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Aspects of mentorship in team supervision of doctoral students in Australia

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Abstract This article examines three aspects of mentorship in collaborative supervision of HDR studies in Australian contexts. The first aspect of mentorship is what the doctoral student learns about supervision—positively or negatively—through the experience of being supervised (supervisor to student). The second aspect is understood as an experienced supervisor who oversees a novice supervisor as part of their rite of passage to becoming a principal supervisor, (expert to novice). Team modes of supervision, particularly collaborative modes open up new ways of performing mentorship within the supervisory context adding richness to the learning context for all participants. To address problems arising from the complexity of team supervision, a third aspect of mentorship might be considered productive (ex-officio mentor to team). The article concludes that mentorship about supervision in each aspect is enhanced through collaboration, though there are challenges for universities to make more systematic the mentor role of principal supervisors. The recommendations have implications for university policy and practices.

Keywords Collaborative team supervision · Self-regulation · Mentorship · Doctoral supervision

Introduction

Supervision by more than one supervisor of doctoral students throughout candidature is now considered best practice, and is enshrined in policy across Australian universities and understood as team supervision. This follows trends in

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the UK (Pole 1998) and other forms of panel supervision typical of America and Canada. There is no single 'right' way to supervise because there are many factors that influence the way supervision is conducted such as the student's topic, geographic location/s of team members, and the topic of study. The interpretation of what a 'team' is and how teams operate varies widely (Robertson 2016). Collaborative team modes—hierarchical and horizontal (Guerin et al. 2011)—differ from other team modes in that the student is explicitly part of the team and that two or more supervisors work and meet together with the student as their usual practice (Robertson 2016). Collaborative teams are thus understood as having at least three members—the principal supervisor, co-supervisor and doctoral student. There are therefore relationships between all parties that need to be considered.

Within collaborative teams, mentorship may be part of complex interactions and sit alongside and entwined with the main function of the team—to support development of the doctoral student's thesis and embedded research skill and capabilities. As social contexts they provide rich opportunities for the development of self-regulation, self and team efficacy (Bandura 1986, 2000). Other team modes such as de facto dyads and segmented configurations form a continuum of team types and supervisory teams may shift modes during the course of candidature (Robertson 2016). All team modes have advantages and risks. The intensely personal nature of doctorates in education, humanities and social sciences, where students nominate their own research project and work with supervisors to guide them through the process of thesis development, means that each supervision will be unique in some respects. For this reason there is an assumption in this article that not all teams will be or should be in a collaborative mode.

Literature related to concepts of mentorship, collaboration and supervisors' learning about postgraduate supervision will be reviewed, followed by an elaboration of Bandura's socio-cognitive theory as it pertains to mentoring and role modelling. The research methodology will be explained, and the findings presented. This will be followed by a discussion that synthesises the preceding sections. The paper concludes with recommendations for future mentorship practices and procedures in collaborative supervisory teams.

Mentorship and collaboration

Mentorship is understood as either a formal (documented) or informal (tacitly evolving) relationship between two people where career advice, guidance and support is given by a more experienced person to a less experienced person (Parise and Forret 2008). In the case of doctoral supervision, the documented arrangement between supervisors and the student can be construed as a formal mentorship. The supervisors have a professional responsibility to guide and support the student through thesis development and research training to completion. However, the relationship between supervisors is implicitly about role modelling—positive or negative—and cannot be assumed to be a mentorship. It may become a mentorship through shared interests, especially if one colleague is more senior and experienced than the other, or it may be formally framed as a mentorship through agreement

between the parties. This article argues that formalising or making more systematic mentorship agreements would add to the richness of the pedagogies of supervision.

