Partnering with supervisors and doctoral students around feedback on doctoral writing

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'Partnership' with our research participants?

- *Supervisors **+** doctoral students* across faculties

- *Researchers*: two ALL lecturers in research education, with TESOL specialisation

- *Institutional partnership*: UniSA and UoW

- *Professional partners*: ALL colleagues across Australia (conferences etc.)

Acknowledgment of support Partnership across universities

- Via AALL funding to explore an area that we are engaged in, but is a neglected area of research

- Project: *Enhancing doctoral learning: Empowering supervisors to give effective writing-related feedback to multilingual doctoral scholars writing in EAL*

Role of the researchers:
# ALL practitioner in the HDR space

- Co-supervisors
- Writing mentors
- Facilitators of research writing circles/groups
- Mentoring other supervisors/contributing to professional development of supervisors
- Collaborators on research projects

Curious about feedback practices and process, esp. with multilingual supervisors/doctoral students

Partnership (Healey, Flint & Harrington 2014)

- As a **process** – authentic engagement and possibility for a transformative learning experience for all concerned

- **Underpinning values**

authenticity

inclusivity

empowerment

reciprocity

community

challenge

responsibility

trust
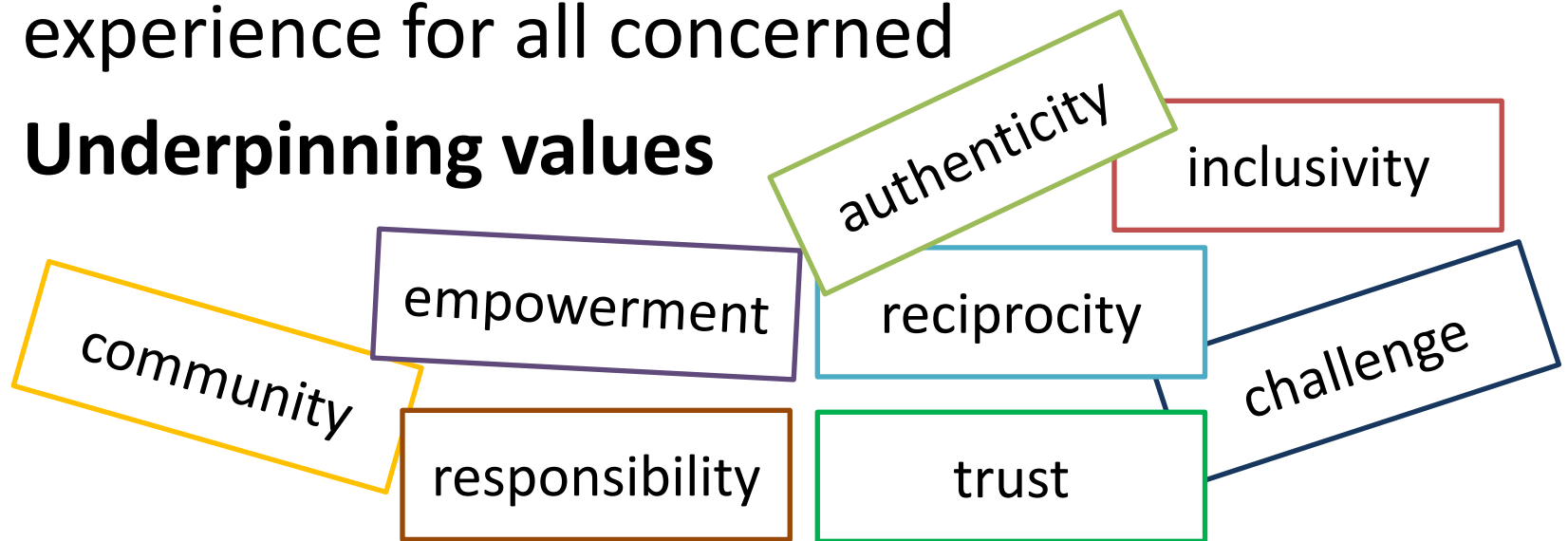
- Need more research evidence, how to sustain

Feedback on doctoral writing: a review

- Scholarly writing – a source of anxiety (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014)
- Emerging body of work that investigates feedback in doctoral writing (Cafferella & Barnett, 2000; Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Yu & Lee, 2013), yet more research required
- Provision for supervision training is uneven (Guerin et al., 2017)
- Often this space of developing research writing is not necessarily viewed as a collaborative activity (ibid)

Partnership in research: method

- Exploring practices and processes re. feedback on doctoral writing
  - ➢ Providing (supervisors)
  - ➢ Receiving & responding (doctoral students)
- *Research study:* Generating data from semi-structured interviews with successful supervisors (n = 17) and their doctoral students (n = 15) …
- Thematic analysis: Coding using questions as a guide

Features of good writing

➢ 'Clarity', 'argument'

➢ 'Complex ideas – simple language'

➢ 'Rigour'

➢ Independence and demonstrate 'critical thinking'

➢ 'Relevance to discipline'

➢ 'Frontier of disciplinary knowledge' – usage, occurs 'gradually'

Feedback

- 'shapes the writing'
- 'teamwork with supervisors'
- *'There would be no thesis without feedback'*
- *'helps our students become our colleagues'*
- *'provoke thinking'*
- *'tailored to students needs'*
- *'every writer is unique'*

Quality of feedback

➢ 'Frequent and regular' – 'timely'

➢ 'Provide clear direction – not just what is wrong, but why and how to correct it'.

