Higher degree research supervision beyond expertise: A Rancièrean and Freirean perspective on HDR supervision

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Abstract

This paper examines the function of 'expertise' in mediating the student-supervisor relationship in Higher Degree Research (HDR). Prevailing conceptualisations of expertise generally translate as *disciplinary acumen* and reference the supervisor's specialist disciplinary and methodological knowledge. Beyond establishing the disciplinary 'signatures' of a discipline, this expertise also confers 'symbolic capital' within the disciplinary field. By way of provocation, this paper asks: "What might it mean when supervisors *lack* such specific disciplinary knowledge in the supervision of HDR projects?" Drawing on theoretical foundations from Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire, this paper considers how alternative ways of knowing and enacting scholarly inquiry might afford new terrains of practice within the HDR project, with the authors' recent experiences in supervising beyond their respective disciplinary expertise providing an illustration of this modality of supervision. This case example demonstrates how mutuality and the enactment of a Freirean dialogic supervisory approach might be brokered to widen considerations of what 'counts' as expertise within HDR supervision, as well as the challenges such an approach posed. In setting out this conceptualisation of an effective HDR supervisory practice, an ethic of mutual inquiry prefaced by the recognition of Rancière's 'two wills' that constitute the pedagogical relationship provide a means for activating a dynamic HDR candidature, the production of innovative research and the recognition of expertise beyond narrowly-defined configurations of disciplinary acumen.

Keywords

Introduction

This paper examines the function of 'expertise' in mediating the student-supervisor relationship in Higher Degree Research (HDR). As experienced scholars, HDR supervisors are expected to maintain and demonstrate *expertise,* with mastery of disciplinary knowledge and methodological proficiency suggestive of the capacities of the supervisor. The expectation for "professional capital" (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) defines this affordance of expertise, but we note that what 'counts' as expertise is often limited to narrowly defined expressions of disciplinary practice. While we recognise that any attempt to identify a "universal description of academic expertise [is] extremely difficult" (Blackmore 2000, 52), we note that prevailing conceptualisations of valued and preferred disciplinary practice generally translate as *disciplinary acumen* – evidenced in "ways of thinking, methods of inquiry, and standards of [generating] evidence" (Taylor 2010, 62) that inhere to the specific tenets of a discipline[1]. In other words, expertise presents as the capacity to enact "specialist knowledge in a specific discipline" (Gube et al. 2017, 2), including the enactment of supervisory practices that correspond with defined disciplinary expectations.

Beyond demonstrating the disciplinary acumen of the supervisor, 'expertise' also confers 'symbolic capital' that is recognisable within, and valuable to, the disciplinary field. Following Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisations, this expression of symbolic capital proceeds in terms of "what is considered (in a given context) to be honor or prestige" (Betensky 2000, 208). Breneman (1976) and more recently Mangematin (2000) have highlighted that "the 'production' of PhD graduates increases the prestige of the PhD supervisor" (Mangematin 2000, 744) and that the reputational value this yields – or what Mangematin (2000) terms 'scientific visibility' – affords successful supervisors status and standing.

For supervisors, the symbolic capital inherent to the display of expertise is indicated in track records of research and prior supervisory success, wherein expertise and prestige work concomitantly to define the supervisor's reputation. For students, the association with high-status supervisory teams signifies reputational value for the project. Perceptions of supervisory expertise and the specific capacities that individual supervisors bring to the project *as* experts afford distinction to the project and the aspirations of the student (Abigail and Hill 2015; Ives and Rowley 2005; Donald et al. 1995; Cullen et al. 1994). Expertise in these terms functions as both an indicative capacity of the supervisor to supervise and a manifestation of the status conferred to the project and its standing within departmental, university and wider disciplinary contexts. Under these designations, expertise is typically regarded as a *valuable* attribute, identifying a sense of supervisory capacity and symbolic capital to supervisors, students and their projects. This in turn reflects the 'professional capital' (Hargreaves and Fullan 2015) that supervisors maintain and that 'accrues' in terms of the value that perceived expertise and relative experience provide. As indicators of the "competence, judgement, insight, inspiration and…capacity for improvisation" (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 5) within the tenets of the discipline, disciplinary expertise works to define successful supervision and the capacities of the supervisor.

The deliberations outlined in this paper challenge this conflation of expertise with disciplinary acumen. Instead, the argument contained here extends consideration of what it might mean when supervisors *do not* hold specific disciplinary acumen in the supervision of HDR projects. Moving away from prevailing configurations of expertise as defined and regulated within the confines of disciplinary knowledge and methodological application, we instead pose an argument that considers the possibilities that emerge when a *lack* of such expertise is maintained by the supervisor. The core question in this paper asks what this lack of disciplinary acumen might provide for the project and we consider how alternative ways of

knowing and enacting scholarly inquiry might afford new terrains of practice within the HDR

project. In taking this focus, we draw attention to the implications that this has for the

supervisory relationship and the 'status' of supervisors and students, to instead consider how

supervisors might effectively utilise stocks of professional and intellectual knowledge that

exist *beyond* the specific disciplinary scope of the supervised project.

Configuring 'lack' as a modality of expertise

We are careful not to conflate this positioning of 'lack' as a form of supervisory ineptitude.

We note that current formulations of the idea of expertise tie closely with demonstrable

ways-of-knowing that correspond with specific disciplinary discourses, technical knowledge

and intellectual paradigms and that these (in turn) describe the 'signatures' of a discipline's

'structures' (Shulman 2005). Knowledge-of and the capacity to enact these defined markers

of disciplinary competence invariably conflate in common parlance *as* expertise. It is our

intention here to widen this sense of expertise by questioning; i) what 'counts' as expertise

within the conduct of HDR supervision, ii) how a 'lack' of such focussed disciplinary

acumen might be framed as *generative*, and iii) how the student-supervisor relationship might

transcend requirements for the display of disciplinary acumen as a key pedagogical modality

for the successful progression of a project.

In taking this approach, we suggest that rather than being detrimental to a project,

supervisory capacity beyond the remit of closely defined disciplinary acumen creates

potential opportunities for the project, the student and the supervisors. Although we

acknowledge that there are very good reasons for why disciplines maintain and respond to

specific bodies of knowledge, intellectual currents and methodological approaches – with

these providing a discipline with its *corpus* of knowledge and practice that in turn define and

demarcate the discipline – we argue that a considered *ignorance* of these 'ways of doing' can

afford the supervision of HDR projects with generative possibility[2]. Indeed, moving beyond considerations of defined accounts of supervisory expertise informed by limited demonstrations of disciplinary acumen provokes the possibility for opening a more creative, speculative and contingent approach to both the supervision and conduct of HDR projects.

To theorise this dynamic, we draw on considerations of pedagogy outlined by Jacques Rancière ([1987] 1991) and Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996). In particular, Rancière's ([1987] 1991) meditations on pedagogical 'ignorance' and Freire's ([1970] 1996) placement of dialogue at the centre of the pedagogical dynamic offer useful conceptual prompts for considering HDR supervision beyond questions of expertise as an expression of focused disciplinary acumen. Inferred within both Rancière's ([1987] 1991) and Friere's (1970) approaches is a pedagogical ethic of dialogic and mutually informed inquiry that we suggest holds significant value for considering effective HDR supervision. Rancière's ([1987] 1991) observation that "there are two wills and two intelligences" (Rancière [1987] 1991,13) operative in any pedagogical exchange provides a useful starting point for this consideration and the possibilities that inhere in the negotiation of knowledge that HDR projects might engage.

Our argument emphasises the significance of dialogue and the engagement between supervisor and student that sits at the centre of an effective HDR candidature. Although an important element of any student-supervisor relationship, we suggest that a more deliberate positioning of the student's knowledge and demonstration of expertise provides a means for broadening the role played by the supervisor and the production of innovative and dynamic projects. A generative modality of supervision emerges when a dialogic relationship of mutual inquiry recognizes the "two wills and two intelligences" within the student-supervisor dynamic.

We turn now to a brief survey of the literature examining expertise in HDR supervision before outlining a more detailed account of Rancière's and Freire's pedagogies as these relate to HDR supervision. We then consider our specific experiences in supervising a recent HDR project where the expertise of the supervisors was distinct from that typical of the project's disciplinary field. This project involved an ethnography of the pedagogical practices applied in higher education music theatre singing (voice) studios, using theoretical resources derived from the archive of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Lee Shulman (2005). The authors/supervisors each brought a defined skillset to this project, but also notably identified areas in which little expertise was held. Author Hickey, for example, held expertise as an ethnographer and theoretician familiar with the work of Bourdieu and Shulman but had very little understanding of the field of higher education music theatre voice pedagogy and studio practice. Author Forbes drew on an extensive background as a professional singer and voice teacher, but held limited expertise in ethnography or the theoretical frames applied in this project.

