

Doctoral Supervision: are we on the right track?

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Outline

- What research is being carried out in doctoral supervision, how is it done?
- Are we on the right track in Europe?
- Introducing a conceptual framework for understanding research supervision
- Can we build more bridges between researchers, managers and practitioners?

An overview of current research

Organisationally-led research (eg PRES * surveys, UK Vitae reports, QAA** documents)

Academic-initiated research:

- a) Longitudinal diary studies from student perspective (McAlpine et al) student-supervisor questionnaires (Almlov et al)
- b) Qualitative studies taken from one point in time – observation, literature reviews and interviews (from Delamont to Roed and Clarke)

* Postgraduate Research Experience Survey led by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)

**Quality Assurance Agency – a UK based government body

Contrasting approaches from some of the literature

- **Functional/Technical-rational model** (Acker in Wisker 2005, Eley and Jennings 2005, Taylor and Beasley 2005)
- **Metaphors: apprenticeship, mentoring, master-slave** (Grant 2005, 2008, Pearson & Kayrooz 2004, Brew 2001)
- **Qualities approach** (Wisker 2003a, Zuber Skerrit & Roche 2004)
- **Communities of practice, Enculturation** (Lave and Wenger 1991, Pearson & Brew 2002)
- **Micro and macro environments, 'nests of influence'** (Lovitts 2008, McAlpine and Norton 2006)
- **Feminist objective 'fully integrated self'** (Firth and Martens 2008, Leonard 2001)
- **Research vs Pedagogy continuum;** (Green and Powell 2005: 153,)
- **Matrices** (Gatfield 2005, Murphy et al 2008, Deuchar 2008, Hopkins 2013)
- **techne, scholarly expertise, habits of the mind, contextual expertise, learning alliance,** Halse and Malfroy 2010

Nested contexts influencing retention and completion

(McAlpine and Norton 2008)

Societal – supra-societal context

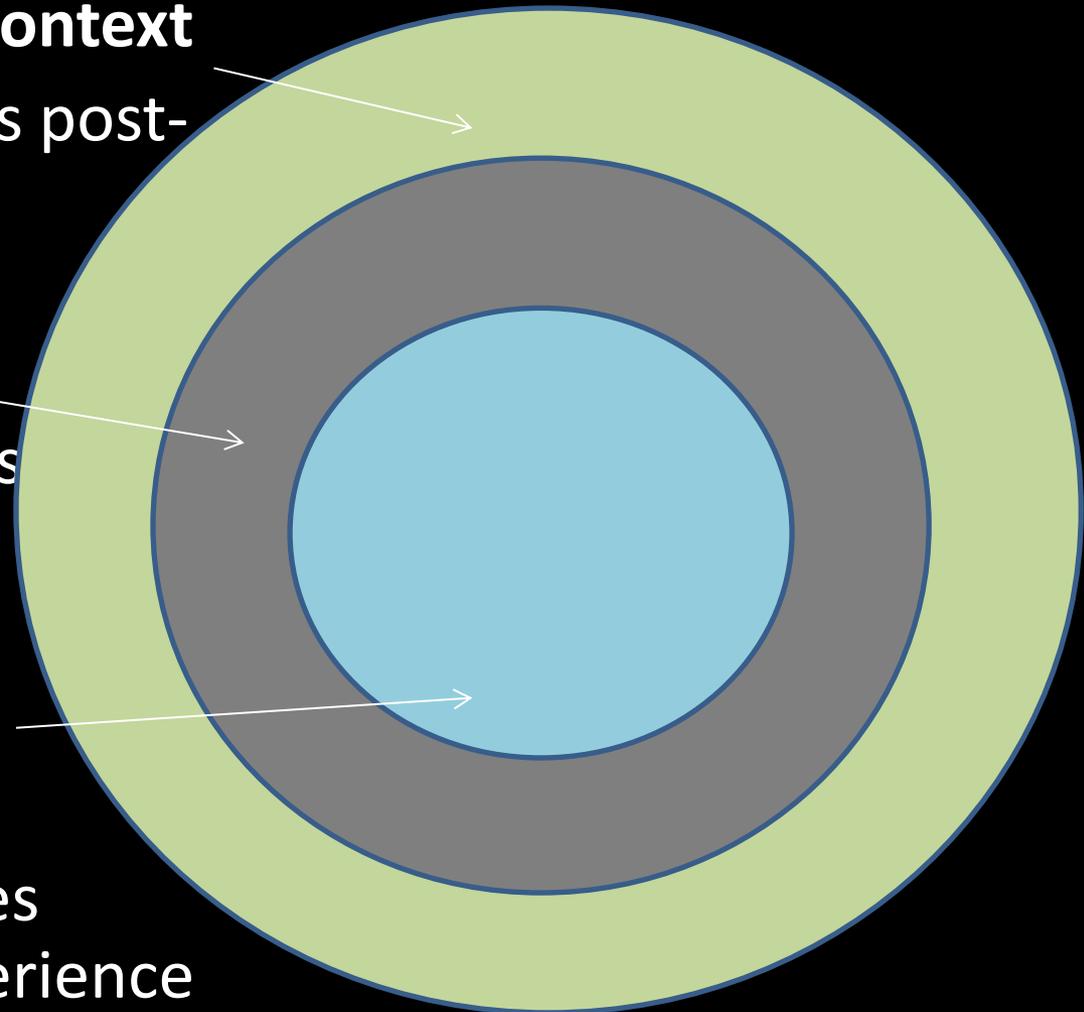
- constrains and enhances post-secondary policies and practices

