



## **Panel-beater or Co-Supervisor? The Politics and Paradoxes of Academic Language and Learning Lecturers providing support to doctoral students**

### **Key Words**

PhD Supervision, doctoral candidature, academic support and development

### **Abstract**

In this presentation we give an autoethnographic account of the pleasures, paradoxes and politics of working with doctoral students as an ALL (Academic Language and Learning) lecturers. The Academic Support and Development (ASD) Department at Victoria University, Melbourne comprises diverse staff from a rich variety of educational backgrounds. A common denominator is extensive teaching experience and expertise in language and communication. Despite a combination of skills and qualifications, few academics in this department undertake PhD supervision. As Chanock (2007, p. 273) articulates it, ALL departments “seem to be regarded as a form of crash repair shop where welding, panel-beating and polishing can be carried out on students’ texts”. The reasons for this may be various –including perception of ALL academics as “remedial” support staff on the “margins” of the university (Huijser, Kimmins & Galligan 2008) rather than researchers as well as a lack of awareness about individuals’ discipline expertise. Our experience and that of our colleagues suggests that ALL academics often engage in unacknowledged supervision. In the “measured university” our skills are harnessed to ensure students develop optimal capacity to deliver successful research outputs. Students range from artists undertaking creative doctorates to International humanities and science students. As such they bring diverse educational and professional experiences to doctoral study and a significant challenge can be “intellectual culture shock” (Ballard, 1987; Johnson, 2014; Kamler & Thomson, 2014) where students must navigate the representation of meaning, self and authority in their work. At times the student’s research is within our discipline, other times not. In both cases many students see us over the course of their doctorate because of our ability to teach research writing skills. We argue that a pleasurable research environment acknowledges the input of all academics involved in doctoral candidature. In some cases this would entail recognizing ALL academics as Associate Supervisors. We draw upon Halse & Bansel’s (2012) notion of the “learning alliance” in doctoral supervision where ethical responsibility and commitment to to all the relationships is prioritised “among the multiple actors and practices that constitute a research community” (p. 388). We suggest that inclusivity can only serve to nourish all involved in the conceptualization and enactment of doctoral candidature.

### **References**

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