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EXPLORING DOCTORAL SUPERVISION IN LAW EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES IN TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This paper explores the pedagogical practices employed in supervising law PhD students within law schools. The study adopts an auto-ethnographic approach to investigate the beliefs of both supervisors and students regarding teaching, learning, research and supervision.

Methodology - An overarching auto-ethnographic method was used to examine the perspectives of students and supervisors on teaching, learning, research and supervision. Data collection spanned eight months and followed a multi-step process. The first set of data was obtained through a focus group comprising five supervisors from the Business and Law Faculty. The second set of data involved naturalistic observations of three supervisory meetings per supervisor and their respective students. The final set of data was collected through the observation of five student annual progression panel proceedings, focusing on the same five students whose supervisory sessions were previously observed.

Findings - The observations revealed five distinct pedagogical approaches to teaching within the supervisory context. Additionally, participants' beliefs were found to be interconnected, allowing for the identification of orientations. Participants aligned with a particular orientation exhibited a unique set of beliefs. It was noted that a supervisor's choice of orientation influences the overall pedagogical approach adopted during supervision. Each orientation incorporated an element of teaching, highlighting the integral role of teaching within supervisory practices.

Significance - The findings have significant implications for faculty professional development, particularly for staff involved in doctoral supervision. They provide insights into the dynamics of student learning during interactions between staff and students throughout the doctoral journey. These

insights can inform future supervision training programmes, offering valuable guidance to novice supervisors and enhancing the overall doctoral supervision experience.

Keywords: Pedagogy, PhD supervision, auto-ethnographic study, law doctoral supervision.

INTRODUCTION

There is an ever-expanding corpus of literature on various aspects of research supervision, including supervisors' perspectives on the doctoral journey (Bastalich, 2017; Brew & Peseta, 2009; Khan & Mikuska, 2023; Lo, 2022; Ridgway, 2022). More specifically studies have analysed supervisor's perceptions of their roles as supervisors, the pedagogical approaches they adopt and the potential impact of these choices on student attrition and retention (Loxely & Kearns, 2018; Khosa et al., 2020). Doctoral programmes are continually evolving to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders, including students, supervisors, policymakers, higher education institutions and the labour market. In response to these demands, the literature provides valuable discussions on the purpose, structure, supervision and pedagogy of doctoral education. Each of these factors requires innovative approaches to ensure the qualification remains purposeful and of high quality (Vehvilainen & Lofstrom, 2016).

This paper builds on the foundational work of Burns et al. (1999) and the subsequent advancements by Franke and Arvidsson (2011), which explore the different ways supervisors and students experience supervision. The beliefs held by both supervisors and students regarding supervision in law education have been examined, with the expectation that these beliefs may vary significantly. Some individuals within the study may hold similar or 'cognate' beliefs, which can be linked via a network of beliefs, forming an orientation. The literature suggests that beliefs about research, teaching and learning are often intertwined with beliefs about supervision (Green & Lee, 1999; Murphy et al., 2007). Scholars such as Connell and Manathunga (2012) and Wichmann-Hansen et al. (2015) view supervision as a form of teaching, whereas Smith (2001) frames supervision as a form of pedagogy. Recent literature on pedagogy emphasises 'networks of learning relationships,' 'learning activities,' and the 'experienced environment,' where students are positioned 'at the centre of a constellation of others' (Bastalich, 2017).

A previous auto-ethnographic study has focused on the doctoral student's experience of submitting writing and receiving feedback (Wei et al., 2019). However, this auto-ethnographic study is novel as it addresses a gap in the literature by investigating the beliefs of both supervisors and students about teaching, learning and research within the context of doctoral supervision in legal education. The research aim is to investigate whether doctoral supervision in legal education constitutes a form of teaching. The study's objectives are threefold: first, to investigate the pedagogical practices and orientations employed during this process; second, to explore whether novel pedagogies can be developed based on the experiences of current PhD students and supervisors in law; and third, to investigate whether law, as a distinct discipline, requires distinct pedagogical approaches due to its specific use of research methodologies The author is not aware of any auto-ethnographic studies that have explored this topic.

The study of law is distinct from other disciplines because the '*doctrinal*' or *black letter law* method is predominately employed in legal research. This approach while highly valuable in common law jurisdictions, can be difficult for researchers from other disciplines to fully appreciate. It involves the synthesis and analysis of cases, national and international legislation, government reports, and scholarly contributions. In addition, legal researchers may employ the 'law and policy' approach, which

recognises that 'law as a social system is cognitively open but normatively closed' (Arup, 2008, p. 38). This perspective interprets external societal influences through the law's internal frameworks, particularly its moral claims and notions of fairness and justice. In addition, many legal scholars test their research to determine how the law can serve a social purpose (Fisher et al., 2009). They examine the law as an economic or social phenomenon, paying close attention to its peculiarities. Hence, the socio-legal research approach aligns well with legal research, as it allows for qualitative methods such as documentary analysis combined with interviews to identify correlations and causations.

Given the diversity present within the various legal research approaches utilised by legal scholars, it is inevitable that their previous training in or preference for a particular approach while carrying out their own research will impact their beliefs on research and, ultimately, their supervision. It is assumed that similar beliefs about research supervision will be regarded as 'orientations' to a particular style of supervision, with each participant's beliefs about teaching, learning, research and supervision being interconnected through intricate networks. The theme of the individual's orientation is influenced by the teaching pedagogy rather than the nature of the research project.

