

# Engaging and Training Supervisors: The Supervisor's Perspective

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# Supervision before the training

## Supervision as a “black box”

- Nobody talked about supervision!
- You learnt to be a supervisor adapting what your supervisor did during your own PhD.
- Lack of (structured) supervision: Too many PhD researchers claiming to be working alone.
- Learning by doing: Mistakes, misunderstandings, drop out rate
- Lonely task. No communication among supervisors.
- Facing challenges: supervising a PhD was more than producing a book.
  - Dissertation
  - Publish with impact factor in 3 years time!
  - Internationalization of supervision.

# Supervision before the training

## **PhD was not a strategic issue for URV**

- Supervision was an additional task for professors.
- \*The Institution did not differentiate between good and bad practices of supervision.
- Lack of institutional coordination. Academic and administrative processes were disconnected.

# Training: Dates and phases

## **Professionalization of PhD Supervision**

**(Personal development as a supervisor)**

- **October 2013**
- **May 2014**

## **Training for Trainers of Supervisors**

**(Personal development as a future trainer of URV's supervisors)**

- **October 2014**
- **May 2015**

# The supervisors training project at URV

**My experience as a supervisor**

# Experiences during the initial and follow-up training workshops

## What exchanging experiences with colleagues provided:

- An excellent opportunity to open a space to talk about supervision.
- Meeting colleagues from different disciplines engaged in supervision.
- Nice atmosphere of exchange -positive and negative experiences, questions, problems, and doubts.
- Better understanding of the differences and challenges of supervising theses in different disciplines.
- Good interaction between senior and junior supervisors.
- Motivation, energy, discussion, group dynamics

# Experiences during the initial follow-up training workshops

## Engaging supervisors in further training and professional attitude

- Providing an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and exchange among participants.
- Inducing self-assessment of one's supervision model and showing a clear path of improvement.
- Opening the individual “black box” of supervision.
- Understanding professionalization as a response to the new PhD context and demands.
- Facilitating tools for improving supervision task.



# The training improved my awareness, practices and skills as a supervisor

- I better understood each of the different phases of the PhD process and my roles as a supervisor.
- I used tools to develop and evaluate my task.
- I made clear milestones during the process, warning signs of each phase and how to deal with them.
- I increased my self-confidence as a supervisor.
- I opened my mind to cooperate with others.
- I increased my awareness of quality assurance of the whole process.
- I mentored future supervisee's career. "Hybrid" type of doctoral candidates.
- I improved my professional effectiveness as a supervisor as well as my personal wellbeing.
- I was very much concerned about the whole process of PhD supervision as part of an institution.
- I increased my awareness of my role inside the institutional strategic effort of my University.
- All of this improved the quality of doctoral education.

# The key topics of my change after the training

- **Immediately after the training. My experience with Alexandra.**
  - I showed her the relevance of our work not only as a personal output but as an institutional output too.
  - I explained to her, the reasons behind all the new requirements of the PhD process and how this connects to the global system of excellence and efficiency. A scenario that a new researcher needs to know, understand and commit to.
  - I increased my feedback and my meetings with her.
  - I opened my agenda to coordinate our work.
  - I left her more freedom to achieve a very good output.
  - I identified some problems and I found solutions.
  - I empowered her to increase her own international network.
  - I used checklist supervisory biography in the final phase of her dissertation.
  - I Worked with her on the idea of a “hybrid” profile for a successful career: Academia (publish with impact factor) and private sector (opportunities to meet business people and interact with them)

# The key topics of my change after the training

- **Further on after the training**
  - Clarifying
    - Roles, expectations and supervisory relationship
    - Meeting protocols -written by the doctoral candidate
    - The relation of support and independence
    - Agenda
    - Responsibilities in co-supervision
  - Selection and induction as a team effort.

# The reaction of my supervisee

- Our supervisory relationship improved strongly. A professional couple working together.
- I talked to my supervisee about my training during our meetings.
- She performed better in the final phase.
- A clear personality developed. She matured not only as an independent researcher but also as a more emotional balanced woman.
- She prepared the transition to her professional project: international stay; relationships with the business sector.
- She was building her own network of contacts for her future career.

The training changed my general notion and understanding of research supervision and the supervisory relation

- Key and complex task
- Researcher development and future career
- Professional relationship
- Research supervision as a team effort of different stakeholders

# Impact of supervisors training at URV

- Acceptance and participation of academic staff.
- Institutional recognition of the "value " of supervision.
- Awareness of the new role of the supervisor in the context of the new doctorate.
- A very supportive and productive supervision culture.
- Special recognition of our supervision task in our annual plan of activities.
- A core group of supervisors created the **Community of Good Practices in Doctoral Supervision**.
- URV supported **the training of 4 trainers of supervisors**.
- Institutional problems and disadvantages are still remaining
  - Coordination of administrative and academic processes
  - A shared strategy and alignment of all stakeholders

# After the experience

- The professionalization of supervisors is the core in building institutional commitment as a whole, as well as in increasing the commitment of the institution.
- Doctoral School has to take over a leading role.
- Successful supervisors training is needed for the future of the PhD, for strongly improving the quality of doctoral education in Europe

# Improve the quality of your doctoral education

- **Efficiency**
- **Excellence**
- **Quality assurance**
- **Research Culture**
- **Satisfactory research experience**

**Supervisors training is a must for the future of doctoral education**