Doctoral rhythms within an EdD: the case of group supervision

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and development, Doctoral supervision and the history of supervision. At the level of theory and methodological considerations he is currently working with and on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and his notion of Rhythmanalysis.

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This paper explores the application and use of group supervision with doctoral candidates studying a professional doctorate, the EdD, at a teaching intensive university. Group supervision is applied as a pedagogical strategy during the module stage of the award with candidates who were advanced practitioners in their fields with several working at the Post'92 university in question. Group supervision is an emergent idea has not been well described in the literature either as a concept or a practice. This paper aims to contribute to understandings of group supervision and its potential value as a doctoral learning approach. Rhythmanalysis, is used to explore students' experiences of group supervision particularly the advantages for advanced professionals from education who are at an early stage in their research career. The paper highlights the importance of the exploration and production of ideas within the group supervision process such as the containing of anxiety, development of identities, grappling with theories and methodologies and the value of peer learning and mattering. Group supervision itself could also be described as a meta-supervision approach with the supervisor stepping in and out of the doctoral learning to articulate and justify what was happening in relation to future learning demands.

Keywords: word; professional doctorate, group supervision, doctoral supervision, peer learning, Rhythmanalysis

Subject classification codes: include these here if the journal requires them

Introduction

Whilst there is certainly a significant and broad range of research literature on the practice of supervision at doctoral level it still tends to be predicated on the more traditional and widely accepted practice of the one-to-one supervisory model which is common in the humanities and social sciences and indeed outside of the US and countries with doctoral systems using that model (Moulton *et al*. 2015; Taylor et al. 2018). This one-to-one approach, first associated with the PhD master and apprentice training rationale, migrated relatively uncritically and with surprising ease into the very

different professional doctoral milieu. Professional doctorates tend to be driven and shaped by a part-time candidate base of mature, mid-career and advanced professionals who are often involved in close to practice research in order to develop and enhance their careers which are already established (Hutchins, 2017; Malfroy, 2005). Clearly, this demographic has a different background and needs to those on the conventional PhD route and the opportunity exists to undertake some reimagining of supervision practice within this context. For example, the supervision of one's own colleagues and those who hold senior and leadership positions. Beyond the traditional one to one model there exists a number of different models of supervision including team or panel supervision, cohort or coursework-based supervision and PhD by publication with an adviser (ASSAF, 2010). A more recent addition is the group supervision model which perhaps has its roots in the sciences with their use of lab groups and journal clubs, where candidates take turns to present a new and important article from their field (Jones, 2009). However, there are a range of examples of group supervision in the literature, each with a different structure and form (McKenna, 2017) although Wilmot (2021) argues that there is a common thread in the value placed on peer learning, diffusion of power dynamics and the development of a sense of community.

This paper is concerned with an investigation into the application and use of group supervision with doctoral candidates engaged in a Doctorate in Education, an EdD award at a teaching intensive university. The EdD concerned was part-time and delivered in the evenings and divided into a module phase of two years and the thesis component lasting typically three years. This two stage approach to the professional doctorate including a taught or module stage, before the thesis stage, is common in the Uk (Mellors-Bourne et al. 2016). The two year module phase in this study involved

around 30 students in total with many being members of the University staff who are internally funded, whilst others from beyond the University are funded by their employer or self-funded. The balance between University and non-University staff, shifts each year. Around half of the group members had middle or senior leadership positions either in the University or in local Schools and Colleges, indicating a potential for a higher rank than the supervisor. Group supervision was deployed in the module phase taking up about half the sessions with a more formal teaching input model used in the remaining meetings. To move onto the thesis stage, the candidates have to complete a compulsory postgraduate L7 module in research practice, which has two assessments as a gateway to the thesis stage, during which they are allocated their doctoral supervisors, indicating a shift from group to panel supervision.

The aim of the study is to explore group supervision and the doctoral learning involved as an emerging EdD practice through the lens of Rhythmanalysis; a methodological approach associated with the work of Henri Lefebvre (2017). This paper therefore commences with a discussion around the concept of group supervision what this concept means, why this concept is important and any associated impact. Then, the methodology section will introduce the methods, sample, and ethical considerations. The thematic findings include a discussion that results in conclusions that summarize the new knowledge generated, which leads to the wider implications for practice.

