In pursuit of sustainable co-authorship practices in doctoral supervision: addressing the challenges of writing, authorial identity and integrity

Journal:	*Innovations in Education and Teaching International*
Manuscript ID	RIIE-2019-0301.R3
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Areas of Interest: Keywords:	co-authorship, supervision, doctoral students, identity, integrity

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Abstract
Developing an authorial voice along with co-authorship practices can be an important pathway towards building one's professional identity and career. However, challenges may arise when contributors have different expectations about co-authorship conventions and are accountable to different stakeholders. This article aims to explore co-authorship practices between doctoral students and supervisors by drawing on four dimensions that highlight professional challenges across disciplinary and national contexts: 1) supervisors' writing and co-authorship, 2) strategies and activities to support writing, 3) authorial voice, and 4) integrity and (the risk of) plagiarism. The article summarises practices and suggestions for academics and policymakers on how to create and promote an ethical and sustainable approach to co-authorship in supervisory context.

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Introduction

An understanding of co-authorship practices develops during doctoral studies, and writing collaborations between doctoral students and supervisors has become an important pathway towards building one's academic identity and professional record (Kamler, 2008). Indeed, in academia today, it is virtually impossible for researchers to operate without scientific collaboration (Henriksen, 2016) and co-authoring (Acedo et al., 2006). Co-authorship between doctoral students and supervisors has become increasingly relevant through the tendency in many institutions to encourage article-based doctoral dissertations.

While authorship attribution is an increasingly important 'currency' of academia (Macfarlane, 2017), it is not only a reward but also a responsibility of participating authors (Smith, 2017) that involves establishing and maintaining effective communication, agreeing on work expectations and meeting deadlines (Conn et al., 2015). These often depend on the nature of collaborative relationships between doctoral students and supervisors, as well as on their approach to managing authorship.

A growing number of studies explore the grounds for co-authorship (Cutas & Shaw, 2015; Leane et al., 2019; Selbach et al., 2018). With this article, we wish to build specifically on research addressing challenges in co-authorship among doctoral students and supervisors (cf. Kamler, 2008). This article presents a synthesis of the central perspectives on co-authorship in a supervisory context that each of us has identified from our interdisciplinary research areas, including writing, ethics, well-being and academic identity. We recognise that the four dimensions we have chosen, though highlighted by research as crucial, are not exclusive, and other disciplinary approaches may identify other challenges and solutions as well. Rather than an ad hoc combination of existing literature, this synthesis based on the collected findings from the authors' recent research is an attempt to take part in the discussion on writing in doctoral education in an era of 'publish or perish' discourse (cf. McGrail, 2006). In doing so, we emphasised the importance of considering the four sustainable practices, so co-authorship in supervisory context could become a much more fulfilling experience for all concerned in different disciplinary and national context.

The synthesis is based on literature reviews and results presented in our research on writing, authorial voice (Castelló & Donahue, 2012; Castelló et al., 2013; Nelson & Castelló, 2011; James & Lokhtina, 2018) and integrity (Löfström & Pyhältö, 2012; 2014; 2015; Löfström et al., 2015; Löfström et al., 2017). The article does not present a literature review *per se*, but the reader is referred to the above-mentioned studies. Moreover, we wish to

explicitly acknowledge the importance of the work of Kitchener (1985, referred to in Löfström & Pyhältö, 2012; 2014; 2015), East (2010), Valentine (2006, referred to in Löfström et al., 2015) and McAlpine & Amundsen (2009, referred to in James & Lokhtina, 2018) for our prior research. Here we bring together what we have identified, based on the studies listed above, to be relevant dimensions of co-authorship in the context of supervision in doctoral studies, and elaborate on those dimensions. While many practices around both supervision and co-authorship are contextual and field-specific, we aggregated the four dimensions of the writing process that are of interest across disciplinary and national contexts, consisting of:

1) supervisors' writing and co-authorship, (González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018; Inouye & McAlpine, 2019);
2) strategies and activities to support writing (Castelló & Donahue, 2012; Castelló et al., 2013; Castelló et al., 2017; Florence & Yore, 2004);
3) authorial voice (Nelson & Castelló, 2011; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009; James & Lokhtina, 2018); and
4) integrity and (the risk of) plagiarism (Löfström & Pyhältö, 2012, 2014, 2015; Löfström et al., 2015; Löfström, et al., 2017).

