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Decentered Doctoral Pedagogy: A Co-autoethnography of Collaboration and Critical, Agentive Induction

偏心化された博士課程教育：協力に関するオートエスノグラフィ
共著、そして批判的・行為者の帰納法

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This paper problematizes the traditional relationship between a doctoral candidate and “supervisor” in terms of its power differential, often characterised as an asymmetric, hierarchical expert/novice dyad. Such a relationship can trap supervisory/advisory relationships in a “transmission” or “training” mode, with candidates receiving “instruction” from “experts”. Through a collaborative co-autoethnography, we offer vignettes of our experiences and reflections on the development of our supervisory relationship, and the impact this has on the production of doctoral work. We demonstrate how we can rethink, disrupt and disorient dominant conceptions of doctoral pedagogy, to build a more collaborative, collegial “decentred” approach to “supervisory/advisory” work.

Drawing on interdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual resources, from cultural sociology, anthropology, organizational studies and education, we argue that the liminal spaces doctoral candidates pass through offer opportunities for relational, productive and decentred pedagogies. Such action possibilities allow supervisors/advisors to construct new ways of valuing candidates’ expertise, and so facilitate their critical inclusion into the academic community.

The paper’s significance lies in the theorization of decentred doctoral pedagogy and its presentation of recommendations for doctoral pedagogic practices, that include a range of pedagogical principles and actions that the doctoral pedagogy might wish to consider.

本稿は伝統的な博士課程院生と指導教官の非対称的で階層的な、「エキスパート」対「初心者」という二者間の力関係を批判的に考察する。このような子弟関係においては、院生が教官から知識の伝達や訓練的を一方向的に受ける形に陥る危険性がある。オートエスノグラフィの共著という共同作業を通して、私たちの指導関係の発展と、その関係性が博士論文にどのような影響を与えたかを振り返る。博士課程教育に関する一般的概念をどのように壊し、捉え直し、より協力的、平等的な偏心化アプローチとすることができるかを説く。

文化社会学、人類学、組織学、教育学から理論と概念を学際的に応用し、博士課程という内面的変化が想定される期間が、相關的、生産性の高い、偏心的な教育の機会であることを唱える。この行動可能性(action possibilities)により、院生の専門性を重視する新しい方法を構築し、院生を学界の重要なメンバーとして受け入れることを促進できるだろう。よって、本稿の意義は、まず、博士課程教育の偏心化理論である。そして、博士課程担当者が検討すべき、教育的原則とそれらに基づく行動を含む実践的な取り組みの提案である。

Keywords

Doctoral pedagogy, power, supervision, repertoire, co-autoethnography

博士課程教育、力関係、指導、レパートリー、オートエスノグラフィ共著

Traditionally, the relationship between a doctoral supervisor and their students has been conceptualised as a master/apprentice – expert/neophyte relationship. The supervisor has been constructed as an authoritative figure dispensing factual information and advice. However, Kamler and Thompson (2008) have argued the “advice” genre often seen in published works suggesting how students can achieve success in their doctoral studies positions the doctoral researcher as a “diminished scholar”, potentially patronised or infantilised.

Janks and Ivanič (1992) have argued that many doctoral supervisory relationships are characterised by an asymmetry of power–relations between supervisor and student. Indeed, the very terms *supervisor* and *doctoral student* or *supervisee* are ones which construct subject positions for both parties. Therefore, while we use the terms above for their familiarity in the field, we feel that the terms *advisor* and *collaborative colleague* more aptly fit the interpellations we aspire to.

In this paper, we aim to trouble the conception that doctoral pedagogies are vehicles for training and the transmission of expert knowledge from supervisor to student. Instead, we contend that doctoral pedagogies should be viewed as productive spaces, or indeed the creation of such productive spaces which aim to provide opportunities to challenge pre-existing assumptions and consider alternatives to these, with the intention of transformation of understandings within the field. We approach this below in two ways: by offering our theorisations of a proposed shift in the pedagogic relationships of doctoral “supervision” (or arguably more appropriately reframed as “alliance”); and then after a brief consideration of the methodological and ethical framing of this paper, we each offer a narrative recount of our journeys towards our new understandings and identities, developed throughout our pedagogical partnership.

