

Engaging and Training Supervisors

Concepts and Experiences from the Trainer's Perspective

9th EUA-CDE Workshop

Doctoral Supervision – practices and responsibilities

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Topics

- Seven years of development
- General Idea of the Approach
- Comprehensive Training Concept
- Testimonials and Reports
- Implementation of Supervisors Training
- The Tarragona Example and Beyond
- Future Tasks and Perspectives

London 2009 – Warsaw 2013 – Delft 2016

7 Years of Ongoing Development

- 2009 start of developing supervisors training concepts at the UNICA Master Classes in Supervision in Dubrovnik
- 2011 starting to provide supervisors training
- Meanwhile, approx. 500 mainly younger supervisors trained in initial and follow-up workshops at 20 European universities
- Stronger developments in Scandinavian countries (best practice Karolinska Institute)
- Still hesitating and not really well informed universities
- But – very good news! – constantly growing awareness and many initiatives for good supervision practices and supervision training (German UniWiND initiative)
- Since 2013 a quantum jump by very successful high impact implementation models in Tarragona (URV), Santander (UC) and Frankfurt (GRADE)

General Idea of the Approach

What is needed – what is not?

Two double perspectives have to come together!

- Deep and full **analytical understanding** of tasks, needs and challenges of research supervision
- A very well developed **practical understanding** of structures and systematics, of helpful procedures and tools
- What **young supervisors are urgently in need** of – their problems, challenges, lacking things!
- What **very good supervisors** and authors in research supervision **are doing and suggesting!**

*Both sides cannot simply be merged –
they have to be hold together and have to serve for each other!*

Comprehensive Training Concept

Comprehensive initial concept

as an integrated approach of 7 core indispensable elements/module for the workshop
“Professionalization of PhD Supervision”

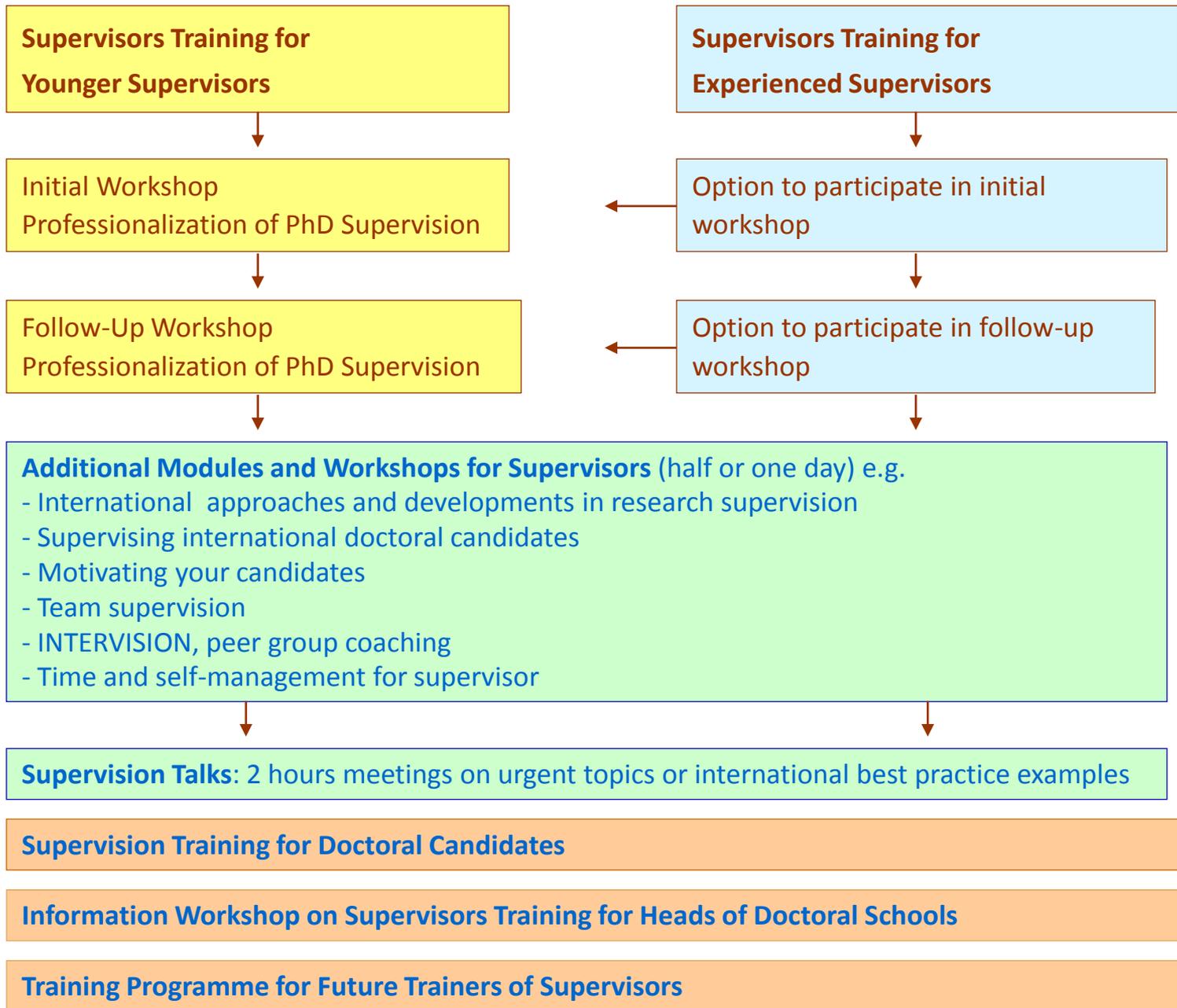
- International Developments in Research Supervision
- Supervisory Biography
- Supervisory Roles, Expectations and Relationship
- Selection of Doctoral Candidates
- Warning Signs and Problem Solutions
- Literature and Supervisory Tools (Toolkit)
- INTERVISION – a Peer Coaching Technique

