Challenging the dual assumption of the ‘always/already’ autonomous student and effective supervisor

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Postgraduate supervision, until recently, was regarded as an extension of research rather than as a form of teaching. Research students were assumed to be ‘always/already’ autonomous scholars at the beginning of their candidature. So too, postgraduate supervisors were assumed to be ‘always/already’ effective at supervising once they had endured the process themselves. Currently, postgraduate supervision is regarded as a form of mentoring, where students gradually master appropriate disciplinary research knowledge. Yet, supervisors also wrestle with the contradictory role of disciplinary gatekeeper. As a result, the ‘always/already’ autonomous student and effective supervisor pair remains a strong underlying assumption in supervision pedagogy. This article explores how Justine, a new supervisor in the Health Sciences, and Catherine, an academic developer and supervisor in the Humanities/Higher Education, hope to contribute to this debate by developing a collaborative approach to enhancing research students’ critical analysis and independent learning abilities.

There is a strong but unspoken tradition in postgraduate supervision that intelligent undergraduate students are able to transform themselves into independent researchers with minimal explicit pedagogical input from their supervisors. They are assumed to be ‘always/already’ independent researchers (Johnson et al., 2000), with excellent critical and creative thinking and writing skills. The supervisor’s job essentially is to ‘take talent’ rather than ‘to grow talent’ (Bills, 2003). If students do not have these skills at the beginning of their candidature, it is expected that they will gain them merely by observing and imitating their supervisor. This construction of supervision is heavily embedded in the traditional master/apprentice model of supervision. It is based on a transmissive approach to education, where students want to be filled up with their supervisor’s knowledge. Students, or ‘scholarly disciples’ in this traditional model, must possess enough ‘genius’ to absorb the supervisor’s knowledge and skill (Yeatman, 1995, p. 9; Grant, 2001). Similarly, until recently, it was assumed that
once they had experienced the process themselves, supervisors became automatically always/already effective. As a result, supervisors often repeated the master/apprentice approach to supervision they experienced as a student. Therefore, powerful assumptions about the always/already autonomous student and effective supervisor pair became self-perpetuating.

Recently, supervisors have been encouraged to take an active role in teaching research. Some theorists have applied notions of cognitive apprenticeship and legitimate peripheral participation to describe this teaching role (Pearson & Brew, 2002; Manathunga, 2005a). A whole literature has emerged on the need to mentor research students by socialising them into disciplinary research communities and discourses, providing emotional support, and assisting with broader career development (Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Brew, 2002; Price & Money, 2002; Wisker et al., 2003).

This literature and the increased governmental interest in research higher degree studies have generated a parallel emphasis on supervisor professional development (Manathunga, 2005b). Some universities have made supervision educational development mandatory, and other universities have introduced supervisory registers, accrediting only those who have attended supervisor educational development sessions. This emphasis on supervisor professional development often problematically positions the ‘developer’ as a colonial operator in relation to their academic colleagues (Manathunga, 2005b).

This paper explores how Catherine, a supervisor academic developer and supervisor in Humanities/Higher Education, and Justine, a supervisor in the Health Sciences, designed an action research project on Developing independent scholars in a Learning Circle on Postgraduate Supervision. They were eager to learn from each other’s disciplinary expertise and understanding of supervision pedagogy. In particular, Catherine was keen to learn from Justine’s systematic, scientific, problem-solving approach to research. Justine was interested in Catherine’s humanities problem-making and critiquing style of research (McCarty, 2001). As a result, this paper tells the story of their interdisciplinary collaboration, and seeks to contribute to debates about supervision pedagogy. It tries to show how they sought to go beyond the traditional power relations that can operate between educational developers and their disciplinary-based colleagues, and engage in a respectful, interdisciplinary exchange (Manathunga, 2005b, 2006). By collaborating in this way, they recognised that they had unconsciously subscribed to assumptions about the always/already autonomous student. They desired this student subjectivity. By exploring this desire through Learning Circle discussions and supervision tools, Justine developed an explicit range of teaching and learning strategies. She translated the research and support group approach, used by Catherine in the Learning Circle, into a series of pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing research students’ independent learning, writing and critiquing skills. The students involved in this project attended an Australian university, and were oncourse Honours and PhD candidates. Oncourse Honours students complete a small thesis project in their final year, and have carried out some preliminary coursework in research methods. The
PhD program in Australia continues to include no formal coursework requirements, unlike similar degrees in the UK and North America.