This study will highlight that each 'orientation' can be viewed as a distinct pedagogical practice containing elements of teaching provided by the supervisor. Subsequently, this will intertwine teaching and pedagogy within the context of research supervision. The study aims to gain an understanding of the existing body of knowledge on research supervision by focusing on direct supervisor interactions with students. The findings may then provide insights into the characteristics of student learning within these interactions, subsequently adding to the areas to be explored in future supervision training. This could be particularly beneficial to novice supervisors, who can "take benefit from support in exploring approaches to supervision, facing challenges and adapting pedagogies" (Vereijken et al., 2018, p. 523).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The supervisory relationship; models and pedagogies

Connell and Manathunga (2012) contend that "supervising a research higher degree is the most advanced level of teaching in our education system" (2012, p. 5). They insisted that "it is certainly one of the most complex and problematic forms of teaching" (2012, p. 5). Yet "this complexity is not often enough acknowledged" (p. 5). They contended that many academics "don't see supervision as teaching" (2012, p. 5), or at least not as teaching in the conventional sense. Connell and Manathunga (2012) maintained that this perspective subsequently impacts the effectiveness and value of postgraduate supervision.

However, key developments within the literature have highlighted that, alongside teaching strategies, developing the pedagogical aspects of doctoral supervision is essential to ensure successful and timely completion (Akerlind & McAlpine, 2017). Furthermore, when research supervision is conceptualised as a teaching activity, students can be acknowledged as learners who are continuously developing their capabilities as they gain feedback (Harwood & Petric, 2018). The discussion within the literature on research supervision has evolved to provide insights into delivery, purpose and structure. However, there remains a limited focus on the development of pedagogy, particularly the need to address the pedagogical requirements of doctoral candidates (Fillery-Travis & Robinson, 2018).

At the university level, pedagogy is often 'taken as coterminous with teaching, merely describing a central activity in an education system' (Fillery-Travis & Robinson, 2018, p. 842). More recent studies define pedagogy as encompassing educators' perceptions, philosophies, and viewpoints about their teaching practices (Sandri, 2020). These discussions highlight gaps in the literature and provoke reflection on questions such as: What constitutes teaching in research supervision within higher education? What does it look like? How do we differentiate between good and poor teaching? Is teaching part of pedagogy, or are they distinct concepts? Is teaching a method deployed within research supervision, with pedagogy forming part of that method? Alternatively, do teaching and pedagogy coexist in mutual harmony?

More generally, pedagogy encapsulates a coherent framework that must be understood to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between postgraduate supervision and learning (Adkins, 2009). Pedagogical scholarship requires the academic community to acknowledge its role within the broader academic and pedagogical environment. Given the multi-level nature of academia, where various levels interact, supervision cannot be conceptualised via a single aspect. Rather, analysis must focus on how these levels interact (Holdsworth & Hegarty, 2015).

Traditional pedagogical scholarship has also explored the principles of andragogical learning (Murphy et al., 2007; Agricola et al., 2020). Andragogical principles emphasise adult learners directing their own learning, reflecting on their experiences and gaining new insights independently. These principles have implications for doctoral supervision, by shifting the focus from teaching to facilitating the learning process. In this context, the supervisor's role is to support and guide rather than concentrate on the production of a final research output. This raises further questions: Is research supervision predominantly a form of adult learning? Does it require a re-evaluation of teaching techniques and enhancement of pedagogical approaches?

The academic literature draws attention to key themes relating to doctoral supervision models and pedagogies. Scholars such as Green and Lee (1995) adopt a theoretical stance to evaluate supervisory practice, arguing that the development of pedagogy within supervisory practice remains underexplored. In contrast, Smith (2001) employed an empirical methodology to investigate whether supervision can be considered a form of pedagogy that evolves based on the candidates being supervised. Over a six-month period, Smith (2001) analysed his meetings with two research students, focusing on specific variables such as knowledge, confidence and the balance of power between candidate and supervisor. His findings confirmed the effectiveness of adopting distinct pedagogical approaches tailored to each student's needs. Burns et al. (1999), however, deployed a multi-dimensional approach by evaluating data collected from both students and supervisors. This study identified three primary supervisory approaches. First, the thesis-oriented approach, where both supervisor and student perceive supervision as a technical process aimed at efficiently completing a thesis. Second, the professionally-oriented approach, in which supervision serves as a means of inducting students into academia. Finally, the person-oriented approach emphasises a supportive and student-focused dynamics. These approaches align with Akerlind and McAlpine's (2017) discussion, which suggests that supervisors often operate with certain purposes in mind when guiding PhD candidates. These purposes include fostering innovation, self-sufficiency, and contributions to new knowledge. There are two overarching variations in purpose: the process of achieving the doctorate and the product of completing the thesis. Supervisors may adjust their pedagogical practices to align with these goals, ensuring that their preferred outcomes are achieved within the context of the doctoral supervision.

Another key theme in the literature on doctoral scholarship is that research skills can be learnt, with students modelling their supervisors' techniques to produce high-quality work. The job essentially involves passing on expertise, but students also need to be provided opportunities to master academic behaviours (Guerin et al., 2015). Building on Connell and Manathunga's (2012) contention that doctoral supervision constitutes a form of teaching, Firth and Martens (2008) argued that doctoral supervision is not only a specialised branch of teaching, but also one that requires its own institutional roles and responsibilities. From a pedagogical perspective, McCallin and Nayar (2011) asserted that students need to be taught techniques and methods essential for conducting productive research. This includes skills such as performing data analysis, conducting effective literature reviews, drafting research proposals and developing project management skills. This view aligns with the concept that students perform better when they receive structured instruction (Dixon & Hanks, 2010). Dixon and Hanks (2010) examined supervision as a teaching activity and proposed cognitive apprenticeship strategies that require supervisors modelling research tasks for the benefit of their students (Dixon and Hanks, 2010). Manathunga (2009) further argued that developing supervision pedagogy can lead to improved success rates and outcomes. However, much depends on whether the supervision pedagogy takes into account both the structure and the process of supervision. The 'hands-on' mode of supervision represents a structured approach in which the supervisor directs the project. In contrast, the 'hands-off' mode allows the student greater independence in managing the project (Manathunga, 2009).