Collaborative modes are potentially rich learning environments for all team members but there are inherent risks with the inclusion of the additional supervisor (co-supervisor) (Manathunga 2012b). The policy support for team supervision was due to its potential for ameliorating risks associated with a single supervisor such as discontinuation of supervision if the supervisor was no longer available, or unprofessional practices behind closed doors. With an additional supervisor, at least on paper, students and the university have greater security. However, there are impediments to working collaboratively in supervisory teams with lack of training, support and workloads featuring strongly. There are also many acknowledged benefits for those working in collaborative teams for supervisors and doctoral students (Guerin et al. 2011). One of these benefits is the opportunity for supervisors to learn from each other, increasing their repertoire of supervisory strategies, regardless of their level of experience.

MacFarlane (2017) argues that academic collaboration is problematic. He proposes that collaboration is best understood as occupying a moral spectrum from altruistic relationships such as ‘intellectual generosity’ and ‘mentorship’ through ‘communication’ and ‘performativity’ to exploitative practices such as ‘cronyism’ and ‘parasitism’ (pp. 476–478). The nature of the current highly competitive environment in universities puts considerable pressure on academics to collaborate but simultaneously works against the altruistic practices of the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Mentorship is traditionally viewed in the academy as a way of supporting the induction of early career academics and researchers into the academy usually through supervisory arrangements such as thesis supervision. MacFarlane notes that credit for outcomes from supervision such as a thesis or other publications is not always fairly attributed, and can thus make these collaborative relationships problematic. Team supervision of doctoral students might usually sit more within these two categories on the moral spectrum but in the broad scope of supervision nationally or internationally, there is evidence of exploitative practices (NSW Ombudsman 2016).

The initial phase of a supervisory team’s establishment is the moment where team structure and logistics are largely determined (Robertson 2016). This coincides with the afterglow of acceptance into higher degree doctoral studies for the student who is embarking on a unique voyage of discovery to an unknown world of knowledge. They often enter into supervision arrangements from a position of ignorance. While it might be expected that the principal supervisor knows and understands the role of supervisor, they often know very little about the student or their intended project when working in non-STEM disciplines. The co-supervisor/s are often selected in response to the need for particular expertise required for the student’s project, and/or to provide training to qualify as a primary supervisor. They may not have worked in a team context with the principal supervisor, and also may not know much of the student and their project. This means that there are many unknowns and assumptions as teams begin their work. This underscores the need for specific training for enhancing supervisor skills, but also highlights the need for

experienced mentors to be available to teams, especially in the early stages of collaborative team establishment.

Concepts of mentorship about supervision in the literature

Learning about supervision of postgraduate students is available from a number of sources, including a growing body of literature. Increasingly supervisor training programmes are being made mandatory in Australian universities and co-supervising a student through to completion is becoming the norm (Kiley 2011). It should be noted however that there is a distinction between training for supervision and mentoring about supervision. Training is seen as more instrumental, focusing on policy, procedures and best practice advice that is removed from any emotional connections to the practice (Kiley 2011). Mentoring is understood as knowledge and guidance from a more experienced colleague to an inexperienced or less experienced individual and includes personal and career advice and access to resources such as professional networks (Pearson and Kayrooz 2004) in a particular context. The relationship between mentor and mentee(s) may also include an emotional connection (Pearson and Brew 2002).

In doctoral supervision literature it is apparent that the primary source of learning about supervision comes from supervisors' experience of being supervised (Guerin and Green 2015; Johnson et al. 2000), regardless of the mode of supervision. New supervisors are likely to mimic the approach taken by their supervisor as the only known model, though some with unsatisfactory experiences will deliberately attempt to develop other models (Lee 2008). Alternative or supplementary models may be made available to the novice supervisor under the guidance of a senior colleague acting as a mentor (Amundsen and McAlpine 2009). There are also examples such as Blass et al. (2012) where access to experienced supervisors was not available, and a group of novice supervisors worked together as peer mentors to develop their supervisory practices. In these contexts, mentoring about supervision occurs outside the supervision meetings, so the student sees little if any of this activity, experiencing only the performance of supervision.