Literature Review

Different Models of Supervision

To define the concept of group supervision it is important to discuss the existing models of supervision in existence, across the globe. As highlighted in the introduction, the original model was the traditional one candidate to one supervisor model but the formalisation and diversification of doctoral education led to an increase in candidate numbers, changes in modes of study, reduced completion times, have influenced changes in supervisory practice in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, South Africa. Drawing on South Africa practice, beyond the traditional model; is now team, panel, or co-supervision models; cohort based or coursework-based supervision, and group supervision (Wilmot, 2021 and ASSAf, 2010). The traditional model is ubiquitous in the humanities and social sciences (Moulton et al. 2015) but it is often supplemented by ad *hoc* and informal support and development programmes (ASSAf, 2010). Team, panel, or co-supervision models include additional supervisors working with one candidate: often deliberately blending experienced and novice supervisors (Bitzer and Albertyn, 2011). The cohort based and coursework based supervision models; includes a cohort of candidates who define themselves as a group to undertake workshops together for a year, which can be economically beneficial for institutions (Wilmot, 2021; ASSAf, 2010). The project-based model includes several candidates working on a funded project which is a subset of the cohort-based model The coursework based supervision model also involves a structured doctoral curriculum which includes epistemology, methodology, critical thinking, or theory delivered by several academics to cohorts, in addition to traditional one to one supervision (ASSAf, 2010). Finally, there is group supervision which Wilmot (2021) suggests is far lesser known, appreciated and understood than the other above-mentioned models.

Group supervision can vary from being a collection of individuals with similar levels of experience to those at varying stages in the research process, it can involve student only versions and mixed supervisor-and-student groups (Bitzer and Albertyn, 2011; Samara, 2006). There are broadly three forms of group supervision which includes: organised research groups in the natural sciences; laboratory meetings and regular seminars where the students meet in groups with other students and established scholars or peer groups that either discuss research topics of common interest or comment on each other's texts. In some cases, the students' supervisor is included in the group, usually when the students are working with similar research topics, but as suggested above, this is not necessarily the case (Samara, 2006). What is clear, is that there are different models of supervision, including the traditional and different models of group supervision. The origins of group supervision in the natural and human sciences will now be discussed, then the adoption in the social sciences and then finally the professional doctorate.

Group supervision in the sciences

When exploring the socialisation of doctoral students in laboratory or field sciences Delamont et al. (2001, p. 81) suggest that the concept of group supervision may have originated in the past under certain historical conditions as 'an unofficial line of responsibility' for postdoctoral researchers. These groups can operate when there are enough postgraduates (at different stages of research) and postdoctoral researchers, but the group size and continuity of research are crucial. Group supervision provides 'pedagogic continuity as skills and equipment are handed down through the research group' as students gain the opportunity to learn from other students at a more advanced stage in their research or achievement of their doctorate. However, this model of group supervision is really only an adjunct or partial addendum to the main focus of doctoral

provision as 'the supervisor is ultimately responsible for the intellectual quality of the PhD students work and cannot abrogate that responsibility' (2001, p. 81). Jones (2009, p. 36) warn of the debilitating effect of 'isolation and over specialisation' for the doctoral candidate and suggest that much can be learnt to combat this phenomenon from the existing doctoral learning group practices in the sciences. This includes lab groups, journal clubs and poster presentations which build 'a sense of shared intellectual responsibility'. Moulton et al. (2015) agree that group supervision is the norm in laboratory based PhDs which Egan et al. (2009) suggest does tend to be used in the 'hard' disciplines where group supervision includes candidates, research fellows and academics in the same group. Akerlind and McAlpine (2017, p.1694) explain how supervisors of field based, and lab work use group supervisions to motivate candidates by addressing 'a lab-based problem or a common intellectual problem' in the group supervision meetings.

Group supervision in humanities of social sciences

Wilmot (2021) focuses on the challenge of finding effective, contextually appropriate supervision models in the humanities and social sciences in order to move away decisively from the traditional and resource intensive one to one approach. Indeed, there are already in existence plenty of forms of group supervision in the humanities and social sciences from which to draw ideas and practical examples including the PhD cohort model (de Lange *et al*. 2011; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011); the Dissertation House Model (Carter-Veale *et al*. 2016); Communities of Practice or learning community approaches (McKenna, 2017; Wisker *et al.* 2007) and the Collaborative Cohort Model (Burnett, 1999). However, Wilmot (2021) insists that the only 'true' group supervision models are those where PhD candidates intentionally enrol on project based teams or coursework PhD programmes which reflect the needs of candidates who

are mature, possibly employed and predominantly female, working on their own individual projects.

Group Supervision during professional doctorates

There are six studies which report on group supervision as part of a professional doctoral programme which include Malfroy (2005); Carr et al. (2010), Fenge (2012) Hutchins (2017); Agné and Mörkenstam (2018) and Kumar (2021).

