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

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The European Conference on Educational Research – Education and Cultural Change, August 2010, Helsinki



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

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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

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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

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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

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Exploring strategies for supervision and doctoral education (cont'd)

Approaches to supervision (Lee, 2008)

Functional Enculturation Critical thinking Emancipation Relationship development.

- 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*

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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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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

Strategy	Conception of supervision (after Lee, 2008)				
	Functional	Enculturation	Critical thinking	Emancipation	Relationship development.
Participation					
Reflection on practice					
Extended understanding for doctorateness					
Strategic reflexiveness					

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