Supervisor training provides a vital secondary or additional source of information about supervision. A number of studies have been conducted to examine supervisor training. Kiley (2011) observes that training programmes are reflective of the values and concerns of a university. Kiley's study examines training offered by a range of universities. It was found that many had programmes that were primarily directed at skilling and/or accrediting early career supervisors but little was available for experienced academics. Kiley's data indicated increased attention on the pedagogies of supervision however one aspect of training provided that was not commonly addressed was mentoring other supervisors. Where most universities have policies of accrediting new supervisors through supervised experience and courses, the lack of training in mentoring other supervisors suggests that there is an assumption that experienced supervisors already know how to do this or that it is not an important skill.

Another shortcoming in the training is on building research teams (Kiley 2011). With policies across universities for team supervision, skills on building and maintaining teams surely should feature more consistently in training programmes for supervisors of all levels. Also largely absent from training was conflict resolution and cross-cultural issues of supervision. Many of these training programmes are generic, attempting to cater for supervisors at all levels of experience, and many of these are provided online as a series of modules (Brew and Peseta 2004). Some programmes offer 'learning circles' (Manathunga 2005) providing an opportunity for small groups of supervisors to reflect on and discuss their supervisory practices, creating contexts similar to Blass et al. (2012). Critical self-reflection that reflects not only on technical aspects but also 'the emotional and intellectual aspects of facilitative leadership' (Pearson and Kayrooz 2004, p. 113) is crucial. It can be expected that training programmes bring benefits to the supervisory team with improved practice, although the impact of some of these training programmes is not well determined (McCulloch and Loesera 2016).

Within collaborative team contexts however, mentoring about supervision is readily apparent and available to team members. This brings together the first and second aspects of mentoring, even though some of the discussions about supervision may occur outside the supervision meetings and not be visible to the student. The student is privy to the interaction between the supervisors during meetings and observe similarities and differences in approaches from the supervisors (Manathunga 2012b). Much may be learned first-hand about approaches to supervision from the performance of the role/s in situ. Regardless of the level of experience between the supervisors, learning about supervision occurs in collaborative contexts. Even where a team has two or more experienced supervisors working with the student, the opportunity to observe and learn from their colleague/s is valuable (Watts 2010). However, the role of the co-supervisor in collaborative teams is not always an equitable one, and the role/s of co-supervisors are not often explicitly discussed in the establishment of supervisory teams. Consequently there is ambiguity and confusion in the positioning of the co-supervisor (Spooner-Lane et al. 2007). They argue that framing the relationship between novice and experienced supervisor as a mentorship would bring into the open the implicit power relationship, and reframe supervision mentoring as a pedagogy.

Despite an increased focus on supervisor training and the adoption of team supervision policies, complaints about the quality of supervision persist. An investigation into higher degree supervisory policy and practices was conducted by the NSW Ombudsman's Department (2016) in response to the number of complaints being made about the quality of their supervision and/or inappropriate behaviour. The discussion paper acknowledges the unique nature of supervisory relationships. The intensely personal aspects of postgraduate studies were noted, including that there is a great deal at stake for students who make the complaint and supervisors who are the subject of complaints or vice versa. The longer grievances were left unresolved, the more complex and intractable the situations appeared to become. The paper notes the predominance of team modes of supervision, but does not identify specific modes of team supervision, so that there is little evidence from which to determine if problems arise in any mode more frequently than another.

However, the paper states that if ‘a dispute arises, it almost always centres on events that occurred when two individuals were alone in a room having a conversation’ (p. 3). This scenario is less likely to occur in collaborative modes of supervision where supervisors and students meet together.

The published Discussion Paper (NSW Ombudsman 2016) makes a number of suggestions to support doctoral students and improve the processes that underpin postgraduate studies. The first four of these suggestions highlight the need for the availability of ‘a designated “mentor” as a part of each supervision team’ (p. 13) through a graduate research office. Mentors were recommended for any team where a student had elected to change supervisors more than once, where a supervisor had multiple grievances made against them within a time period, and/or where anyone in close association with the team notes a significant deterioration in the functionality of the team. Little detail on the specific remit of the ex-officio mentor is given beyond the recommendation that ‘a part of the mentor’s role was to monitor the general supervisory relationship’ (p. 13). The role of an ex-officio mentor of this type extends the role of mentorship in a third aspect effectively as a mentor to the team. The Ombudsman’s paper stops short of requiring an ex-officio mentor for all teams, but rather suggests that these be made available. There may be an opportunity in the recent development of faculty Research Education Coordinators (REC’s) to support research by acting as an ex-officio mentor to supervisory teams. This would extend their role of supporting students and nurturing research dispositions (Brew et al. 2017).

