Opening new spaces for research education

Deborah Churchman, Dianne Bills, Sharron King, Wendy Bastalich, Judy Ford, Monica Behrend

University of South Australia, South Australia, Australia

The traditional practice of ‘supervisor meeting with student’ has become a standard model for research mentoring of doctoral students. Performance-based changes in the research education environment have resulted in new expectations of supervisors who simultaneously work with increasingly diverse student groups (Pearson 1999). This has contributed to new tensions in supervisor-student relationships. Alongside an increase in the quantity, complexity and variety of academic work (Tierney 2003) there is now an increased surveillance of the traditionally ‘private’ space of supervision via a range of administrative, reporting and ‘professional development’ obligations (Manathunga 2005, 20).

Supervisors are increasingly responsible for promoting discourses of commercialisation and performativity (Holligan 2005) and for integrating practical and professional knowledge with scholarly writing. Yet the quality of supervision continues to be seen as the ‘critical factor’ for student satisfaction, research completions and attrition rates (Hasrati 2005; see for example Ives & Rowley 2005).

This forum seeks to open new ‘research territory’ (Malfroy 2005) for doctoral work, by exploring the different spaces in which research education might occur, such as audio (radio), geographical (beach walking group), social (writing groups, interdisciplinary curriculum, peer support) and virtual (online) spaces.

The exposure to multiple research communities should complement the traditional supervisor-student relationship but may equally create new complexities and tensions for doctoral students and supervisors. As students are introduced to the research paradigms, methods and experiences of others, interpretations of their research may change. What counts as expertise and who has authority can be contested. This forum will engage with these questions among others, through café conversations.

References