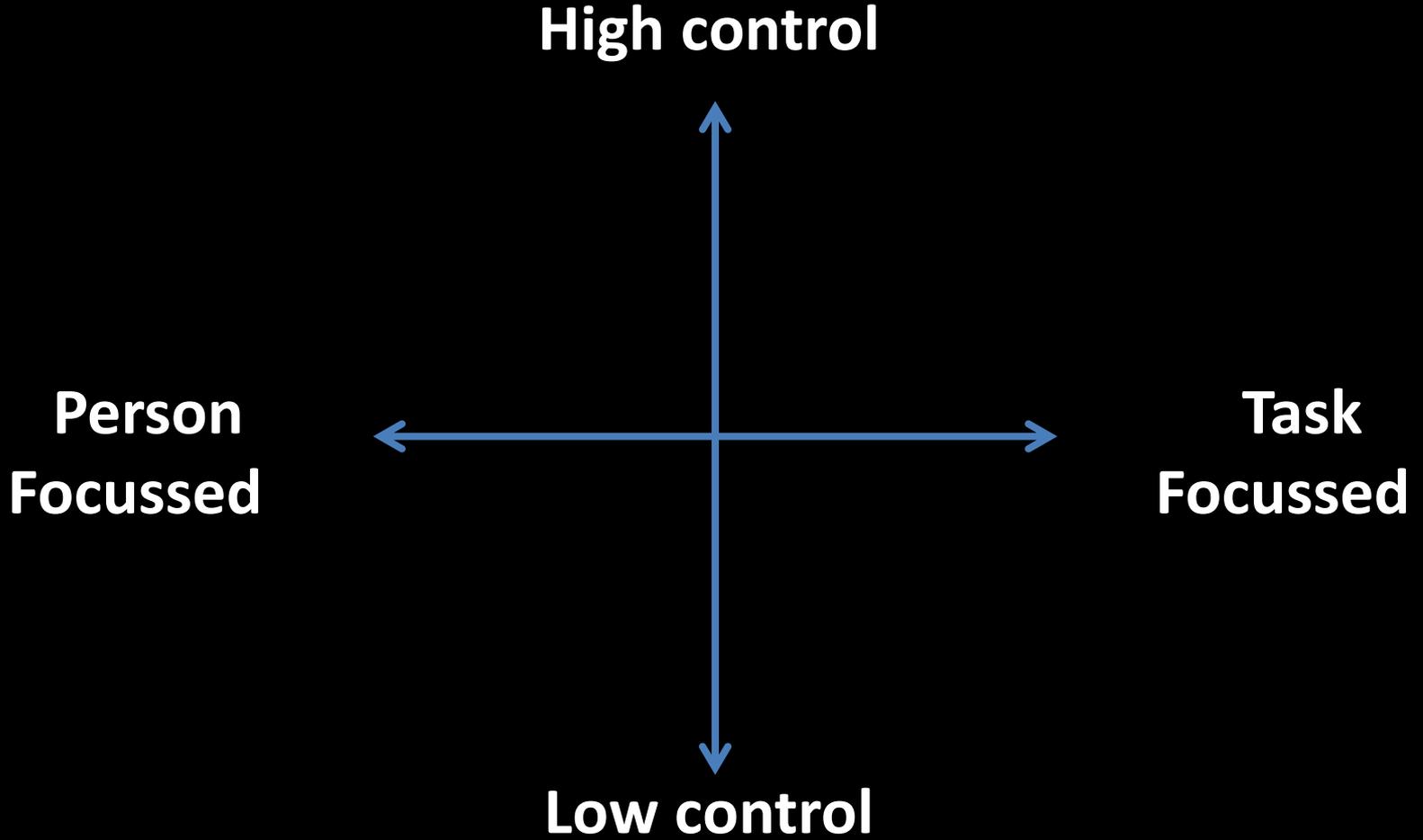
Institutional context

- constrains and enhances departmental policies and practice

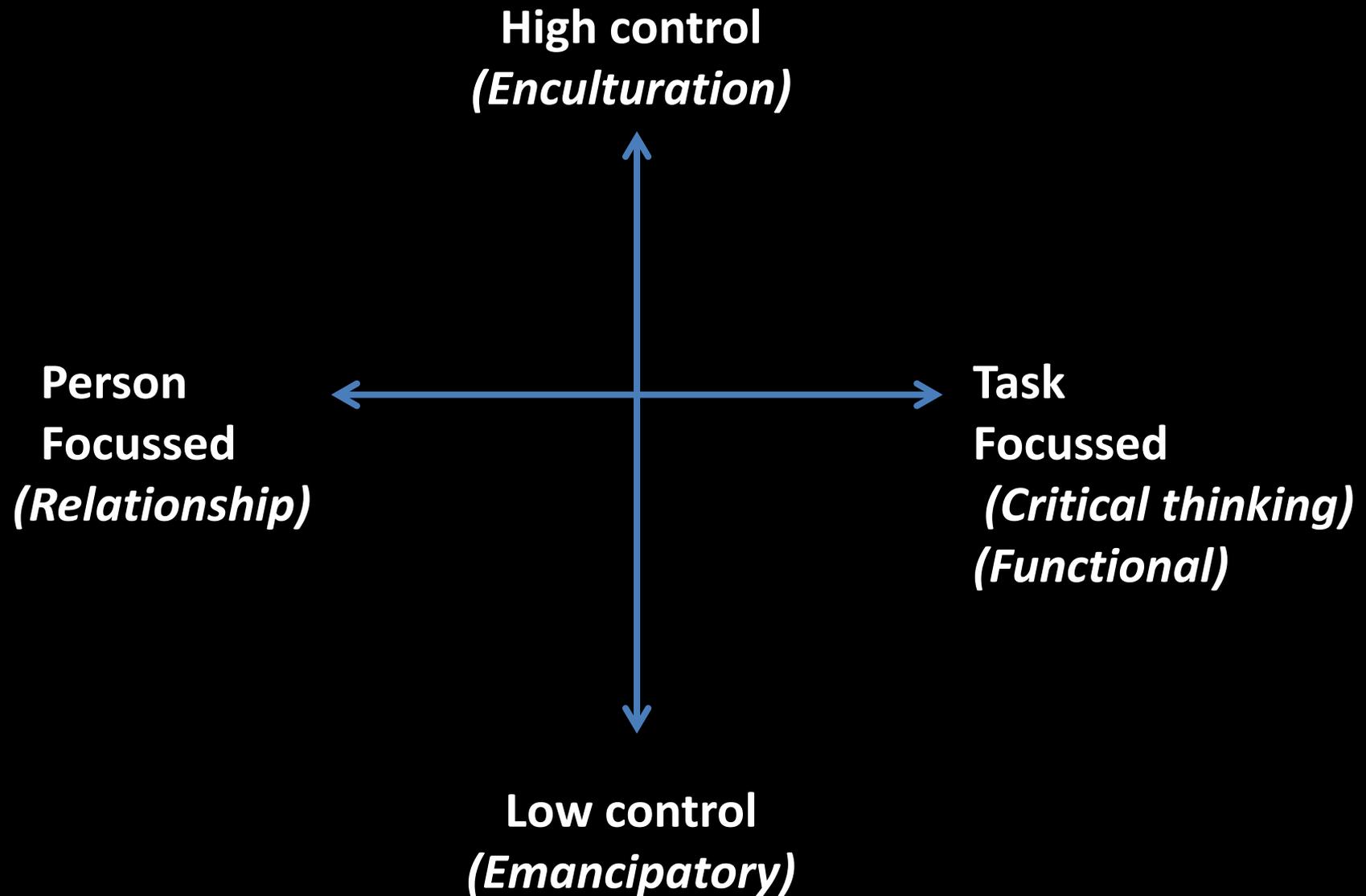
Department-disciplinary context

- constrains and enhances supervisor-student experience





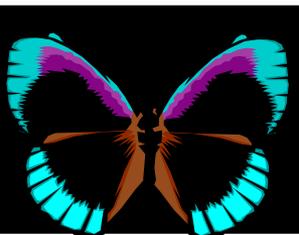
An interpretation of Murphy et al's model contrasted with Lee



My own research questions

- What conceptions of supervision do supervisors hold?
- Is there any relationship between the conceptions of supervision and the jobs that their PhD graduates subsequently undertake?
- What are the common problems faced?
- What training for supervisors, if any, is undertaken or might be helpful

A framework for concepts of research supervision

					
	<i>Functional</i>	<i>Enculturation</i>	<i>Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Emancipation</i>	<i>Relationship Development</i>