Following a discussion of the implications of this approach, we close this paper with a consideration of how the reification of dialogue and the nurturance of the student-supervisor relationship informed by Rancièrean and Freirean conceptions of pedagogy might yield generative possibility in the supervision of HDR projects whilst also broadening considerations of what counts as effective supervisory expertise.

Expertise and Higher Degree Research

A prominent theme within the literature identifies the role of the supervisor as mentor and guide for the HDR student. While this intent towards effective guidance is crucial to the progression of any HDR project and the development of the student as an 'autonomous' scholar (Johnson, Lee and Green 2000; Overall, Deane and Peterson 2011), it remains that

the predominant conceptualisations of mentorship evident in the literature position the

disciplinary expertise of the supervisor as foundational to this guidance.

Lee's (2008) identification of five mutually contingent 'approaches' to supervision

provides a useful summary of the capacities suggested by this formulation of *expert*

guidance. As Lee (2008, 270-1) notes, supervisors enact their practice as supervisors across

the following approaches:

(1) Functional: where the issue is one of project management.

(2) Enculturation: where the student is encouraged to become a member of the

disciplinary community.

(3) Critical thinking: where the student is encouraged to question and analyse their

work.

(4) Emancipation: where the student is encouraged to question and develop

themselves.

(5) Developing a quality relationship: where the student is enthused, inspired and

cared for.

While Lee's (2008) typology identifies important generic capacities for effective supervision

('critical thinking' and 'developing a quality relationship' in particular), the implication

within this typology rests on the capacity of the supervisor to guide *as* an 'expert'. For

instance, under the 'functional' approach, the supervisor "gives priority to issues of skills

development" (Lee 2008, 271) where emphasis is placed on the imparting of functional skills

that define the discipline and reflect its structures. Under the 'enculturation' approach, "an

apprenticeship element is included" (Lee 2008, 272), wherein the student is enculturated into

appropriate practice by a disciplinary master. Within the 'critical thinking' approach, the

supervisor poses questions of the student with the purpose of exposing the underlying

epistemic frames of the discipline, further revealing the supervisor's knowledge of and

expertise within the discipline. Overarching all of this, 'emancipation' is geared to encouraging the student to "question and develop themselves" (Lee 2008, 271), but with adherence to the disciplinary structures that define the discipline's conduct. Core to each of these approaches is the activation of disciplinary modalities of practice that reflect the expert supervisor's positioning within the discipline. This expertise is possessed by the supervisor and imparted to the student to provide the foundation of the HDR candidature and the student's progression toward autonomy.

McCallin and Nayar's (2012, 66) analysis similarly highlights that "supervisors are expected to coach and mentor students", with attention given to the 'training' that students undertake during the candidature as entry into the disciplinary field proceeds. Within this formulation, the HDR candidature represents a form of professional induction performed under the guidance and direction of the expert supervisor. Although we argue that there are a number of important reasons for why this should occur – not least for the exposure to scholarly networks and disciplinary leaders with whom some association should be brokered by the HDR student – we also note the risk of insulation that corresponds with the replication of practices, ways of knowing and methodological conduct core to a discipline; a phenomenon identified within the literature as 'academic inbreeding' (Inanc and Tuncer 2011). For supervisors who do not maintain such focused disciplinary association (and further, such intricately defined understandings of the disciplinary field), the possibility for the productive contravention of the 'rules' of a discipline open opportunities for conducting the research in (potentially) innovative ways.

Extending this view, Ives and Rowley (2005, 536) note that although "expertise in one's field of specialization and active involvement in research" are often considered prerequisites for effective supervision and that these capacities have traditionally provided the means for introducing a student to the tenets of a discipline, they do not necessarily

"guarantee good supervisory practice". This important insight indicates the significance of

the nurturance of the supervisory relationship and the capacities required by supervisors to

support the 'psychodynamic' and 'transpersonal' dimensions of supervision (Reason and

Marshall 1987). We highlight Ives and Rowley's (2005, 541) findings that although "the

supervisor's expertise and the student's Ph.D topic usually forms the basis for supervisor

allocation", the effectiveness of the relationship between supervisor and student provides a

better indicator of a student's ultimate success and intellectual development. Such a

consideration of the placement and function of supervisory practice relocates the impetus of

supervisory capacity away from limited conceptions of disciplinarily-framed expertise to

more deliberative considerations of the supervisor's capacity to work *relationally* with the

student in the enactment of a dialogic approach to the supervision.

Such a positionality is illustrated in Wisker, Robinson and Shacham's (2007, 303-4)

conceptualization of the 'guardian supervisor' wherein "the supervisory relationship is the

primary one to ensure…that students are guided and empowered to be autonomous learners".

These authors also identify an important further element of the supervisor's role. As with Ives

and Rowley's (2005) observations regarding the importance of the relationship between

student and supervisor, Wisker, Robinson and Shacham (2007) highlight that the supervisor's

capacity to guide and provide pastoral support in accordance with the contextual

requirements of the project provides a key indicator of supervisory success. Wisker,

Robinson and Shacham (2007, 302) extend these considerations to focus on how the

formation of communities of practice might be developed across cohorts of peers in an effort

to develop student-led networks that provide mutual support and that challenge the view of

postgraduate research as "a lone venture". This approach draws attention to the development

of "students who are able to engage in problem-solving dialogues with their supervisors and

with peers" (Wisker, Robinson and Shacham 2007, 305), emphasizing the relational and

contextualized nature of higher degree research. Under this formulation, the function of supervision remains geared towards guidance and the generative development of students as autonomous scholars, but *within* wider networks of inquiry and support.

We argue that significant amenity for supervisors is to be found in such an approach, but that a number of concomitant challenges present. We note the tension inherent to expectations within higher degree programs for supervisors *to* maintain disciplinary expertise relevant to the topic of the research, but that the pragmatics of allocating supervision are often "based on institutional arrangements" (Gube et al. 2017, 2), and more pertinently, who is available to supervise. We suggest that reconsiderations of what constitutes supervisory expertise and how supervisory capacity might be imagined beyond the limits of disciplinary acumen provide opportunity to also move beyond the structures of these structural constraints.

In an effort to provide theoretical depth to these deliberations, we turn now to consider how conceptualisations of supervisory expertise might be expanded. Through consideration of the generative capacity of 'ignorance' as outlined by Jacques Rancière ([1987] 1991) and the centrality of dialogue in the formation of effective pedagogical relations detailed by Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996), we reframe supervisory expertise towards the efficacy of the relationship between student and supervisor.

Lessons from Rancière

Jacques Rancière's ([1987] 1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* considers the role of the pedagogue in learning. Rancièrean pedagogy is established on the premise that *instruction* – the primary pedagogical modality of systems of formal education as Rancière understood these – functions as 'stultifying' for the student. For Rancière ([1987] 1991, 6-7), education under this formulation proceeds as a demonstration of

the teacher's expertise, wherein the teacher's (or, in the case of this article, the supervisor's) expertise maintains primacy as the focus in the dissemination of knowledge:

> To explain something to someone is first of all to show him [*sic*] he cannot understand it by himself. Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid. The explicator's special trick consists of this double inaugural gesture. On the one hand, he decrees the absolute beginning: it is only now that the act of learning will begin. On the other, having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, he appoints himself to the task of lifting it…The pedagogical myth, we said, divides…the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligence into two. It says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one.

The problem for Rancière rests with the 'myth of explication' and the ceding of any expertise held by the student to that of the teacher. By contrast, Rancière ([1987] 1991, 13) argues that a liberatory pedagogy emphasizes "the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student" and that students come to learning as knowledgeable in their own way. The purpose of education is not to expose a student's ignorance (or impose the teacher's expertise), but to draw together a "pure relationship of will to will" (Rancière [1987] 1991, 13) between teacher and student in acts of mutual inquiry.

In the context of HDR supervision, the HDR student, possessing an undergraduate qualification (and in the case of entry into a doctoral program, a qualifying postgraduate degree – usually an Honours or Masters qualification), comes to the HDR program not entirely naïve to the requirements of the disciplinary field. By the time of the HDR candidature, the student is already, to some degree, accomplished as a scholar and familiar with the requirements of the discipline. Under a Rancièrean pedagogy, rather than impose a

pedagogy of *explication*, that in turn positions the student as *not* knowing, a more effective HDR supervisory pedagogy would elevate the relationship of supervisor and candidate to reify the student's capacities and knowledge (or 'will' in Rancièrean terms). Within this dynamic the implications for the supervision are then geared toward how the supervisor provokes a climate of support and engagement for the student, wherein the supervisor's expertise in negotiating the pastoral aspects of a HDR pedagogy supersede those of the explicit demonstration of disciplinary acumen.