In their Australian study, Malfroy (2005) explores the concept of group supervision delivered through 'seminars' in relation to two doctoral programmes: a PhD in Environmental Health, Tourism and Management and a Professional Doctorate in Nursing and Midwifery. The PhD programme called the seminars 'PhD nights' whilst the Professional Doctorate called them 'Doctoral Schools' and the midwifery students had a 'Midwifery research group'. The purpose of the 'Doctoral Schools' were mentioned in the course handbook and delivered to separate cohorts for five days every semester over the first three years. One student suggested the seminars were useful to share stories and experiences, whilst others felt vulnerability in sharing their work with supervisors. There were contrasting views on the content and value of the seminars amongst the supervisors. Group supervision through the seminars developed the research capacity of students and provided a forum for imaginative explorations about researching practice. The paper argues that the seminars or group supervision is a powerful pedagogic practice, which is often overlooked in the focus on the traditional one to one model although the group supervision ran in addition to the one-to-one supervision.

Curiously, three of these six studies are from academics at Bournemouth university in UK (Carr *et al*. 2010, Fenge, 2012 and Hutchins, 2017) and they all focus on a Professional Doctorate in Health and Social Care which is not module based. Carr *et al*. (2010) is a conceptual paper outlining the seven dimensions of group or cohort supervision for 6-8 candidates to meet monthly with two academics to share experiences and challenges. The dimensions of their cohort supervision include structural and process elements which include belonging, containing anxiety, growing confidence, commonality and uniqueness, values clarification, scholarly community, and significantly for this paper negotiating the rhythms of receptive an active time. Therefore, rhythm and temporality are significant for Carr *et al.* (2010) for they provide a fairly intense pattern of time for receptive thinking, learning and reflection with creative moments of active engagement and contribution. Indeed, they also suggest that cohort supervision is the means through which to facilitate what they call 'nourished scholarship' which is about satisfying and enriching the student learning journey by linking learning, values professional and academic development and contribution. For Carr *et al.* (2010, p.139) 'nourished scholarship feeds on meaning' adding rhythmically the 'why' to the existing pulse of 'what' and 'how' in doctoral learning.

Carr *et al*. (2010) are the only paper to argue that group supervision should replace one to one supervision; whilst the other two UK Bournemouth papers by Fenge (2012) and Hutchins (2017) are content to suggest that group supervision takes place in parallel with one to one supervision providing complementary support for students. In the Fenge (2012) study there were three cohorts of 7, 3 and 6 candidates which were supported by an unspecified number of supervisors, again on a non-modularised programme. They suggest that the group supervision enables the doctoral candidates to

be reflexive around identity development with the benefits of peer learning. As with Malfroy (2005) their take on group supervision was promoted and was the rationale for some candidates choosing the programme. As with Carr *et al*. (2010) the group supervision focusses on the doctoral journey and was seen as important to allow the group or cohort to benefit from the shared journey. However, the research also suggests that not all students find the cohort a safe environment due to the prevalence of vocal and dominant candidates and others feeling silenced. In short, cohort learning certainly has its advantages, but it is hardly a substitute for the one-to-one approach.

The most recent UK Bournemouth study by Hutchins (2017) which also explored three cohorts on the same non-modular professional doctorate as Fenge (2012) explore how group supervision and peer learning can nurture mutual and sustained support but with a focus on how online peer group supervision (through Tm communication or TmC) could impact. Again, the group supervision consisted of four to six candidates who would meet monthly with two academics which ran in parallel with the primary supervisor meetings. As the pathway was open and not modular the participants were at different stages of the doctoral process. They draw on Carr *et al*. (2010) concept of 'nourished scholarship' to suggest that cohort supervision can support and sustain the doctoral journey and improve completion rates (2017, p. 548). The analysis drawing on the conceptions of supervisory practice by Lee (2010) suggests that the roles traditionally associated with one to one supervision such as checking progress, nurturing belonging, critical thinking, and relationship development are facilitated through the peers in cohort supervision. There was an indication that some candidates felt the focus of some sessions was unclear and unstructured. The barriers or hindering factors include the difficulties in aligning diaries, importance of structure and having a clear focus for the cohort supervision sessions. There were specific barriers and enablers

relating to the online delivery. They reveal that the online cohort supervision was welcomed by some and resisted by others. However, most saw it as complimentary rather than a replacement for face to face interactions. However, despite the aspiration to challenge the prevailing doctoral culture, cohort supervision remains positioned at the moment it seems as 'an enabling and complimentary support' (2017, p. 548) for doctoral candidates rather than a replacement for the core supervisor relationship. Indeed, there is also some additional hesitation expressed that cohort or group supervision could perhaps be seen in the longer term at least as a deficit model languishing in professional doctorates without any wider appeal. And yet, for Hutchins, this concern for the fate of group supervision is also somewhat offset by the growing and rather pressing need to provide a 'sustainable solution for managing rising numbers of students within increasing academic workloads' (2017, p. 537).

