Redefining Beginner Postgraduate Student-Supervisor Relationships in the Digital Era

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Abstract

Beginner postgraduate students in higher education face a complex set of challenges as they navigate the uncharted terrain of the research space. These challenges are often categorised into personal and emotional, academic and research, and institutional-related challenges. The transition from structured undergraduate learning to postgraduate studies typically necessitates independence, self-directed learning, time management, and critical engagement with the subject matter, among other competencies. Therefore, it is crucial to support these types of students as they shift from being consumers of knowledge to taking a significant and critical step towards becoming knowledge generators, which is vital for their academic success and career progression in the academy and beyond. Moreover, with continuous exploration and incorporation of new technological tools, systems, and methods such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, and digital tools/simulation in research to advance scientific knowledge and untangle complicated issues, undertaking postgraduate studies has become a complicated process for these types of students. Grounded in Foucault's (1979) power-knowledge dynamics, this paper provides an analytical framework for understanding how the digital era reshapes student-supervisor relationships, establishing a different scenario—a shift from a mentor-novice framework to a hybrid model. Moreover, this work contributes to ongoing debates regarding the implications for supervisory roles and mentorship models for supervisors and students in higher education in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Era, Higher Education, Beginner Postgraduate Students, Student-Supervisor Relationships, Supervisory Roles, Research.