Following Wisker, Robinson and Shacham's (2007, 303) observation that "the supervisory relationship is the primary one to ensure", such an approach to supervision emphasizes how the relationship between student and supervisor provides a context for inquiry. Manderson's (1996, 410; emphasis added) discussion on what makes for effective supervision provides further nuance for explaining the dynamic between student and supervisor:

> One myth of supervision is that the supervisor must be an expert on the substantive topic of the thesis. On the contrary, the student will inevitably come to know more about his subject than his supervisor does. If this is not the case, then something is seriously awry. *Not knowledge but experience is the aim of supervision*. It is neither the principal goal of the supervisee to acquire expertise nor the goal of the supervisor to transmit it. The supervisor's role is to help the student learn how to learn. This means a focus on the processes of learning: how to research, how to read, how to write, how to structure an argument. We might even go so far as to say that a supervisor should not be helping her student find answers, but rather should encourage the process of asking better questions.

The important element in this observation corresponds with the pedagogical implications this holds for the supervision. Supervision is after all pedagogical in its prerogative, with the

implication resting in the capacity that the supervisor brings to the 'cultivation' of the project

and the research training that the HDR candidature represents. It is with how this is achieved

that the question rests, with Manderson (1996, 410) going on to note that:

> …supervision is mutual: it is an exercise by which both participants gain. The
>
> supervisor, for example, learns something about the subject matter of the thesis. But
>
> beyond this, supervision provides an opportunity for both parties to share something of
>
> themselves and their minds. The student is no lesser being in this exchange.

A Rancièrean ethic is implied in Manderson's (1996) deliberations. At core in his claim is the

relationship between student and supervisor and the ways that this supervisory relationship

provokes an ethic of inquiry and mutual discovery. It is in these terms that an effective

supervision moves beyond the reification of narrowly defined supervisory expertise –

represented under the guise of disciplinary acumen – to instead prefigure the exchange, and

indeed, the relationship between supervisor and student as foundational to the project. Under

this formulation, effective supervision is more about the nurturance of the relationship than it

is the disciplinary expertise of the supervisor.

Case Study: Freire, Dialogue and Engaged Supervision

With this reframing of the roles inherent to the supervisory relationship, attention turns to

how the relationship between student and supervisor is brokered *in practice*. The focus of the

supervisory relationship shifts to one of mutual inquiry, where the interaction between

supervisor and student exposes a pedagogical modality that emphasises the 'two wills' that

define the pedagogical relationship. It is within this context of mutual inquiry and recognition

of the 'two wills' that a more distributed expression of expertise is realised.

The authors' recent experiences in supervising beyond their respective disciplinary

expertise provide an illustration of this modality of supervision. As indicated at the beginning

of this paper, the HDR project in question involved the supervisors coming to the supervision

with markedly distinct disciplinary expertise and backgrounds. Although author Forbes held connection to the concerns of the discipline (with her background in higher education vocal pedagogy relevant to this project), it remained that her expertise in the theoretical and methodological applications of the project were limited; areas in which author Hickey held capacity. This situation was further complicated by the host university's requirement for experienced supervisors – designated by records of prior supervision 'to completion' – to take the lead as 'Principal Supervisor'. In this instance, author Hickey was required to assume the role of Principal Supervisor, even though author Forbes arguably held a greater understanding of the project's field. This brings to light the 'institutional arrangements' that Gube et al. (2017) identify and that further reinforce (and complicate) prevailing assumptions of what counts as 'expertise'.

At first blush, the mutual strengths of each supervisor might be considered as having provided a coverage of expertise for this project. But it emerged that something beyond this 'distributed' capacity was at work as the supervision progressed. Dialogue and the activation of what Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996) identifies as 'problem-posing education' opened space for a far more mutual approach to the project's development; an approach that integrally relied upon the student and her understanding of, and association with, the field of this project's inquiry. The student – an experienced performer and voice teacher – was crucial to this situating of the project and, far from being a passive recipient of supervisory expertise, was central to the formation of the project's conceptual, theoretical and methodological progression. The supervisors and student came to recognise and enact the 'two wills' and in doing so emphasised the place of mutual inquiry and participatory dialogue in defining the supervisory relationship.

Such an approach amplified the significance of "dialogical relations" (Freire [1970] 1996, 79) in effective supervision, where mutuality of inquiry in the conduct of the project

was prefaced as a mode of practice and engagement. But apart from simply providing a

necessary means to ensure the progress of this project, this approach also generated

innovative ways of conceptualising and investigating the phenomena at core in this inquiry;

conceptualisations that were not informed by disciplinary strictures and 'ways of doing

things' but that emerged through a mutuality of inquiry prompted by the respective expertise

and ignorance that each supervisor and the student brought to the project. Seemingly naïve

questions were able to be asked in the spirit of inquiry and as the student and supervisors

developed their own understanding of the field and the intricacies of the project. A pedagogy

that emphasised discovery and dialogue was brokered in these terms.

For example, this project identified theoretical and conceptual frames that were

otherwise absent in the literature – material primarily drawn from the archives of Pierre

Bourdieu (1994) and Lee Shulman (2005). Little guidance could be derived from the

literature and its established traditions of practice, and consequently this required the student

to be active in developing this project and its conceptual points of reference – to 'try things

on' – and develop a way of working that utilised the supervisors' own inquiry and discovery

as a further reference for establishing the project's foundations. Although this expectation of

coming-to-expertise is common to all HDR projects, it was with the mutuality of the inquiry

and the supervisors' reliance on the student to also demonstrate expertise that a point of

distinction with more typical supervisory practice was noted. The supervisors did not possess

their own stocks of disciplinary knowledge to gauge the student's 'development', and

accordingly were reliant on the student's knowledge of the field, its networks of leading

scholars and *ways of doing things* that constituted this field's signatures of practice. This

prompted the reconsideration of what counted as supervisory 'expertise', with the supervisors

and student deliberating as partners on this project and not within a 'master-apprentice'

arrangement (Harrison and Grant 2015; Frankland 1999). Emphasis was placed on mutually

identifying ways of creatively enacting the research and less on adhering to disciplinarily

sanctioned theoretical and methodological approaches.

While indicating the significance of Rancière's ([1987] 1991) considerations of

pedagogical 'ignorance' and the emancipatory capacity of drawing the student into the

pedagogical design of a project, dialogue provided the modality of engagement for activating

this pedagogical dynamic. This aspect of the approach taken in this project is illustrated by

Paulo Freire's ([1970] 1996) considerations of dialogue in mediating the student-teacher

relationship. As Freire ([1970] 1996, 80) notes:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to
>
> exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no
>
> longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [*sic*] taught in dialogue
>
> with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly
>
> responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on
>
> "authority" are no longer valid.

We are careful in acknowledging that the context from which Freire was writing is markedly

different to that of the case example we have described to this point; not least for the

liberatory imperative inherent to Friere's work with marginalized peoples. But this

formulation of a dialogic pedagogy nonetheless offers a means for activating a student-

supervisor relationship that prefaces the expertise of each (and in doing so, gives form to the

recognition of Rancière's 'two wills'). It is out of such a dynamic that both student and

supervisor come to the project as 'experts' in their own way, but importantly, under a mode

of relationality that avoids arbitrary hierarchies and limited designations of disciplinary

expertise. In the authors' example, the supervision proceeded as a far more mutual

negotiation, where dialogue was "indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality"

(Freire [1970] 1996, 83).

Discussion: Expertise and Experts

Although the case example demonstrates how mutuality and the enactment of a dialogic

supervisory approach might be brokered to widen considerations of what 'counts' as

expertise, a number of challenges, especially early-on in the relationship, required

negotiation. These primarily corresponded with the tacit expectations that both the

supervisors and student brought to the project, as informed by prevailing assumptions that

circulate around the idea of expertise and what is expected of the student-supervisor

relationship. We characterise these challenges in the following ways:

'Distributed' expertise

Establishing the student-supervisor relationship such that the 'two wills' of the supervisory

relationship could activate an ethic of mutual inquiry required challenging existing

assumptions of the role of the supervisor; and in particular, how guidance and mentorship in

the supervision was activated and recognised. It was notable that, early-on in the project,

heavy emphasis was placed by the student on the display of disciplinary acumen by the

supervisors. It took some time for a recognition of the supervisors' capacities – especially

those of author Hickey – to be considered as *valuable*. To some extent this corresponded with

assumptions that associate with this particular project's field, where 'practice' as a

performing artist (evidenced through a record of performance experience) complements more

scholarly markers of supervisory capacity. Author Hickey did not come to this supervision

with a record of performance experience as an artist-performer and subsequently a dynamic

emerged where author Forbes would be engaged by the student and advice sought based on

perceptions of her status as a performing artist, voice pedagogue *and* scholar. While both

authors were active in supporting the student in negotiating the various administrative

processes that coincided with the initiation of the project (including processes associated with

commencing the project and progressing toward confirmation of the project's proposal within

the first year of candidature), it remained that in these early stages the student situated the

project by referring primarily to author Forbes' disciplinary acumen and connection to

networks of scholars.

