

## Supervising the Modern Doctorate – a Pan-European Study (0038)

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This paper will discuss the first findings of the Erasmus+ funded project: Doctoral supervision of multi-disciplinary practice based doctorates: an appreciative inquiry into best practice in their design, development and delivery or SUPERProfDoc. The project consortium consists of key researchers from Maastricht School of Management, Middlesex University, Adapt Italy, EUROdoc and Trinity College Dublin with support from University of Central Florida as representative of [The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate](#). This pan-European Study is in its third and final year has identified best practice in the supervision of modern doctorates and is in the process of codifying it within a practice framework. One of its specific aims is to identify how such supervision can hold the tension between the freedom of enquiry of the student and their development with the needs of the other stakeholders such as the sponsoring organisation and the academy.

Doctoral degrees are no longer simply a training ground for the next generation of academics. Different forms have evolved to encompass multi- and trans-disciplinary study by practitioners within their work context (Lester 2004 (Lester 2004, Boud, Tennant 2006)). The designation has also changed to include terms such as professional, industrial or practice-based PhDs or Doctorates (Fillery-Travis, 2012) hereby identified as modern doctorates throughout the remainder of this paper. These developments are driven by the contribution to knowledge exchange these degrees make and how they facilitate innovation and growth within diverse sectors. But supervision of modern doctorates is not fully codified although it requires a number of capabilities (academic and professional) recognised as being beyond those needed for conventional PhD supervision such as advising and facilitation ((Boud & Tennant 2006)). Previous research on PhD programmes has largely focused on the competences required of candidates (Robert Costello, Nadine Waehning et al. 2014, Costley & Lester 2012) and less so on those of their supervisors (Lee 2008). These degrees fulfil a variety of purposes, ranging from knowledge exchange between industry and academia, increasingly required for advanced levels of practice within the professions; in applied research, in policy making, in management; and in many other leadership roles in society (Fillery-Travis 2014). However without effective supervision, delivery of the full benefits of these degrees to the host/sponsoring organisation (and the progression and attainment of the candidates) will be compromised.

In modern doctorates there is a broadening in the focus and context of the research from a single discipline study within academia to addressing multidisciplinary issues within the workplace itself. The corresponding shift in purpose, form, structure and context of the doctorate (Costley & Lester 2012)

poises some significant pedagogical issues that must be addressed by the supervisory team. Namely; the freedom of the candidate to choose the subject of their research; the candidate's significant expertise and knowledge of the work context and environment beyond that of their supervisors; the applied nature of the required outcomes and the needs of other stakeholders; the need for assessment standards to remain the same for all doctorate types and the focus on multi- and trans-disciplinary research.

**The supervision of such work-based research requires complex capabilities from the supervisor(s) to allow them to work with these tensions as they seek to:**

**(a) address the diverse needs of a candidate (including freedom of expression) who is operating at doctoral level within a work environment where their priorities are, in part at least, set by the needs of their organisation and work role and**

**(b) supervise the creation of knowledge recognised by the academy to be at doctoral level.**

And yet there has, to date, been little study of these needs and no commonly accepted framework of practice for supervisors to draw upon.

The project objectives are to:

- (1) Access best practice in the supervision/advising of modern doctorates:
- (2) Identify the host/sponsoring organisation's requirements from supervision (if any) and their contribution to it
- (3) Develop a framework of practice (supported by training resources) suitable for modern doctorates
- (4) Disseminate this best practice framework to all stakeholders
- (5) Produce a sustainable impact on supervisory practice throughout the EU.

The project has used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider, Whitney et al. 2008) to gather over 70 semi-structured interviews of candidates and supervisors across Europe exploring the rich stories and examples of emerging supervisory practice in the field and the challenges/dilemmas faced by stakeholders (using the Discovery and Dream Stages of AI). These have been investigated using thematic analysis (Aronson 1995) for opportunities and barriers to learning and how these have been addressed within supervisory practice. An in-depth literature review and on-line survey has provided further validation and expansion of these themes. These findings have been collated within a practice framework using the meta-model approach (Lane & Corrie 2007) (Design Stage). The resulting framework of practice is a major output of the project and will be disseminated across the EU (Destiny and Delivery Stage). The chosen methodology has proved highly appropriate for exploring practice where achieving representation in a sample would be problematic as in this emerging field.

The results illustrate the range of purposes identified for such supervision and how they differ with varying types of doctorate. The underpinning theoretical frames used within the research pedagogies is also diverse but confirm the

centrality of the supervisory relationship throughout the doctoral journey of the candidate and the impact it has on the candidate's development. A new learning paradigm for research is clearly being enacted in response to the tensions identified above. The supervisor(s) identify their role as bridging the gap between the academy and the site of research i.e. the workplace. In this presentation we will identify the framework and explore how it can provide an evidence base for supervisor development allowing the fully opportunities for co-creation of knowledge to be enacted within the modern doctorate.

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