Study design

This study is framed as interpretive qualitative research (Cresswell 2007). In this section I explore Bandura’s socio-cognitive theory (1986, 2000), and explain how this theory may be interpreted in the context of doctoral supervision and the potential for mentorship. Of particular interest in the study of collaborative team supervision are the concepts of self-regulation, self and collective efficacy. Self-regulation underpins self-efficacy, which is also crucial for individuals operating within team contexts to develop collective efficacy.

Bandura’s (1986) early work develops understandings of human behaviour within social contexts. In the preface, Bandura explains that social cognitive theory provides a means of ‘analyzising human motivation, thought, and action [that] embraces an interactional model of causation in which environmental events, personal factors and behaviour all operate as interacting determinants of each other’ (p. xi). Human behaviour is seen as contextual and interactive performance, drawing on personal characteristics and cultural backgrounds to inform responses. As Bandura (2000) explains ‘Social structures are created by human activity, and sociostructural practices, in turn, impose constraints and provide resources and opportunities for personal development and functioning’ (p. 77). In the case of collaborative team supervision, the social structure is co-created by the supervisory team of principal supervisor, co-supervisor/s and student. The social structure is formed for a specific purpose and is time limited in that once the function is

completed, the team is free to disband (not withstanding restructure or early termination due to environmental circumstances). There are constraints imposed within a larger framework of social structures (disciplines, university policies and procedures and government regulation). The intensely personal nature of postgraduate research and the intimacy of the team dedicated to supporting the aspirations of the least powerful individual in the team is thus constrained by professional standards of practice.

Self-regulation contains three subprocesses: self-observation, judgemental processes and self-reaction (Bandura 1986). Self-regulation commences with critical self-reflection, understanding of personal motivations and values and the performance of these attributes. Personal performance is informed by feedback, particularly from significant others, that allows the individual to make judgements about their social operation. Role models provide internal performance standards through a social comparison. However, the social standing of the role model needs to be seen as realistically achievable and desirable to have a positive effect. By making comparison with others in a social context, the individual is able to make judgements about themselves, and model or regulate their behaviour accordingly. The implication is that in the processes of self-regulation, critical self-reflection, role models, comparisons and judgements made about self-performance may be potentially positive or negative. In hierarchical collaborative supervisory teams, the principal supervisor is likely to be the role model. In horizontal modes where leadership is distributed (Robertson 2016), role models may be any team member. Individuals are able to get feedback about their social performance through comparison with other team members, allowing them to regulate their behaviour accordingly (Bandura 2000). The team context is one where learning about the performance of professional responsibilities is facilitated (Watts 2010). Environments that are supportive of positive self-regulation, where role models and standards of behaviour are achievable will enable greater self-efficacy and consequently team efficacy (Bandura 1986).

Data for this article are drawn from a broader study of supervision practices in Australia. In the initial study highly experienced supervisors ($n = 12$) and late stage doctoral candidates ($n = 10$) were interviewed face to face in most instances or via Skype with video enabled. Participants were either experienced supervisors and/or had published widely in the field of postgraduate supervision, identified through reputation and recommendation by peers. The second cohort were domestically enrolled doctoral students who were approaching or had recently completed candidature. Participants in this cohort were recruited through email requests circulated through their universities postgraduate offices, or via snowballing. Participants came from eastern states or territories of Australia. There was no relationship between any supervisor and doctoral candidate. One of the criteria for participation was that the person had experience of ‘team’ supervision. This was left as an open term as the study sought to determine how the policies for increased numbers of supervisors were being interpreted. The interview questions were also open and sought to establish the participants’ experience with supervision (either as an academic or candidate); one question, for instance, asked the participant to describe the roles of team members and how these were established in the team. The