Beyond these initial observations regarding the tacit designation of this project's locus

of supervisory expertise, it was indeed the case that author Hickey was reliant on the input of

the student and author Forbes to establish his own sense of the disciplinary 'coordinates' that

defined this project. Author Hickey was particularly reliant on the student to identify frames

of reference for positioning the epistemic 'conditions' of the field and orienting the way that

knowledge is produced and represented. While traditionally it is within these early stages of a

candidature that the student engages the literature to establish a sense of the field, for this

project, the authors (and in particular author Hickey) were also actively engaged in reading

widely and negotiating the positioning of the project within the wider terrain of its discipline.

It was via this mutual inquiry that author Hickey's contribution to the project emerged. In

negotiating the literature and establishing his own sense of how the project would refine its

specific focus of inquiry, author Hickey provided suggestions regarding the theoretical and

conceptual framing of the project. These prompts in turn provided the foundation for

dialogue between the student and the authors and from which the design of the project, its

theoretical frames and methodological conduct were considered, negotiated, and defined. It

was here that disciplinarily unexpected applications of theory and method were identified,

and in a process of 'trying-on' different ideas and theoretical and methodological

applications, the specific focus of this project emerged.

There was also a further aspect to this dynamic. Vereijken et al (2018, 523) observe

that:

In comparison to experienced doctoral supervisors, novices worry about being taken

seriously by students and feel unprepared for working within environments without

clear guidelines.

We suggest that the same applies to supervisors whose expertise derives from different

disciplinary backgrounds to the student. When not equipped with a discernible track record of

focussed, disciplinary expertise, supervisor and student must engage as co-inquirers and

develop an ethic of mutuality in establishing and progressing the project. It took time for

author Hickey's contributions to the project to register and during this period significant

uncertainty – from both the student and supervisors – was experienced; did this supervisory

relationship provide the right 'fit'? Was author Hickey's background appropriate to this

project? Could a shared *lingua franca* of theoretical and conceptual knowledge be generated

to serve this project?

We note that perceptions of a 'lack' of expertise – by students, by supervisors and

indeed within wider departmental and disciplinary networks of scholars – represent as a

significant challenge to supervision. Transcending initial perceptions and expectations for

what counts as effective supervision, premised on assumptions regarding disciplinary

expertise, presents as a notable 'risk' to the progression of HDR projects[3]. Given that, under

prevailing assumptions, supervisors are *meant* to maintain and demonstrate disciplinary

expertise, a challenge presents in affirming the value of distributed expertise beyond such

narrowly defined conceptualisations.

Supervisory 'ignorance' to the field

Although Rancière ([1987] 1991) configures 'ignorance' as a generative capacity, there

remain some very good reasons for why supervisors *should* appraise themselves of the

project's field. As the discussion above suggests, it is valuable for supervisor and student to

engage the project (and its field) mutually and indeed, for the student to advise the supervisor

on key theoretical material and the intellectual traditions that define this field. But beyond this, supervisors still require cognisance of the expectations inherent to the discipline and should remain receptive to the prevailing discourses and ways of generating and representing knowledge that define the project's field. The HDR project is, after all, undertaken for an award qualification and accordingly will be prone to examination and appraisal by recognised disciplinary 'experts'. It follows that supervisors must become familiar with these dynamics in order to effectively position their own expectations for the project and to advocate on behalf of its conduct.

This situation corresponds with Callanan's (2004) distinction between 'scholarly' and 'pedagogical' expertise. While the 'ignorant' supervisor may come to the supervision with considerable pedagogical expertise, we note that supervisors should work to develop their disciplinary acumen as part of the supervision; that is, Callanan's (2004) 'scholarly expertise'. While we suggest that it is with pedagogical expertise that the greatest influence of the supervisor is realised, the supervisor should nonetheless aim to develop scholarly expertise and an understanding of the project's disciplinary positioning. This aligns with the central purpose of the dialogic approach outlined above, wherein dialogue and mutual inquiry 'equip' both student *and* supervisor with new frames of understanding and knowledge.

We follow Hamilton and Carson's (2015, 4) observation that:

It could be argued that all candidates must eventually exceed the knowledge of their supervisor as they forge a highly specialised contribution to new knowledge. However, in an emergent field, relinquishing the role of expert as all-knowing researcher-supervisor, and assuming a primarily enabling role is an experience to which many supervisors will relate, especially when candidates are differently situated – not only in terms of their practice, but also in terms of their cultural background.

A certain pragmatism is inherent to this sentiment. Given that HDR projects are not always able to be supervised by disciplinarily 'expert' supervisors, providing the conditions wherein mutual inquiry and shared knowledge production can proceed provides the project the potential to chart innovative lines of inquiry.

Expanded conceptions of 'expertise'

As indicated by Callanan's (2004) distinction between 'scholarly' and 'pedagogical' expertise, we suggest that expanded definitions of expertise are required in order to open opportunities for more deliberative supervision practice. Given that expertise is often conflated with narrowly defined disciplinary acumen, which in turn reduces the possibility for generating innovative approaches to research within a field, we suggest that emphasis should be placed on expanding understandings of what constitutes effective supervision and an effective supervisor. Reformulations of the 'prestige' that associates with disciplinary acumen should coincide with the identification and description of 'pedagogical expertise'. How it is that supervisors come to enact practices that position centrally the 'two wills' of the HDR candidature, geared as this is toward mutual inquiry through dialogue, opens the opportunity for recording more deliberate accounts of effective supervision practice and pedagogy.

Conclusion

We have argued that expertise as it is currently defined limits the possibilities for HDR projects. Drawing on Rancière's ([1987] 1991) conceptualisation of pedagogical 'ignorance' and Freire's ([1970] 1996) placement of dialogue at the core of effective pedagogical engagement, we presented a case for the nurturance of the relationship between student and supervisor. In setting out this conceptualisation of an effective HDR supervisory practice, we noted that an ethic of mutual inquiry prefaced by the recognition of the 'two wills' that constitute the pedagogical relationship provide a means for activating a dynamic HDR

candidature, the production of innovative research and the recognition of expertise beyond

narrowly-defined configurations of disciplinary acumen.

Mikhail Bahktin's (1984, 88) suggestion that the pedagogical relationship provides the

basis "to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationship with

the other ideas, with the ideas of others" neatly encapsulates the argument outlined in this

paper. Inherent to the activation of Rancière's ([1987] 1991) 'two wills', and central to the

mutuality and shared inquiry of Freire's ([1970] 1996) dialogic pedagogy, is an ethic that

positions the relationship as central to learning. By prefacing this relational dynamic and

allowing the inquiry to proceed as mutually constituted provides the means for recognizing

wide expressions of expertise and for acknowledging student and supervisor capacity to

inform the project. To close, we suggest that broader notions of expertise generate

possibilities for the recognition of supervisors and for more innovative HDR projects.

Notes

[1] These are perhaps best characterized in terms of what Lee Shulman (2005, 52) refers to as

'signature pedagogies', or "the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in

which future practitioners are educated".

[2] This of course has limits, and supervisors must remain cognisant of the requirements

inherent to supervision in particular disciplinary fields. In some fields – including 'technical'

and 'vocational' disciplines where industry requirements for specific competencies

correspond with the HDR candidature – requirements for particular demonstrations of

disciplinary expertise and concomitant credentialing remain core to supervisory capacity.

What this paper argues for is a conception of supervision that affords a wider purview of

what 'counts' as expertise, while recognising that basic competencies continue to define the

terrain of supervision in particular fields.

[3] Gert Biesta (2015) suggests that the most dynamic pedagogical exchanges are those that embrace such 'risk'. By transcending the expected and conventional, possibilities for new and innovative work emerge.