Given that we frame this paper methodologically as a co–autoethnography, as discussed later in the methodology section, it is important that we offer, at this early stage, a sense of who we are as authors, our relationship and our positionality/motivations in writing this paper. Our professional collaboration began as doctoral advisor and doctoral candidate between 2009 and 2013 and has continued since in a variety of forms including co–authorship. It was through our original work together on a professional doctorate programme that we both developed our understandings of the advisor/candidate (collaborative colleague) relationship and that we both came to an understanding that a more decentred conceptualisation of our roles and identities enabled more collegial and equitable ways of working and allowed us to understand the identity work implicit in the advisor/collaborative colleague alliance. Such a shift in our understanding and subsequent practice, grounded in a shift in our identity and power relations, has changed the way we conceive of our relationships and we felt it important to share the impact and implications of such a pedagogic shift in terms of equity, ethicality, hierarchy and practice. Reflecting on our joint journey through this process, we have become convinced that shifting from a view of expert/novice to one of academic and intellectual colleagues is a profound ethical and material repositioning with significant pedagogic potential.

Paré (2010, p. 113) argues the role of doctoral pedagogy is in part an enculturation process, through which students “learn more about the community they are joining, its past, its current debates, its cultural and discourse practices”. We see doctoral pedagogies as a route to an agentive and reflexive induction into an academic discourse community. They are pedagogic opportunities to construct more collaborative, egalitarian relationships “to enhance the value placed on individuals’ academic contributions and facilitate the process of induction into the academic discourse community, through a notion of critical inclusion” (Hyatt, 2005 p. 339). Our conception of these pedagogies advocates more collaborative supervisory relations (Lee & Kamler, 2008) achieved through careful and reflexive supervision (Lee, 2008) encouraging an expansion of student research literacies (Green & Lee, 2008). We see these spaces, where stu-

dents are invited into the discourse community (Swales, 1990) through such critical inclusion, as means by which, as Golde and Walker (2006) put it, one can envisage doctoral education as preparation of the future stewards of the discipline (though we do provide a caveat here in the use of the metaphor of stewardship in the current interdisciplinary context – and professional doctorate context – and in the inherent power structures which are implicit in the notion of “disciplines”).

Our approach to a decentred doctoral pedagogy is thus named for its intention to diffuse the power from the central authority of the supervisor out to the student community. Pedagogically, the supervisor is seen as someone whose job is not merely to “skill up” learners but to help them to develop the repertoire of a successful member of the academic discourse community—or, in relation to professional doctorates, a repertoire which mirrors established professional norms.

Through our problematization of the traditional view of supervision, we intend to offer an approach to the development of doctoral repertoires and aim to exemplify this in the narratives of a doctoral student, and of her supervisor, in considering how such a collaborative supervisory relationship can lead to critical inclusion in the doctoral discourse community. We will consider the methodological and ethical issues raised in the construction of this paper, the theoretical resources implicit in this approach, and will describe how the two participant partners reflect on their experiences of working in this innovative manner. Finally, we will consider some pedagogical actions that can be co-opted within what we deem to be a decentred approach to doctoral pedagogies.

Co-constructed Autoethnography

Methodologically, we adopt a collaborative ethnographic approach in this article. Lapadat (2017, p. 589) describes such an approach as “a multivocal approach in which two or more researchers work together to share personal stories and interpret the pooled autoethnographic data, [and which] builds upon and extends the reach of autoethnography and [...] supports a shift from individual to collective agency.” This is important in terms of reflexivity and its inherent relationality aligns with our narratives describing the inherent relationality of a decentred doctoral pedagogy. Our approach aligns closely with that of Ellis (2004) in which authors share “their personal, incomplete and historically situated version of the shared experience, and after which, in collaboration, these individual perspectives are integrated into a co-constructed narrative” (Snoeren, Raaijmakers, & Niessen, et al, 2016, p. 6).

