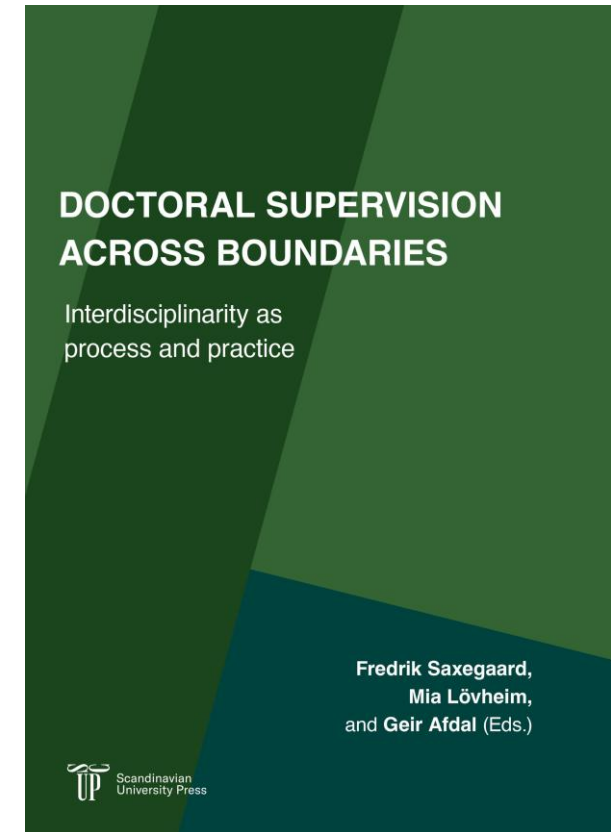


“Dimensions and negotiations of interdisciplinary supervision across cultural differences.”



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<https://www.universitetsforlaget.no/doctoral-supervision-across-boundaries>

VID Specialized University

Intensifiers (Winchester-Seeto et al.)

 power thesaurus

Synonyms for Intensifiers

amplifiers

enhancers

intensifier

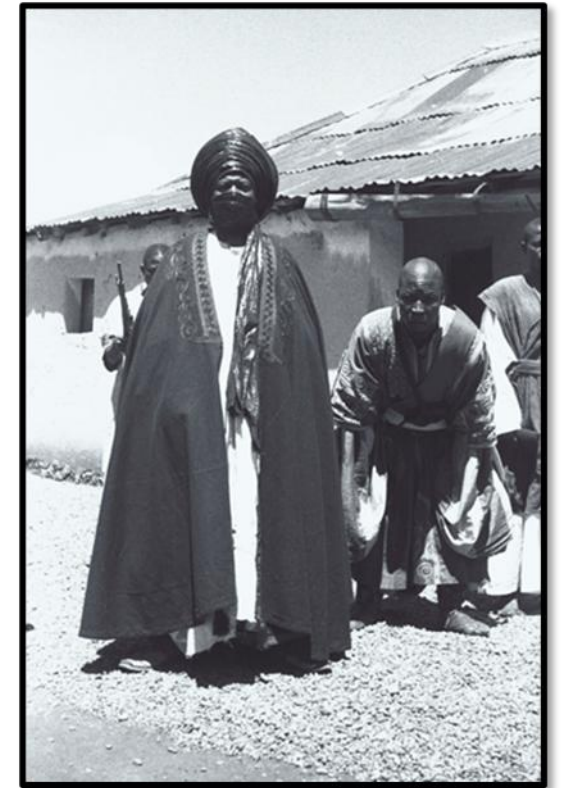
boosters

escalators

Winchester-Seeto, T. et al. (2014). Doctoral supervision in a cross-cultural context: Issues affecting supervisors and candidates. *Higher Education Research & Development* 33(3), 610-626.