Supervisors Activity	Rational progression through tasks Negotiated order	Gatekeeping Master to apprentice	Evaluation Challenge	Mentoring, supporting constructivism	Supervising by experience, developing a relationship
Supervisor's knowledge & skills	Directing, Project management	Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching	Argument, analysis	Facilitation, Reflection	Managing conflict Emotional intelligence
Possible student reaction	Organised Obedience Negotiation skills	Role modelling, Apprenticeship	Constant inquiry, fight or flight	Personal growth, reframing	A good team member. Emotional intelligence

FUNCTIONAL: where the issue is one of project management;

'I have a weekly timetabled formal slot for them and follow-up if they do not turn up'

ENCULTURATION: where the postgraduate researcher is encouraged to become a member of the disciplinary community;

'My students all know their academic grandfather'

CRITICAL THINKING: where the postgraduate researcher is encouraged to question and analyse their work;

'I use 'magic' words to help them identify the thread in their argument eg arguably, conversely, unanimously, essentially, early on, inevitably etc'

EMANCIPATION: where the postgraduate researcher is encouraged to question and develop themselves;

'Your job as a supervisor is to get them knowing more than you'

DEVELOPING A HIGH QUALITY RELATIONSHIP: where the postgraduate researcher is enthused, inspired and cared for; *'I need to encourage them to be brave in their thinking'*

	Function	Enculturation	Critical thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
ENGINEERING	XX	XX	X		X
ENGINEERING	X	X	X	X	O
SCIENCE	XXX	X	X		X
SCIENCE	XXX	XXX			O
TECHNOLOGY	XX	XX			
COMPUTING	X	X	X		XX
SOCIOLOGY				XX	XX
PSYCHOLOGY	XX	XX	X		
ECONOMICS			XX		X
PHILOSOPHY	X		XX	X	O
MANAGEMENT STUDIES	X	X	XX	X	
MANAGEMENT STUDIES	X			XX	XX

