

## TRAIN THE RESEARCH SUPERVISORS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Students are now the central of institutions' structure where the focus should be given based on their demands towards best training services and also supervisors' professional consideration. This scenario has substantial influence to the image of academic institution. Thus, research supervisor in institutions need to be prepared with extensive professional qualification. It does not only serve for customers' satisfaction, but also a need in staffs' continuing professional development. This article will discuss the important skills and responsibilities of a supervisor to practice.

**Keywords:** Research student, supervisor, students' satisfaction, continuing professional development.

### Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) is required for an institution to sustain where the research supervisors have to enhance their skills in supervision related tasks within a particular framework. For this purpose, a training session for supervisors might be appropriate. The experienced supervisor should help in training new inexperienced supervisors from time to time and followed by mentoring program for the supervisors. Research supervision concept affects the way the CPD being deployed. There are many ways to develop supervisors' skills and to form a CPD process in supervisors' career. There is a need for each of the supervisors to reflect themselves and develop their skills in supervision as a part of their profession.

### Professional Supervisor for Quality Education

There is always demand for quality education especially in higher education. Such intention need to be addressed from every institutional level including supervisors' input. Supervisors or lecturers need to awake and prepare themselves with relevant skills and input. Therefore, there is a need to extend their knowledge regarding supervision instruction so that their professional prestige and capacity to plan, analyze and pedagogically guide instructional processes in their institution will be increased (Nir, 2003). There is a circumstance in Sweden where the demand for effectiveness in postgraduate studies is increased (Frankea & Arvidssonb, 2011). This means a greater role of supervisor in guiding postgraduate students to ensure an excellent research outcome.

Quality education can be defined and explained through many perspectives. Nevertheless, quality in supervision can be described by the level of supervision experience. Supervision satisfaction refers to the supervisee's perception of the quality of supervision based on supervisor's personal qualities, supervisor s' performance/competence, and trainee's comfort with expression of personal ideas in supervision (Holloway & Wampold, 1984). The bond between them will determine the successful of project progress. The interaction between student and supervisor should be bonded with specific goal. Thus, the process of supervision can be done effectively.

The students have right to choose their supervisor according to their preferences. The journey of a research student starts from selection of supervisor until viva presentation. Then it will cycle as a good supervision process. Lee (2008) said that, the quality of supervisors is affected by their experience while supervising or being supervised when they werestudents. Sometimes, they repeat what they learned and perceived good based on their experiences. Training should be made especially to new lecturers.

Supervision is a communicative activity and needs to be based on theories of language and communication. The particular aims were threefold: (1) to improve students' academic writing; (2) to provide support and help students solve the problems they encountered in the different phases of their research; and (3) to help students finish on time (Dysthe, Samara, & Westrheim, 2006). Nevertheless, these needs varied from one to another. The needs also changes according to different stages of research process. During the process of supervision, they are hoped to possess

and assimilate the knowledge that was transferred so that in turn, the students will become more capable in their field for better future. Therefore, the evaluation for quality education can be assessed using the three domain of learning outcomes which are cognitive, skill-based and affective outcomes as proposed by Kraiger et al. in 1993.

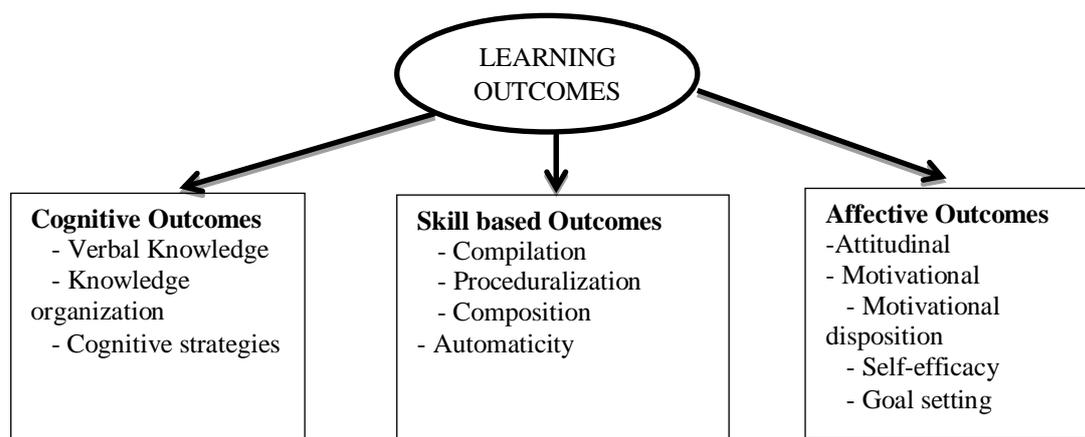


Figure 1: A preliminary Classification Scheme of Learning Outcomes  
Source: (Kraiger et al., 1993)