Learning Circle on Postgraduate Supervision

As a new supervisor, Justine was keen to learn what was expected of supervisors. Justine enrolled in Catherine’s *Becoming an Effective Advisor* professional development series for new supervisors in 2001. Catherine, the newly-appointed academic developer and a relatively new supervisor, was seeking to implement several supervisor development strategies (Manathunga, 2005b). Therefore, when Justine and George, another health science supervisor, approached her with the idea of starting a research and support group for supervisors, she jumped at the chance, and the Learning Circle on Postgraduate Supervision was born out of an interdisciplinary desire to explore supervision pedagogy.

The Learning Circle started in February 2002 as an interdisciplinary group providing:

- practical support for supervisors through learning from experienced supervisors about solving real supervision problems;
- action learning projects on supervision;
- tangible outcomes, such as joint publications.

The Learning Circle became a shifting group of about 10 supervisors, in which Catherine acted as a facilitator/participant. Each Learning Circle session starts with an informal presentation by an experienced supervisor, followed by either a series of reflective activities, or a discussion of key readings or fictional accounts of supervision (Manathunga, 2006).

Justine found the informal presentations by experienced supervisors and the interdisciplinary group discussions particularly useful. She was concerned about the large number of students she had to supervise. In particular, she was worried that her students were too dependent on her, and were requiring multiple revisions of their written work. Meanwhile, Catherine had supervised a couple of highly independent doctoral students, but was worried about how she might supervise less autonomous students in the future. Having explored the literature on supervision as an academic developer and researcher, she also wondered about the kinds of explicit pedagogies active supervisors might employ.

Justine and Catherine decided to conduct an action research project on *Developing independent scholars*. Table 1 lists the questions this project aimed to investigate.

By explicitly identifying these concerns, Justine and Catherine began to recognise that they had unconsciously subscribed to assumptions about the ‘always/already’ autonomous student. If asked about this, they would have vehemently denied it, and yet their first four research questions clearly assumed that students should have some level of independence ‘at the beginning of the project/supervisory relationship’, and that the supervisor’s goal was to ‘move [them] along the independence continuum’,
despite ‘funding pressure on length of candidature.’ However, as they tried to unpack their plans, there was a shift in their research questions. They started to question ‘how [students] can develop new skills?’ and ‘how independent do [students] need to be?... How much should we give?’ They also began to question the whole always/already autonomous agenda—‘what is independence?... What are we aiming for?’

Their focus also shifted to the students’ themselves—‘why are they doing this research? Is it related to their personal identity?’ As Justine’s students were from an allied health discipline, it was important to think about whether their research training could potentially lead them on to become scholars or, alternatively, could facilitate their clinical practice. Devising strategies to develop student independence in this context would then require consideration of both career options. As a result, Justine and Catherine began to think more about the importance of listening to students’ learning needs and future career goals.

Catherine and Justine began to explore a range of supervision tools and readings that would enable them to listen effectively to Justine’s students’ learning needs. Justine also enrolled in a Graduate Certificate in Education (University Teaching) in order to gain credit for completing this project. Due to time constraints, Catherine decided to support Justine’s project rather than immediately implement strategies in her own supervision.

The supervision tools included the:

- Research Student [Virtual] Portfolio (RSVP™) (Manathunga et al., in press);
- Supervisor Student Alignment Tool Kit (Gurr, 2001).

RSVP™ was originally developed by Catherine, Paul, a supervisor in chemical engineering, and George, the health science supervisor mentioned before. It is designed to help supervisors and students develop key graduate attributes which students would like to enhance by the end of their candidature. It then assists supervisors to plan learning activities to achieve this knowledge and skill development. Therefore, it explicitly acknowledges that students cannot be ‘always/already’ autonomous at the beginning of candidature, and that supervisors need to take an

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Table 1. Key questions for developing independent scholars action research project

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<td>How to work out where the student is at in terms of independence at the beginning of the project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to establish where the student is on the independence continuum at the beginning of the supervisory relationship?</td>
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<td>How to develop strategies to help them move along the independence continuum?</td>
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<td>How do we produce independent scholars given the current funding pressure on length of candidature?</td>
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<td>How to assess the skills they have and how they can develop new skills?</td>
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<td>What are their expectations of us and how independent do they need to be? How much should we give? Where are the boundaries?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is independence? What do we mean here? What are we aiming for?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why are students doing this research? Is it related to their personal identity?</td>
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active role in facilitating students’ learning (Manathunga et al., in press). A unanimous response from Justine’s students, after reading RSVP™, was the desire to develop critical analysis skills.