As we have argued at the outset, doctoral study has been historically viewed in terms of individual endeavour, the lone doctoral student. This position is exacerbated in neo-liberal times with the valorisation of the individual and individualism, echoing the assumptions of individualistic and autonomous identity, deriving from the Enlightenment (Eakin, 1999). In contrast, our work focuses on doctoral pedagogies as being characterised or constituted by relations and their social, historical, institutional and political contexts – and the power dynamics that circulate within and between these contexts. Such a relational stance is central to our work—as Papacharissi (2012) puts it:

Understanding “the self” as the intersecting node where many relations meet, we realize how these relations begin to define the self and the subsequent feelings of belonging that may be experienced. For social scientists, the vantage point shifts, no longer focusing on the individual as the fundamental atom of social life, but on relations as defining the complexion of the individual self. As a result, we evolve beyond individualism to understand societies as webs of relations rather than as assemblages of connected or disconnected individuals (p. 834).

Ethically, we acknowledge the problematics of anonymity in co-autoethnography (Lapadat, 2017) but believe that, as the only two participants involved in this collaboratively co-constructed article, we have both given authentically informed consent to be so easily identifiable. It is through this acceptance that we acknowledge a shift to joint agency in the writing of this paper.

Theoretical Framing of the Work

Cochran-Smith urges teacher educators to engage in a “rich dialectic” between scholarship and practice (2003, p. 9), and that is what we have aimed to achieve in our reflections and in the writing of this paper. Our conception of decentred doctoral pedagogy is grounded in a range of interdisciplinary theoretical resources. In addition to the notion of relationality which we have considered above from a methodological perspective, and which has been employed productively in critical psychology (Gergen, 2010; Murriss, 2017), we also draw on the notions of repertoire and liminality. Each of these have wide purchase in a variety of the social sciences.

Repertoire

In one of the most widely cited articles, key to the contemporary view in cultural sociology that culture is both constraining and enabling, Ann Swidler notes that “...culture provides a repertoire of capacities from which varying strategies of action may be constructed” (1986, p. 284). Within sociolinguistics, Blommaert argues that our current “super-diverse” urbanised world contains spaces where people from different backgrounds interact in a vast array of languages, and through bits and pieces of languages. He describes these different languages and language fragments as “repertoires”, which he considers to be “the complexes of resources people actually possess and deploy” (2010, p. 102). He notes:

Shifting our focus from “languages” (primarily an ideological and institutional construct) to resources (the actual and observable ways of using language) has important implications for notions such as “competence [...] The question of what it is to “know” a language, to “speak it well” or to “be fluent” in it will have to be reformulated, and some existing tools for measuring the answers to such questions (as in language testing schemes) will have to be critically revisited. A clearer understanding of repertoires, furthermore, may add detail and precision to analyses of communication processes in the world of globalized communication, where people often communicate with bits and pieces of genres and registers. (p. 102)

Similarly, we argue that, if capacity-building and individual development are the goal as opposed to summative assessment hoop-jumping, then the repertoire of a successful doctoral student would be informed by the repertoire of a successful academic researcher / research informed practitioner. We then sought to question what such a doctoral repertoire should look like.

Doctoral Repertoires

A doctoral repertoire is a patchwork of attributes that a doctoral student needs to be successful. However, these are personal and biographical—they are dependent on who people are, where they come from and where they want to go. They are “indexical biographies” (Blommaert & Backus, 2011), though are always constructed as a result of relations with others—they represent relational repertoires as others are always implicated in the construction

of one's own identity. We argue that they should be more than just technical, instrumental and measurable in the ways that they are often reified through Research Council funding requirements, regularly linked to "human capital development" discourses. Whilst we do not discount the value of technical skills in certain contexts, doctoral repertoires also include dispositions, attitudes, experiences, knowledge, ethical orientations, theoretical orientations, ontological/epistemological/agency assumptions, ideological allegiances, meanings, beliefs, symbols and symbolic boundaries. These will differ in different contexts/disciplines and in transdisciplinary contexts (e.g., co-production) and, as Blommaert and Backus (2011) argue, in a super-diversity context, learners engage with a broad variety of groups, networks and communities, and their resources are consequently learned through a wide variety of trajectories, tactics and technologies.

