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Challenges and Responses within South Asian Context



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Issues in Supervision of PhD Candidates

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Current Practice as a Supervisor

- *First, ask students to prepare and submit fact sheet*
- *Second, Weekly timetabled formal slot for students and follow-up if they do not turn up*
- *Third, Monthly meetings to discuss their progress and they produce 5000 words before each meeting*
- *Balance between telling the PhD candidate what to do, and allowing him/her to develop own ideas*

Warning: Your supervisor will not write your PhD for you! YOU OWN IT.



PhD research is your baby



REMINDER: In your lifetime, you only write ONE PhD thesis.

Most critical issues in supervision

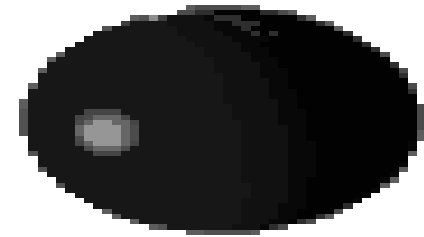
- Good guidance in literature search
- Good guidance in topic selection & refinement
- Support in making plans for the future
- Journal publication
- PhD proposal defence & thesis defence.
- **Decent supervision is a right not a privilege!**





Problems that students face - the supervisors' view

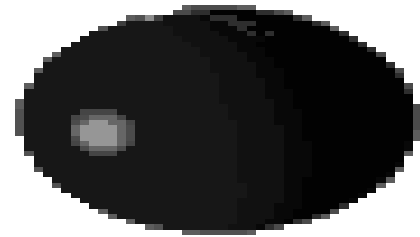
- Dependency; some totally rely on supervisor
- Research ethics, privacy
- Poor progress. Not understanding the required standard of work and showing insufficient initiative
- Plagiarism, copying sentences or paragraphs word-for-word from one or more sources, whether published or unpublished, which could include but is not limited to books, journals, reports, thesis, websites, conference papers, course notes, etc. without proper citation;
- Letters of reference/recommendation





Problems that students face - the supervisors' view

- Joint publications
- Career enhancement
- Qualitative and quantitative research
- Vocabulary issue, want to use rich words, good vocabulary
- Referencing APA style
- Research Methods (including: SPSS & Nvivo)
- Want copy past and ready to spent money
- Not aware about their future goals and objectives
- Charge Rs.5000/- per hour for data analysis
- Library skills





Behaviours that can cause relationship problems

Supervisor

- Not responding to questions or giving feedback quickly enough
- Giving poor responses or feedback
- Not being available
- Not showing concern or interest in the student or their work

Student

- Not doing the work
- Not responding to feedback or suggestions
- Hiding problems or lack of progress
- Being too dependent and not taking responsibility





Burning Issue: Plagiarism

- Copy someone else's words and ideas without acknowledgement
- Different cultures view copying in this way differently
- It invokes severe penalties for plagiarism
- Suggestions
 - If you quote someone's exact words ALWAYS give the reference
 - Keep quotes short – a sentence or two not whole paragraphs
 - Better to use a reference instead of exact words if possible
 - Don't copy and paste from web sources without thinking about above
 - If you have trouble with English don't copy and paste to cover it
 - Don't help someone else to plagiarise – it won't do them any favours
 - Don't copy from another student
 - We use Turnitin software to detect plagiarism and copying
 - You can use it too to check that you are OK!

Academy literacy skills



A great area of concern is the inadequate academic literacy levels of postgraduate students whose mother tongue is not English, as it is expected from them to write and articulate their ideas at the level at which they are working and thinking. Working in another language clearly hinders this. Often students need to translate what they hear and read. This slows down postgraduate students' thinking and expression, impeding thought processes.



Common Writing Problems

- Lack of focus
- The manuscript is poorly organised
- The title doesn't reflect the contents
- Key words or concepts are not well defined
- Assertions are unsupported by evidence or the "facts" are not accurate
- The manuscript is not original
- Too many spelling and grammatical mistakes
- Use of difficult words/concepts when simpler words will do.



Why is supervision important?

- Within the academic context, conducting PhD research can be a lonely process therefore the supervisor is the key agent in enabling the supervised to make sense of their research
- The supervisory relationship is a key place for learning, development, guidance and support
- Increasingly the postgraduate research process is more formally time bound. Therefore the supervisor can help monitor progression towards deadlines.

Tasks of a PhD supervisor

Before the beginning of a PhD project:

- Define a problem;
- Determine how realistic and plausible is to expect a PhD student to bring the project to a stage that is adequate for granting a PhD degree;
- Prepare the necessary environment for a project;
- Help to arrange necessary funds for the fieldwork and data analysis.



