‘Effective supervision’: Practices and perceptions of learning

Hanne Nexø Jensen
Department of Political Science
Purpose and structure

Contribute to discussions and reflections on ‘effective supervision’ and how you can develop your own/ DTUs supervision practices

1. Definitions, dilemmas and a setting
2. Practices – findings from a study
3. Perceptions of learning
4. To summarize: supervision in practice
What do your associate with ‘effective supervision’?

- Write an example down

- Tell your neighbour what you wrote
1. Definitions, dilemmas and a setting
Definitions

Supervision: One-to-one form of teaching involving interaction (e.g. face-to-face or by email) between a supervisor and a student in the process of writing a Bachelor or Master’s thesis

‘Effective supervision’ (in pedagogical terms): the responsiveness of the supervisor to students’ changing supervision needs throughout a writing process

Purpose of supervision: ensure students’ learning according to the learning objectives (DTU’s Study Handbook)
Institutional setting of supervision

Preconditions

Student
Knowledge, motivation for subject, resources, supervision needs

Supervisor
Resources, consciousness of roles and process, experiences

Institutional demands

Process

Supervision
Clarification of expectations
Roles of supervisors and students’ supervision needs

Support functions

Product

Thesis
Excellent thesis within time limit
Good process

Based on Biggs 2003:
Dilemmas concerning good supervision

Management

Input – output
cost-efficiency

Supervisor/
researcher

Responsiveness to
students’ changing
needs

‘Effective supervision’ as
a short cut to
more research time

Fulfilment of
supervision
needs

Student

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2. Practices – findings from a study
Data and facts

- **Type of data:**
  5 processes of Master Thesis supervision
  Sound recording, written material

- **Facts:**
  2-8 meetings (average 5)
  50 minutes each (variation 19-97 minutes)
  5-8 written papers
  64% supervisor/ 36% student: division of speaking time (average)
  9.4 grade (average)
A model

Model of students’ needs and supervision during a process in maths/ science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Choose assignment</th>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Solve the task/problem</th>
<th>Write the thesis</th>
<th>Complete</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td>Market one’s research field, evaluate</td>
<td>Teach, discuss, evaluate</td>
<td>Support, challenge, help</td>
<td>Control, criticise</td>
<td>Criticise, put up resistance</td>
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Model of students’ needs and supervision during a process in humanities/ social sciences

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Choose subject</th>
<th>Develop research question</th>
<th>Read &amp; collect data</th>
<th>Write drafts</th>
<th>Adapt, rewrite</th>
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<td>Motivate, criticise, ‘teach’</td>
<td>Support, give advice</td>
<td>Inspire, discuss, solve</td>
<td>Criticise, put up resistance</td>
<td>Support, control</td>
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1. All phases in the social sciences model were exposed, but ...

### A model

#### Model of students' needs and supervision during a process in maths/science

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#### Model of students' needs and supervision during a process in humanities/social sciences

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2. Process and text-oriented feedback

- Process and text-oriented feedback
- **Red-pen** feedback
- Unbalanced feedback
Understanding the cause of imbalances

Roles of supervisor

- Academic
- Methodology/methods
- Process
- Person

Supervisor

Student’s supervision needs

- Academic
- Methodology/methods
- Process
- Person
3. From monologue to dialogue

Monologue when a student just want a go-ahead

Dialogue: questions and solutions develop at the meeting
Student email questions in advance 50/50
### `Effective supervision`, a summary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Effective +</th>
<th>Effective ÷</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Models</strong></td>
<td>All phases in hum/social sciences model Elements from maths/science</td>
<td>Students’ progress Supervisors move slower and back and forth compared to students</td>
<td>Supervisors teach too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kind of feedback</strong></td>
<td>Process and text oriented + red pen</td>
<td>Relevant kind of feedback on time</td>
<td>Too much process feedback in the end Mismatch of expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication pattern</strong></td>
<td>From monologue to dialogue Division of speaking time</td>
<td>Dialogue: save time and leave room for student reflection</td>
<td>Student returning to title + research question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Perceptions of learning
Perceptions of learning and supervision

Monologue  Mix  Dialogue

Education/ teaching approach  Apprentice approach  Partnership approach
4. To summarize: Supervision in practice
How would you characterize your last supervision (BSc-project or Master-thesis student):

1. Model of supervision:  
   - Maths/ science  
   - Humanities/ social sciences  
   - Mix

2. Kind of feedback:  
   - Process and text oriented  
   - Commenting on a ‘final’ draft (‘red pen’ in use)  
   - Product oriented (robot building, experiment, lab)  
   - Ad hoc (feedback in the lab, in the hallway or e-mail)

3. Division of speaking time between you and the student?  
   (app. percentage)

Write an answer to each point  
Tell your other neighbour what you wrote
Supervision in practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Your practices</th>
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<td>Maths/ Science</td>
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<td>Humanities/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mix</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kind of feedback</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Process/text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red pen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product in focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Division of speaking time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(student/ supervisor)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>40/60</td>
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<tr>
<td>50/50</td>
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<tr>
<td>60/40</td>
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<tr>
<td>80/20</td>
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</table>
What works for me? (Examples of some of the tools I use)

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<th>Tools</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Student</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Remember</strong></td>
<td>The student is (just) next in line</td>
<td>Unknown terrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarification of expectations</strong></td>
<td>Supervision as such Time, competences Single meetings</td>
<td>Ambitions Time - resources Supervision needs Agenda, questions, summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process and learning approach</strong></td>
<td>Feedback departing from text; how does the student move forward</td>
<td>Think of feedback as a mirror; you may agree or not, but use feedback as a way of improving your work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limits</strong></td>
<td>Be aware of limits (academic, psychological, personal)</td>
<td>Compensate for supervisor’s limits (work with fellow students, use libraries, Learning Lab etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References (not a complete readinglist regarding the topic)


Improving students’ competencies concerning supervision

Hanne Nexø Jensen
Department of Political Science
Improving students’ competencies concerning supervision (examples from DTU practices)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Student</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
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Improving students’ competences concerning supervision (my reflections)

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<th>Supervisor</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Reflection on own practice</td>
<td>♦ Become aware of and make needs for supervision and learning strategies explicit</td>
<td>♦ Look into curriculum; where and how do students learn about writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Reflection on own perception of learning</td>
<td>♦ Clarify expectations with one’s supervisor</td>
<td>♦ Initiate discussions about pedagogical, ‘effective supervision’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Less teaching more dialogue</td>
<td>♦ Train competences; set the agenda and make summaries of meetings</td>
<td>♦ Make experiments with different forms of supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Supervise students in groups</td>
<td>♦ Train competences concerning receiving feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Discuss practice with colleagues</td>
<td>♦ Engage with fellow students writing</td>
<td></td>
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