Liminality

Another key concept is liminality. The doctoral journey is often metaphorised as a rite of passage. From the anthropological work of Arnold van Gennep (1909) and later Victor Turner (1967), a rite of passage consists of a pre-liminal phase (separation), a liminal phase (transition), and a post-liminal phase (reincorporation). Turner noted that in liminality, individuals were "betwixt and between", they did not belong to the society that they previously were a part of and they were not yet reincorporated into that society, and that this was the point where an identity shift occurs—for us, the necessary identity shift that defines "doctorateness".

Doctoral Liminality

We understand doctoral liminality to be the middle phase, associated with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962), namely the psychological stress, conflicting thoughts, attitudes or behaviours, and the associated discomfort, experienced by someone who is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values. This experience is often cited as a common element along the doctoral journey (Loyd, Harding-DeKam & Hamilton, 2014) and yet Golombek and Johnson (2004) suggest that it is precisely this tension which can motivate an individual to engage in professional learning.

During a ritual's liminal stage, participants "stand at the threshold" between their previous way of structuring their identity, time, or community, and a new way, which the ritual establishes. A threshold can be viewed as a juncture where various realities can be observed—therefore a place full of heightened potentialities. Liminal spaces help individuals enact a different way of being in a situation and can open up opportunities to explore the potential for change/growth. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) describe the boundary crossings that mark the start and end of the liminal phase as open to four potential learning opportunities: identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation (p.142). Identification involves seeing that others have differing perspectives and perceptions and the subsequent opportunity through dialogic engagement to reconcile these is referred to as coordination. Key to the development of a doctoral identity is the next phase of reflection where the learner will view their own perspectives and positions through the lens of others and the outcome of this process is a personal and professional transformation of identity, often described by successful doctoral candidates (Dann, Basford, & Booth, et al., 2018).

Context

The authors collaborated as part of a taught professional doctoral programme in education. The programme is constructed around weekend schools which occur three times a year, with

opportunity for both formal “taught” sessions, seminars, one to one “supervision” sessions and importantly space purposely constructed to enable peer to peer debate and conversation. The dyadically symmetrical collaboration was initiated by a group of 10 students (one of whom was a co-author of the paper) with a shared interest in discourse analytic approaches to policy analysis which was a methodological specialism of the academic tutor (the other co-author of this paper). The group of students had identified a commonality of need and had discussed this in a mutually supportive peer grouping and approached the tutor. Together they formed a non-hierarchical community of inquiry, taking advantage of the affordances for productive pedagogical space for the joint construction of knowledge in-group collaborations (Malfoy, 2005), specifically in doctoral education scholarly writing groups (Parker, 2009). Members of the scholarship group shared and fed back on draft work of all participants, critiqued a later-published framework developed by the academic tutor, presented their own analysis which was subjected to group critique, presented and critiqued self-selected published articles on a common theme (thus raising overall awareness of the group to scholarship in the field). This dyadically non-hierarchical approach led to a reconfiguration of relationships between tutor and students. The process is described in more detail in (Hyatt, 2013, pp. 835–836), noting that in:

post-session feedback, all the students reported they had found the session valuable, particularly in terms of the exposure to materials and perspectives they might not have otherwise encountered, but also in the collegial shared nature of the discussions...and involved participants in a community of practice that saw each participant bringing their contextual expertise to the group, and allowed the other participants to gain access and inclusion to a newly formed academic discourse community, through a notion of critical dialogue and reciprocity.

We now move to each participant’s narrative reflections on this collaborative partnership.