The question about whether candidates should have individual or collective supervision was explored in a Swedish study by Agné and Mörkenstam (2018). The focus was a professional doctorate in Political Science which recruits in cohorts and the programme includes 15-18 months of coursework and then 30-33 months to undertake the thesis. Since 2009 the candidates have been allocated collective supervision in the first year which involves 3-7 students with 2 – 4 supervisors. They warn that the collective supervision does not prevent individual candidates contacting and interacting with other researchers beyond the collective supervision group. The primary research with 145 doctoral candidates found that collective supervision in the first year should allow to reduce the time to complete and increase the probability for completion. They conclude that group supervision could replace individual supervision in the first year, rather than being seen as supplementary to individual supervision; suggesting some utility with those earlier in their candidature. In addition, they suggest that collective

supervision could run in parallel with individual supervision and organised with candidates in specific fields or stages rather than being cohort-based.

The most recent study was undertaken by Kumar et al. (2021) in the USA and was the only study to focus on the EdD. Similar to Hutchins (2017) the study explored online research group supervision in an online cohort based EdD doctoral programme. The online cohort supervision generally involves one or more supervisors with a group of candidates from the end of Year 2 as prior to this the candidates are advised by the programme co-ordinator. The cohort comprised 22 students who were assigned to four faculty members in groups of 4-6 candidates during the thesis stage. The meetings were either weekly, fortnightly, or monthly and as with most of the other studies the cohort supervision meetings took place in addition to one-to-one meetings. The findings discuss themes including sharing, being more motivated and accountable to others, gaining peer feedback and developing relationships. There were challenges and strategies for the online aspect including the structure of the sessions, but the academics worked in educational technology.

If the jury is still out with these five studies on group supervision their exploration is an indicator nonetheless of an emerging practice which Wellington (2021) identifies and analyses more fully as 'distributed pedagogy' within doctoral education with the usefulness of aspects such as peer learning. This highlights the importance of learning from networks and alliances where candidates take an active role, being independent, collaborating and benefiting from socially situated learning. Wellington (2021) is drawn towards the EdD protective and nurturing cohort effect as both an example of necessary cultural change in doctoral education and a means of grounding that change in a coherent and sustainable way.

> Doctoral students, especially on professional doctorate programmes, will form a 'cohort' or a group which is moving towards the final examination together; the cohort can have a huge positive effect on not only the students' progress and learning experiences but also their motivation i.e., the affective aspect of their doctorate as well as the cognitive. (Wellington 2021, p. 10).

Therefore, as described in many of these studies it is within this context of the cohort effect that group supervision can arguably take root and thrive. In addition, group supervision can also be more clearly articulated and theorised as a means of exploring its potential and giving it the recognition, it deserves. Interestingly, whilst EdD provision is now fairly ubiquitous across the HE sectors its pedagogical impact remains poorly understood. Therefore, as a contribution to this debate this paper will look at group supervision as a pedagogical strategy during the module stage of the EdD programme in a Post-92 teaching intensive university.

EdD Programme Background and Structure

The EdD programme at a Post-92 teaching intensive university began in September 2012 and was the first professional doctorate in the institution. In 2014 its operation was revisited and thoroughly reviewed resulting in a significant shift in its focus and pedagogically approach towards a broader methodological and theoretical orientation and appeal. As part of this reorientation and indeed perhaps at its core was a conscious and deliberate swerve away from some of the more ubiquitous conventions of teaching within the Higher Education field to be superseded by a growing engagement with group supervision as an innovative pedagogical strategy for supporting students at the beginning of their doctorate.

The EdD Course Handbook (2022) outline the course aims:

- Create and interpret new knowledge through research of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;

- Systematically acquire and reflect upon a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;

- Conceptualise, design and undertake a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;

- Have a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry;

The EdD programme is described in the course handbook (2022) as being delivered across an initial module stage including three specific modules which leads on to a culminating Thesis stage. The group supervision component is located in the module stage which normally lasts two years.

The rationale for group supervision on the EdD: gaining and maintaining momentum towards the Thesis

The rationale for group supervision on the EdD perhaps has its origins and orientation in the attempt to engage with two parallel doctoral and pedagogic considerations including a means of creatively delivering the aforementioned course aims and secondly as a form of extended preparation in the module stage for the experience of individual supervision. In short, a rehearsal of concept for what is to come. The course aims do not explicitly promote or even mention group supervision which is different to earlier studies such as Fenge (2012). They are perhaps predictably far more concerned with the 'generation of new knowledge, applications and understanding at the forefront of the discipline or area of professional practice' and the inherent learning required in order to

achieve this at doctoral level. Nonetheless, the course aims concerning creating and interpreting new knowledge through research of quality to satisfy peer review, applied within the module stage provides a suitable *entrée* for group supervision.