Lee (2008) proposed a framework, that combines the various modes of supervision and pedagogy to foster a productive learning partnership between the supervisor and the candidate, ultimately facilitating the completion of doctoral work. Her model of supervision incorporates elements of project management, enculturation within the academic community, and the development of critical thinking. The framework outlines three models of supervision: traditional, group and mixed (Lee, 2008). The traditional model emphasises students as structured, self-directing and independent researchers. In this approach, students typically meet with their supervisors to discuss progress, while supervisors provide mentoring and coaching. The disadvantage of this model is the potential lack of interaction between the student with other students and faculty members. This isolation may hinder the student's ability to contribute meaningfully to the knowledge economy (Walker, 2010). To address this limitation, Wisker et al. (2007) highlighted the benefits of group supervision which fosters cohort interaction and collective learning. The group model promotes intellectual independence through activities such as writing groups, workshops and networking events organised within Research Schools. These forums complement individual supervisory sessions (Aitchison & Lee, 2010). Research suggests that the group model of supervision enhances the overall supervisory experience for students (Buttery et al., 2005; Adams, 2019).

The final model of doctoral supervision utilises a blended learning approach, integrating elements from the traditional and group supervision models. This approach incorporates new technologies such as online programmes, virtual classrooms and teleconferences alongside face-to-face learning. The adoption of these technologies has been accelerated by the Covid -19 pandemic, which necessitated emergency e-learning measures for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to mitigate community transmission risks (Ashour et al., 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Murphy, 2020). Mewburn et al. (2021) claim that this type of supervision not only strengthens the relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors but also fosters a sense of community among geographically dispersed participants. As funding constraints in doctoral studies increasingly impact completion times, this model offers a potential solution. McCallin and Nayar (2011) propose that the mixed model of supervision supports timely completions by enabling students to maintain strong connections with their supervisors while accessing multiple support systems. However, McCallin and Nayar (2011) also reiterate the

importance of formalised training for supervisors to remain equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to assist students effectively and ensure timely completions.

Recognising the importance of the three models advanced by Lee (2008), it is argued that a mixed model of supervision could address the primary inadequacies associated with the traditional/hierarchical model of supervision. The first limitation of hierarchical supervision is the inability of a single supervisor to fully meet the emotional, physical and research-related needs of a doctoral student (Harrison & Grant, 2015). Previous studies have highlighted that both supervisors and students report positive learning experiences when students engage in extra-supervisory activities, such as presenting their work, observing peers, networking and reflecting with others (Harrison & Grant, 2015). Secondly, an overreliance on the hierarchical model risks leaving students less able to acquire well-rounded skills upon graduation. It is unlikely that relying solely on 'one or two' individuals for guidance can adequately prepare students for life beyond completing their doctorate. Finally, utilising a mixed model of supervision may facilitate more open communication from students regarding negative experiences. Previous studies have identified challenges in obtaining candid student accounts of their adverse supervisory experiences, which may stem from the power dynamics inherent in hierarchical relationships between supervisors and students (Harrison & Dwyer, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Context

This study was conducted within the Law Department of an English metropolitan university. While specific to this context, its findings may contribute more broadly to research supervision practices. Ethics approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects. Data collection on the university campus spanned eight months and included several steps: (i) A focus group with supervisors, (ii) Observations of supervisory meetings between supervisors and their students, and (iii) Observations of five annual student progress review panels.

The study adopted an auto-ethnographic approach to capture the actual supervisory experiences and methods of both students and supervisors. This approach stems from the perception that knowledge is constructed from the experiences and actions of participants. Auto-ethnography was chosen because it utilises personal experiences to comprehend cultural experiences (Jones, 2005; Anderson, 2006). Scholars advocate auto-ethnography because it introduces new ways of 'thinking and feeling,' enabling researchers to make sense of themselves and their surroundings (Adams, 2008; Hernandez et al., 2010). This aligns with a relativist ontological perspective, acknowledging the existence of multiple realities (Craswell, 2007). The researcher aimed to utilise auto-ethnography to develop insights grounded in personal experience. In higher education research, personal experiences often influence research processes, influenced by factors such as institutional requirements, funding and individual preferences (Fine, 1993). Auto-ethnographic research design accommodates subjectivity, acknowledging that researchers inevitably influence their studies. This is applicable in this study as the researcher is an active doctoral supervisor within the department. Hence, by acknowledging these influences, the study embraces transparency rather than disregard the interplay between personal and professional dimensions (Spry, 2001; Tomaselli et al., 2008; Clegg & Stevenson, 2013).

Participants

Focus Groups

Data for this study was obtained through observations and a focus group conducted on the university campus. This approach ensured that the focus was 'not on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in' (Henderson., 2018, p. 407). The focus group was made up of five mid-career supervisors (with more than five years of post-doctoral research experience) who volunteered to participate following an email invitation sent to the Business and Law Faculty. Supervisors from the Business School were included in the sample as they participated in law students' annual progression panels for other students of the faculty and acted as co-supervisors for law students. This interdisciplinary supervisory team was deemed useful for students researching legal implications in interdisciplinary topic areas such as corporate social responsibility and business ethics. All five supervisors served as lead supervisors for the five students observed during their annual student progression panels (described later) and individual supervisory meetings.

The focus group discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes and centred on supervisors' perceptions of teaching, learning, research and supervision. The discussion was initiated with open-ended questions, such as: Can you share your perceptions of the supervisory relationship? What are your perceptions of yourself as a supervisor; including the effects of your role, the use of pedagogy, and the conditions for successful supervision? The supervisors were further probed to determine their beliefs about supervision. The questions aimed to determine whether their personal experiences as doctoral students influenced their perceptions of supervision as a form of teaching. This aligns with scholarly assertions that supervisors' understanding of supervision is often determined by their own PhD experiences (Lee, 2007). Typical questions included: Do you perceive doctoral supervision as a form of teaching? If so, do you actively teach your supervisees? Is your supervisory approach influenced by your own PhD journey? Does your preferred research approach impact your supervisory role? Please explain. The final set of questions explored the links between supervisors' beliefs and their practices. These questions looked at the supervisors' expectations of their students and the methods they employed to assist students in meeting those expectations, particularly in terms of teaching. Examples of such questions included: If you consider doctoral supervision to involve teaching, where does this teaching occur within the supervision process? Can you provide practical pedagogical examples to illustrate this teaching?