The Supervisor Student Alignment Tool Kit (Gurr, 2001) allows students and supervisors to indicate their perspective about students’ needs and supervisory style on a two-dimensional graph. One dimension charts the student’s positions on a continuum, from dependent to competently autonomous. The other dimension allows the supervisor’s recent style to be identified as ranging from hands-on to hands-off. Completing this tool enables supervisors and students to engage in an explicit dialogue about students’ current learning needs, and whether they are being met by their supervisor's supervisory approach. Initially, this tool appears to subscribe to assumptions about the always/already autonomous student. This is especially evident in the opening statement of Gurr (2001, p. 82) that his tool aims to encourage ‘a more proactive role for students’, and that it seeks to produce ‘competently autonomous’ students as ‘a universal objective of the PhD’. On closer inspection, however, Gurr (2001, p. 84, 85) argues for the ‘development of independence over time’ and suggests that

though the successful student will typically develop from a state of relative dependency to competent autonomy over the period of candidature, progress along this continuum should not be seen as consistent in either pace or direction. Periods of slow progress and of elevated levels of dependency are likely when new phases ... are initiated.

Justine thought this tool would help measure the impact of her pedagogical intervention.

Developing research students’ critical analysis skills

On identifying her research students’ desire to improve their critical analysis skills, Justine explored the available literature. Most of the research conducted on developing students’ critical analysis skills focuses on undergraduates. This is partly because educational researchers are still seeking to define what these skills might include at research higher degree level, and partly because of the pervasive tradition of the always/already independent research student. The few notable exceptions to this will be explored below (Bruce & Brameld, 1999; Knowles, 1999; Manathunga, 2005a).

At an institutional level, critical analysis is touted to be an important skill for all students to develop. It is seen as, not only an ‘educational ideal’, but as ‘required university practice’ (Woodward-Kron, 2002). University statements of graduate attributes (see University of Queensland (UQ) http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/index.html?page=25095&pid=25075) frequently state that graduates of undergraduate degree programs will possess the ability to display critical judgement in a range of contexts.
How these critical analysis skills might be extended at research higher degree level has only recently been explored (see UQ policy http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/index.html?page=25167&pid=25141). Bruce and Brameld (1999) share some strategies that are designed to assist supervisors to facilitate students’ development of critical thinking, reading and writing skills. In particular, they provide useful resources that help students to think about:

- What questions should I ask when critiquing an article?
- What does thinking critically mean?
- [How do I] critically assess Internet resources?
- How could the following elements of a document help you determine its relevance? (Bruce & Brameld, 1999, p. 165).

Some supervisors have devised scaffolded approaches to assist students, whose second language is English, to develop critical analysis skills. For example, a supervisor in the health sciences sets ‘achievable writing tasks’ every two to three weeks for her students with English as a second language, and ‘models the process by doing the task herself’. Initially, ‘Sarah’ asks students to prepare a written review summarising one article relevant to their thesis. As their academic English skills improve, she ‘shifts the focus away from simple summary to developing critiquing skills’. She meets with the student to give them constructive verbal and written feedback, and they discuss the student’s work together (Manathunga, 2005a).

Some authors have suggested that these critical analysis and judgement skills might be developed through supervisor feedback on research students’ writing. Knowles (1999, p. 114), for example, argues that the feedback process enables supervisors and students to engage in ‘critical conversations’ that assist students to learn to critique the literature and their own work. In this way, they gradually become independent researchers. While Justine was happy to continue having these critical conversations through feedback on students’ writing, she was keen to help them develop their own critical analysis skills, which they could apply to direct their own reading and writing (Tippens, 1986).

It appears, however, that, even at the PhD level, research students may not have an explicit understanding of critical analysis. Indeed, it is a concept that even experienced scientific writers struggle to define (Woodward-Kron, 2002). If the master/apprentice model of supervision is the dominant supervisory approach, students will either be assumed to be always/already possessing critical analysis skills, or will become over-dependent on supervisors’ feedback, which they will uncritically and obediently incorporate in their thesis drafts (Knowles, 1999). Justine was particularly concerned about signs of over-dependence on her feedback, and believed that students should be assisted in acquiring skills to build interpretations, not just taught the interpretations (Stiffler, 1986). It became clear that students needed to become aware of an explicit critical analysis framework that they could utilise in their reading and writing activities (Lea & Street, 1999, cited in Woodward-Kron, 2002). In particular, students need to become acutely aware of the standardised academic
criteria, which govern the organisation, style and content of written material (Bacha, 2002). Each discipline has its particular strategies through which writing is constructed, evaluated and critiqued, and it is the supervisor’s job to make those apparent to students (Knowles, 1999).

