

Contemporary discourses of doctoral supervisors' education: A critical analysis of eight doctoral supervision course plans.

Getahun Yacob Abraham (Associate Professor) Magnus Levinsson (Associate Professor)

getahun_yacob.abraham@hb.se

magnus.levinsson@hb.se

University of Borås

Abstract

Education on doctoral supervisors has been a part of higher education pedagogy in Swedish universities for the last five decades, introduced in 1969 higher education reform and reviewed in 1998 (Jansson & Román, 2016). The purpose of this study is to identify dominant discourses on the education of doctoral supervision, with a particular focus on the construction of doctoral supervisors' professional knowledge and practice. The study will be undertaken through a critical and pragmatic discourse analysis of doctoral supervision course plans collected from six universities and two university colleges in Sweden. The eight course plans are selected from two senior universities established more than 100 years ago, two universities established 50-100 years ago, and two universities and two university colleges established less than 50 years ago. Based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993, 2003) and a pragmatic discourse analysis, which draws on Dewey's transactional perspective (Quennerstedt, 2008) and Foucault's concepts of power (Foucault, 1980, 1982, 2002), the course plan texts will be analysed and discussed in three interrelated steps: (i) conducting a transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), focusing on participants, processes (material, mental, verbal, relational), and circumstances; (ii) identifying the main discourses constructing reoccurring patterns of professional action in relation to supervision practice; and (iii) discussing implications for supervisors professional knowledge base, as well as for power relationships in supervision practices. Through these steps, we will closely scrutinize the purposes, goals, contents as well as the teaching and learning activities of the course plans. There will also be a focus on common areas that are addressed by the course plans, the differences that could be identified, as well as what are missing in the documents. Based on our critical analysis, we will suggest possibilities for considering vital issues in relation to future courses on supervising doctoral students.

Keywords: course plans, discourse analysis, doctoral supervision, power, professional knowledge.

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