Written Auto-Ethnography

The second set of data was collected through naturalistic observations of 15 supervisory meetings between supervisors and their students. Each student-supervisor pair participated in three observed sessions, with each supervisory session occurring approximately eight weeks apart. Each session ranged from 15 to 45 minutes. All five students consented to the observations and were selected as they were scheduled by the department to participate in the student annual progression panels at the end of the academic year.

The researcher obtained the final set of data by observing the student annual progression panels for each one of the five students, ensuring that the sample included one student per supervisor. Of these students, two (supervised by A and D) were in their first year of the PhD programme, while the remaining three (supervised by B, C and E) were in their second year. The annual student progression panels were conducted within the Law School and adhered to university regulations. The panels assessed each

student's performance and progress. If a student's progress was deemed satisfactory, the panel recommended their transfer to the PhD programme. Conversely, students who did not meet the required standards received specific recommendations, with the possibility of being awarded an MPhil degree in more severe cases.

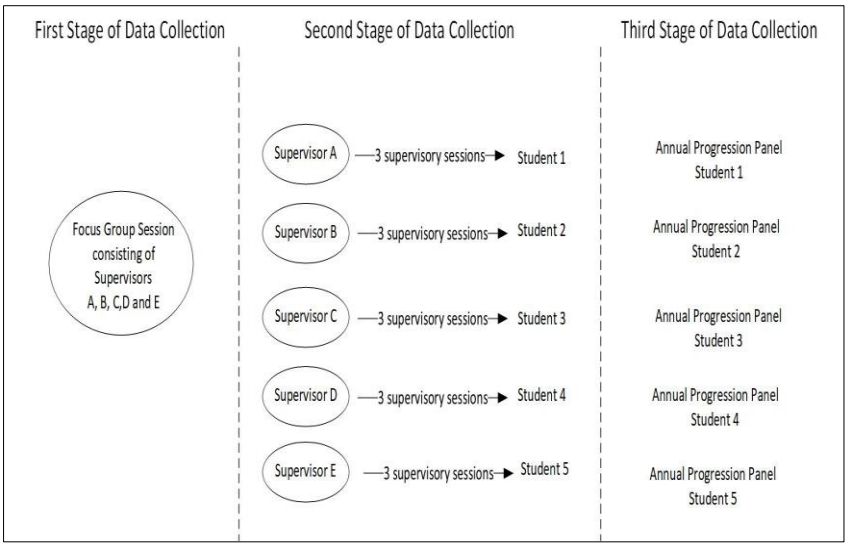
The primary purpose of observing the annual progression panels was to gain insights into the progress of both the supervisee and the doctoral project. The researcher assumed that consistent progress, as evidenced by positive panel outcomes, indicated a well-established and effective supervisory relationship between the supervisor and supervisee.

The observations conducted through an auto-ethnographic research design aimed to produce a 'thick description' of the supervisory culture (Goodall, 2008). The researcher drew on personal experiences to create an account that would promote understanding for both insiders and outsiders. These insights were derived from distinguishing cultural experiences (repeated feelings and stories), field notes (documenting observations of supervisory meetings and student annual progression panels) and interviews (focus group discussions with supervisors) (Jorgenson, 2002). Recognising that researchers operate within social networks rather than in isolation, the study relied on sampling from colleagues and students within the researcher's academic environment. To balance personal perceptions and minimise personal biases, the researcher used interactive interviews with colleagues in the focus groups, fostering collaborative engagement between the researcher and participants. The emphasis in this setting was on establishing what could be learnt from these interactions, enriched by narratives and experiences shared by participants (Mey & Mruck, 2010).

During the supervisory sessions, the student annual progression panels and the focus group discussions, field notes were meticulously recorded and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, themes were identified from the raw data, while specific portions of the texts were categorised under sub-themes. In certain instances, raw data that did not align with the research objectives was excluded. Thereafter, numerous codes were refined into overarching themes, which then informed the development of specific orientations. Figure 1 illustrates the data collection procedure as follows.

Figure 1

Diagram highlighting the data collection procedure.

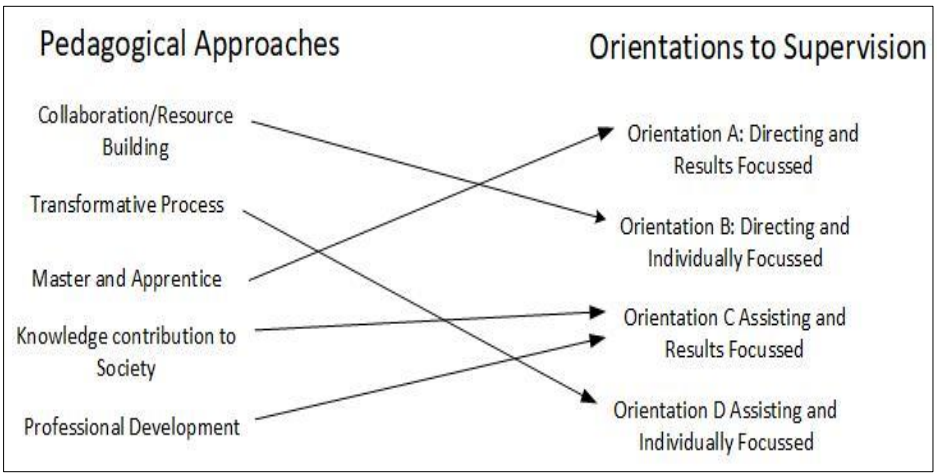


RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data derived from the auto ethnographic observations of supervisor-student sessions, student annual progression panels and the staff focus group discussions revealed distinct beliefs about supervision. These beliefs were categorised into four orientations and five pedagogical approaches. The researcher observed that there were interlinkages between certain pedagogical approaches and orientations, which highlighted the teaching elements embedded within doctoral supervision in law education. Consequently, these interconnected pedagogical approaches and orientations were analysed collectively. The following Figure 2 indicates the pedagogical approaches and orientations followed by a discussion of the data obtained supporting Boud and Lee's (2008) assertion that supervision is a form of teaching.