Therefore, group supervision aims to build a sense of growing autonomy and independence for the emerging researcher at the outset of their doctoral journey. This involves drawing on the classical pedagogical model and intellectual traditions of individual doctoral supervision and adapting them to a group learning context within the EdD module sessions. However, there is still a paucity of research into group supervision on EdD provision and for Fenge (2012) as a result the notion itself lacks clear guidelines and remains enigmatic. Indeed, group supervision cannot be readily reduced for pedagogical convenience according to Fenge (2012) to a nurturing affinity group, a peer learning experience, a working alliance for researchers or a learning ecology, although it does tantalisingly contain all four of these elements in varying proportions.

To prepare for the group supervision sessions, during the module stage in the EdD under consideration it is necessary for candidates to bring their own questions, concerns and reflections relating to their particular area of research interests and priorities, related theories, and methodologies. Therefore, to get the full pedagogical value from the group supervision experience, it is essential for candidates to think carefully about what they actually want and need to gain from the session in advance of the session itself. In addition, candidates also must reflect on what they can individually contribute both intellectually and practically to the doctoral learning and development of the other group supervision participants. The tutors review and provide informal feedback on a draft assignment work. In addition to the informal tutor feedback on

assignments participants in group supervision will also be expected to engage fully with and provide peer review of assignment work for each other at the drafting stage.

Methodology

Aim of the study

This study intends to explore the nature and value of group supervision on the modular stage of the EdD.

The theoretical Framework of Rhythmanalysis

For Lefebvre (2017) the study of the everyday with its working assumptions, routines, rituals, and rites can best be understood or at least approached by investigating the existence and prevalence of rhythms. For Lefebvre a rhythm exists with an expenditure of energy in space and time. A force historically and politically configured. Rhythms can often be mundane and predictable passing by almost unnoticed, similar to the ticking of a clock or the beating of the human heart. Nonetheless, these temporal moments or pulses are also material and philosophical facts with pedagogical importance.

Interestingly Lefebvre (2017) in his deliberations on rhythms in the everyday explores the dialectical relationship between the present and presence. However, capturing, holding, and analysing the present and presence is nonetheless somewhat problematic in doctoral learning. The life cycle of production in the doctoral candidature so often consists of different and differing phases over many years (Author, 2021), the rhythmic quandary of long-learning, noticeably at odds with the neo-liberal dominance and demands of undergraduate teaching. For EdD candidates the

temporality of long-learning, a feature of all doctorates, is further complicated by the pressing productive needs of their professional workplace in education in which they have already established their expertise and the demands of the doctoral space where at the outset and for a significant period beyond their research production is at the novice stage (Pratt and Shaughnessy, 2021). Such a temporal and epistemological dislocation, expressed rhythmically, constantly positions and re-positions the EdD doctoral experience as a contentious practice in the neo-liberal university.

Ethical approval

This article arises from an internally funded research project undertaken at one University from England, which had full ethical approval. The candidates were approached through an open invitation to current and former EdD course members who were experiencing or had experienced the group supervision approach. Information sheets and consent forms were produced using BERA guidelines (2018) which outlined the research aims and objectives, to reassure participants such as the right to withdraw and gain their consent. Quotations will be included but the candidate names will be not be used in this paper.

Sample

The group consisted of ten candidates in total who were in regular attendance in the EdD modules which amounted to eighteen evening sessions over the academic year. The participants had come to HE teaching after a successful career in other relevant fields outside of HE. These would often include, for example, senior teaching and management roles in Schools and FE Colleges; advanced practitioner positions in

Nursing, or other Health based disciplines such as Radiography. Becoming doctoral candidates for these senior professionals can therefore place them in a different position to their role in the workplace where they have authority and experience; but during the doctoral have to receive suggestions and guidance from academics and supervisors (Malfroy, 2005). Whilst the original professional doctorate was seen as an alternative to the PhD for those professionals who worked beyond universities (UKCGE, 2002), there are a number of higher education staff who are now undertaking doctorates, particularly in the Post-92 university in this study. Malloch (2010) stated that some higher education staff may undertake a doctorate to maintain a university position; whilst Malfroy (2005) indicated that most of the candidates were professional practitioners who did not aspire to work in academia, indicating they were not higher education staff.