interviews and transcription were undertaken by the researcher and transcriptions returned to the participants to check for accuracy and de-identification (names used in this article are pseudonyms). The transcripts were read repeatedly, emergent themes identified and subsequently coded through NVivo. Interpretive qualitative research recognises the intersection of the researcher and data analysis (Cresswell 2007), and every effort is made in the analysis to allow the participants to speak for themselves. Data for this article are drawn from the emergent theme of mentorship as a means of developing and supporting individual and team efficacy and is typical of the larger dataset. While this is a small sample, patterns are evident, indicating that mentorship is not well understood within the context of doctoral supervision.

Findings

The findings will be presented by examining the data pertinent to the three aspects of mentorship about supervision. The first aspect is learning about supervision as a student from supervisors; the second is learning from co-supervisory experiences; the third combines the first and second to consider the collaborative team supervision context; while the final aspect considers mentorship to the team.

First aspect

Little reference was made in the data from the experienced supervisor cohort about what they learned about supervision from their own experience of being supervised. Many of these supervisors were towards the end of their lengthy careers, and their own experiences may not have seemed relevant in the current contexts. However Dr H., a mid-career supervisor commented:

> I know a lot of what's written about supervision says that the way you supervise is very shaped by how you were supervised yourself…so as a student I had one supervisor then another…my supervisor left and another one took over…but it was always a two way meeting and never anything more than that.

In his current university team supervision is required, as opposed to his experience of dyadic (one on one) supervision. This suggests that a supervisor may bring a set of values about the supervisory relationship, but the actual mode of supervision may be more determined by local policy.

In the doctoral student cohort, both positive and negative learning about supervision are more apparent. Sharon had a series of traumatic supervision experiences throughout her candidature. She now supervises postgraduate students and says:

> I try to be the exact opposite, and probably at a personal cost because I do try to get their feedback to them in generally within a week at the very most and sometimes I do it earlier…

> I'm trying to make up for the mistake of having to wait for 6 weeks and email again and say 'any chance you might have had time to read my work'? It drives me insane. So that's something I have to be conscious of…
> I could never be the supervisors that I've had (Sharon).

This comment indicates critical self-reflection, judgement and self-comparison with other available models. In this way, Sharon shows development in her self-regulation, in reaction to her negative experiences.

Alternatively, Roslyn is able to make a comparison between supervisory approaches. At the time of the interview, Roslyn had graduated, secured an on-going position and was co-supervising students. Her first primary supervisor left the university and she made a smooth transition to another primary supervisor. Roslyn was not particularly critical of her first supervisor but is very positive about her second lead supervisor. Her observation about the possible impact on completion is illuminating. Of her second primary supervisor she says:

> in some respects she was not [an expert in the field] but she was a better supervisor in a way in terms of the attention she paid to me, the phone calls, the monitoring. With my (first) principal supervisor we could go 6 weeks between meetings and there would be very minimal contact in that time or she wouldn't email and ask. My (second) principal supervisor kept checking "how're you going?"…
> I cannot imagine HOW they managed to do ALL of that on top of all their other commitments. It was amazing and I wonder now whether with my (first) principal supervisor I'd have submitted by now (Roslyn).

With two available principal supervisor models and an active co-supervisor, Roslyn is positioned to make a critical comparison and aspire to future behaviour based on her preferred model.

Doctoral students in the cohort were all acutely aware of their supervisor's workload, and would have accepted being told that getting feedback would take some weeks but resented being left in limbo for extended periods of time. Jennifer, at the time of interview was waiting on feedback on her final draft and was anxious to submit. She described the behaviour of many supervisors as 'largely unavailable and unprofessional'. Her analysis of the relationship is insightful.

