Type of Contribution: PAPER

The supervisory relationship in the doctoral process: how do Croatian IS students see it?

Keywords: supervisors, supervision, supervisory relationship, information science, doctoral students, Croatia

# Introduction

Although doctoral education differs across national contexts, supervisor is a key element and quality relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors is important for successful doctoral process (Gardner 2007, Pyhältö, Vekkaila, and Keskinen 2012, Woolderink et al. 2015, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick 2007).

In the study, presented int his paper, the role of supervisors in doctoral process will be analysed. The study will be conducted among doctoral students at Croatian IS departments at three state universities (Zagreb, Zadar and Varaždin).

**Theoretical framework**

Although literature review shows that there are significant differences in supervision process in different scientific areas (Gardner 2007, Sugimoto 2012, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick 2007), not many studies on this topic have been conducted specifically in relation to the discipline of LIS (Sugimoto 2012).

Doctoral students' experiences and perception of supervisors' support differs. For instance, good supervisory relationship, constructive feedback from the supervisors (Ali, Watson, and Dhingra, 2016, Corner, Löfstrom, and Pyhältö 2017, Dimitrova 2016, Woolderink et al. 2015), social support (Ali, Watson, and Dhingra 2016, Corner, Löfstrom, and Pyhältö 2017, Gardner 2007, Pyhältö, Vekkaila, and Keskinen 2012, Woolderink et al. 2015), independent work (Ali, Watson, and Dhingra 2016, Dimitrova 2016, Gardner 2007) contribute to satisfaction with supervisory relationship and timely completion of doctoral studies. For quality relationship between supervisor and doctoral student mutual respect, flexibility, clear communication, and coaching skills are most important. (Ali, Watson, and Dhingra 2016, Halse and Malfroy 2010, Woolderink et al. 2015). Furthermore, frequent meetings with supervisors and their support have been one of key elements associated with the success and satisfaction with doctoral studies (Corner, Löfstrom, and Pyhältö 2017, Pyhältö, Vekkaila, and Keskinen 2012, 2015, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick 2007). On the other hand, doctoral students report negative experience related with communication problems, a lack of discipline/research expertise, and conflicts with supervisors (Ismail, Majidb, and Ismail 2013), supervisor abandonment, inadequate supervision and disrespect (Löfstrom and Pyhältö 2014). Accordingly, the quality relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors influences the students’ satisfaction with their supervision and the doctoral process (Ives and Rowley 2005, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick 2007). Although, superivison includes both intellectual dimension entailing providision of knowledge, suggestions, and feedback, and affective aspects such as caring, support, and friendliness (Ali, Watson, and Dhingra 2016, Halse and Malfroy 2010), previous studies indicate that doctoral students value more cognitive and affective qualities of the supervisor than their professional expertise qualities (Davis 2019, 431).

**Research questions**

Goal of this study is to analyze how doctoral students at Croatian IS departments perceive the role of their supervisors in doctoral process and to identify desired qualities of a good supervisor, in their opinion. It is hoped that the study will raise awareness of the importance of supervision in doctoral process since it has immense impact on the quality of doctoral education as a whole.

In this paper the qualitative data will be presented, which will be obtained in a semi-structured interview with IS doctoral students.

In the study we shall try to answer the following research questions:

1. Why did students enroll in the IS doctoral program and how satisfied are they both with the supervision and their doctoral study program in general?
2. What are the characteristics of a successful supervision and supervisory relationship?
3. What are the qualities of good supervisors?
4. What are the qualities of good doctoral students?

**Methodology**

Authors will conduct a qualitative study with the help of a semi-structured interview with doctoral students at Croatian IS departments at three state universities (Zagreb, Zadar and Varaždin). The study is aimed at doctoral students at different levels of their studies, as well as those who have completed their doctoral study within past 12 months.

**Conclusion**

This is one of rare studies into the perceptions of the relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors in IS internationally and no such study has been conducted yet among doctoral students at Croatian IS departments so the results will be highly relevant for Croatia's IS departments which are embarking on revision of their doctoral programs.

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