Methods

The research intention was to begin the process of gathering a group supervision conspectus which included marks, traces, and murmurs on the EdD by using an elicitation approach rather than more conventional direct interviews (Thille, Rotteau, Webster 2021). The use of elicitations provided rather open-ended considerations and reflections around some EdD pertinent evocations and provocations which are outlined below:

(1) Some initial experiences of the EdD and group supervision, hopes and concerns at the outset, motivation for doing the programme, links to professional context and practice…

(2) The experience of group supervision on the module stage of the EdD, the evolution of group supervision and the EdD modules whilst you have been on the programme…

(3) Thoughts on assessment on the EdD, formative assessment, working as a cohort and getting feedback in group supervision…

(4) Exploration of theory in group supervision, engagement with theory whilst on the EdD, the theory and practice relationship, the impact of theory…

Exploration of methodology and methods whilst on the EdD, new approaches to methodology and methods developed in group supervision…These elicitations were collated through face-to-face discussions and email interactions. The face-to-face discussions were recorded and then transcribed, whilst the data from the emails was transposed into a word document.

Analysis

For Lefebvre (2017), Rhythmanalysis was always conceived as a philosophically based and politically oriented strategy for enquiry rather than a fully formed and articulated methodology. Therefore, as part of his legacy in research, we are given the task and challenge by Lefebvre to begin to devise a way forward for Rhythmanalysis at the operational level of implementation and intervention.

Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p261 & 262) explore the 'plugging in' of theorists with research data as a liberating process when exploring new and emerging methodological positions and possibilities. Their approach avoids the rather mechanistic stance of coding and data reduction and 'writing up transparent narratives that do little

to critique the complexities of social life' (Jackson and Mazzei 2013, p261 & 262) In short, the authors argued that focusing on specific concepts of individual theorists as opposed to thinking within their general theoretical frameworks, opened up thought rather than foreclosed it and as such 'grasped onto these concepts as they were articulated in a certain moment and time in a philosopher's oeuvre' (Jackson and Mazzei 2013, p264). Interestingly, this approach resonates closely with Lefebvre's view of praxis as a site of origin for concepts situated precisely in history and not the product of the retrospective construction and demands of a philosophical system. The notion of 'plugging in' as a means of working and thinking with theory has therefore been attempted with the data analysis of this study based on the critical mobilisation of Lefebvre's ideas.

In order to 'plug in' to theory the data was analysed by a method of repetitive and responsive listening, typed transcripts and recurrent reflective commentary on the material in order to capture its marks, traces and murmurs. The nature of this data aligns well with the perspective of Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p263), 'We assume that data is partial, incomplete, and always being retold and remembered'. Indeed, for Lefebvre (2017) this is a regressive/progressive approach: constantly oscillating or bending backwards and forwards with the data whilst exploring the praxis of conceptual production. The result was an artifact, an EdD course conspectus with the ideas from Rhythmanalysis identified and used to unearth related extracts, fragments, and reflections from the transcripts. The methodological motion of bending backwards and forwards whilst (re)reading the data was facilitated in the early stages at least by a tabular approach to recording and reporting (Cloutiier and Ravasi, 2020) Particularly relevant text was highlighted, and the conspectus printed off and further annotated with

handwritten notes and comments to enhance and clarify the objective of thinking with theory. In addition, it was also noticeable that a method based on rhythms contained within itself a certain rhythmic quality and pulse in the research process often veering towards or returning to the political origins and intentions of Lefebvre. For Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p263), 'It is the process of arranging, organizing, fitting together. So, to see it at work, we have to ask not only how things are connected but also what territory is claimed in that connection'.

Findings

Marks, traces, murmurs

The rhythmic evidence unearthed in the research was fairly fragmented which is not surprising as it consisted mostly of the marks, traces, and murmurs of the experience of group supervision which was recalled and reflected upon after the event. For Lefebvre (2017), rhythms can have a material impact and leave a historical record of their marks on groups and individuals including traces in their memories, everyday lives, and locations. Murmurers also persist and accompany rhythms as a recurrent, subdued, incomplete, half spoken and a something almost said historical narrative. Therefore, with regard to these findings it could be argued that a doctoral conversation was undertaken mostly at the level of murmur with the marks and traces of rhythms also identified.

Indeed, the pedagogical rhythms of the EdD seem to have had an early presence and been prefigurative in that they shaped the initial decision by the students to undertake the EdD rather than embark on the more traditional PhD in Education route:

I preferred the structured approach of the EdD as opposed to the PhD due to my current work commitments that part of my development.

The structured 'taught' part of the EdD was part of the attraction for me. Working in isolation for a PhD would not have suited me

Once the candidates were on the EdD the experience of group supervision marked their experience and progress on the course as it was seen as essential to help candidates feel that they belonged to a learning community of peers with a similar identity and purpose. Their engagement with the rhythm of group supervision build capacity and assisted by addressing the often felt anxiety about being able to undertake a doctorate within the everyday of competing work and family priorities and commitments:

I did initially feel like a fraud when I first enrolled but was put at ease by the first few sessions when I realised that I was actually part of a learning community with like-minded people who have similar fears to my own.