Sally’s Experience

My journey as a doctoral student “started’ as a “nurse educator” and as a reflexive and questioning individual trying to understand the policy and direction of the nursing profession; and could be described as concluding in the production of a thesis that examined the decision made in 2009 that from 2013 the only route onto the UK Nursing register would be through graduate programmes. Six years later, however, I recognise that the journey has not been that straightforward. The beginning was not the start, the journey has not ended, and it has not been a linear journey. I recognise that the formal period of my registration on my EdD signifies only that—the formality; but has less to do with my ontological and epistemological being as a “professional”, as an “academic”, as a “student” or as I earlier framed myself – a “reflexive and questioning individual”, simply trying to make sense of my world.

The doctoral research itself in its focus and its execution played out as many things. It problematised a policy decision, explored the discourses surrounding it and primarily questioned whether the new standards for nurse education are a form of social (re)engineering. The study drew on both the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu (field of practice, habitus and capital e.g., 1990) and on his three distinct levels of inquiry; the position of the field within other fields; mapping the objective structure of relations between positions occupied by those who occupy “legitimate” forms of specific authority in the field; and by exploring the habitus of the agents.

It identified definitional struggles influenced from both within and outside of the profession, definitional struggles which I think equally apply to the role of “supervision” within the

doctoral journey. To explore this, I utilised the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a conceptual lens both to scrutinise and understand the importance of “education” in society, and considered pedagogic agency (traditionally held by the expert, or in this case the supervisor) holding capacity (power) to inculcate meaning—the mainstay of processes of imposition of a cultural arbitrary which reproduce power relations that effectively rewrite their own operations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Alongside the inclusion of ideas, pedagogic action also involves the exclusion of ideas as unthinkable and this exclusion or censorship is an effective mode of pedagogic action. It also acknowledges pedagogic authority as an arbitrary power, misrecognised by its practitioners and recipients as legitimate or legitimating, with such authority being experienced as neutral or overtly valued and so making explicit claim to educational legitimacy. Thus embodied, such misrecognition exists in, through, and because of the practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment. It is an integral part of behaviour—a doxic experience. Doxa enables individuals, through “habitus”, to relate unquestioningly to their field without any need (or even possibility) of questioning their experience. Certain ways of thinking, being or acting thus become unthinkable (Bourdieu, 1990).

In my experience, however, it is (and was) possible to re-engineer the field through the critical inclusion of me not as “the student” but as “member” of the academic community; a community of inclusion and equity of identity and ideas. Equity because we all brought our knowledge, expertise and curiosities into a democratised space. We were encouraged/enabled by tutors to use the study schools, and our peer interactions, in part 2 of the EdD experience (the thesis stage) to design our own meaning and focus. Examples of this include consideration of the interrelationship between the nature of this “equitable” knowledge base (epistemological factors) and the creation of academic networks and communities (social factors) and the creation of this democratic space, positioning us as not only belonging in the academy but also as “legitimate” creators of new knowledge. It also provided space to offer up my competencies, dispositions and values and to create a rich and liberated, fertile space for debate and creation with peers – a relational space.

This was especially demonstrated in the creation of a “space”, over several sessions at various study schools, for supervisors and students to explore Critical Discourse Analysis, in both its concept and in its approach (these sessions are described more fully in David’s story below). CDA sits within epistemological paradigms that see “knowledges” as generated and circulating as discourses. It focuses on the process through which “knowledge” or “what is known” becomes operationalised in societies and economies as precisely the dialects of discourse.

We engaged in social practices and social events within the context of this CDA space (such as explicit discussion about the traditional roles and relationships between supervisors and supervisees with a mutual desire to step outside the confines of these roles) as a facet of action, in the construal (representation) of aspects of the world and in the constitution of identities. This is where for me, the magic occurred. Identity is not to be found inside a person but rather it is relational and inheres in the interaction a person has with others (Elliott, 2005). This conception of self therefore stresses the continual production of identity within specific historical and discursive contexts – the interrelations matter, and through this kind of practice where ideas and identities are accomplished (become authentic) and can clarify the ideologically informed basis of the purpose and methods of social groups (Candlin, 2010), in this case a mixture of “supervisor” and “students”.