Supervision of Ph.D. students

It is important encouraging and ensuring that the candidate participates in the intellectual activity of the department or area through activities such as attendance and presentations at departmental seminars and conferences.



Significance of a PhD

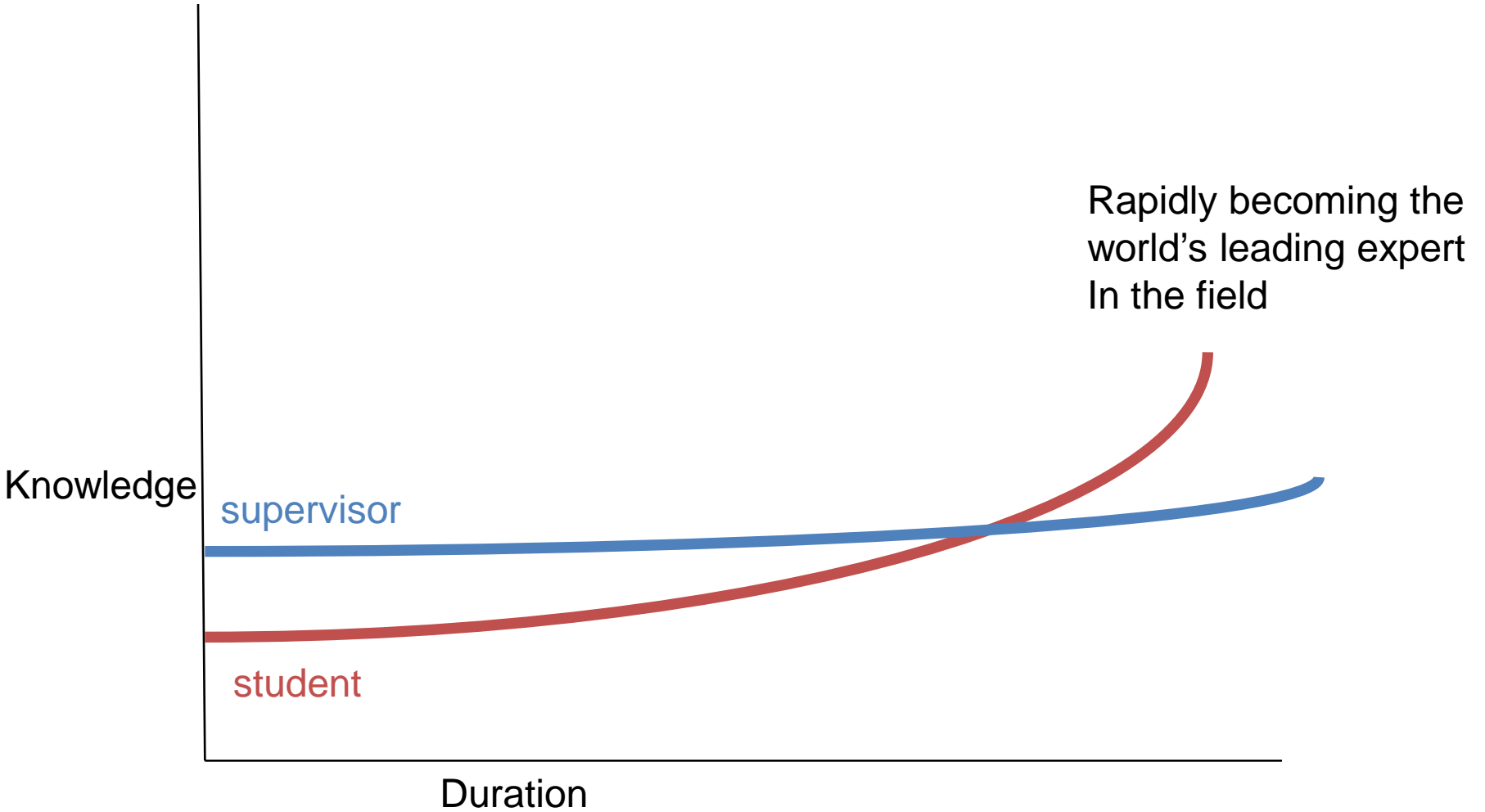
- In the management sciences, social sciences and some natural sciences, 'significance' is widely regarded as being of help to society in some way and a contribution to knowledge.
- Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework ([Rapoport, 1970](#), p. 499).



Changing dynamics

- The relationship will evolve over time
- **Year 1:** supervisor knows more about the project and its context than the student and should guide student in first steps;
- **Year 2:** supervisor and supervisee will be on same page, exchanging ideas and debating results;
- **Year 3:** student will be the expert, knowing more about his/her own research than the supervisor.