Key

x Statement of approach clearly attributable to this category

O Negative experience as a student

X Positive experience of category as a student

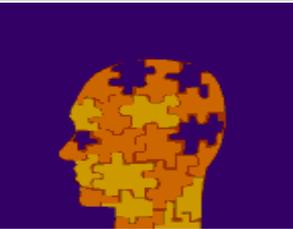
Advantages and Disadvantages

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Advantages	Clarity Consistency Progress can be monitored Records are available	Encourages standards, participation, identity, community formation	Rational inquiry, fallacy exposed	Personal growth, ability to cope with change	Lifelong working partnerships Enhanced self esteem
Disadvantages	Rigidity when confronted with the creation of original knowledge	Low tolerance of internal difference, sexist, ethnicised regulation (Cousin & Deepwell 2005)	Denial of creativity, can belittle or depersonalise student	Lack of focus Toxic mentoring (Darling 1985) where tutor abuses power	Potential for harassment, abandonment or rejection

Dependence and independence

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Dependence	Student needs explanation of stages to be followed and direction through them	Student needs to be shown what to do	Student learns the questions to ask, the frameworks to apply	Student seeks affirmation of self-worth	Student depends on supervisor's approval
Independence	Student can programme own work, follow own timetables competently	Student can follow discipline's epistemological demands independently	Student can critique own work	Student autonomous. Can decide how to be, where to go, what to do, where to find information	Student demonstrates appropriate reciprocity and has power to withdraw

What do students want? Identifying student motivation, objectives and needs

					
	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
What students might be seeking	Certainty Clear signposts Evidence of progress	Belonging Direction, Career opportunities, Role models	Ability to think in new ways Ability to analyse, to recognise flaws in arguments	Self awareness Autonomy Self actualisation	Friendship Nurturing Equality

Engendering creativity

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Creativity might arise from (see Kleiman 2008)	A reaction to or resistance to constraints	A process of incremental change	Purposeful exploitation of chance occurrences	Reacting to disorientation	Creation of something new that has personal value

Using the framework: Planning the first meeting

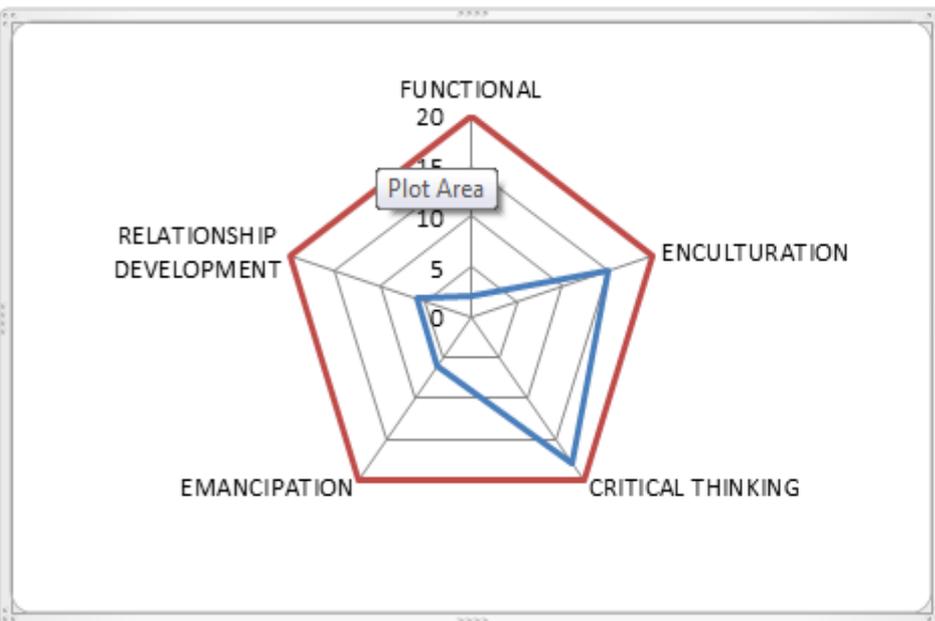
Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through codes of practice • Agree a timetable for future meetings • Create a project plan with milestones and make sure they are written in supervisors' and students diaries. • Clarify the roles of primary and co-supervisors • Explain the 'rules of engagement' • Discuss a publication policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce student to the team • Invite student to team meetings/seminars • Introduce student to key authors/texts • Set tasks where the student will learn 'how we do it here' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascertain subject knowledge and identify any gaps • Encourage student to begin to identify/create their own 'critical toolkit'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage student to present their own plans • Explore their inner motivation for wanting to do this research • Encourage student to identify outsiders who might provide support/illumination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the relationship, how it might go, • Discuss what the student can do if they are unhappy at any point • Establish mutual expectations