### The Responsibilities of an Effective Supervisor

In order to become a good supervisor, they need to understand the responsibilities that were underlined in their job's scope. Russell (1996) undertook a study in the Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology at The Flinders University, South Australia to understand graduate research by interviewing research students and supervisors. This study found that nearly half of the students who participated felt that the constraints they encountered related to lack of support from the supervisor and school. These included a lack of encouragement, pastoral care and reassurance from the supervisor, as well as a lack of formal and informal arrangements for students to support each other. Cryer (2000), Donald et al. (1995) and Salmon (1992) support this statement. At the very least, the supervisor should know where to refer students when serious personal problems begin to affect their work (Zuber-Skerrit et al., 1994).

There are so many roles of supervisors and the role is not only monitoring the projects' progress but also to prepare any possible guidance through each of the research stages. Supervisors are expected to be mainly experts in teaching (Brown and Krager, 1985; Connell, 1985; Waitie, 1994). A further focus in ensuring smooth operation of supervision process is to provide the students with adequate innovation and creativity input. The European Council conclusions of May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training formulate four primary strategic goals for educational policy. One of these is enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training (Weiß, 2009). In the other part of the responsibilities of supervisors include making sure that they are aware of matters such as project registration, defining research scope, determine the research topic, guiding through the proposal writing, preparing the resource needs etc. Such advice is, of course, especially useful for international students (Russell, 1996).

### Skills in Supervision

Conceptualizing of research project supervision/advising is the consideration of three inter-related areas: the learning and teaching process; developing the student; and producing the research project/outcome as a social practice (Todd, Smith, & Bannister, 2006). They thus make their position clear: supervision is centrally a teaching/learning process but never-the-less a practice that has parallel processes, namely, student development and the research itself (Maxwell & Smyth, 2009).

Russell (1996) and Moses (1992) found that both supervisors and students agreed that one role of the supervisor was to assist students in general and the amount of assistance that supervisors give to graduate students varies, depending upon the stage that the latter have reached (Moses, 1992). It depends on the dependency of a student. Most of the students should be given time to think about their research and encourage them to try solving the problems on their own during their process (Cryer, 2000; Phillips & Pugh, 2000). The supervisors also should motivate the students (Donald et al., 1995; Kam, 1997).

As the supervision progresses, a supervisor should realize how to react to the changes of students' needs. There are a few steps that should be taken prior to the supervision to happen such as: (1) attended conference/seminar on student supervision; (2) attended workshops on student supervision organized by institution; (3) get enough support in the university to engage in student supervision; (4) financial support (such as grants); (5) peer support; (6) management support; and (7) mentoring support. Supervision of postgraduate research can be viewed as management of uncertainty; management of transformations and realizing that time is the enemy (Hassan, 2011). Meanwhile, Zuber-Skerritt et al. (2004) introduces indicators of effective and ineffective supervisors. An effective supervisor should have larger experience base, encouraging, facilitator, resourceful, committed to student, multidisciplinary, highly organized and insightful. A supervisor should not be neophyte, ill-equipped and judgemental.

## Conclusion

Complementing the needs of a supervisee is a must in current education world. By giving support and guidance through their journey, students can complete their study in time and graduate contently. Meanwhile, to provide the best offer to the students, a supervisor should prepare himself/herself with relevant skill and knowledge to assist a supervision process. Moreover, the route taken by supervisors for their self-learning and training can contribute to their continuing professional development. Supervisor need to have a good interpersonal and communication skill, knowledgeable and skilled in research field, and act as a motivator and supporter. By enhancing the CPD, it will increase the image of institution and view academicians as a sanctuary of knowledge.

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