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Higher degree research supervision *beyond* expertise: A Rancièrean and Freirean perspective on HDR supervision

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Higher Degree Research Supervision *Beyond* Expertise: A Rancièrean and Freirean perspective on HDR supervision

Abstract

This paper examines the function of 'expertise' in mediating the student-supervisor relationship in Higher Degree Research (HDR). Prevailing conceptualisations of expertise generally translate as *disciplinary acumen* and reference the supervisor's specialist disciplinary and methodological knowledge. Beyond establishing the disciplinary 'signatures' of a discipline, this expertise also confers 'symbolic capital' within the disciplinary field. By way of provocation, this paper asks: "What might it mean when supervisors *lack* such specific disciplinary knowledge in the supervision of HDR projects?" Drawing on theoretical foundations from Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire, this paper considers how alternative ways of knowing and enacting scholarly inquiry might afford new terrains of practice within the HDR project, with the authors' recent experiences in supervising beyond their respective disciplinary expertise providing an illustration of this modality of supervision. This case example demonstrates how mutuality and the enactment of a Freirean dialogic supervisory approach might be brokered to widen considerations of what 'counts' as expertise within HDR supervision, as well as the challenges such an approach posed. In setting out this conceptualisation of an effective HDR supervisory practice, an ethic of mutual inquiry prefaced by the recognition of Rancière's 'two wills' that constitute the pedagogical relationship provide a means for activating a dynamic HDR candidature, the production of innovative research and the recognition of expertise beyond narrowly-defined configurations of disciplinary acumen.

Keywords

higher degree research; supervision; pedagogy; Freire; Rancière

Introduction

This paper examines the function of 'expertise' in mediating the student-supervisor relationship in Higher Degree Research (HDR). As experienced scholars, HDR supervisors are expected to maintain and demonstrate *expertise,* with mastery of disciplinary knowledge and methodological proficiency suggestive of the capacities of the supervisor. The expectation for "professional capital" (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) defines this affordance of expertise, but we note that what 'counts' as expertise is often limited to narrowly defined expressions of disciplinary practice. While we recognise that any attempt to identify a "universal description of academic expertise [is] extremely difficult" (Blackmore 2000, 52), we note that prevailing conceptualisations of valued and preferred disciplinary practice generally translate as *disciplinary acumen* – evidenced in "ways of thinking, methods of inquiry, and standards of [generating] evidence" (Taylor 2010, 62) that inhere to the specific tenets of a discipline[1]. In other words, expertise presents as the capacity to enact "specialist knowledge in a specific discipline" (Gube et al. 2017, 2), including the enactment of supervisory practices that correspond with defined disciplinary expectations.

Beyond demonstrating the disciplinary acumen of the supervisor, 'expertise' also confers 'symbolic capital' that is recognisable within, and valuable to, the disciplinary field. Following Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisations, this expression of symbolic capital proceeds in terms of "what is considered (in a given context) to be honor or prestige" (Betensky 2000, 208). Breneman (1976) and more recently Mangematin (2000) have highlighted that "the 'production' of PhD graduates increases the prestige of the PhD supervisor" (Mangematin 2000, 744) and that the reputational value this yields – or what Mangematin (2000) terms 'scientific visibility' – affords successful supervisors status and standing.

For supervisors, the symbolic capital inherent to the display of expertise is indicated in track records of research and prior supervisory success, wherein expertise and prestige work concomitantly to define the supervisor's reputation. For students, the association with high-status supervisory teams signifies reputational value for the project. Perceptions of supervisory expertise and the specific capacities that individual supervisors bring to the project *as* experts afford distinction to the project and the aspirations of the student (Abigail and Hill 2015; Ives and Rowley 2005; Donald et al. 1995; Cullen et al. 1994). Expertise in these terms functions as both an indicative capacity of the supervisor to supervise and a manifestation of the status conferred to the project and its standing within departmental, university and wider disciplinary contexts. Under these designations, expertise is typically regarded as a *valuable* attribute, identifying a sense of supervisory capacity and symbolic capital to supervisors, students and their projects. This in turn reflects the 'professional capital' (Hargreaves and Fullan 2015) that supervisors maintain and that 'accrues' in terms of the value that perceived expertise and relative experience provide. As indicators of the "competence, judgement, insight, inspiration and…capacity for improvisation" (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012: 5) within the tenets of the discipline, disciplinary expertise works to define successful supervision and the capacities of the supervisor.

The deliberations outlined in this paper challenge this conflation of expertise with disciplinary acumen. Instead, the argument contained here extends consideration of what it might mean when supervisors *do not* hold specific disciplinary acumen in the supervision of HDR projects. Moving away from prevailing configurations of expertise as defined and regulated within the confines of disciplinary knowledge and methodological application, we instead pose an argument that considers the possibilities that emerge when a *lack* of such expertise is maintained by the supervisor. The core question in this paper asks what this lack of disciplinary acumen might provide for the project and we consider how alternative ways of

knowing and enacting scholarly inquiry might afford new terrains of practice within the HDR

project. In taking this focus, we draw attention to the implications that this has for the

supervisory relationship and the 'status' of supervisors and students, to instead consider how

supervisors might effectively utilise stocks of professional and intellectual knowledge that

exist *beyond* the specific disciplinary scope of the supervised project.

Configuring 'lack' as a modality of expertise

We are careful not to conflate this positioning of 'lack' as a form of supervisory ineptitude.

We note that current formulations of the idea of expertise tie closely with demonstrable

ways-of-knowing that correspond with specific disciplinary discourses, technical knowledge

and intellectual paradigms and that these (in turn) describe the 'signatures' of a discipline's

'structures' (Shulman 2005). Knowledge-of and the capacity to enact these defined markers

of disciplinary competence invariably conflate in common parlance *as* expertise. It is our

intention here to widen this sense of expertise by questioning; i) what 'counts' as expertise

within the conduct of HDR supervision, ii) how a 'lack' of such focussed disciplinary

acumen might be framed as *generative*, and iii) how the student-supervisor relationship might

transcend requirements for the display of disciplinary acumen as a key pedagogical modality

for the successful progression of a project.

In taking this approach, we suggest that rather than being detrimental to a project,

supervisory capacity beyond the remit of closely defined disciplinary acumen creates

potential opportunities for the project, the student and the supervisors. Although we

acknowledge that there are very good reasons for why disciplines maintain and respond to

specific bodies of knowledge, intellectual currents and methodological approaches – with

these providing a discipline with its *corpus* of knowledge and practice that in turn define and

demarcate the discipline – we argue that a considered *ignorance* of these 'ways of doing' can

afford the supervision of HDR projects with generative possibility[2]. Indeed, moving beyond

considerations of defined accounts of supervisory expertise informed by limited

demonstrations of disciplinary acumen provokes the possibility for opening a more creative,

speculative and contingent approach to both the supervision and conduct of HDR projects.

To theorise this dynamic, we draw on considerations of pedagogy outlined by Jacques

Rancière ([1987] 1991) and Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996). In particular, Rancière's ([1987]

1991) meditations on pedagogical 'ignorance' and Freire's ([1970] 1996) placement of

dialogue at the centre of the pedagogical dynamic offer useful conceptual prompts for

considering HDR supervision beyond questions of expertise as an expression of focused

disciplinary acumen. Inferred within both Rancière's ([1987] 1991) and Friere's (1970)

approaches is a pedagogical ethic of dialogic and mutually informed inquiry that we suggest

holds significant value for considering effective HDR supervision. Rancière's ([1987] 1991)

observation that "there are two wills and two intelligences" (Rancière [1987] 1991,13)

operative in any pedagogical exchange provides a useful starting point for this consideration

and the possibilities that inhere in the negotiation of knowledge that HDR projects might

engage.

Our argument emphasises the significance of dialogue and the engagement between

supervisor and student that sits at the centre of an effective HDR candidature. Although an

important element of any student-supervisor relationship, we suggest that a more deliberate

positioning of the student's knowledge and demonstration of expertise provides a means for

broadening the role played by the supervisor and the production of innovative and dynamic

projects. A generative modality of supervision emerges when a dialogic relationship of

mutual inquiry recognizes the "two wills and two intelligences" within the student-supervisor

dynamic.

We turn now to a brief survey of the literature examining expertise in HDR supervision before outlining a more detailed account of Rancière's and Freire's pedagogies as these relate to HDR supervision. We then consider our specific experiences in supervising a recent HDR project where the expertise of the supervisors was distinct from that typical of the project's disciplinary field. This project involved an ethnography of the pedagogical practices applied in higher education music theatre singing (voice) studios, using theoretical resources derived from the archive of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Lee Shulman (2005). The authors/supervisors each brought a defined skillset to this project, but also notably identified areas in which little expertise was held. Author Hickey, for example, held expertise as an ethnographer and theoretician familiar with the work of Bourdieu and Shulman but had very little understanding of the field of higher education music theatre voice pedagogy and studio practice. Author Forbes drew on an extensive background as a professional singer and voice teacher, but held limited expertise in ethnography or the theoretical frames applied in this project.