Using the framework:

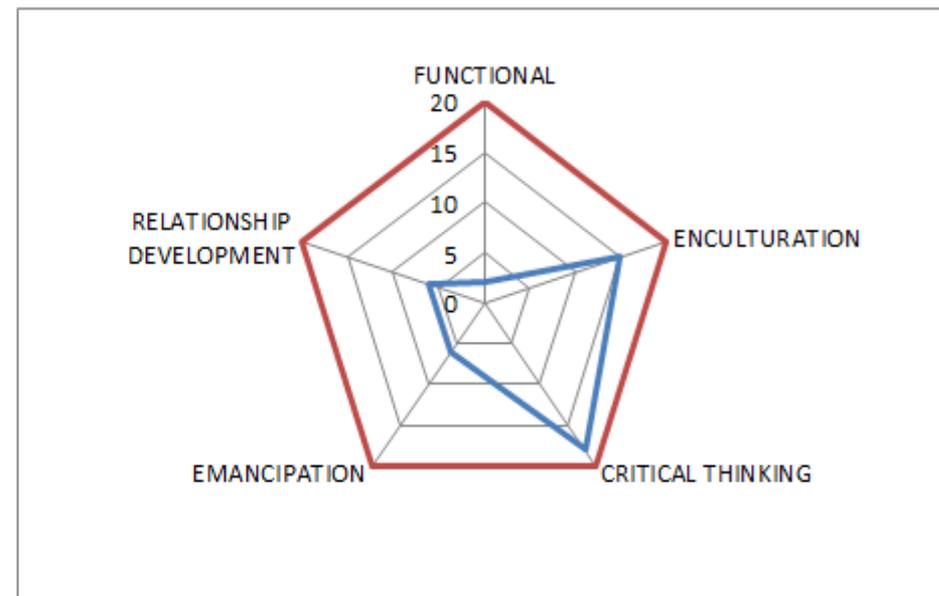
Participating in and Developing Supervisory Teams

1. What advice would you give to this team?

Primary supervisor: Jan



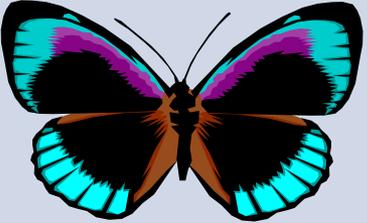
Co-supervisor: Jo



SOME OPTIONS FOR SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT

TYPE OF PROVISION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Accredited, award bearing (examined/assessed) programmes	Consistency of approach, outcomes more measurable. Quality assured.	Need an infrastructure to support them
Substantial programmes where attendance is mandatory	Opportunity to integrate scholarship and promote reflection	Need senior management support to maintain momentum
Workshops (eg one or two days)	More attractive to time-pressed academics.	Careful planning required. Difficult to evaluate whether there is long term behaviour change.
Lunch-time or short seminar programme	Topics can be time relevant	More about information giving than sharing or developing practice
Action learning sets	Can have profound impact on individual's practice	Can be completely ignored by those who are not engaged
Award schemes	Can involve a wide range of staff. Can lead to a community of excellent supervisors	Requires excellent administration to create a credible and lasting scheme
Mentoring schemes	An inexperienced supervisor can still be a first supervisor if they have a suitable mentor to advise and guide.	Depends on the quality of the mentor and the time available for mentoring sessions
Policy development or evaluation (using experienced academics to make recommendations about future policy)	Encourages involvement of experienced and senior academics	Needs careful facilitation to avoid 'pooled ignorance' and to ensure it engages the heart as well as the head. Danger of 'tokenism'