How are these modules integrated – what are the synergy effects?

Comprehensive overall and long term sustainable training concept

- Training measures for young as well as for experienced supervisors
- Training measures for doctoral candidates
- Training for futures trainers of supervisors

Overall Aim: Establishing an outermost productive and supportive supervisory culture



Methods Used

Balancing Opposing Expectations, Needs and Demands

- Input of the trainer – „food for thought“; promise to reach professional awareness, knowledge and skills within two days
- Giving space for intensive discussion and exchange of experience – also beyond departmental boundaries
- Elaborating supervisor’s own insights and solutions during the interactive exercises in working groups
- SWOT analysis
- Role playing
- Working with and developing a supervisory toolkit
- Intervision – peer group coaching, discussing and solving urgent cases
- Individual feedback – specific needs and problems of participants
- Not about easy recipes, tips and tricks – complex but not over-complex!

Expectations, Needs and Worries of Young Supervisors

Lack of knowledge and experience

- To know what is supervision
- Don't know how to do it
- Learn to supervise
- I don't know if I am doing it well, if there is a proper way to do it
- Lack of experience and expertise
- Learn to be a good supervisor
- Identifying my needs
- Improve my knowledge
- Analyse myself
- I am happy to learn what options of support exist
- More orientation courses like the one I'm going to take with you

Lack of time and communication

- How can I reserve more time for the doctoral candidate?
- Do it better with the same time
- Share ideas and experiences

Lack of a systematic approach

- Systematics and structure
- Learning to organise the work
- Plans and tools how to structure the meetings with the PhD
- Effective supervision
- Knowledge in how to deal with unpleasant situations
- Getting tools beyond my intuition
- To know different styles and practices
- To guide the candidates properly
- Balance between rigor and creativity, control and freedom
- Signals of danger to meet the goals
- How to find and select the best possible candidates
- How to motivate
- Coaching skills
- Relations and responsibilities in a supervisory team
- Establishing a work relationship

Feedback in Follow-Up Workshops

“Which practices have you changed? Improvements personally and institutionally”

- From maternal to professional
- The start with clarifying mutual expectations is a very good way
- I am more systematic with candidates – meetings, objectives
- I make them write the agenda and meeting report
- My relationship with my doctoral candidate has improved because of continuous and well prepared meetings.
- More tight supervision with problematic candidates
- I am more realistic
- I am trying to see the warning signs
- I talked with my co-supervisor about expectations
- I am making systematic use of the toolkit
- I am delegating more
- I am more structured with my time
- **The workshop helped me to save time and to work much more relaxed**