Following a discussion of the implications of this approach, we close this paper with a consideration of how the reification of dialogue and the nurturance of the student-supervisor relationship informed by Rancièrean and Freirean conceptions of pedagogy might yield generative possibility in the supervision of HDR projects whilst also broadening considerations of what counts as effective supervisory expertise.

Expertise and Higher Degree Research

A prominent theme within the literature identifies the role of the supervisor as mentor and guide for the HDR student. While this intent towards effective guidance is crucial to the progression of any HDR project and the development of the student as an 'autonomous' scholar (Johnson, Lee and Green 2000; Overall, Deane and Peterson 2011), it remains that

the predominant conceptualisations of mentorship evident in the literature position the

disciplinary expertise of the supervisor as foundational to this guidance.

Lee's (2008) identification of five mutually contingent 'approaches' to supervision

provides a useful summary of the capacities suggested by this formulation of *expert*

guidance. As Lee (2008, 270-1) notes, supervisors enact their practice as supervisors across

the following approaches:

(1) Functional: where the issue is one of project management.

(2) Enculturation: where the student is encouraged to become a member of the

disciplinary community.

(3) Critical thinking: where the student is encouraged to question and analyse their

work.

(4) Emancipation: where the student is encouraged to question and develop

themselves.

(5) Developing a quality relationship: where the student is enthused, inspired and

cared for.

While Lee's (2008) typology identifies important generic capacities for effective supervision

('critical thinking' and 'developing a quality relationship' in particular), the implication

within this typology rests on the capacity of the supervisor to guide *as* an 'expert'. For

instance, under the 'functional' approach, the supervisor "gives priority to issues of skills

development" (Lee 2008, 271) where emphasis is placed on the imparting of functional skills

that define the discipline and reflect its structures. Under the 'enculturation' approach, "an

apprenticeship element is included" (Lee 2008, 272), wherein the student is enculturated into

appropriate practice by a disciplinary master. Within the 'critical thinking' approach, the

supervisor poses questions of the student with the purpose of exposing the underlying

epistemic frames of the discipline, further revealing the supervisor's knowledge of and

expertise within the discipline. Overarching all of this, 'emancipation' is geared to encouraging the student to "question and develop themselves" (Lee 2008, 271), but with adherence to the disciplinary structures that define the discipline's conduct. Core to each of these approaches is the activation of disciplinary modalities of practice that reflect the expert supervisor's positioning within the discipline. This expertise is possessed by the supervisor and imparted to the student to provide the foundation of the HDR candidature and the student's progression toward autonomy.

McCallin and Nayar's (2012, 66) analysis similarly highlights that "supervisors are expected to coach and mentor students", with attention given to the 'training' that students undertake during the candidature as entry into the disciplinary field proceeds. Within this formulation, the HDR candidature represents a form of professional induction performed under the guidance and direction of the expert supervisor. Although we argue that there are a number of important reasons for why this should occur – not least for the exposure to scholarly networks and disciplinary leaders with whom some association should be brokered by the HDR student – we also note the risk of insulation that corresponds with the replication of practices, ways of knowing and methodological conduct core to a discipline; a phenomenon identified within the literature as 'academic inbreeding' (Inanc and Tuncer 2011). For supervisors who do not maintain such focused disciplinary association (and further, such intricately defined understandings of the disciplinary field), the possibility for the productive contravention of the 'rules' of a discipline open opportunities for conducting the research in (potentially) innovative ways.

Extending this view, Ives and Rowley (2005, 536) note that although "expertise in one's field of specialization and active involvement in research" are often considered prerequisites for effective supervision and that these capacities have traditionally provided the means for introducing a student to the tenets of a discipline, they do not necessarily

"guarantee good supervisory practice". This important insight indicates the significance of

the nurturance of the supervisory relationship and the capacities required by supervisors to

support the 'psychodynamic' and 'transpersonal' dimensions of supervision (Reason and

Marshall 1987). We highlight Ives and Rowley's (2005, 541) findings that although "the

supervisor's expertise and the student's Ph.D topic usually forms the basis for supervisor

allocation", the effectiveness of the relationship between supervisor and student provides a

better indicator of a student's ultimate success and intellectual development. Such a

consideration of the placement and function of supervisory practice relocates the impetus of

supervisory capacity away from limited conceptions of disciplinarily-framed expertise to

more deliberative considerations of the supervisor's capacity to work *relationally* with the

student in the enactment of a dialogic approach to the supervision.

Such a positionality is illustrated in Wisker, Robinson and Shacham's (2007, 303-4)

conceptualization of the 'guardian supervisor' wherein "the supervisory relationship is the

primary one to ensure…that students are guided and empowered to be autonomous learners".

These authors also identify an important further element of the supervisor's role. As with Ives

and Rowley's (2005) observations regarding the importance of the relationship between

student and supervisor, Wisker, Robinson and Shacham (2007) highlight that the supervisor's

capacity to guide and provide pastoral support in accordance with the contextual

requirements of the project provides a key indicator of supervisory success. Wisker,

Robinson and Shacham (2007, 302) extend these considerations to focus on how the

formation of communities of practice might be developed across cohorts of peers in an effort

to develop student-led networks that provide mutual support and that challenge the view of

postgraduate research as "a lone venture". This approach draws attention to the development

of "students who are able to engage in problem-solving dialogues with their supervisors and

with peers" (Wisker, Robinson and Shacham 2007, 305), emphasizing the relational and

contextualized nature of higher degree research. Under this formulation, the function of supervision remains geared towards guidance and the generative development of students as autonomous scholars, but *within* wider networks of inquiry and support.

We argue that significant amenity for supervisors is to be found in such an approach, but that a number of concomitant challenges present. We note the tension inherent to expectations within higher degree programs for supervisors *to* maintain disciplinary expertise relevant to the topic of the research, but that the pragmatics of allocating supervision are often "based on institutional arrangements" (Gube et al. 2017, 2), and more pertinently, who is available to supervise. We suggest that reconsiderations of what constitutes supervisory expertise and how supervisory capacity might be imagined beyond the limits of disciplinary acumen provide opportunity to also move beyond the structures of these structural constraints.

In an effort to provide theoretical depth to these deliberations, we turn now to consider how conceptualisations of supervisory expertise might be expanded. Through consideration of the generative capacity of 'ignorance' as outlined by Jacques Rancière ([1987] 1991) and the centrality of dialogue in the formation of effective pedagogical relations detailed by Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996), we reframe supervisory expertise towards the efficacy of the relationship between student and supervisor.

Lessons from Rancière

Jacques Rancière's ([1987] 1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* considers the role of the pedagogue in learning. Rancièrean pedagogy is established on the premise that *instruction* – the primary pedagogical modality of systems of formal education as Rancière understood these – functions as 'stultifying' for the student. For Rancière ([1987] 1991, 6-7), education under this formulation proceeds as a demonstration of

the teacher's expertise, wherein the teacher's (or, in the case of this article, the supervisor's) expertise maintains primacy as the focus in the dissemination of knowledge:

> To explain something to someone is first of all to show him [*sic*] he cannot understand it by himself. Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid. The explicator's special trick consists of this double inaugural gesture. On the one hand, he decrees the absolute beginning: it is only now that the act of learning will begin. On the other, having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, he appoints himself to the task of lifting it…The pedagogical myth, we said, divides…the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligence into two. It says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one.

The problem for Rancière rests with the 'myth of explication' and the ceding of any expertise held by the student to that of the teacher. By contrast, Rancière ([1987] 1991, 13) argues that a liberatory pedagogy emphasizes "the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student" and that students come to learning as knowledgeable in their own way. The purpose of education is not to expose a student's ignorance (or impose the teacher's expertise), but to draw together a "pure relationship of will to will" (Rancière [1987] 1991, 13) between teacher and student in acts of mutual inquiry.

In the context of HDR supervision, the HDR student, possessing an undergraduate qualification (and in the case of entry into a doctoral program, a qualifying postgraduate degree – usually an Honours or Masters qualification), comes to the HDR program not entirely naïve to the requirements of the disciplinary field. By the time of the HDR candidature, the student is already, to some degree, accomplished as a scholar and familiar with the requirements of the discipline. Under a Rancièrean pedagogy, rather than impose a

pedagogy of *explication*, that in turn positions the student as *not* knowing, a more effective

HDR supervisory pedagogy would elevate the relationship of supervisor and candidate to

reify the student's capacities and knowledge (or 'will' in Rancièrean terms). Within this

dynamic the implications for the supervision are then geared toward how the supervisor

provokes a climate of support and engagement for the student, wherein the supervisor's

expertise in negotiating the pastoral aspects of a HDR pedagogy supersede those of the

explicit demonstration of disciplinary acumen.