> I think there is an emotive and affective relationship with your supervisor that is fundamental. It can go badly. The academy would be fantastic, your aspiration to belong, your sense of 'I am of that place'. You want to be this academic and you want to be smart… They've impressed you. That's why you're in the building as a PhD student, because the brains of the academic have inspired you and you want to be like that and all of a sudden they treat you badly or are disrespectful. It pains you in a different way because you have aspired to be that kind of a person and the reality of that is difficult to grasp. There's a real slippage there. I'm using you to motivate me to do this work and then I see some parts of you are not inspirational at all. So I think that affective thing is part of the messiness of that relationship. This is the projection that we project onto this in order to do a PhD. We don't do it for

> nothing. We are thinking OK I could be an academic with this, and then sometimes you look at them and go eeeww…is this really what I aspire to? Do I want to be like that person? You feel more let down because of that aspirational affective connect that you're projecting on to it (Jennifer).

Jennifer identifies the role model aspect of supervision, and highlights the implicit learning about behaviour and pedagogy that is embedded in the relationship between supervisor and student.

Second aspect

In the second aspect of a supervisor learning about supervision from a colleague, the examples were both positive and negative. In positive examples, the relationship is described as mentor/mentee. In negative cases, the descriptions are as a rejection of examples set by a colleague or as a negative role model.
The relationships between mentors and mentees, when they are enriching, may endure for long periods of time. Professor B. describes his experiences of a relationship that was framed from the beginning as a mentor/mentee:

> When I joined this department I co-supervised quite a lot with this guy who's my mentor or who I had as my mentor who's still a good colleague of mine who's supervised a lot with 30 or 40 students. So we co-supervised a lot and that was much more about me helping him but I think I also learned a lot about supervision…
> So co-supervision, there was really compatible points of view from the student's point of view but a lot of it was also about learning how to supervise for me (Professor B.).

The explicit framing of the mentor relationship appears to facilitate self-regulation by clarifying the power relationship. Dr H.'s experience as a mentee was also very successful. He explains:

> there is actually a dual thing of co-supervision but also supervisory mentoring…so that we're both there to support the student but equally the supervisor, the more experienced supervisor, was there to help me enter the world of supervision as a supervisor. And that meant we had some conversations about our relationship with each other and that was framing it as a pedagogic one. I thought that was helpful. It gave it a purpose. It wasn't what kind of what kind of person are you, or how do you supervise because the answer is always it depends on the student and depends what's going on with the student. So I think that initially that explicit framing of a kind of asymmetry was very helpful because it was there anyway (Dr H.).

Explicitly framing the relationship as a pedagogic one clarifies the power asymmetry and gives it purpose by distancing personal aspects. However, not all primary supervisors are supportive of the co-supervisor. Professor A. describes one of his experiences:

> He was a professor and he was the most dishonest, incompetent academic I've ever had the misfortune of having anything to do with and at the same time he was a [brown nose]. He would suck up to you effectively (Professor A.).

The professor's lack of professional and ethical behaviour is clearly rejected and casts the relationship as exploitative (MacFarlane 2017). As a role model this exemplar is categorically rejected and there is no suggestion of mentorship occurring.

Professor A., an academic of more than 40 years' experience, whose current role includes training novice supervisors, is critical of current training. He states:

> Principal supervisors [it is] generally assumed [are] meant to have a sort of mentoring role with junior colleagues. We don't give them any guidelines, or any support in terms of what's involved in mentoring. I don't want to sound like I'm bashing the professors here. We are being unfair to them. We're setting up expectations but the expectations aren't even articulated. And then the support of how we meet those expectations in a negotiated non-conflict sort of way. It's simply not there (Professor A.).

Professor A. identifies the shortcoming in training for the mentor/mentee relationship, and the lack of clarity of the expectations. This contrasts with Dr H.'s experience where the relationship in co-supervision was explicitly framed as mentorship. In his experience, the expectations were articulated and documented as part of the commencement procedures. Through university policy it would be desirable to clarify this aspect of the principal supervisor's role as a mentor to ensure greater consistency across the sector.