I want to become a doctor and visualise that happening, I have had a space in which to produce work that I felt I was not capable of producing. My fear of not being able to write a Doctorate has slowly disappeared.

It was apparent from the outset that being with these likeminded peers during the module sessions was a powerful pedagogical aspect for the candidates as part of the group supervision which certaintly left its rhythmic traces in their experiences and reflections:

It's great this EdD stuff particularly the opportunity to talk to others, it's really empowering.

However, the experience and impact of group supervision with its structure, regularity and demands also contained an inherent but unanticipated pedagogic rhythm which was increasingly dominant in the murmuring around the course. Rhythmatically,

it seems that the group supervision process manifested Lefebvre's notion of transduction; the intentional or unintentional move from the everyday given or 'the real' to the possible. Therefore, the murmuring around the group supervision often resonated with the current ideas and concepts which were being explored with an unfamiliar level of intensity. The world view of the candidates were being changed and the rhythmic emotional mark was often palpable:

> Excitement, the lure of a doctorate, an entirely different language. I have been exposed to new concepts and have been changed. I have become more open and receptive to new ideas.

> I have come to the conclusion if fairly slowly that the EdD is not necessarily just an award to prove and validate your level of study but that it is also a way of being. Making change equates to being changed.

The rhythm of group supervision emerged from the pedagogic challenge of supporting established professionals as newly enrolled doctoral candidates, who wanted to understand what was happening, epistemically when things were happening in the sessions. Indeed, this rhythm was further intensified by the necessity of supervision one's own colleagues from within the same organisation, particulary senior colleagues who requested and required a particular approach; a form of meta-supervision that was instructive on doctoral learning and the shifting register in the worldview of candidates:

> The EdD so far has given me a very welcome space to think, to challenge and to feel for the first time in ages my head hurting through thinking and that is really good although not always comfortable experience.

> I have found the assessments challenging but useful – they have given me the direction to explore new areas. It is also quite clear how they relate and lead to the end piece of research, the thesis.

The intensity of exploring theory or more precisely discovering what is like to become a reader and user of theory was one of the lasting marks and traces of group supervision rhythm. The rhythm of working with and on theory, including its deployment and employment in the written assignments, ebbed, and flowed in the murmuring on the course and yet was always present. This process or indeed rite of ideation defined the experience of group supervision for many; which was apparent in their reflections:

> I have found that I can relate theories to the literature.

> The exploration of theory has been very engaging and somewhat challenging.

An aspect of this rite of ideation also marked and supported candidates with their growing confidence and enthusiasm for engagement with new and emerging research methodologies:

> Interestingly and unexpectedly my ideas about how I approach my thesis has already changed, my perceptions have changed, and I am now excited by the idea of using innovative methods such as using Lego to explore identities, this is a real departure for me, the support which results from the collaborative nature of the EdD is invaluable.

> The exploration of methodology has been particularly challenging but also very rewarding. It has been fascinating to explore the degree of ontological challenge.

In short, the value of group supervision was **felt and embedded in the marks and traces that remined. It was a safe space for transduction where the identities of the doctoral candidates were being supported in their shift on the EdD from educational professionals to researchers. In addition, and quite unexpectedly with**

the rising level of confidence evident in the murmuring came a new form or mark of personal authority:

> I like the experience of being in what feels like a safe space to talk about things with colleagues and not feel like a manager.

> Above all the EdD has given me a kind of authority to give time to study and reading – that still feels like a kind of luxury, and I am not good enough yet at guarding my time

Discussion

Clearly, there are limitations in this initial research into group supervision on an EdD course. Reflections and recollections from participants, the marks, traces, and murmurs in the Lefebvre's (2017) sense are inevitably partial and incomplete. All responses are therefore fragmentary, underpinned perhaps by the Barristers standard caveat that this is the understanding and judgment at the moment.

Arguably, despite these hesitations, there are two emerging trends that appear from the marks, traces, and murmurs around the pedagogical practice of group supervision. First, what is clear from many of the doctoral candidates is the central importance of a feeling of purposeful belonging to a learning community with the focus on the exploration and production of ideas. Carr *et al*. (2010) describe the rhythmic necessity of certain 'scholarly punctuation points' with regular cohort meetings providing the opportunity for receptive time and active times; 'the creative challenges of the journey require times of letting go predetermined agendas, and other times of focus and discipline'. Moreover, for Carr *et al.* (2010) this 'creative temporal rhythm' can be 'understood and worked with' in doctoral learning. Being with likeminded peers

during the module sessions was a powerful pedagogical aspect for the candidates as part of the group supervision which contributed to the changes, they noted in themselves.