➢ 'Frustrating – often massive amounts of editing'.
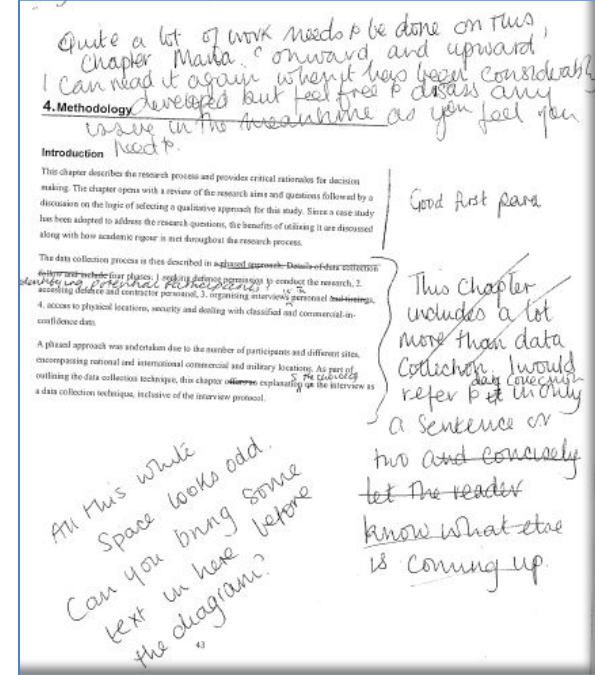
Barriers

➢ Time: 'Giving good feedback takes a lot of time'

➢ Possibilities of some resistance: 'Acknowledging that your writing is not great or you need to learn how to give feedback is like committing professional suicide.'

➢ Learn through 'trial & error'

Resources

Positive:
- Writing groups
- Discipline-based resources
- Workshops + practice time

Negative:
- Generic
- Online

What supervisors have said …

'I would love to see my EAL students develop across their course, so I would love to see some additional resources for developmental support built into their candidature. Not just as a subject in their first year, but something that is iterative and developmental. There is so much opportunity for the development work'.

What doctoral students have said …

➢ 'Training – Both supervisors and students need to understand expectations. Common expectations. What kind of help they can expect from supervisors and the second one, to mitigate any conflicts between supervisors and students and what kind of facilities are available to students at the university.'

➢ 'For supervisors, how to deal with students from different background and how to set the expectation level. And the resources that are there. Sometimes supervisors are not aware of these (what is available) and this could save students some time.'

Establishing partnerships – in context (1) with supervisors

➢ Multilingual research leader/professor

➢ Community – mutual interest

➢ Establish rapport – neutral, bilingual

➢ Trust/vulnerability – 'I was petrified'

➢ Authenticity – re. relationships with students

– 'I understand my student, to try to make them feel better …'

– 'I like debates … convince me of that …'

➢ Inclusivity – 'every student is different …'

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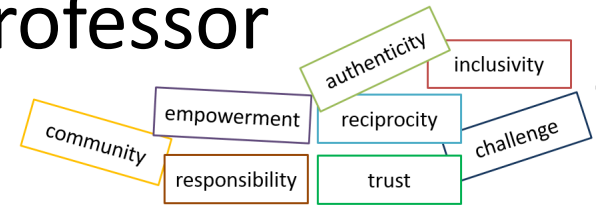
trust

Establishing partnerships – in context (2) with student

➢ Multilingual doctoral student

➢ Empowerment – improve English communication

➢ Trust – disagreement with supervisor

➢ Authenticity – appreciation for the supervisor

  – Quick turn around times, sending good examples

  – Quality of interaction – ppt exchange [drafting?]

➢ Reciprocity – asked about HDR workshops

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empowerment

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community

challenge

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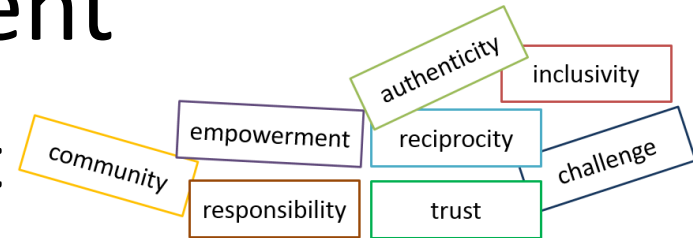
trust

Possibilities: Opening the door

➢ Possible collaboration on resources for students and supervisors – ongoing development

➢ Facilitating 'Communities of Practice'

➢ Strategy – 'successful' 'fostered **trust**'

In a nutshell: some principles

➢Engaging in collaborative research

➢Changing relationships

- open new doors

- start new conversations

- …

➢Value adding in some form

This research is still ongoing …

References

Aitchison, C. & Guerin, C. (2014), *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond: Innovations in practice and theory,* London, Routledge.

Guerin C., Walker R., Aitchison C., Mattarozzi M., Chatterjee Padmanabhan, M. & James B. (2017), 'Doctoral supervisor development in Australian universities: Preparing research supervisors to teach writing', *Journal of Academic Language & Learning,* 11(1), A88-A103.

Kumar, V., Stracke, E. (2007), 'An analysis of written feedback on PhD theses', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 12 (4), 461-470, DOI:10.1080/13562510701415433.

Stracke, E & Kumar, V. (2010), 'Feedback and self-regulated learning: Insights from supervisors' and PhD examiners' reports', *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 11(1), 19-32. httpp://DOI: 10.1080/14623940903525140

Method

- Interviews of dyads

- Copy of comments

- Initial SFL analysis