Figure 2

The interlinkages between pedagogical approaches and orientations to supervision



Collaboration/Resource Building: Orientation B; Directing and Individually Focused

The participants mentioned that supervision becomes visible through meaningful exchange of knowledge between the parties involved. This exchange suggests that teaching occurs as part of the supervisory cycle when both the supervisor and the student contribute to the learning process. In successful supervisory partnerships, the student is perceived as a research collaborator, actively contributing to the research community. Supervisor A specifically emphasised the collaborative nature of supervision:

> "*As you collaborate with them, new knowledge is created. They might not start at the same level of knowledge; however, as time passes, you begin to learn from them. I tend to find that, as I am supervising, at times I am expanding my own knowledge as the student grows, and the epitome of this is when the student then publishes via a research output."*

This supervisor believed that teaching methods should enable students to develop ethically, encouraging them to recognise and respect the contributions of other academics, understand their own limitations, and avoid academic dishonesty. Supervisor A's perception of supervision aligns with Clegg and Gall's (1998) description of the metaphor 'the supervisor is a resource.' Clegg and Gall's (1998) study on

doctoral supervision identified three theoretical metaphors: "The supervisor is a parent; the supervisor is a resource; the PhD is a journey" (Clegg & Gall., 1998, p. 326).

In accordance with the metaphor 'the supervisor is a resource,' the supervisor is seen as a 'sounding board' providing feedback, evaluating the student's ideas and fostering a strong collaborative relationship. The term 'sounding board' is often used interchangeably with 'resource,' highlighting the collaborative aspect of this supervisory role rather than a one-sided transfer of knowledge.

Observations revealed that participants who perceived supervision as a collaborative relationship most closely aligned with the 'directing and individually focused' orientation. Within this framework, supervisors prioritised individual professional development and saw their role as providing project direction and academic expertise. Supervisory outcomes were expected to include original contributions that benefit the wider academic and professional community. Teaching beliefs within this orientation tended to be prescriptive, with learning outcomes assessed by evaluating the accumulation of knowledge. Both Supervisors A and D appeared to embody this orientation. Supervisor D, in particular, encouraged input from students and employed Lee's 'enculturating' techniques (Lee, 2018, p. 883). These techniques involved prompting students to reflect on their past experiences and the knowledge they had gained from academia or industry. Similarly, Supervisor A frequently provided feedback and critique, fostering students' engagement with philosophical rigour and strengthening their academic arguments.

Student 1 reflected on the benefits of this approach stating:

> *"I have been encouraged within these meetings to reflect on my learning so far and apply it in the context of my current work. As I progress in my thesis, I find myself growing in confidence."*

Student 4 shared a similar sentiment, describing the meetings as an informal platform for idea exchange:

> *"For me, this meeting is an informal channel to share my ideas."*

The collaborative pedagogical approach observed in doctoral supervision within law aligns with previous studies on the use of experiential law pedagogy, which emphasise the development of critical skills such as critical analysis, communication and collaboration (McWilliam et al., 2018). This is supported by Student 4, who remarked:

> "*Debriefing meetings such as this particular one allows me to discuss collaboratively with my supervisor how legal policy can develop. However, I acknowledge that these discussions are only useful if I have done my background tasks, which include studying literature and research design*."

Transformative Process: Orientation D; Assisting and Individually Focused

Participants identified the PhD supervisory cycle as a mechanism that promotes learning through the application of knowledge and creates opportunities for a qualitative shift in their perceptions. Student 2 reflected on this process, describing it as influencing their way of 'seeing the world.' During the current study's focus group, Supervisor B emphasised the transformative nature of the supervision process, stating that:

> *"The supervision process is one where the supervision takes the candidate on a transformative journey. At the beginning, the researcher is a novice; then at the end of the project the researcher can critically evaluate, make decisions, and transform into an expert within the field.*"

Supervisor B acknowledged the importance of students taking risks and formulating their own solutions. This perspective on supervision aligns with Clegg and Gall's (1998) metaphorical framework, which describes the PhD as a journey. They point out that these metaphors are consistent with the conceptual mappings outlined by Lakoff (1993). Teaching within the PhD supervisory process occurs by encouraging students to engage in self-initiated tasks and gradually develop autonomy. Supervisor B's approach reflects Lakoff's six mapping categories for the journey metaphor, which include:

- Long-term activities with aims and purpose are conceptualised as meaningful journeys.
- A purpose is linked to a destination.
- A means corresponds to having a path.
- Difficulties represent obstructions to motion.
- Anticipated progress is akin to a travel schedule.
- Actions are self-navigated movements.

Practical examples of Lakoff's mappings were evident in Supervisor B's supervisory sessions. For example, during observations, the supervisor was seen guiding the student through a journey in which the student had limited prior knowledge. The supervisor's guidance prepared the student to navigate independently through the milestones set for their research. Student 3 reflected:

> *"This discussion has now allowed me the opportunity to consider and possibly apply other regulatory frameworks, which I may have been afraid to explore."*

Participants highlighted that the transformative pedagogical approach could enhance the supervisory experience in law as a discipline. This approach encourages students to move beyond the traditional 'thinking like a lawyer' framework and instead seek to transform existing legal knowledge. Such an approach may face resistance from legal scholars who view their role as providing rational, objective assessments of facts. Supervisor C observed:

> *"Law students tend to be less methodologically aware than their counterparts in the social sciences. This can be problematic when it comes to the viva defence. I begin probing the theoretical presumptions of the student quite early in the project. I believe their presumptions will underpin the type of legal questions they then explore."*

Supervisor A further emphasised the limitations of the conventional 'thinking like a lawyer' approach, stating:

> "Thinking like a lawyer can at times be limited and a rather flawed 'legal' tool for research."

