

Perspectives on the doctoral viva: student, supervisor, examiner and chair. One and the same?

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Research Methods (Professional Doctorate)

Background

Origins

- Personal experience
- What the literature said



Literature: Paradox, Purpose and Process

Methods

Purposive sample

Two stage -

- pre interview issued short questionnaire
- semi-structured interview (45 -60 minutes)

Thematic analysis

Findings

| Sample n=9 (3 Business, 3 Health, 3 Engineering) | | |
|--|-------|--------|
| | Range | Median |
| Currently supervising doctoral student | 2+ | 8 |
| Doctoral completions | 3+ | 11 |
| Examinations | 5+ | 24 |
| Chair | 3+ | 8 |

Supervision: confidence and concern

General indicators

- Enthusiasm for the topic
- Time management: ability to hit deadlines
- Quality of writing
- Methodology

Need for supervision intervention (proactive)

Specific concern ... Inherited students

Importance of preparing for viva - mock

Examining

‘means of physically authenticating the student’,

‘ensuring the student had written the work and not the supervisory team or even a ghost writer’,

the student has to demonstrate ‘doctoralness’ in the quality of their answers.

Key area the student’s ability to handle questioning regarding methodology (Professional Doctoral weakness)

Chair



Learning and implications

Learning

- **Experience as a student (good and bad) influential at outset**
- **Experience outside home university**

Implications

1. **Need to revisit training programmes**
2. **Ageing workforce**