Exploring Industry Supervision From A Students’ Perspective

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The supervision of Research Higher Degree (RHD) students by both academic and industry supervisors is likely to increase as the number of university-industry collaborations expand. Research students may become involved in these collaborative arrangements for a variety of reasons and, excited by their prospects, may launch into their RHD without considering how they will serve two masters and how this complex relationship will affect their RHD experience. Moreover, little research has been conducted to assess the impact of these arrangements on current RHD students’ experiences.

Industry-linked RHD projects can also be quite highly defined and at times, offer little scope for a student’s exploration of “serendipitous discoveries” (Marsh, 2006, p.63). Moreover, with many industry supervisors being driven by organisational demands, it is becoming increasingly important to explore whether these supervisors are playing an appropriate role to develop students’ independence. Additionally, the placement of industry-linked RHD students within industry locations and away from the traditional academic setting where procedures exist to manage large cohorts of RHD students may also impact upon their RHD experience and outcomes.

The experiences of students with academic and industry supervisors were, therefore, explored in a survey of 2,300 confirmed RHD students at The University of Queensland. This paper investigates differences between the two types of supervisors and indicates how students perceive they are being groomed as independent researchers.

References