Following Wisker, Robinson and Shacham's (2007, 303) observation that "the

supervisory relationship is the primary one to ensure", such an approach to supervision

emphasizes how the relationship between student and supervisor provides a context for

inquiry. Manderson's (1996, 410; emphasis added) discussion on what makes for effective

supervision provides further nuance for explaining the dynamic between student and

supervisor:

> One myth of supervision is that the supervisor must be an expert on the substantive
>
> topic of the thesis. On the contrary, the student will inevitably come to know more
>
> about his subject than his supervisor does. If this is not the case, then something is
>
> seriously awry. *Not knowledge but experience is the aim of supervision*. It is neither the
>
> principal goal of the supervisee to acquire expertise nor the goal of the supervisor to
>
> transmit it. The supervisor's role is to help the student learn how to learn. This means a
>
> focus on the processes of learning: how to research, how to read, how to write, how to
>
> structure an argument. We might even go so far as to say that a supervisor should not
>
> be helping her student find answers, but rather should encourage the process of asking
>
> better questions.

The important element in this observation corresponds with the pedagogical implications this

holds for the supervision. Supervision is after all pedagogical in its prerogative, with the

implication resting in the capacity that the supervisor brings to the 'cultivation' of the project

and the research training that the HDR candidature represents. It is with how this is achieved

that the question rests, with Manderson (1996, 410) going on to note that:

> …supervision is mutual: it is an exercise by which both participants gain. The
> supervisor, for example, learns something about the subject matter of the thesis. But
> beyond this, supervision provides an opportunity for both parties to share something of
> themselves and their minds. The student is no lesser being in this exchange.

A Rancièrean ethic is implied in Manderson's (1996) deliberations. At core in his claim is the

relationship between student and supervisor and the ways that this supervisory relationship

provokes an ethic of inquiry and mutual discovery. It is in these terms that an effective

supervision moves beyond the reification of narrowly defined supervisory expertise –

represented under the guise of disciplinary acumen – to instead prefigure the exchange, and

indeed, the relationship between supervisor and student as foundational to the project. Under

this formulation, effective supervision is more about the nurturance of the relationship than it

is the disciplinary expertise of the supervisor.

Case Study: Freire, Dialogue and Engaged Supervision

With this reframing of the roles inherent to the supervisory relationship, attention turns to

how the relationship between student and supervisor is brokered *in practice*. The focus of the

supervisory relationship shifts to one of mutual inquiry, where the interaction between

supervisor and student exposes a pedagogical modality that emphasises the 'two wills' that

define the pedagogical relationship. It is within this context of mutual inquiry and recognition

of the 'two wills' that a more distributed expression of expertise is realised.

The authors' recent experiences in supervising beyond their respective disciplinary

expertise provide an illustration of this modality of supervision. As indicated at the beginning

of this paper, the HDR project in question involved the supervisors coming to the supervision

with markedly distinct disciplinary expertise and backgrounds. Although author Forbes held

connection to the concerns of the discipline (with her background in higher education vocal

pedagogy relevant to this project), it remained that her expertise in the theoretical and

methodological applications of the project were limited; areas in which author Hickey held

capacity. This situation was further complicated by the host university's requirement for

experienced supervisors – designated by records of prior supervision 'to completion' – to

take the lead as 'Principal Supervisor'. In this instance, author Hickey was required to

assume the role of Principal Supervisor, even though author Forbes arguably held a greater

understanding of the project's field. This brings to light the 'institutional arrangements' that

Gube et al. (2017) identify and that further reinforce (and complicate) prevailing assumptions

of what counts as 'expertise'.

At first blush, the mutual strengths of each supervisor might be considered as having

provided a coverage of expertise for this project. But it emerged that something beyond this

'distributed' capacity was at work as the supervision progressed. Dialogue and the activation

of what Paulo Freire ([1970] 1996) identifies as 'problem-posing education' opened space for

a far more mutual approach to the project's development; an approach that integrally relied

upon the student and her understanding of, and association with, the field of this project's

inquiry. The student – an experienced performer and voice teacher – was crucial to this

situating of the project and, far from being a passive recipient of supervisory expertise, was

central to the formation of the project's conceptual, theoretical and methodological

progression. The supervisors and student came to recognise and enact the 'two wills' and in

doing so emphasised the place of mutual inquiry and participatory dialogue in defining the

supervisory relationship.

Such an approach amplified the significance of "dialogical relations" (Freire [1970]

1996, 79) in effective supervision, where mutuality of inquiry in the conduct of the project

was prefaced as a mode of practice and engagement. But apart from simply providing a

necessary means to ensure the progress of this project, this approach also generated

innovative ways of conceptualising and investigating the phenomena at core in this inquiry;

conceptualisations that were not informed by disciplinary strictures and 'ways of doing

things' but that emerged through a mutuality of inquiry prompted by the respective expertise

and ignorance that each supervisor and the student brought to the project. Seemingly naïve

questions were able to be asked in the spirit of inquiry and as the student and supervisors

developed their own understanding of the field and the intricacies of the project. A pedagogy

that emphasised discovery and dialogue was brokered in these terms.

For example, this project identified theoretical and conceptual frames that were

otherwise absent in the literature – material primarily drawn from the archives of Pierre

Bourdieu (1994) and Lee Shulman (2005). Little guidance could be derived from the

literature and its established traditions of practice, and consequently this required the student

to be active in developing this project and its conceptual points of reference – to 'try things

on' – and develop a way of working that utilised the supervisors' own inquiry and discovery

as a further reference for establishing the project's foundations. Although this expectation of

coming-to-expertise is common to all HDR projects, it was with the mutuality of the inquiry

and the supervisors' reliance on the student to also demonstrate expertise that a point of

distinction with more typical supervisory practice was noted. The supervisors did not possess

their own stocks of disciplinary knowledge to gauge the student's 'development', and

accordingly were reliant on the student's knowledge of the field, its networks of leading

scholars and *ways of doing things* that constituted this field's signatures of practice. This

prompted the reconsideration of what counted as supervisory 'expertise', with the supervisors

and student deliberating as partners on this project and not within a 'master-apprentice'

arrangement (Harrison and Grant 2015; Frankland 1999). Emphasis was placed on mutually

identifying ways of creatively enacting the research and less on adhering to disciplinarily

sanctioned theoretical and methodological approaches.

While indicating the significance of Rancière's ([1987] 1991) considerations of

pedagogical 'ignorance' and the emancipatory capacity of drawing the student into the

pedagogical design of a project, dialogue provided the modality of engagement for activating

this pedagogical dynamic. This aspect of the approach taken in this project is illustrated by

Paulo Freire's ([1970] 1996) considerations of dialogue in mediating the student-teacher

relationship. As Freire ([1970] 1996, 80) notes:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to
>
> exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no
>
> longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [*sic*] taught in dialogue
>
> with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly
>
> responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on
>
> "authority" are no longer valid.

We are careful in acknowledging that the context from which Freire was writing is markedly

different to that of the case example we have described to this point; not least for the

liberatory imperative inherent to Friere's work with marginalized peoples. But this

formulation of a dialogic pedagogy nonetheless offers a means for activating a student-

supervisor relationship that prefaces the expertise of each (and in doing so, gives form to the

recognition of Rancière's 'two wills'). It is out of such a dynamic that both student and

supervisor come to the project as 'experts' in their own way, but importantly, under a mode

of relationality that avoids arbitrary hierarchies and limited designations of disciplinary

expertise. In the authors' example, the supervision proceeded as a far more mutual

negotiation, where dialogue was "indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality"

(Freire [1970] 1996, 83).