Developing research skills early in the careers of legal researchers is essential. For example, the UK-based Research Excellence Framework (REF) assesses the quality of research in higher education institutions, emphasising the importance of legal scholars securing external funding for research

projects. Such projects often require scholars to justify their theoretical underpinnings (Cryer at el., 2011).

Participants who recognised supervision as a transformative process identified with the 'assisting and individually focused' orientation. In this approach, teaching takes place through addressing student-led needs, with learning outcomes aimed at producing knowledge for the future. This perspective assumes that the supervisor's role is to assist the student's personal and professional development, while the student's role is to initiate research and develop as an independent thinker. From the observations, it was evident that Supervisor B aligned with this orientation. Throughout the supervisory sessions, the supervisor guided students to navigate their way to the next milestone, encouraging them to explore other options in the literature, methodologies and philosophical designs. Student 2 reflected:

> "*My supervisor has encouraged me to take risks, particularly to explore other methodologies which, at the start of the project I would have not considered. I am encouraged to initiate ideas at meetings and offer solutions."*

Master and Apprentice Relationship: Orientation A; Directing and Results-Focused

Participants acknowledged that supervisors might occasionally prefer to guide projects within niche areas closely related to their own research interests. This approach often results in a more rigid supervisory style, where teaching takes place through micro-directing the student's work to ensure desired outcomes. Supervisor C in the current study perceived the supervisory setup as a master-and-apprentice relationship, aligning with Lee's (2008) traditional supervisory model. Supervisor C stated:

> "*The supervisor is the specialist within the area and needs to share skills and expertise with the student to enable the student to become an efficient researcher. However, for this process to develop there needs to be frequent interactions between the supervisor and the student. I meet my supervisees once a week throughout the three/four years to ensure that the student has enough problems to work with. My supervisees tend to research in areas very close to my own research interests.*"

Supervisor C's approach in supervisory practice also aligns with Clegg and Gall's (1998) theoretical source metaphor that depicts 'the supervisor as a parent.' This metaphor views supervision as a parenting activity. Observations revealed that Supervisor C fostered a nurturing atmosphere while stressing the importance of timelines and deadlines. Regardless of the stage of the research journey, the supervisor consistently ensured that students adhered to the mutually planned schedule and concluded each session by assigning the next set of tasks with clear timelines.

The participants who identified supervision as a master-and-apprentice relationship also aligned with the 'directing and results-focused' orientation. They perceived supervision outcomes in a narrow scope, portraying the supervisor's dominant role as an expert providing clear directions. In contrast, the student's role was characterised as controlled, risk-free and reliant on the supervisor's approval for progress. The interaction between the supervisor and researcher followed a traditional student-teacher dynamic, with teaching beliefs based on the expectation that students complete designated tasks. Learning was positioned as the amassing of knowledge via task completion. In this study, it could be inferred that Supervisor C closely aligned with this orientation. During observations, the supervisor consistently directed students towards their next tasks and set firm deadlines. The students in response

were eager to comply with the set tasks and follow the timelines set by the supervisor. As Student 3 pointed out:

> "*My supervisor's research interests are closely aligned to my project. I find that I have clear guidance on what my next steps should be and how I should steer this project.*"

This aligns with Lee's (2018) prior research findings, which highlight supervisors adopting a functional approach that utilises project management skills to guide the thesis. The master-apprentice pedagogical approach may be particularly effective in the law discipline, especially during the initial stages of doctoral studies. Students with traditional legal backgrounds often lack exposure to various methodologies available and may be hesitant to experiment with diverse research techniques. However, legal research is increasingly incorporating methodologies from social science and qualitative research methodologies alongside the conventional doctrinal approach (Loughnan & Shackel, 2009). Focused guidance from supervisors is essential to help students explore and integrate these varied methodological approaches. For instance, Student 3 shared:

> "*By using my supervisor's preferred methodological approaches utilised in previous research papers I have managed to develop the research design for my study, whilst staying focused on my research objectives and not feeling lost or disoriented.*"

Knowledge contribution to society: Orientation C; Assisting and Results-Focused

The participants emphasised that the primary aim of a PhD in Law should be to address deficiencies within the current legal system and regulatory frameworks. As a part of the teaching process, supervisors should engage in discussions, monitoring legal developments, and propose areas for future research. Participants with this perspective aligned with the 'assisting and results-focused' orientation, which perceive the supervisory relationship as a collaborative effort aimed at contributing to society through active research and innovation. Supervisor D, a highly active researcher, highlighted the importance of supervisors maintaining robust research activities to ensure effective supervision:

> *"Through the supervisor's research activities, the student learns to identify research projects and formulate problems for future research. The supervisors' activities highlight to the student the importance of research and the role of a researcher … which is to contribute to society."*

Supervisor D's supervisory practice reflected a combination of Clegg and Gall's (1998) theoretical source metaphors. Observations revealed that the supervisor often acted as a 'sounding board,' facilitating input and fostering collaborative interactions. Additionally, the supervisor adapted their style to align with the student's internal deadlines, ranging from providing general feedback to offering more structured and intensive guidance. Student 4 remarked:

> "*These sessions provide me clarity. The initial session focused on a general discussion on the overall project. Followed by meeting two and three being more focused—we looked at some feedback from my writing*,"

The contribution-to-knowledge pedagogical approach, often applied across disciplines, aligns well with the legal field. It supports Lo's (2022) proposition that creating new knowledge requires a critical

review of existing knowledge. Reflecting on existing information allows students to challenge old assumptions and explore unresolved issues, paving the way for new insights.
Student 2 highlighted this process:

> "*I have been drafting my literature review this year, so examining legal resources has allowed me to challenge old assumptions; revise the scope of my research to aid me to produce novel concepts for this work.*"

Professional development: Orientation C; Assisting and Results-Focused

Participants acknowledged that teaching within supervision can foster a student's personal and professional development. This process often involves disciplinary enculturation and recognising intrinsic rewards. Supervisor E emphasised this by stating that, "supervision should aim to cultivate the student's professional life". The supervisor expected researchers to engage and network within the wider research community, albeit with initial guidance provided by the supervisor. According to Supervisor E, "students need to actively build a network to further their professional careers." Observations revealed that Supervisor E demonstrated various elements of source metaphors, in particular projecting the PhD as a journey and the supervisor as a resource. The supervisory approach during sessions varied, ranging from listening to the student's personal concerns to engaging in active academic discussions. In this context, the supervisor inclined towards Lee's (2008) group model of supervision.

Participants who identified the supervisory role as one of aiding professional development aligned with the 'assisting and results-focused' orientation. They viewed teaching as a mechanism to promote learning while addressing the students' needs. This approach positioned the supervisory process as largely self-initiated by the student, with the supervisor acting as a co-researcher. The candidate was expected to take the lead in research activities. Observations indicated that Supervisor E aligned with this orientation, initiating discussions but requiring students to take ownership of their projects. As Student 5 reflected:

> "*I feel ready for the upcoming progress panel because I have also been encouraged to lead the project and defend my ideas from the outset.*"

Student 1 highlighted the importance of a supportive yet independent supervisory relationship, stating:

> "*My supervisor is a guide. Throughout this year, I have been able to progress in my research with some independence. Although it's early days, I know I can come to my supervisor for in-depth discussions on the project."*

During the focus group discussions, supervisors overwhelmingly supported Guerin et al.'s (2015) assertion that their own experiences as doctorate students significantly influenced their teaching beliefs and preferred methods of supervision. Supervisor C emphasised this point by stating:

> *"As a supervisor, you need to reassure the student, to enable them to understand that they may feel they never have enough, but they are likely to be producing intense work that they will not probably produce again."*

Furthermore, Supervisor E reflected on their own supervisory experience, stating:

> "*Non-directive supervision worked for me—so as long as you are encouraging them along the journey and motivating them, then the goods will come.*"

The professional development model may positively impact supervision in the legal discipline, where increasing concerns about student employability have led to heightened vocationalism within law schools (Jones, 2017; Gregersen, 2019). Many law schools now provide pro bono legal advice to the community, enabling students to develop their legal and professional skills in preparation for employment. This opportunity may enable supervisors to supervise vocationally themed PhD projects developed and designed around the courtroom, clients, and end users. Such practically oriented PhDs not only enhance students' development as legal professionals but also encourage them to reflect on challenges within the legal market and propose innovative solutions.

The discussion reveals that participants aligned with a particular orientation shared a unique set of beliefs. It is argued that a supervisor's preference for a selected orientation significantly determines the overall pedagogical approach utilised by that supervisor or supervisory team. Each orientation incorporates an element of teaching, requiring supervisors to integrate pedagogical practices into their supervisory sessions. Observations of the interactive sessions between supervisors and students in this study suggest that supervisory teams should critically examine the extent to which their personal research paradigms influence their chosen supervisory approach. The five pedagogical approaches identified in this study highlight the unique challenges faced by law as a discipline, particularly the intellectual challenges of legal research and the dynamics of the supervisory relationship. To address these challenges, it is crucial for law departments to continue supporting future legal scholars, especially in a competitive employment market.

While the law supervisors acknowledged the teaching aspects inherent in supervision, they consistently highlighted that terms such as 'pedagogy' and 'learning' do not fit with the context of higher-degree research supervision in law. This perspective may indicate broader views of teaching and learning within legal education. The focus group discussion underscored that positioning supervision as form of teaching could prove to be a vital element of legal research education. Participants emphasised the need for creating opportunities for supervisors to articulate and adopt 'supervision as teaching' as a functional tool. Supervisor A remarked:

> *"I think that there is a tension in law schools between studying law as training for professional practice and studying it as an intellectual discipline. This distinction needs robust academic rigour. Following this, we can move on to focus on developing functional pedagogies for legal doctrinal supervision."*

The data highlights the diverse experiences of teaching within the context of doctoral supervision. Deliberating on the teaching aspects of research supervision may improve supervision in several ways. Firstly, supervisors may experience supervision as teaching in multiple forms, each leading to different learning outcomes. Their preferred supervisory approach is often determined by factors such the individual student's needs, the stage of doctoral journey, and external factors such as the student's personal circumstances. Consequently, supervisors who are well-informed about diverse supervisory approaches, are better equipped to adapt their personal style in accordance with the specific requirements of their research students. Previous studies also support the adoption of supervisory teaching styles to enhance the doctoral student experience. For example, Brew (2001) recognises research as consisting of distinct yet interconnected principles that must be understood and synthesised. This concept is aligned with analysis by Bruce and Stoodley (2013) and Guerin et al. (2015) which

conceptualises research as being a set of skills that must be acquired and applied to contribute to society. Similarly, Akerlind and McAlpine T(2017) emphasise that researchers must develop a variety of skills to meet academic requirements and subsequently create value for their communities.

To summarise, the findings highlight contrasting perspectives on doctoral supervision within legal research. Participants with 'directing' views—whether students or supervisors—perceive the supervisor as a formal overseer of the legal research process. Conversely, those with 'assisting' views perceive supervision as a collaborative effort between the supervisor and the student. Participants with 'results'-focused beliefs view supervision as task-based, while those with 'individually' focused beliefs emphasise the development of legal professionals through the supervisory process. The discussion underscores the need for a cultural paradigm shift in doctoral supervision within the legal discipline. Law schools must acknowledge the importance of positioning law as a dynamic and evolving mechanism for driving social change. Thus, perhaps it requires fostering a culture that assists in recognising this transformative potential. Additionally, the development of feedback mechanisms to enable supervisors to reevaluate and refine their supervisory practices is essential.

