

Philosophy of Supervision

What is the chief end of the university?

seek truth with others

right and truthful relationships

(equal human worth and dignity, different professional roles)

What is the chief end of supervision?

hold space for candidates' intellectual growth

(within limits of expertise, resources and capabilities)

rules, structures, institutions...

cultures, traditions...

individual actions, decisions



all else are means to these ends

Equal Human Worth and Dignity



persons (vs objects, projects,
consumables, Gantt diagram box)
rights and responsibilities

Example:
right to speech
responsibility for words spoken

Equal Human Worth and Dignity

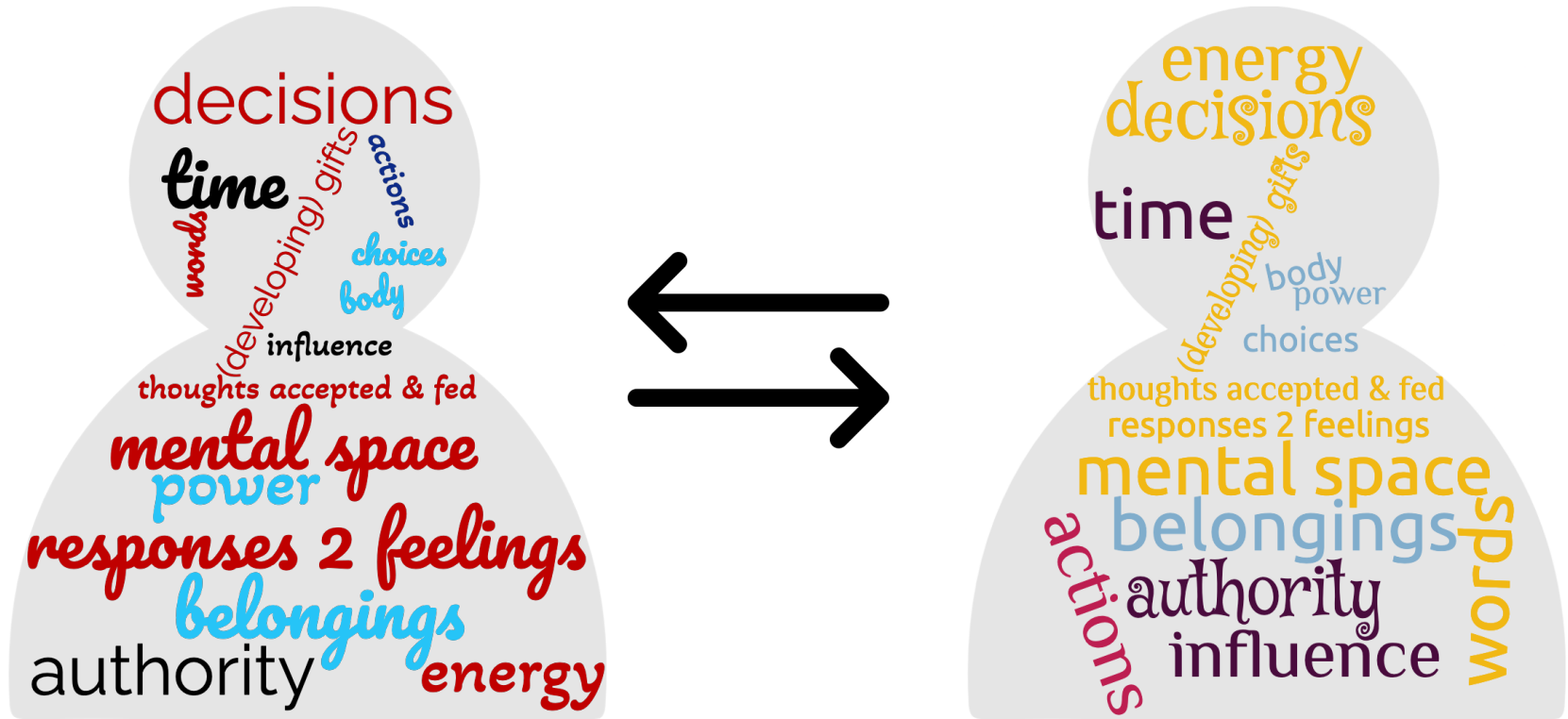


rights & responsibilities

rights & responsibilities



Equal Human Worth and Dignity



Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC)

Examples: time (starting & ending on time), magnet full field...

Otherwise stealing (taking without asking), falsehood, injustice...

Equal Human Worth and Dignity



Corollary: 3 uncorrelated axes (in life and physics):

- (1) whether one is doing what one should, i.e. one's part
- (2) how one feels,
- (3) whether there are 'results'

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Supervisors' Responsibilities (Proposal)

- provide **starting point** for reflection (thesis topic)
- provide necessary **equipment**
- provide (opportunities for) necessary **training**
- facilitate **social integration**
- **protection** from political & administrative distractions
- **availability** for consultations, problem resolution etc.

Candidates' Responsibilities (Proposal)

- develop their intellectual gifts
- honest effort to make positive contribution to projects

Free, prior and informed consent ⇒ details should be discussed beforehand as much as possible, on a case-by-case basis

∃ helpful worksheets from 'formation d'encadrement doctoral'

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Supervisors Should Not...

- do students' work for them or vice versa
- act as substitute parent, sibling, friend, partner etc. or otherwise go beyond their professional role
- play doctor, therapist, psychiatrist etc. or otherwise trespass on the territory of other professions

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One Size Doesn't Fit All!

- knowledge of strengths and limitations
- clarity re. boundaries
- mismatches of personality and expertise can occur
(what is the institutional response?)

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French Universities' Positive Features

- elected leaders
- short probation for faculty
- tenured faculty work in groups
- co-supervision (~80% in Paris-Saclay)
- PhD candidates are employees (labour rights)
- PhD oversight committees (*comités de suivi*) are national law
- strong technical and engineering support

Structural Issues in (French) Academia

- supervisors also evaluate ⇒ **conflict of interest**
- *comités de suivi* also performance review ⇒ **conflict of interest**
- universities control PhD supply & demand ⇒ **conflict of interest**
- grant funding changes supervision relationships

Proposals

- (I) formulate supervision philosophy
- (I) reflect on strengths and limitations (cf. e.g. implicit.harvard.edu)
- (I) clearly express boundaries
- (M/U) clarify PhD goals, rights and responsibilities of all
- (M/U/ED/I) improve FPIC, e.g. during interview process
- (M/U) clarify criteria for registration, defence and award of PhD
- (M/U) PhD funding from fellowships alone
- (M/U) abolish right of supervisors to veto registration
- (M/U) abolish right of supervisors to veto defence
- (M/U) separate student advocacy and performance review roles
(both done by CST at the moment, a conflict of interest)
- (U/ED) active evaluation for registration, defence etc.
- (M/U/ED) provide supervision of supervisors
- (M/U/ED) compulsory training for HDR candidates, including on
FPIC, power, conflict of interest and structural violence

M = Ministry, U = University, ED = Ecole Doctorale, I = Individual