Discussion: Expertise and Experts

Although the case example demonstrates how mutuality and the enactment of a dialogic supervisory approach might be brokered to widen considerations of what 'counts' as expertise, a number of challenges, especially early-on in the relationship, required negotiation. These primarily corresponded with the tacit expectations that both the supervisors and student brought to the project, as informed by prevailing assumptions that circulate around the idea of expertise and what is expected of the student-supervisor relationship. We characterise these challenges in the following ways:

'Distributed' expertise

Establishing the student-supervisor relationship such that the 'two wills' of the supervisory relationship could activate an ethic of mutual inquiry required challenging existing assumptions of the role of the supervisor; and in particular, how guidance and mentorship in the supervision was activated and recognised. It was notable that, early-on in the project, heavy emphasis was placed by the student on the display of disciplinary acumen by the supervisors. It took some time for a recognition of the supervisors' capacities – especially those of author Hickey – to be considered as *valuable*. To some extent this corresponded with assumptions that associate with this particular project's field, where 'practice' as a performing artist (evidenced through a record of performance experience) complements more scholarly markers of supervisory capacity. Author Hickey did not come to this supervision with a record of performance experience as an artist-performer and subsequently a dynamic emerged where author Forbes would be engaged by the student and advice sought based on perceptions of her status as a performing artist, voice pedagogue *and* scholar. While both authors were active in supporting the student in negotiating the various administrative processes that coincided with the initiation of the project (including processes associated with commencing the project and progressing toward confirmation of the project's proposal within

the first year of candidature), it remained that in these early stages the student situated the project by referring primarily to author Forbes' disciplinary acumen and connection to networks of scholars.

Beyond these initial observations regarding the tacit designation of this project's locus of supervisory expertise, it was indeed the case that author Hickey was reliant on the input of the student and author Forbes to establish his own sense of the disciplinary 'coordinates' that defined this project. Author Hickey was particularly reliant on the student to identify frames of reference for positioning the epistemic 'conditions' of the field and orienting the way that knowledge is produced and represented. While traditionally it is within these early stages of a candidature that the student engages the literature to establish a sense of the field, for this project, the authors (and in particular author Hickey) were also actively engaged in reading widely and negotiating the positioning of the project within the wider terrain of its discipline. It was via this mutual inquiry that author Hickey's contribution to the project emerged. In negotiating the literature and establishing his own sense of how the project would refine its specific focus of inquiry, author Hickey provided suggestions regarding the theoretical and conceptual framing of the project. These prompts in turn provided the foundation for dialogue between the student and the authors and from which the design of the project, its theoretical frames and methodological conduct were considered, negotiated, and defined. It was here that disciplinarily unexpected applications of theory and method were identified, and in a process of 'trying-on' different ideas and theoretical and methodological applications, the specific focus of this project emerged.

There was also a further aspect to this dynamic. Vereijken et al (2018, 523) observe that:

> In comparison to experienced doctoral supervisors, novices worry about being taken seriously by students and feel unprepared for working within environments without clear guidelines.

We suggest that the same applies to supervisors whose expertise derives from different disciplinary backgrounds to the student. When not equipped with a discernible track record of focussed, disciplinary expertise, supervisor and student must engage as co-inquirers and develop an ethic of mutuality in establishing and progressing the project. It took time for author Hickey's contributions to the project to register and during this period significant uncertainty – from both the student and supervisors – was experienced; did this supervisory relationship provide the right 'fit'? Was author Hickey's background appropriate to this project? Could a shared *lingua franca* of theoretical and conceptual knowledge be generated to serve this project?

We note that perceptions of a 'lack' of expertise – by students, by supervisors and indeed within wider departmental and disciplinary networks of scholars – represent as a significant challenge to supervision. Transcending initial perceptions and expectations for what counts as effective supervision, premised on assumptions regarding disciplinary expertise, presents as a notable 'risk' to the progression of HDR projects[3]. Given that, under prevailing assumptions, supervisors are *meant* to maintain and demonstrate disciplinary expertise, a challenge presents in affirming the value of distributed expertise beyond such narrowly defined conceptualisations.

Supervisory 'ignorance' to the field

Although Rancière ([1987] 1991) configures 'ignorance' as a generative capacity, there remain some very good reasons for why supervisors *should* appraise themselves of the project's field. As the discussion above suggests, it is valuable for supervisor and student to engage the project (and its field) mutually and indeed, for the student to advise the supervisor

on key theoretical material and the intellectual traditions that define this field. But beyond this, supervisors still require cognisance of the expectations inherent to the discipline and should remain receptive to the prevailing discourses and ways of generating and representing knowledge that define the project's field. The HDR project is, after all, undertaken for an award qualification and accordingly will be prone to examination and appraisal by recognised disciplinary 'experts'. It follows that supervisors must become familiar with these dynamics in order to effectively position their own expectations for the project and to advocate on behalf of its conduct.

This situation corresponds with Callanan's (2004) distinction between 'scholarly' and 'pedagogical' expertise. While the 'ignorant' supervisor may come to the supervision with considerable pedagogical expertise, we note that supervisors should work to develop their disciplinary acumen as part of the supervision; that is, Callanan's (2004) 'scholarly expertise'. While we suggest that it is with pedagogical expertise that the greatest influence of the supervisor is realised, the supervisor should nonetheless aim to develop scholarly expertise and an understanding of the project's disciplinary positioning. This aligns with the central purpose of the dialogic approach outlined above, wherein dialogue and mutual inquiry 'equip' both student *and* supervisor with new frames of understanding and knowledge.

We follow Hamilton and Carson's (2015, 4) observation that:

It could be argued that all candidates must eventually exceed the knowledge of their supervisor as they forge a highly specialised contribution to new knowledge. However, in an emergent field, relinquishing the role of expert as all-knowing researcher-supervisor, and assuming a primarily enabling role is an experience to which many supervisors will relate, especially when candidates are differently situated – not only in terms of their practice, but also in terms of their cultural background.

A certain pragmatism is inherent to this sentiment. Given that HDR projects are not always able to be supervised by disciplinarily 'expert' supervisors, providing the conditions wherein mutual inquiry and shared knowledge production can proceed provides the project the potential to chart innovative lines of inquiry.

Expanded conceptions of 'expertise'

As indicated by Callanan's (2004) distinction between 'scholarly' and 'pedagogical' expertise, we suggest that expanded definitions of expertise are required in order to open opportunities for more deliberative supervision practice. Given that expertise is often conflated with narrowly defined disciplinary acumen, which in turn reduces the possibility for generating innovative approaches to research within a field, we suggest that emphasis should be placed on expanding understandings of what constitutes effective supervision and an effective supervisor. Reformulations of the 'prestige' that associates with disciplinary acumen should coincide with the identification and description of 'pedagogical expertise'. How it is that supervisors come to enact practices that position centrally the 'two wills' of the HDR candidature, geared as this is toward mutual inquiry through dialogue, opens the opportunity for recording more deliberate accounts of effective supervision practice and pedagogy.

Conclusion

We have argued that expertise as it is currently defined limits the possibilities for HDR projects. Drawing on Rancière's ([1987] 1991) conceptualisation of pedagogical 'ignorance' and Freire's ([1970] 1996) placement of dialogue at the core of effective pedagogical engagement, we presented a case for the nurturance of the relationship between student and supervisor. In setting out this conceptualisation of an effective HDR supervisory practice, we noted that an ethic of mutual inquiry prefaced by the recognition of the 'two wills' that constitute the pedagogical relationship provide a means for activating a dynamic HDR

candidature, the production of innovative research and the recognition of expertise beyond

narrowly-defined configurations of disciplinary acumen.

Mikhail Bahktin's (1984, 88) suggestion that the pedagogical relationship provides the

basis "to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationship with

the other ideas, with the ideas of others" neatly encapsulates the argument outlined in this

paper. Inherent to the activation of Rancière's ([1987] 1991) 'two wills', and central to the

mutuality and shared inquiry of Freire's ([1970] 1996) dialogic pedagogy, is an ethic that

positions the relationship as central to learning. By prefacing this relational dynamic and

allowing the inquiry to proceed as mutually constituted provides the means for recognizing

wide expressions of expertise and for acknowledging student and supervisor capacity to

inform the project. To close, we suggest that broader notions of expertise generate

possibilities for the recognition of supervisors and for more innovative HDR projects.

Notes

[1] These are perhaps best characterized in terms of what Lee Shulman (2005, 52) refers to as

'signature pedagogies', or "the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in

which future practitioners are educated".

[2] This of course has limits, and supervisors must remain cognisant of the requirements

inherent to supervision in particular disciplinary fields. In some fields – including 'technical'

and 'vocational' disciplines where industry requirements for specific competencies

correspond with the HDR candidature – requirements for particular demonstrations of

disciplinary expertise and concomitant credentialing remain core to supervisory capacity.

What this paper argues for is a conception of supervision that affords a wider purview of

what 'counts' as expertise, while recognising that basic competencies continue to define the

terrain of supervision in particular fields.

[3] Gert Biesta (2015) suggests that the most dynamic pedagogical exchanges are those that embrace such 'risk'. By transcending the expected and conventional, possibilities for new and innovative work emerge.

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