

How do Mainland Chinese doctoral students perceive the supervisory relationship with supervisors in Hong Kong?

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ABSTRACT

The supervisor-supervisee relationship has been acknowledged as an important aspect of successful completion of doctoral study. Therefore, information about students' perceptions of their relationship with their supervisors can be useful for improving the quality of doctoral supervision.

Hong Kong is viewed as a combination of the East and the West experiencing rapid development during the past decades. Notwithstanding these changes, research recognizes that the Chinese culture in interpersonal relationship is still influencing the concepts and conducts of Hong Kong society significantly. The limited existing research mainly centers on the function and styles of doctoral supervision. Despite that increasing mainland Chinese students pursue their higher degrees in HK, little is known about the their perception of supervisory relationships in the higher education field in Hong Kong.

Therefore, the main research question is "How do the mainland Chinese doctoral students experience the supervisory relationships with their supervisors in Hong Kong?" A review of the literature that examined role theory, transference issues and resource-dependence theory provided the foundation for the study.

Random purposeful sampling was used to conduct in-depth interviews with 10 current Chinese doctoral students from different disciplines in a Hong Kong university. Findings revealed that the concept of power emerged as a central theme for most of the participants. Besides, it was found that the students' previous master learning experience shaped their attitudes towards the supervisor-supervisee relationship in terms of expectation and conflict management. Implications for postgraduate education will be presented with personal reflections.

Key words: supervisory relationship, doctoral student, supervisor, Chinese, Hong Kong