

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Scholarship Production Through Online Group Supervision: Affordances and Challenges

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Research Domain: Postgraduate Scholarship and Practice (PGSP)

Abstract: The Higher Education Institution under study adopted a group supervision model for students doing research projects. Group supervision offers opportunities for collaborative learning, addressing the challenges posed by one-on-one supervision, in terms of improved peer learning and ensuring equity in delivery. It demands a specific skill set from supervisors in traditional face-to-face settings. In an emergency online environment, and compounded by an inherited unequal ecosystem, these skills and desired outcomes require an in-depth understanding of the nature of the learning continuum. The goal is to instil self-determined learning competencies for future readiness and success in a connected world. The model in this study was implemented via the learning management system two years prior to lockdown. Shortcomings in existing supervisory skills and research and digital literacy competencies in particularly from disadvantaged students. The study draws from a neo-Weberian and Universal Design for Learning approaches. using qualitative data from interviews, the paper explores the nature of group supervision for scholarship creation. It recommends key requirements for the future success towards increased scholarship and research output.

Paper:

Postgraduate students are encouraged to publish with their supervisors, thereby contributing to the institutions research and scholarship profile. Scholarship in the form of research articles, conference proceedings, dissertations and theses are collaborative efforts between supervisors, researchers, and students. In a connected world creating, and sharing scholarship are increasingly done digitally. Digital scholarship is research output housed, availed, developed, curated and maintained in open access digital collections. The quality and integrity of the scholarship hinges on the skills and competencies of both supervisors and students.

The Higher Education Institution under study adopted a group supervision model for their postgraduate students doing research projects. Implemented correctly, group supervision pedagogy offers opportunities for collaborative learning, addressing the challenges posed by one-on-one

supervision, in terms of improved peer learning and ensuring equity in delivery. It demands a specific skill set from supervisors in traditional face-to-face settings. In an emergency online environment, and compounded by an inherited unequal ecosystem, these skills and desired outcomes require an in-depth understanding of the nature of the research, supervision pedagogy, the learning continuum that will lead to increased new knowledge shared as digital scholarship.

Ideally, online supervision should guide students in a group setting to progress and build the academic and scholarly competencies required for self-directed learning, where the student actively takes responsibility for their learning and the quality of their work. The goal is to instil self-determined learning competencies that will enable the student to produce research output and scholarship. The pandemic posed restrictions on movement and demanded an immediate shift from the existing approach to a fully online mode.

Developing these skills is an ongoing process. Research literacy includes an understanding of research ethics, something that emerging researchers and students find confusing in practice. It is pivotal to conceptualise the key ethics constructs for this study to understand its nature including the connection to moral values in an online research environment in producing scholarship. To gauge the challenges of producing quality and ethical research projects in the target group, an understanding of the nature of ethics, in general, and specifically the nature of research-, information-, and digital ethics is required. Here, the Weberian approach proved valuable as Weber's explanation of ethics of convictions and responsibly laid the foundation for further discourse.

Aspects such as the difference between ethics, values and morals, digital exclusion in online teaching and research, research ethics as applied ethics, and disruptive technology need to be explained within the context of this study. The demands of pandemic conditions emphasised the importance and challenges of adhering to online research ethics.

The model reported in this study was implemented via the learning management system two years prior to lockdown. Completed research projects, dissertations and theses are submitted to the institutions open access online repository as digital scholarship. Subsequent lockdowns accelerated the roll-out *inter alia* to all supervisors and students as a compulsory mode of delivery. This mode change of delivery exposed shortcomings in existing supervisory skills, connectivity and technological accessibility, research and digital literacy competencies and inclusivity challenges faced by all students, but more particularly to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through a conceptual framework, drawing from theorists such as the models of strength-based model for supervision; neo-Weberian by Max Weber; and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by Vygotsky. The study illustrates that the pandemic posed significant challenges on the demands for research output and scholarship production and management.

Established on qualitative data from interviews with supervisors, substantiated by documentary data, the paper explores the nature and transition of supervision pedagogy in an emergency remote ecosystem, to achieving self-directed competencies using online collaborative learning. The paper recommends key requirements for the future success of group supervision on the learning continuum, in developing independent emerging researchers with metaliteracy competencies such as academic and research literacies to contribute to digital scholarship and the sharing of new knowledge.

The study reports on the perceived ability to produce overall ethical and quality research and scholarship. Students were confronted with shifting research online and gather credible and trustworthy data remotely, using available online platforms. The focus was on how digital exclusion, as observed and experienced by postgraduate supervisors, affected research ethics, quality, and trust.

Questions that begged further investigation included how support of postgraduate students could be ensured? Similarly, the HEI had to ensure that quality scholarship and research output resulted under trying circumstances. The value of the study lies in the contribution to an under-researched area, offering best practice guidelines resulting from the findings.

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