Understand the dynamic nature of supervision



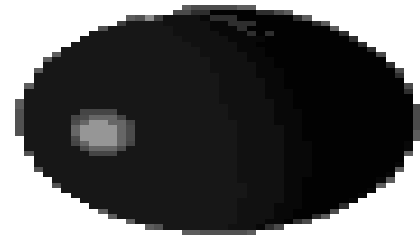


For the supervisor

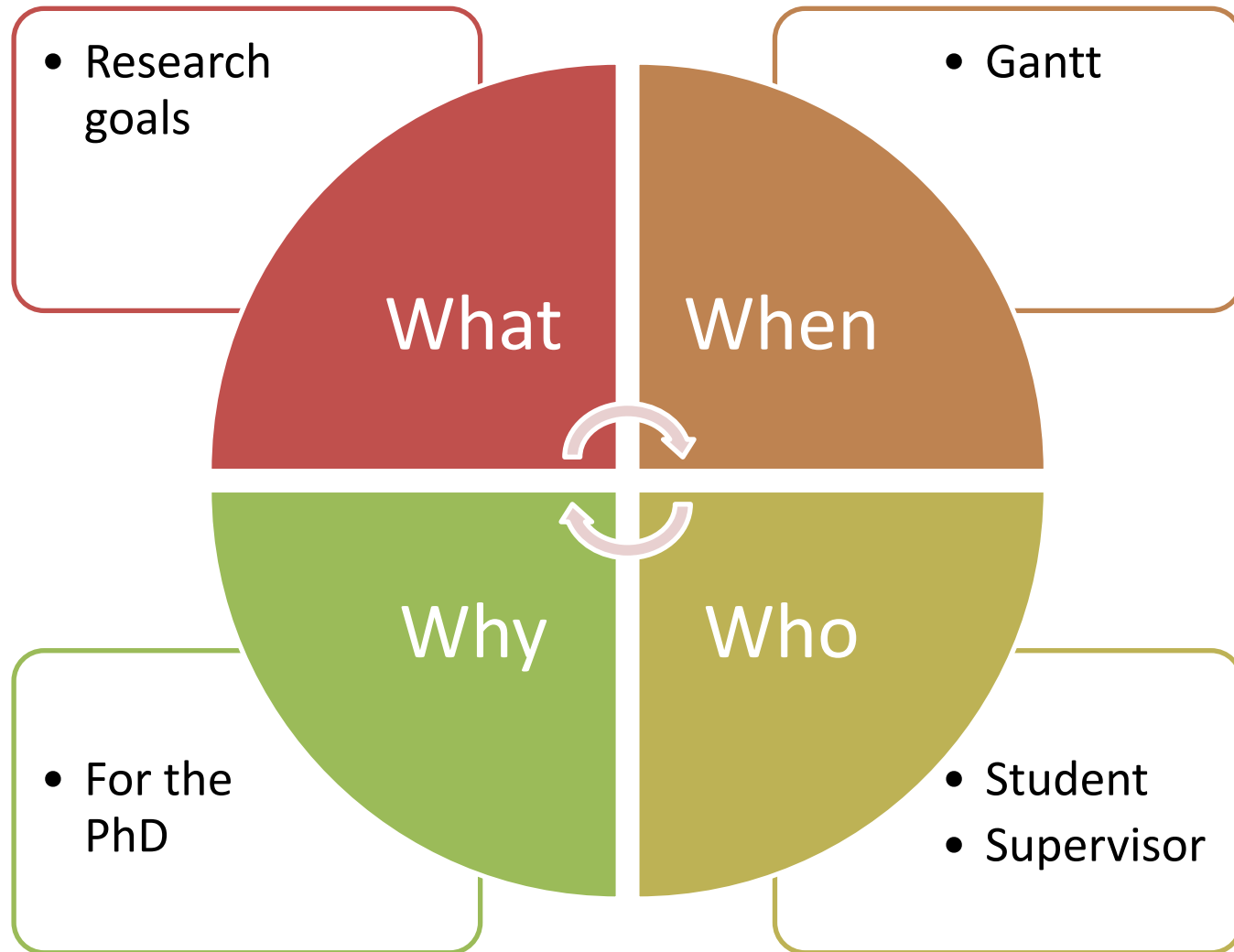
1. Temper criticism with praise and criticise the work, not the person
2. Give advice and suggest solutions to problems, but expect students to sometimes dismiss these and find their own way forward
3. Be available when your student needs help and attend the viva.

Log book and Plans

- Log Book
 - Make sure your log book is up to date and
 - include failures as well as successes
 - include how long it took you to do each item
 - write down ALL ideas you have as you work (they will be useful for your Recommendations).
- Regular Plan
 - Prepare a regular plans and ask your supervisor for comments, especially on your plans & REALISTIC timings for further work



Supervisor-supervisee contract



This is interesting ...