We created different forms of specific authority in the field, we created a different legitimacy. For me as a student of life with unforgiving and relentless doubts of my credibility as an academic this form of partnership, this form of collaboration, marked a move away from tra-

ditional doctoral pedagogic practices and the implications such decentring orientations have for collaboration, collegiality and professional identity released in me a confidence to “be”. To publish, to propose, to critique and question and, most latterly and in partnership with my “supervisor”, to co-examine.

David’s Experience

I’ll start by problematizing my own institutional “naming” as a “supervisor”—I don’t feel my job is to supervise my student (colleague). I’m their advisor, their critical friend, their colleague, their co-conspirator.

Throughout my academic career, my interests have centred around two key areas: power and relationality. My current interest in doctoral pedagogy and specifically the “troubling” of the hierarchical relationships between supervisors and supervisees, has developed via an intersection of the worlds of applied linguistics and pedagogy. A hugely formative experience came with my reading of a story, from critical language awareness scholars Hilary Janks and Ros Ivanič (Janks & Ivanič, 1992), of the international academic who on coming to study for a doctorate in the UK felt diminished by being exposed to a transmission pedagogy and being viewed as a lesser scholar receiving knowledge from his betters. Fortunately, despite his disillusionment and alienation at this state of affairs, he summoned the courage to confront his supervisor with his concerns and she heard him. So instead of treating him as someone who needed educating, she began to share her draft work with him, treating him as a critical friend, and in doing so created new identity positions for each of them as collaborative colleagues.

This story brought home to me the agency held by supervisors in reconfiguring their relationships with their students and also the agency held by the students in challenging their status as mere apprentices, in receipt of the transmitted wisdom of their supervisors. This reconfiguration blossomed when the group of students (including Sally) approached me after a session I had led on Critical Discourse Analysis. They knew they needed to engage with educational policy analysis but didn’t know how. They felt that CDA might offer them an approach to resolve their dilemma and asked if we could form a small interest group in a series of collaborative workshops. We began by each selecting a journal article that adopted a CDA approach that they felt might be relevant to their research. Then, we each chose a piece of text to analyse discursively and shared these texts with the group. We each analysed our texts and prepared a short presentation on our analysis after which the group offered their thoughts and analyses of the text. We concluded with a critique of an analytical framework I had devised and which we all had employed, relating it to our own work and suggesting ways in which it might be improved, enhanced or supplemented and it was in this final activity that our relationship became reconfigured from student/tutor to critical friends and colleagues. The participants reported they valued the sessions as assistive to their analysis but also in terms of the collective and egalitarian nature of the interactions.

I think this experience helped to define the relationship established during the supervision and, as a result, we have gone on to write together (this being the second article we have co-written) and to examine doctoral work together. I would like to argue that decentring the supervisory relationship changes the way we feel about and work with our colleagues/students and this can transform the collegial relationship from something that is usually defined by the timespan of the study to something with far more longevity. Its benefits transcend the technical and instrumental achievement of a qualification and can help to construct ongoing and highly fruitful academic collaborations. I remember this experience with this cohort as being enormously formative in the establishment of my identity as a “supervisor”, and attempt to continue with this approach throughout my academic practice as a doctoral educator.

And to bring the story full circle, this article in draft form has been shared with the latest cohort of the professional doctorate programme (and with my co-tutor on that programme), in the hope that they too will read this in a more empowered way.

Pedagogical Implications

The conceptualisation and narratives above have encouraged us to consider how to translate these theorized experiences into a range of pedagogical mechanisms for doctoral pedagogy work.

The creation of open discursive dialogic spaces are a central element of our decentred pedagogy for the fostering of doctoral repertoires and negotiating the liminal space of doctoral studies with its resultant identity transformation. These discursive events allow for the opportunity to have a professional dialogic and relational space in which thinking could be explored (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009). This can be achieved in a number of ways, specifically through the creation of student-determined spaces for authentic dialogue. The type of decentred workshops described in Hyatt (2013) are clearly one successful mode to employ. Similarly, student defined and organized debates, panels, symposia, offer similar opportunities for identity and perspectival coordination, reflection and transformation.