First and second aspects combined

Collaborative team contexts provide an opportunity for all team members to learn about supervision from each other. Ideally supervision is discussed explicitly, especially when the teams are being established and then revisited on a regular basis. As Dr P. explains:

> Every 2 or 3 months there's an item on the agenda called 'how is supervision going' and we all talk about it (Dr P.).

The student is explicitly included in these discussions, is able to articulate their perspective and is also able to learn about the supervisor process rather than simply being the subject of supervision. Supervisors are able to appreciate how their pedagogy of supervision is working for the student and evaluate their own performance. This increases the opportunities for critical self-reflection, self-regulation and supports self and team efficacy. Dr H. highlights the value of the learning opportunity of collaborative contexts.

> when it actually is collaborative team supervision, where there are three in the room…it adds a valuable third party presence there, which in a Vygotskian way is one of those mediating things. It works back on me, it helps me regulate myself as a supervisor and see myself and understand. It sits there in the

> pregnant pause and changes what I might say and to me it's a really valuable thing to part of [team supervision]…
> I think it avoids the reproduction of the supervisory practices [like] the one's you've had…because you immediately expand your exposure to how supervisors can do things (Dr H).

The opportunity for self-regulation is apparent as is the opportunity to increase the supervisor's repertoire of supervision pedagogies. Team members are effectively mentoring each other about supervision.

Third aspect

There are arrangements in most universities to resolve conflicts in supervision and in some universities senior academics whose roles include responsibility for mentoring colleagues when problems have become apparent. Two of the participants were well placed through their managerial roles to make informed comment. Professor D., from a Group of eight university, has such a role. He explains:

> the role I'm in I'm occasionally having to intervene or become involved in issues with the panel where there's some sort of breakdown or problem with the panel…
> [As an intervention] I'd probably get eight or ten people a year sometimes with a mentor outside the supervisory structure (Prof D.).

Once intervention becomes necessary, support is usually confidential and according to Professor D. 'we don't actually record how often that's used'. Intervention as a form of mentoring is for an individual, rather than the team. The causes of problems are varied, but according to Professor A. arise from inadequate preparation at the establishment of the supervisory team.

> often there is so little interaction between the supervisors at the beginning of the project. And so no clarification as to what the respective roles might be or even whether they meet with the student as a team or as a pair or whether singly. Those sort of things are not adequately dealt with at the beginning of the candidature and so people only become conscious of them and reflect upon them when there's a problem and there are many, many problems and a lot of our work here is mopping up where the problems occur…
> In teams there are one or two co-supervisors who are often junior members of staff, who just like a student has to negotiate that power differential with the supervisors. They have to also negotiate the same power differential with their senior colleagues and are often feeling lost and demoralised by the experience and certainly it leads to confusion on the part of the student (Prof A.).

The effects of team dysfunction are well recognised and include impacts on attrition rates and completion times for students and professional reputations for academics. Avoiding team dysfunction might be effectively addressed through better initial preparation that would include training in mentorship and more comprehensive

discussion at the outset of team engagement. There is an opportunity for universities to develop policy that clearly articulates the mentor role of primary supervisors.

Discussion and recommendations

Collaborative teams provide a context where self- regulation is apparent (Manathunga 2012a). According to Bandura (1986) the social context of collaborative supervisory teams enables the opportunity for critical self-reflection and the development of self-efficacy, which in turn supports team efficacy. These opportunities were recognised and valued by participants. However, not all teams work harmoniously and productively and problems can arise.

While collaborative teams create an ideal opportunity for mentoring about supervision, it is not safe to assume that the relationship between the supervisors is necessarily understood in this way. Mentorship is not acknowledged where the example set is believed to compromise values and the role model is rejected. As Bandura (2000) notes, role models need to be both accessible and their behaviour deemed desirable to promote efficacy. Teams where the role model is remote, disengaged, does not provide clarity or has unreasonable expectations are at risk of becoming dysfunctional, with negative impacts on team members. Sadly, comments from participants and the need for the NSW Ombudsman's Office to address the issues arising from complaints reaffirm that team supervision policies have not resolved all of the problems arising from single supervisions and may indeed have created some additional complexities, especially where the co-supervisor is a novice.