Using the framework to look at ways of developing faculty

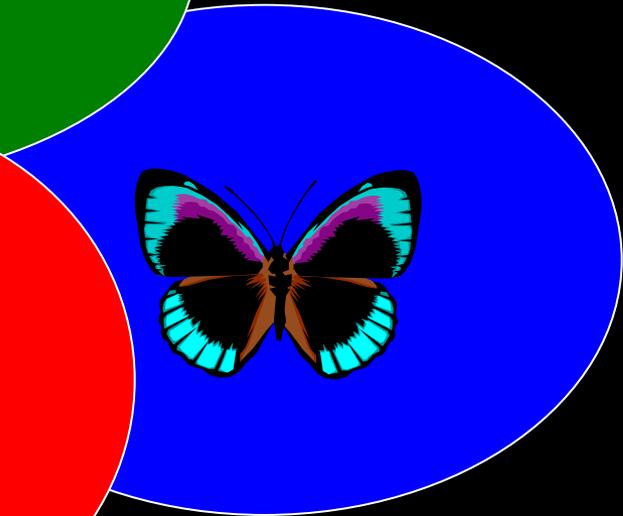
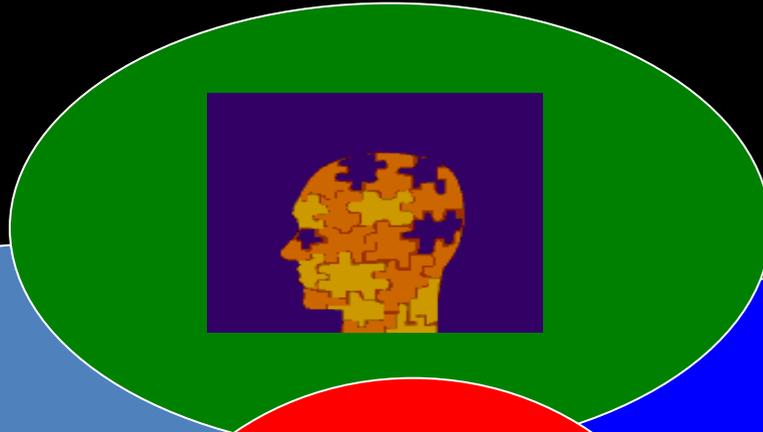
FUNCTIONAL	ENCULTURATION	CRITICAL THINKING	EMANCIPATION	RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD framework • Professional qualifications • Promotion • Skills Development • Benchmarking eg surveys • Awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer observation • Departmental projects • Team supervision • Programme leaders empowered with resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly seminars • Academic qualifications • Pedagogical journal clubs • Pedagogical research (especially international/int erdisciplinary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring programmes • Encouraging research and reflection • Participants teach each other - action learning sets • Learning contracts • Sabbaticals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing social facilities • Arranging social events • Promoting open lectures

Feelings about attending supervisor development programmes (n = 106)

- 90% positive, especially when attendance is voluntary
- Contrasting concerns: some hope for *'time to discuss the underlying psychological and philosophical aspects of the role with colleagues'*, others *'hope we do not waste valuable time on building a sense of community rather on provision of useful content'*

Building bridges between researchers, practitioners and managers

1. Use, test and refine existing research
2. Ensure that new research meets the new challenges
eg: international collaborations, group supervision, links between supervising research and academic leadership
3. For workshops, programmes and seminars
 - a) have an evidence-based compelling case for workshops and seminars,
 - b) use a neutral language that is acceptable to all parties
 - c) recognise disciplinary differences and similarities
 - d) consider a wide range of approaches
 - e) consult widely, evaluate and continuously refine



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**It is a
balancing
act**