Although this study involved a small number of participants, the observations suggest that the beliefs expressed within each orientation are interconnected. For example, participants within the 'assisting and individually focused' orientation recognise teaching as a facilitative process where learning is self-initiated, and the supervisory outcomes centre on the student's development. Such beliefs are thematically linked, irrespective of whether they are expressed by students or supervisors. From the observations, it is evident that the participants' overall beliefs about teaching and learning were the focus of each orientation. Importantly, there is no evidence from the observations that one particular orientation should be favoured over another, as all five students demonstrated satisfactory progress during their annual progress reviews. However, consistent with Pearson and Brew's (2002) argument, where pedagogy is absent from the supervisory relationship, there is a need to encourage supervisors to reflect on and understand their own beliefs in order to enhance their practices. A potential solution is the introduction of an additional Director of Research with expertise in teaching and learning. This role would complement the formal Director of Research, providing targeted support to students and emphasising the teaching aspects of supervision.

As discussed earlier, there have been significant advancements in complementary forms of research supervision, moving deliberately away from the traditional 'thinking like a lawyer' supervisory model. These advancements emphasise skills development, social practices and the evolving role of the supervisor, incorporating pedagogically appropriate methods to share best practices (Craswell, 2007). This study highlights that teaching is an inherent element within each supervisory orientation, and that the chosen orientation by the supervisor or supervisory team determines the pedagogical practices used in supervising law-based PhDs. The author recommends combining Lee's (2008) group model of supervision with the hierarchical one-to-one model of supervision to address the emotional, physical and intellectual needs of postgraduate students (Adams, 2019; Tsaoussi, 2020). The findings suggest that there is no universally perfect model of supervision for doctoral pedagogy. Rather supervisors should be encouraged to integrate various effective practices tailored to the needs of their students and the specific requirements of their projects.

Group learning has the potential to enhance pedagogical practices in doctoral supervision within the legal discipline, enriching the overall learning experience (Lee, 2008). Group supervision, commonly used in professional doctorates such as nursing, counselling, and social work often complements other cohort-based pedagogies (Fenge, 2012). Peer learning is an essential pedagogical principle in

supporting group supervision. Boud et al. (1999, p. 413) defined peer learning as "the use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn from each other without the immediate intervention of the teacher." Peer learning fosters cooperative learning facilitated by a group supervisor or facilitator (Slavin, 1990). Peer learning can take various forms, including peer tutoring, mentoring and cooperative learning, and can be conducted online or via face-to-face (Topping, 2005; Moorhouse, 2020). The use of online forums has proven advantageous for postgraduate students with other commitments, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, when online learning was the preferred mode of education in higher education institutions (Ashour et al., 2021; Dowling & Wilson, 2017; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Peer learning is based on the model of reciprocity, where peers reflect and learn collectively. To implement this effectively, monthly sessions could be organised, allowing students to share ideas with the group and the facilitator. However, it is crucial for the facilitator or supervisor to create a supportive and inclusive environment. This ensures that all members feel safe and unthreatened within the group setting, enabling them to confront differing mindsets and differences constructively (Mullen et al., 2010, p. 181). Such a cohort-based approach provides a safe forum for students to collaboratively address challenges and develop solutions.

While group supervision offers numerous benefits, it is acknowledged that some students may not find this approach suitable. Factors such as the dominance of certain students, the pressure of comparing their progress against that of their peers can make others feel vulnerable or discouraged. In such cases, the facilitator/supervisor would need to remain vigilant about such power dynamics within the group. They must actively ensure that the environment remains inclusive for all participants, irrespective of their progress. Peer learning is only fruitful when all participants come prepared. Without adequate preparation, discussions risk becoming asymmetrical and less productive (Nordentoft et al., 2013). To address this, supervisors or facilitators could structure the collective sessions more effectively, either through online platforms or in person. This structure could include clear guidance on when to move on between topics and ensuring that every group member contributes regardless of their year of study. Expanding on Lee's (2008) mixed model of supervision, incorporating blended learning approaches could further enhance peer learning. For instance, online forums hosted by the Research School could provide a supportive space for students to receive assistance outside their supervisory team. Such platforms may be less intimidating and encourage broader participation. Extending these forums to include all faculty members could provide opportunities for interdisciplinary research and collaboration, enriching the doctoral experience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the four orientations of research supervision are inherently interconnected. Teaching in the context of doctoral supervision involves much more than merely passing on information. It encompasses discussions that facilitate the sharing of information, assisting student to engage with the research community and encouraging deep learning. Teaching can thus be identified as a mechanism for sharing. While students often require guidance, they must also cultivate initiative and self-direction. Supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring that effective learning processes is embedded within their teaching methods. Learning is seen as impactful when students demonstrate the ability to develop new concepts and ideas throughout their PhD journey. The observations in this study align with Clegg and Gall's (1998) theoretical source metaphors on supervisory practice, with supervisors occasionally displaying a mixture of these approaches. To enhance the pedagogical practices of research supervision for law PhDs, the use of alternative supervisory models, such as group supervision and mixed model

supervision, is recommended. These approaches can foster a more creative and collaborative learning environment for students.

However, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample size was relatively small and focused exclusively on the fields of Business and Law, which may have influenced the outcomes. Expanding the sample size and including participants from diverse disciplines could provide more robust findings. Additionally, while supervisors were observed, students were not engaged in focus group discussions due to logistical challenges during the data collection period. Future research could address this limitation by organising multiple focus groups, enabling students to contribute to a collective forum and enrich the findings.

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