Repeated presentation and “defence” of on-going research allows students a pragmatically experiential opportunity to prepare themselves for an ultimate viva voce, though in a supportive, sympathetic and sensitive peer environment. Students have reported that the value of this often lies, not in the actual presentation of their work, but rather in the questions and comments they face, allowing for a dialogic engagement with others’ perspectives and a reflexive self-examination facilitated through the prism of alternative conceptualisations of one’s work. These experiences link closely with the previously discussed Akkerman and Baker’s (2011) coordination and reflection stages.

Drawing on the transformatory experience described by Janks and Ivanic (1992) of a supervisor shifting from presenting her students with completed and published works of her own, to sharing draft work of as yet unsubmitted papers, we encourage supervisors to do the same. Janks and Ivanic describe this as constructing new subject positions for them both: collaborative colleagues. Students can move to reading in a different way. Instead of requiring the supervisor to explain parts the student doesn’t understand (a transmission pedagogy), students identify parts of the draft work they felt need to be clarified. The weakness shifts from the student to the writing and the student moves to reading from the empowered position of a colleague rather than a subordinate.

Similarly, collaborative co-authorship between student and supervisor can reconstruct their relative subject positions, with the caveat that this needs to be done in an ethical and non-exploitative manner with the student receiving full credit for their contributions.

Students can begin to see themselves, and be seen by others, as experts, through the production of pedagogic resources, for sharing with peers. One approach to this is the production of short video vignettes in which the students discuss a theory, theorist, methodology, or concept with which they have become expert through prolonged utilisation and engagement.

In problematising the subject positions created and enshrined through unequal dyadic relations, this paper inevitably invites us to question the prevailing dominant discourses surrounding doctoral pedagogies. Questions we need to begin to engage with at both the personal and institutional level, and indeed when considering global narratives that carry rhetorical and discursive power, include: should we be supervisors or advisors (or mentors)?; should we rename our doctoral training centres as doctoral development centres?; should our training needs analyses be reconceptualised as Doctoral Development Analyses?

Reflections on the Role of Expertise

In order to be true to our critical and reflexive intentions in this paper, I think it is crucial to clarify what this call for the reconfigured supervisory relationship entails—or perhaps more significantly, what it does not entail.

A decentred approach is not a denial of the expertise, experience or knowledge of the supervisor and is not meant to imply that the supervisor needs no knowledge of the field in which the student is working. Such expertise can only be of benefit to the student. Similarly, a decentered approach does not entail a denial of the psychological safety students desire in feeling their supervisor is “expert”. The growth of a marketised higher education has inevitably led to some institutions viewing doctoral students as another “income stream” and with this lies the danger of the appointment of supervisors, to take up the slack, who have no specific knowledge of the area the student is researching. In this vein, the call for a decentred approach to doctoral pedagogy does not advocate a “sink-or-swim” abandonment of students but rather entails a structured programme of learning that works from the student’s current state of knowledge and as such is congruent with a constructivist view of learning.

The collegial approach advocated here does not imply there should be any disregard of the importance of scholarship, rigour, subject knowledge, originality, significance, or credibility and for those engaged in a professional doctorate does not imply a disregard or neglect of the demands of professional practice.

And, crucially, this approach should not be seen as in any way a face-threat to the supervisor, to their sense of expertise, specialism and their pedagogic identity within their role.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have made a call for the disrupting of hierarchical relations between supervisors and doctoral students through a process of critical inclusion, facilitated by decentred pedagogies. In advancing the cause of more collaborative and collegial working between them, we advocate a turn within doctoral pedagogies from the transactional to the relational, from a dehumanising technical training to a rehumanising professionalism, from measurement to professional friendship and collaboration. This reconceptualisation is aimed at helping students to negotiate their role as experts, while simultaneously aiding supervisors to renegotiate their role as colleagues through a democratisation of the relationship and a diffusion of the dyadic power differential, within a changed pedagogic context.

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