Addressing these residual issues requires a number of strategies, some of which have policy implications. A greater focus on providing training in mentorship for both mentors and mentees, noted by Kiley (2011) as a deficiency and raised by Professor A., is one such strategy. It is also clear that explicitly framing the relationship between experienced and novice supervisors as a mentorship has benefits. By formalising this aspect of the relationship, mentorship becomes part of the pedagogies of the supervision that happens alongside supervision of the student. It adds clarity to respective roles, acknowledges the power differentials and distances more personal aspects of the relationship. It works to maintain the professional framing of the relationships within the intensity of a student's candidature.

Making supervision an explicit part of the supervisory teams' on-going discussions also contributes to acknowledging the aspects of learning about supervision through practice. It is respectful of students' needs to be supported academically and emotionally through candidature by creating an inclusive environment. It acknowledges that supervisors, regardless of their level of experience, are also learning in the team context. It creates an accessible social context where critical self-reflection, judgemental processes and self-reaction lead to self and ultimately team efficacy. Where relationships are framed and conducted professionally, self-regulation is a corollary. Explicit discussions can only contribute productively to the expansion of supervisors' repertoire of skills.

Not all teams, however, are framed and conducted with such clarity. It is apparent in the findings that the explicit discussions about roles and expectations do not occur with the regularity and depth that would establish the team in such a robust manner. The Ombudsman's discussion paper (NSW Ombudsman 2016) raises the concept of mentors to teams made available through Graduate Schools. This would have policy implications for universities. Such mentors would be from outside the department or faculty and thus not part of the chain of command. The Ombudsman's proposal is directed at teams that have been identified as dysfunctional or at risk of being dysfunctional. From the brief outline of emergent patterns provided in the discussion paper, these mentors would support and monitor team progress. Clearly there are advantages for teams experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, difficulties. As an ex-officio team member who is available to any team member or indeed the whole team, issues of power are largely avoided.

The Ombudsman's Office has addressed the issues at a point where a complaint has been made. This is likely to be the tip of the iceberg, with other students and supervisors dealing with teams that do not function as productively as they might. Based on the knowledge of experienced and highly regarded supervisors in this small study, it may be more productive to have team mentors engaged with all supervisory teams in the initial stage of establishment to broach the often difficult and frequently overlooked subjects of roles, responsibilities, expectations and logistics. By ensuring clarity at the outset problems may be avoided. The team mentor would then only need to monitor from a distance unless approached by a team member.

Policies for team supervision have addressed some of the issues of risk management and timely completions as intended, but managing collaborative supervisory teams adds complexity, which in turn has created some additional tensions. The evidence from the Ombudsman's paper also reveals that complaints frequently arise when only the student and one supervisor is present, which adds weight to the argument for collaborative modes of supervision providing greater security for all parties.

Conclusion

Mentorship about supervision occurs in a number of aspects. The first of these is what a student learns about supervision in the context of their supervision during doctoral studies. Positive models are more likely to be repeated and negative ones rejected but may remain as a default unless there are opportunities to increase the repertoire for other sources. Learning from experienced colleagues as co-supervisors has become common practice, but the learning is enhanced where the relationship is clearly framed as a mentorship. Training for mentorship needs to be given greater priority in supervision training programmes provided by universities. Collaborative modes of supervision expand opportunities for learning about supervision. This works very effectively where the team regularly discusses supervision as part of the agenda. Academics are exposed to a wider range of strategies and approaches to supervision from working with colleagues. However,

teams may avoid difficulties if a team mentor was available as part of the team establishment procedures. Where mentorship becomes a fundamental part of the pedagogy of supervision and operates in all three aspects, teams are more likely to be effective.

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