Justine deliberately decided to help her students’ develop their own critical analysis framework through discussions with other students and researchers, and through readings (e.g., Yore et al., 2002; Woodward-Kron, 2002), rather than imposing her own because this could help demystify critical analysis, allowing it then to be utilised effectively in reading and interpreting journal articles, and in writing. There is a great deal of literature that emphasises the benefits of peer and collaborative, discussion-based approaches to learning (Brookfield, 1990; Biggs, 1999; Burnett, 1999; Boud et al., 2001; Conrad, 2003).

Authors have also suggested that students should be encouraged to judge pieces of work from different perspectives, in order to develop a metacognitive awareness of critical analysis (Howell, 1986). Gunther (2000) reported on a practical debating activity that he trialled with a group of high school students. The students were divided into opposing teams, encouraged to openly debate, and then write an assignment drawing conclusions about what they had learned from the debate. This activity enabled students to develop critical thinking skills, and make clear connections between their reading and writing. Justine decided that such a debating activity could be modified for use with her research students. She believed that the interest group format, similar to the Learning Circle on Postgraduate Supervision, could be used as a forum to teach and discuss various research practices. Such a group could also provide a supportive peer network, where students could learn from one another and reduce their dependence on her as a supervisor.

Context of study

Justine supervised six female students who were engaged in hypothesis-driven, experimental research, with participants with speech disorders. The students had varied cultural and educational backgrounds. Two of the PhD students were international students from India and Taiwan. Both students had completed Bachelor and Research Masters degrees in speech pathology; one student completed both degrees in India, while the other student completed her Bachelors degree in Taiwan, and her Masters in the USA. A third PhD student was originally from Hong Kong, but had lived in Australia since the age of three years. She completed a Bachelors degree in speech pathology at The University of Queensland, and had carried out an Honours project in her final year under Justine’s supervision. The PhD students were at different stages of PhD candidature.

The remaining three students were all domestic students undertaking an oncourse Honours project under the supervision of Justine in the final (fourth) year of their Bachelor of Speech Pathology degree. They had had no prior personal research experience, but had completed course work in research methods and statistics. The
honours program required the students to carry out their research project and to write up the results as an authentic journal article. the time frame for the honours project was one year.

strategies to develop students’ critical analysis skills

in establishing an interest group among the research students, and in devising activities that would facilitate the development of critical analysis skills, a number of key strategies were realised (see table 2).

the interest group meetings were held at a coffee shop on campus to establish an informal, supportive setting. over seven meetings during one semester, the concept of critical analysis was introduced with the students then practising and implementing critical reviews of other’s work, as well as their own, in a set of activities. two introductory meetings were held, aimed at assisting the students to develop an explicit understanding of critical analysis, and to become aware of the importance of developing critical analysis skills for research writing. discussions were held with prompt questions (e.g., what is critical analysis? what are the purposes of a research article? etc.) and facilitated through the provision of journal article review examples for students to comment on. following these discussions, the students were asked to begin developing their own critical analysis framework to be used in following meetings. the students reviewed and extended each other’s frameworks and developed a shared critical analysis framework (see appendix 1).

then, the students were to engage in debating activities, whereby two students would identify positive and negative features of a selected article, and present these findings to the rest of the group. all of the students were to read the article, and were to be provided with the opportunity to have their say at the end of the debate. importantly, each student would write down, at the end of the meeting, how they might change their own manuscript, in an effort to transfer what was learnt to their own work.

in discussing the debating format, the students indicated that they did not wish to debate the articles on an individual basis, but would rather carry out the debating task as a group. as a result, the meetings then ran as discussion sessions, with different students putting forward their points of view regarding the article and

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<th>Table 2. Strategies employed to develop students’ critical analysis skills</th>
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<td>• Students to develop their own explicit critical analysis framework</td>
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<td>• Active and regular participation in activities to encourage deep learning of, and practise in, critical analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applying the critical analysis framework in activities, such as debating or taking the role of a journal reviewer/supervisor and critiquing journal articles, other students’ writing, and own writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Learning with and from peers in a supportive environment</td>
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<td>• Group discussions/activities</td>
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<td>• Peer review</td>
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identifying positive and negative points. All of the students participated in the discussions, although it appeared that the level of input was commensurate with the degree of preparation. Also, when more members of a particular student group (e.g., PhD) were present at the meeting, it appeared that this group were more vocal during the workshop.

