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Title Doctoral supervision –student´s perceptions about practices and monitoring

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Part 1 Abstract: (150 word summary)

Doctoral supervision is quite important, as it involves the training of researchers at an early stage. Doctoral students must develop research skills and also autonomy, resilience, integrity, ethics, creativity, innovation and communication skills. These characteristics are recognized as doctoral students attributes (Dublin descriptor, 2004; Bergen, 2005) and should be acquired during the third cycle in higher education.

Aiming at deepening knowledge about the doctoral student supervision experience in Portugal, an exploratory survey was conducted throughout a survey of doctoral students in education enrolled in various universities across the country. The results reveal that students' perceptions about their supervisors indicate that doctoral student's autonomy and teamwork is encouraged, as well as supervisors engage with students' projects and include them in the research fields' area. Supervision practices include seminars, oral presentations, workshops and individual meetings. The results suggest that doctoral students don't use instruments to plan and monitor the doctoral research progress.

Part 2 Outline: (a maximum 1000 word paper) (not including references)

The interest about doctoral education as grown since the seventies of the twenty century (Jones, 2013) and particularly since the Bologna process, as higher education assumed a new importance in Europe. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, both the Bologna process and the European Union Lisbon strategy (2000) converged in the importance not only of an European area of higher education (considered crucial to promote innovation and knowledge) but also an European research area. Both areas are defined as two pillars of a knowledge based society (Berlin, 2003) and since doctoral education is the connection between them, it emerges has a key to innovation and development of countries.

The Dublin descriptors (2004) that were adopted in Bergen (2005), were reinforced in Salzburg (2005) with the ten principles for the third cycle. Within these principles supervision is highlighted as a crucial element for doctoral training, ensuring critical mass and the development of research skills. Being so, doctoral supervision is fundamental to promote doctoral success (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Gardner, 2007 and 2008) and to shape future researchers and academics (Halse & Malfroy, 2010; McAlpine & Amundsen 2012).

Research work has made it possible to identify three main aspects that influence the process of knowledge construction during the third cycle. The first is connected to how the supervisor handles creativity, perceives metacognition, develops communication, and proposes ideas to achieve goals (namely, knows how to select and solve problems) encouraging and stimulating students (Kam, 1997; Gatfield, 2005; Wolf 2010; Bengtsen, 2011; Heiskanen & Lonka, 2012). The second is linked to the need for mechanisms that ensure

students' progress and develop self-efficacy (Coutinho, 2007; Overall, Deane & Peterson 2011; Pyhältö, Vekkaile & Keskinen, 2012; Figueiredo, Huet & Pinheiro, 2012). The third is related to the relationship established between the supervisor and the student, which requires a socialization process and the integration and involvement of the student within a research environment, but also the supervisor availability to listen, argue and debate (Kyvik & Smeby, 1994; Heath, 2002; Denicolo, 2004; Lee, 2007 and 2008; Mainhard, van der Rijst, van Tartwijk & Wubbels, 2009; Halse, 2011; Christensen & Lund, 2014; Määttä, 2015; Olehnovica, Bolgzda & Kravale-Pauline, 2015; Hunter & Devine, 2016).

One of the challenges currently facing both universities and supervisors is related to the emergence of mature students (sometimes also called lifelong learners), part-time or hobby PhD students whose profile are different from the traditional student and who hold part-time doctorates (Salzburg, 2005, Lee, 2009, Lee & McKenzie, 2011; Gardner & Gopaul, 2012; Baptista, 2014 and 2015; Castelló, Pardo, Sala-Bubaré & Suñe-Soler, 2017). This diversity of students with different expectations, needs, concerns and interests has prompted a reflection about objectives, effectiveness and preparation that doctoral programs effectively ensure, as well as have led to the rethinking of supervision's practices (Green, 2005; Lee, 2009; Lee & Green, 2009, Halse & Malfroy, 2010; Maxwell & Smyth, 2010 and 2011, Lee & McKenzie, 2011; Gardner & Gopaul, 2012; Lafont, 2014; Baptista, 2015; Mello, Fleisher & Woehr, 2015).

Our research work focuses on how doctoral students perceive supervision. It intends to deepen knowledge about two dimensions within the doctoral supervision process: the practices and the monitoring. Following a quantitative design, an exploratory survey was conducted with doctoral students in Education enrolled in different universities in Portugal. The answers from 42 doctoral students were analysed and preliminary results and conclusions were outlined.

Students' profile

The questionnaire was distributed to 74 doctoral students attending an early educational researchers' conference and 42 of them answered it. The PhD students (n=42) were mainly enrolled in public universities (90.5%) and only 9.5% in private universities. 71.4% of the students were full time doctoral students, but 28.6% were at the partial time. 21% of the students were in the first year, 29% were in the second year, 24% were in the third year of the doctoral programme, 10% in the fourth year and 12% in fifth or more years (5% didn't answer). Concerning previous academic degrees, 4.7% specify that they already have a PhD, 71.4% refer that they have concluded a master, 7.1% refer the first-degree and 16.6% didn't answer. The survey shows not only significant age diversity among the students (from 25 to 55 years old, with an average of 38) but also a significant diversity regarding professional experience: 42.9% were non-higher education teachers, 16.6% were FCT (national science and technology foundation) grant students, 11.9% were psychologists, 11.9% were students, 4.8% were sociologists, and 11.9% had other professions.

Survey items

The survey focuses on seven issues: Contact type; Feedback type; Work environment; Supervision monitorization (mechanism and instruments); Supervision practices; Autonomy development, students'

perceptions about supervisor; supervisor engagement in the supervision process. In order to answer the questions doctoral students had to agree or disagree with positive and negative statements.

Results

The results suggest that supervisors usually meet the students individually and regularly contact them by e-mail. The students perceive the regular feedback given by supervisors as important and good. Only 29% of the students work alone while developing the doctoral research project, and 76% share the sense of belonging to a research group which indicates that they feel integrated within the research community. Typically, students do not monitor the supervision process: only 38% use a research matrix, 21% use a diary and 24% portfolio. The supervision practices comprise participation in workshops (95%), seminars (60%), oral presentations (62%) and individual meetings (81%). Supervisors promote students' autonomy, not only by encouraging them to write (93%) but also supporting research planning (86%) and management (88%). Students' perceptions about the supervisor and his engagement with their doctoral research project show that supervisors are involved in doctoral research (95%), accompany students' progress by debating the research project (90%) and consider students competent (86%). These results of the exploratory survey clearly convey the general profile of the supervisor as quite near the ideal doctoral supervisor (Baptista, 2015).

Final Remarks

The results of the exploratory study indicate that the age profile of doctoral students surveyed is similar to the one reported in previous research about doctoral students in Education (Alves & Azevedo, 2010), but in the current survey 28.5% of the PhD students do not have full-time professional activity as they are researchers in early stage (PhD students). Supervisor's availability is very well appreciated by doctoral students in both studies in contrast with the results presented by Baptista (2015) according to which mature students often refer to the lack of timely feedback and availability to schedule meetings. This contrast might have different explanations: in the one hand, it might be due to a new type of PhD student profile in Education, but on the other hand it might be a consequence of the fact that the questionnaire was distributed to students attending an early researcher's event in which they were involved following their supervisors' encouragement. Further developments of this explanatory survey aimed at a broader sample of doctoral students will enable to better understand these results.

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