Implementation of Supervisors Training

Common Mistakes and False Strategies

- No real impact: testing and evaluating supervisors training by one workshop
- False advertisement: supervisors training cannot be identified if mixed with all offers
- There are no personal letters to the faculties, deans and potential clients
- The younger supervisors are not explicitly addressed
- Not clear that it needs a long term offer and development from the beginning
- No backing by university heads
- Not part of the university's strategic planning
- Fear that supervisors training will be seen as a sign of existing incompetence
- Organising unit has no expertise and focus in this field
- Insinuations: “our people have no time for a two days workshop – it will never be full”
- Worse ideas: divide an integrated two days workshop into 2 single days

Implementation of Supervisors Training

10 Core Strategies for Success

- High impact from the beginning – aim to reach a critical mass soon
- Training of 100 to 150 younger supervisors within 2 years - at least 4 workshops per year
- Developing and implementing an overall long term strategic and operative plan
- Supervisors training and supervision workshops for young and experienced supervisors, for doctoral candidates, as well as for heads of doctoral schools
- Programme for follow-up workshops and ongoing training and improvement
- Self-organised community of best practice in research supervision
- Advertisement of the workshops in time – elaboration of annual programmes
- Well elaborated explanation of tasks, objectives and benefits
- Good and clear backing and support from the university's heads
- Well recommended colleagues are advertising and explaining the strategic project

The Tarragona Example

Best Practice at the University Rovira i Virgili

A snapshot of very much positive and promising experiences and insights

- Pilot-project April 2013 till May 2015
- 9 initial and 3 follow-up workshops
- Workshops for doctoral candidates and heads of doctoral schools
- Training for future trainers of supervisors (tts) October 2014 till May 2015
 - initial tts-training, assistance in workshops, homework for developing own modules

Preconditions

- Initiative of URV Excellence Campus (Jordi Cartanya)
- Take over by newly established doctoral school (Francesc Diaz, Mar Figueras)
- Support from the rector and vice-rector

Impressive effects and results

- Critical mass in a relatively short time
- Constant interest and participation over 2 and 1/2 years – 2 workshops in one row
- Early start of community of best practice in supervision
- Awareness and pride to develop and enable an European best practice model
- Understanding the potential for improving the quality of doctoral education, professional skills, attitudes, and the personality of supervisors and supervisees

The Tarragona Example

Evolving Mindsets and Skills of the Actors

Behaviour and awareness of young supervisors

- Very much eager to learn and to avoid early mistakes with expectations or selection
- Very much happy to have the opportunity to understand the supervision tasks and challenges in a deeper way very early
- Very much happy to have the chance to early develop their own concepts on the basis of a professional approach

Behaviour and awareness of experienced supervisors in initial workshops

- Very much polite and helpful; sharing experiences, good and bad cases
- Being interested to get to know about the international state of the art; compare knowledge and experiences with current concepts, topics and systematics
- “I am here to get fresh ideas and to learn new ways to do it.”

The doctoral candidates

- Very much interested in getting to know professional knowledge and literature
- Understanding immediately the great opportunity to professionally cooperate with their supervisors from the beginning
- Especially grateful getting advice about the importance of clarifying mutual expectations, of very good supervisory relationship, and systematically structuring the PhD trajectory.

The Tarragona Example and Beyond

The future trainers

- Even more deeper understanding of all supervisory tasks and challenges by developing their own training concepts, and by reviewing different approaches in the literature on research supervision
- Awareness to be member of an international community of designers and developers in research supervision
- Getting aware and being ready to take over a responsible role at their university for developing and disseminating concepts and skills of outstanding research supervision

Latest developments in spreading and developing best practices

- Implementation of comprehensive supervisors training also at the **University of Cantabria** in Santander – managed by the doctoral school (Alberto Ruiz, Thomas Mantecón);
4 initial and 1 follow-up workshops since May 2015, continued in May 2016;
start of an **innovative programme** to train supervisors and their doctoral candidates in parallel from the beginning
- Start of comprehensive supervisor training in November 2015 at the **Goethe University Frankfurt** managed by the Goethe Graduate Academy (Heike Zimmermann-Timm);
training programmes for supervisors as well as for doctoral candidates

4 Messages to You and the European Universities

- The notion that supervisors training is a powerful and successful means given into our own hands and responsibility
- The urgent need for supervisors training , especially for the next generation of supervisors and doctoral candidates
- The advantages of the strategy for comprehensive and sustainable training which can be observed by the Tarragona, Santander and Frankfurt model
- The idea and vision for a joint policy to implement supervisors training into the core strategic development plans of our universities, and to share common principles of outstanding supervision practices

Thank you for your attention!



Fotos: H. Brentel (2), University of Cantabria (1), B. Zierlein (1)