Language and Power Relations

- Adapting to an academic language
- English as second or third language
- Power relations
 - #metoo
 - Power distance: Hofstede/Schwartz (Hu et al. 2016)
 - Confusianism – Asia (Xu 2017)
 - Respect for authorities / elders / ancestors – Africa (Doyle et al. 2018)



Cultural Differences and Stereotypes

- «The postcolonial contact zone»
(Cavanagh et al. 2022)
- Catherine Manathunga (2014)
*Intercultural Postgraduate Supervision:
Reimagining time, place and knowledge*
 - **Assimilation**
 - **Unhomeliness**
 - **Hidden curricula / hidden racism**



Separation from the familiar/support

- **The psychological and personal side** of the academic life
- **Practical consequences** of changing continents
- **Cultural awareness vs cultural sensitivity** (Christensen et al. 2011)
- **«High quality supervision»** - culturally appropriate and safe (Cavanagh et al. 2022)

Experiences, Complexities, and Strategies of Supervision



The Difficult Beginning

- Supervisors underscore intake-quality as a challenge:

If you are going to write a master's thesis or Ph.D., you must meet certain criteria, and learning that language, and the genre to be applied ... is challenging [....] For some, it doesn't work out very well, and for some, it takes an awful long time.

The Difficult Beginning

- Students highlight lack of system-knowledge and practical issues:
 - **Missed introductory classes** (did not find the room)
 - **Pressure to act as ‘buddy’** for new international students
 - **VISA issues** / ID-number / bank account / telephone

You know, they may not have seen their family members in years. There may be background issues related to [how] they're behaving and how they're taking in information and how they're processing stress ... [if the student] is some kind of charity case [or] you know, their dad is a member of parliament.

The Social Dimension

- Supervisors: Safe learning environment
- Students: Few “safe spaces” – lack of networks

My ideal is that the candidates should experience that professional relations are safe [...] that there is good chemistry between me and the candidate; that it is possible to experience that there is a secure and good relationship that makes it possible to dare to have fruitful professional conversations but also dare to talk about some of the difficulties and problems that one faces by having to perform at a high level in as short a time as three years.

Intercultural Knowledge vs. Contextual Competence

- For some students, contextual competence was more important than intercultural knowledge

I do my work in a rural community [....] I'm not writing about something that happens in xxx (the capital) or something that can be read when you look at literature. So, I feel sometimes that there's no one to really check ... and to understand. And sometimes when I get questions about the religious context, or I write with any of my supervisors, so then I'm thinking, okay, I need someone ... who can look at this work within the context it exists.



Hidden Curricula?

There is a Western view of what university research, academic research entails in the Humboldt tradition. It is clear that it has colonial elements, but it combines many different knowledge regimes [...] I don't see an obvious solution to this. These are the rules of the game here because it should be understandable to a wider circle. I think it's important to be aware that this is the way academia works here.

Hidden Curricula?

In Scandinavian countries ... there's the hidden curriculum. There is the hidden class differences. There is the hidden cultural differences, you know, the cues and the things that you're supposed to know. Then you have the Nordic countries where there's this whole song and dance about how we're equal and, you know, that this is like not a vertical society. It's, you know, horizontal, class, we're all equal. We're all colleagues. ... when in fact, there are a whole bunch of hidden hierarchies and the longer you're at the institution, the longer you figure out what those hierarchies are. In the end ... the academic drama is academic drama everywhere.

Is it always «culture»?

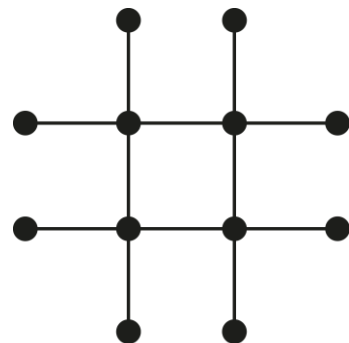
Actually, one should not overinterpret the cultural approach. Of course, one can pay attention, but there may not be cultural reasons that cause a person not to eat a particular dish. It could be about allergies, or that you think it's pretty disgusting.

Because I have worked many years abroad myself, and know that there are different ways of looking at a professor, or a teacher, a tutor ... And foreign students are just as different as Norwegians, so it's not like you can just think that now I have a foreigner in front of me...



Concluding Remarks

- We should be careful **not to exoticify or overemphasize** the role of culture in supervision contexts
- **«The difficult beginning»** highlighted by students from the Global South
 - Material and practical challenges
 - Hidden curricula
 - Inferiority within Western academic hegemony
- **Interdisciplinarity might downplay cultural differences**
 - Questions absolute hegemonic epistemological and colonial structures
 - Fosters innovation and playfulness



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