What do you think is the most important component of success in the PhD student – Supervisor relationship? Communication? Hard work?

Transparency?

A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, E = 5, F = 6,
G = 7, H = 8, I = 9, J = 10, K = 11, L = 12,
M = 13, N = 14, O = 15, P = 16, Q = 17, R = 18,
S = 19, T = 20, U = 21, V = 22, W = 23, X = 24,
Y = 25, Z = 26

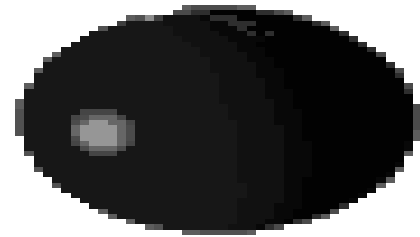
1 + 20 + 20 + 9 + 20 + 21 + 4 + 5 = 100%
A T T I T U D E



Two personality types in the PhD candidates

One was a candidate that was too independent, overconfident, not being open for criticism and having troubles accepting authority and expertise of the supervisor.

The other concerned candidates who were too dependent, passive, waiting for solutions offered and having no self-confidence.



Supervisory Interaction

- Student should have a meeting with main supervisor at a minimum of once every four weeks
- The “meeting” may be face to face or it may take the form of an email exchange, skype or telephone conversation
- Student should complete a supervisory record form following the “meeting” and send this to the supervisor for agreement.
- The supervisory record template covers:
 - Progress made since the last “meeting”
 - Areas discussed at the “meeting”
 - Work agreed





Recommendations

- HEC should organize training of PhD supervisors. Many PhD students and supervisors experience the PhD project as ‘learning by discovery’.
- HEC should organize the preparation of Handbook for Supervision which outlines the code of conduct for all involved. This will ensure that every supervisor and student is aware of and familiar with the often complex administrative regulations, requirements and deadlines that accompany this process.



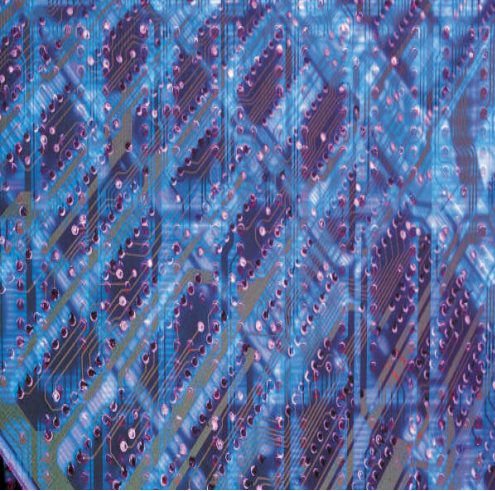
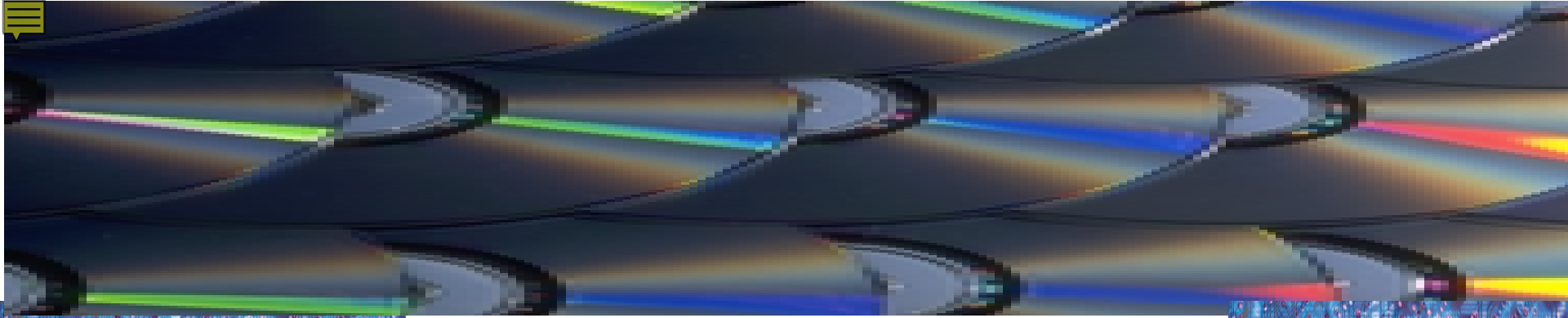
Conclusion

- Supervisor-student relationship is very important in the PhD process, delicate and complex
- Should be structured, with regular recorded meetings
- Requires mutual respect, openness and honest debates
- Effective supervision is a two-way process
- Nobody can effectively multi-task (job, research, consultancy, teaching at a go?)



Q & A





THANK YOU !