To further assist the students to apply their developing critical analysis skills to their own work, peer review activities were planned for the final two meetings. Justine had some reservations about this task, especially with the Honours students, who were in a competitive course and were giving each other copies of examinable work. Despite these concerns, the students unanimously agreed that they would like to try the process. Each student submitted a written section of their research report at least one week prior to the research group meeting. The students became the ‘supervisor’ and critiqued the submitted work, and were asked to write a short report similar to a journal article review. The pieces of writing were disseminated in ‘anonymous’ form, but in reality, with a group of only six students, it was inevitable that the students would know which piece of work belonged to each other. The PhD students did not participate fully in the peer review sessions, as they were in data collection and analysis stages at the time. They did, however, act as reviewers for the peer review cycle.

Students’ learning outcomes

A number of quantitative and qualitative measures were taken to determine how well the overall program achieved the aim of assisting the students to develop critical analysis and writing skills. To examine whether perceptions of student independence had changed following the meetings, the Supervisor Student Alignment Tool Kit (Gurr, 2001) was utilised at the first and last meeting. The results of the alignment tool revealed that, at the start of the meetings, student/supervisor responses only matched for one student. For two students, Justine’s ratings of student status matched the students’ ratings, but differed with regard to opinions about how much input Justine, as the supervisor, provided. For another two students, student/supervisor ratings differed regarding student status (see Figure 1). For the majority of the students then, it appeared that at the start of the project, Justine believed that she provided more guidance (hands-on), and that the students were less independent (student’s status) than the students believed they were.

Following the meetings, Justine’s impression of the students’ level of independence changed little. By contrast, her ratings of the level of input that she had to provide (supervisor’s recent style) was reduced for the majority of students, in line with what was noted regarding the quality of the manuscripts (i.e., that less revision was necessary). Although there was no reduction in the number of drafts submitted, the students required less direction regarding structure, what content to include, and the critical interpretation of literature and results. For example, one student when writing the results section of her research report prior to the workshops, stated that she did not know where to start or what to include. Following the workshops, she was
able to start her discussion section without assistance and included many of the points that had been discussed in the workshops. This showed that her level of independence had increased, and that she had a better understanding of the research writing process and content.

Indeed from the students’ own perspectives, the three Honours students rated themselves as more autonomous at the final meeting compared to the initial meeting. Two of the PhD students did not rate any change in their level of dependence, while the third PhD student was not present at the final workshop. Although the ratings are positive, indicating that at least three students perceived themselves to be more independent following the workshops, it cannot be assumed that the workshops were the sole contributors. One additional possible factor may be that at the final session, the Honours students had almost completed their reports; therefore, this sense of completion may have added to their sense of independence.

Qualitative feedback was also gathered on the interest group and peer review meetings. Anonymous written feedback gathered at the final interest group meeting further revealed the students’ high level of interest and motivation in these meetings. The students appeared to like the coffee shop venue, which engendered an ‘informal’, ‘casual’ and ‘non-threatening’ atmosphere. In line with the peer learning ethos of the program, students commented that:

- It provided a nice support network to discuss any problems that may have come up. (Honours student)
- I enjoyed sharing experience and ideas with others. (PhD, international student)

The interest group activities also appeared to address the important goal of developing the students’ understanding of critical analysis, which could then be applied to their own writing. Indeed, the following comments suggest that the students’ implicit knowledge of research writing had become more explicit:

![Figure 1. Supervisor Student Alignment Tool Kit (Gurr, 2001) independence ratings prior to the critical analysis program](image-url)
• Clarified a lot of questions that I had with regards to article structure and components. (Honours student)

• Made you think more about how/style of writing as you were writing your article and critical analysis framework was a good reminder of what to include. (Honours student)

• We need to know the desirable qualities of a manuscript before we can produce a quality manuscript. (PhD, domestic student)

On a practical level, it was suggested by one of the students that the meetings ‘could be a little more lively’. This possibly reflects the degree to which the student was interested in the topic. Actual debates with debating teams could be a way to make the sessions livelier with competition rather than discussions about the articles. This way, the students could get excited about the team that they were on, and the position they were taking about an article.

