

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Affordances in Online Professional Development of Doctoral Supervisors: A Case Study of a Multi-Campus, Large-Scale, Cross-Disciplinary Course

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Abstract: In the last decade, the increase of doctoral students, internationalisation and professionalisation of doctoral supervision, coupled with the recent pandemic, have challenged traditional models of professional supervisor development. Our case study is a large-scale, professional supervisor development course in a university with multiple, distributed, distant campuses and different disciplines, which has now developed, extended, and moved online. In addressing the following research question: *What are the specific affordances of technology for collaborative learning in online professional development of doctoral supervisors?* we draw on systematic evaluations and group interviews with supervisors, revealing the specific affordances of technology (Jeong & Hmelo-Silver 2016). The findings reveal an important complexity in the online design and essential organizational development in which the facilitation of activities and communities between the supervisors and the faculty leaders are crucial for collaboration, ownership and supervisors' development.

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The demographic situation in the Arctic led to the development of an online multi-campus, large-scale, cross-disciplinary course in research supervision, aiming to enable professional development for research supervisors dispersed across large distances. [Professional development programmes for research supervisors](#) have grown since the 1980s (Brew and Peseta 2002, Hammond et.al 2010, Kandlbinder and Peseta 2000, Kiley 2011, Lee et.al. 2010, McCormack and Pamphilon 2004, Metcalfe

et.al 2002), however there is a dearth of *research* on them beyond evaluative descriptive work, and a distinct gap in the literature of doctoral supervision concerning experiences, practices, and challenges in large-scale online doctoral supervision programmes, particularly as further developed in response to challenges and affordances of technology, during the pandemic (2020-). Most postgraduate supervisor development courses are still ad hoc workshops or series designed to deal with start-up supervision. The main supervisory development programmes models range from emphasising training and instruction to narrative storytelling and sharing (McCormack and Pamphilon 2004). Some programmes are workshop-orientated, some mixed mode and since the pandemic, some have gone online (Gray and Crosta 2020; Taylor et al. 2021), addressing formalities of VLEs, overcoming difficulties and more specific affordances of zoom or teams' processes making communication available between supervisor(s) and student (s) . Other research addresses impact on dynamics of supervisor–supervisee relationships that should provide appropriate environments for supervisees' learning and ethical decision-making (Löfström & Pyhältö, 2012), and alternative engagement strategies (Carpenter, 2012; Nasiri & Mafakheri, 2014).

There is clear need for research on large–scale, remote/online professional development of supervisors across campuses and disciplines, the starting point of this case study . We focus on a course addressing professional development of doctoral supervisors at ten distanced campuses in a Norwegian multi-campus university, using an online environment. The course began following university board decisions that all supervisors (600+ main supervisors, more co-supervisors) should undertake a mandatory course in professional development for research supervision. Our research paper explores ways this large-scale, innovative, distributed model is developing, with a special focus on the affordances of technology to achieve underpinning aims of collaborative cross-disciplinary professional learning for all doctoral supervisors.

Here, we draw on documents, observations, group interviews with supervisors, and systematic evaluations focusing on the specific affordances of technology for collaborative learning in online professional development of doctoral supervisors .At the same time, the authors emphasize that sharing is of little value if it is not "used" and given meaning in the learning process. The procedures and activities included in the collaboration should contribute to engagement, a productive process, varied instructional strategies and various forms of support - and that the technology's' potentials »are utilized. We use Jeong & Hmelo-Silver (2016) 's theoretical framework of potential affordances of technology concerned with identifying needs and challenges highlighting context-specific aspects of the learning environment and how asynchronous collaboration can allow more flexible communication and reflection; how resource and experience sharing can enable learning and problem-solving. Based on a systematic review of studies on collaborative learning, Jeong & Hmelo-Silvers' (2016) framework points to seven potential affordances where the use of technology can support collaborative learning:They indicate seven steps which we see underpinning this successful postgraduate supervision programme :

1. Establishing a joint task
2. Communication
3. Sharing resources
4. Engaging in Productive Processes

5. Engaging in co-construction

6. Monitoring and regulation

7. Finding and building groups and communities

Our findings reveal a complexity of aspects linked to the online design in which the facilitation of activities and communities between supervisors and faculty leaders are crucial for supervisors' development, collaboration, and ownership. We highlight distinct challenges and rich affordances for higher education institutions when developing online courses for multidisciplinary groups of supervisors, especially in large numbers, over distances, where collegial working is seen as a valued outcome.

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