Perhaps this rhythm of receptive time and active times constitutes a form of learning ritual or more precisely the doctoral rites of ideation which in so many ways transcend and supersedes the conventional HE teaching model. Indeed, so forceful is this rhythm that the exploration and production of ideas in group supervision is often carried on outside the formal module sessions into the physical and virtual education workplace environment. In this sense perhaps it could be argued that the rites of ideation began and initiated the process of creating not only emergent researchers as a doctoral requirement but also future thought leaders in the education workplace as an outcome for the EdD. These rites of ideation were expressed in the application of theories and methodologies which at times could be challenging to practitioner world views (Pratt and Shaughnessy, 2021), and experienced as an uncomfortable departure in identities which were supported through group supervision. The experience of group supervision was nonetheless somewhat entangled in the overall cohort effect of the EdD, a largely positive group dynamic in doctoral learning (Wellington, 2021).

The second emerging trend which appeared from the data related perhaps to the practice of group supervision itself in the form what could be described as a certain meta-supervision approach which was apparent within the present Lefebvre (2017) of the group supervision practice. The doctoral candidates on the EdD were all advanced practitioners in their own particular area of educational expertise. Typically, they were mid-career professionals and yet they also found themselves as researchers to be at an early and still only emerging career stage when on the EdD (Malfroy, 2005). Moreover, some candidates held senior management positions in the University, comfortable and

experienced with giving instructions to staff, making decisions, writing evaluative management reports, and leading teams around particular HE policies and tasks. However, they were much less familiar or comfortable with being questioned and challenged from those below them in the organisational hierarchy which was usually the position held by the EdD supervisors. The group supervision here took place during the module stage and thus followed the set activities and assessments for the first three modules. The group supervision therefore was perhaps more structured in terms of content than the sessions discussed in earlier studies (e.g., Hutchins, 2017).

This dynamic of noticeable discomfort forced, through pedagogical necessity, a significant shift in the supervisory process and stance resulting in the practice of meta-supervision. The notion of meta-supervision does not appear directly in the literature although it is arguable a significant contribution to the 'nourished scholarship' identified by Carr et al (2010) as the mark of the group supervision experience. Indeed, both Fenge (2012) and Malfroy (2005) discusses candidates' feelings awkwardness and the resulting tensions arising from sharing academic work as an emerging researcher, compared to their senior and established hierarchical role in their workplace. However, the response of supervisors to this challenges is not considered or recorded in these accounts. Perhaps meta-supervision as part of group supervision is closest in the literature to the pedagogical interest in mattering (Gravett et al. 2024). In short, what really matters in what we do in HE and could we make it matter more? Mattering attempts to 'surface the micro-moments, the fine grained day to day practices of learning and teaching' (Gravett et al. 2024, p.401). . Meta-supervision as part of a group supervision approach involved in this paper meant the supervisor explaining contiguously if briefly to the candidates what was being actualised in group supervision moments; why were certain questions, methods or provocations and evocations being

used. In this way the supervisor would step in and step out of the doctoral learning in order to articulate and justify what was happening. Therefore , meta-supervision intentionally facilitated the doctoral learning presence or moment within the group supervision present. For example, explaining the doctoral purpose and nature of the questioning and theorising underway or the level and structure of the learning conversation as it may relate to the future assessment of the thesis and indeed the viva. Therefore, the 'doctorateness' (Wellington, 2021) was deliberately drawn out of the discussion with meta-supervision and identified as both the context and rationale for the endeavour. Meta-supervision arguably provided a certain palpable rhythm the candidates to feel that they not only belonged in doctoral learning but matter on the EdD too. .

Conclusion

The practice of group supervision as a pedagogic strategy is still only emerging within the EdD and wider doctoral context. Yet it is the main conclusion of this study that by using the lens of Lefebvre (2017), if group supervision can be said to have a central organising concept in its practice it is that of the doctoral ritual and rites of ideation: the exploration and production of ideas. In addition, the paper has argued that unerthing the notion of meta-supervision as a rhythmic force also contributes to our wider pedagogical understanding of doctoral belonging an mattering (Gravett et al. 2024) and provides a stimulus for further research and application in this area.

New ideas and concepts were being experienced during the group supervision which were impacting on the identities or world views of the candidates in alignment with the work of Fenge (2012) and Pratt and Shaughnessy (2021). Furthermore, group supervision, involving peers with a similar identity also assisted in containing and

positively channelling the inevitable fears and anxiety of being able to undertake a doctorate amongst established educational practitioners, some of whom were in senior positions in HE. In short, group supervision contributed rhythmically to the production and experience of 'nourished scholarship' conceptualised by Carr et al (2010).

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