Other comments related to Justine’s style of interaction in the meetings and included:

• Could give a definite stance on whether the articles being reviewed were good or not. (PhD, international student)

• If you could give us more substantial suggestions in response to everyone’s opinion instead of agreeing with us all the time, it would be much appreciated. (PhD, international student)

These comments indicated that different expectations for the meetings might have been held between student and supervisor. Justine’s intention for the interest group was not to simply tell the students the answers (indeed a lot of what was discussed was subjective and open to varying opinions), but to facilitate discussion between the students, and to get them to think deeply and critically about various issues. It appeared that some of the students at least might have expected the supervisor to still ‘teach’ them what they should know. Therefore, it would be important for similar types of workshops that at the outset, different teaching and learning styles are discussed and expectations and ground rules are clarified.

In particular, students gained a great deal from the peer review meetings. All of the members of the group submitted detailed and well thought out reviews of each other’s work. The reviews contained a high level of critical analysis, which provided the basis for insightful discussions in the peer review sessions. Students found these sessions ‘very helpful in obtaining feedback from others to improve my own writing style and structure’ (PhD, domestic student). Other students stated that the peer review exercises ‘provided good opportunities to get feedback on critical analysis techniques’ and provided ‘good reinforcement’ (PhD, domestic student) of the critical analysis skills learned in earlier interest group meetings.

Conclusions and implications

Justine and Catherine’s efforts to contribute to the debate about the always/already autonomous student and the always/already effective supervisor have resulted in
strategies to develop students’ critical analysis skills and respectful collaborative approaches to supervisor academic development. In the process of designing an action research project on Developing independent scholars, Catherine and Justine began to recognise that they had subconsciously subscribed to this very powerful, implicit assumption within supervision pedagogy. As a result, they sought to develop an active pedagogical strategy that would assist students in developing their critical analysis and writing skills. They adopted a socially constructivist approach that would allow Justine’s students to devise for themselves, in a supportive peer group environment facilitated by Justine, a shared, agreed upon framework for critically analysing literature. The second step in the strategy was to assist students to apply their critical analysis skills to their own and each other’s writing. As a result, students engaged in a productive peer review process, and learnt a great deal about giving and receiving feedback.

These strategies appeared to increase levels of independence in some students. Although there was no reduction in the number of drafts Honours students submitted to Justine for feedback, there was a marked improvement in writing quality. So too, many of the students believed they had become more autonomous. This active pedagogical intervention in Justine’s research students’ learning also proved to be a time efficient way to help a large number of students. As a result, Justine’s intervention provides a potentially useful example for other supervisors.

In addition, Justine’s and Catherine’s interdisciplinary collaboration in exploring supervision pedagogy may provide an example of supervisor professional development that goes beyond colonial approaches to educational development (Manathunga, 2005b, 2006). Both were keen to learn from each other’s disciplinary research expertise and understandings of supervision pedagogy. As a result, they have tried to blend Justine’s scientific, problem-solving research approach with Catherine’s humanities, problem-making research style, to tell this story about their investigations of supervision pedagogy. They hope that this collaborative tale will contribute to the ongoing debate about supervisor expectations of PhD and Honours students and the teaching and learning strategies they might use in supervision.

References


Appendix 1

Critical Analysis Framework (excerpt)

What to look for when critically analysing an article, and points to remember when writing articles. In the interests of space only the points relating to the discussion are listed:

TITLE ...
ABSTRACT ...
INTRODUCTION ...
METHOD ...
METHOD OF ANALYSIS ...
RESULTS ...
DISCUSSION
Was the research question answered?
Stated whether the hypotheses supported? If not, discussion as to why?
Are certain aspects of the results ignored or underplayed? Has the author overlooked anything?
Were studies that do/do not support the findings discussed?
Is the discussion of the results related to/address the aims?
Did the author accomplish his/her objectives?
Were appropriate conclusions/interpretations drawn?
Is what author the contends about the results warranted by the data? (e.g., does author claim strong support for an interpretation when the data in fact provide weaker support?)
Are there alternate ways of arguing from the same material?
Does discussion reflect the issues treated in the introduction?
Was relevant literature discussed?
Variance between author’s research and prior research findings stated?
Free from bias?
Taken into account all contributing/influencing factors?
Does the discussion raise theoretical issues and topics for further discussion?
Was the generalisability of the results discussed? Was this discussion appropriate?
Confined to sample population being drawn from.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS and CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS ...
STYLE and FORMAT ...