We conclude by summarising practices and suggestions for academics and policymakers on how to create and promote an ethical and sustainable approach to co-authorship in a supervisory context.

Supervisors' writing and co-authorship

Whereas research on doctoral students' writing has been extensive and growing over the last two decades (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Carlino, 2012; Castelló et al., 2009b; Castelló et al., 2013; Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; Kamler, 2008; Kamler & Thomson, 2014), studies focusing on supervisors' writing and even on faculty or experienced researchers' writing have been scarce (Florence & Yore, 2004; Iñesta & Castelló, 2012). Yet, in discussing co-authorship practices between students and supervisors, it is important to understand supervisors' writing experiences and expectations. The evidence from studies that focus on this area sheds light on three complementary aspects.

Firstly, writing difficulties do not disappear after doctoral graduation and even experienced researchers struggle with writing, specifically to adjust different genres to their

disciplinary discourses (Emerson, 2012; Iñesta & Castelló, 2012; Tardy, 2003; Swales, 2009). What is different from students' perspective is how supervisors tend to deal with the challenges and make strategic use of their knowledge and rhetorical strategies to position themselves as authors in the scientific community (Iñesta & Castelló, 2012; Florence & Yore, 2004).

Secondly, there is some evidence regarding how perceived competence, attitudes and especially feelings towards writing mediate or interfere with researchers' genre preferences. Those researchers that consider writing as a demanding but also rewarding activity are more able to engage in research and scientific writing than those who perceive research writing as non-relevant or unsatisfactory (Bazerman et al., 2012; Gallego et al., 2016).

Thirdly, highly productive researchers and writers tend to be active members in their disciplinary and scientific communities and demonstrate deep knowledge not only of the rhetorical requirements of written genres, but also of the research field-related dynamics and social relationships among authors. This knowledge is demonstrated through their strategic decisions regarding how to write and interact with other authors through citations, peer revision processes and journal selection and publication (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Emerson, 2012).

Research supports the idea of writing as a developmental process related to research-related competences and identity development (e.g. Ivanic 2005; Castelló, et al., 2017; Inouye & McAlpine, 2019), that requires emotional engagement (Aitchison et al., 2012) and is socially situated (Prior, 2013; Castelló, et al., 2017; Iñesta & Castelló, 2012). At the same time, in a collaborative context, this process is filtered and influenced by the supervisors' writing habits, prior experiences and strategies, as well as their position within the discipline or research area.

Strategies and activities to support writing

Research on how supervisors support writing has mainly focused on the identification and analysis of the supervisory strategies to support student writing and on how these strategies and other types of writing feedback are perceived both by students and, to a lesser extent, supervisors. More recently, the impact of supervisory writing support strategies and feedback on students' development and learning as writers and researchers has been also investigated.

Research on supervisory feedback on writing has revealed that supervisors are often unaware of the particular challenges that their students experience when having to write in unfamiliar genres, such as articles or doctoral dissertations, as well as the difficulties they face in publishing their research (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Bitchener et al., 2010; Maher et al., 2014). Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that a high number of doctoral students and even postdocs hold maladaptive conceptions about writing that may result in them procrastinating and experiencing writing blocks, especially if they are perfectionists (Lonka et al., 2014; Cerrato-Lara et al., 2017; Castelló et al., 2017). However, students' challenges as writers are quite unknown to supervisors. There is abundant evidence from research, but also from supervisory daily work and training, that highlights supervisors' concerns when they realise that students are apparently unable to learn simply from text corrections or that they do not just write and submit their texts in due time (Lee & Murray, 2015). While supervisors may believe that they contribute substantially to the students' writing process as well as learning process, the students might, at the end of the day, find themselves struggling alone to understand the genre, the expectations and the nature of relationships formed around the writing.

Subsequently, supervisors offer different types of writing support to help their students to deal with their writing difficulties. In a recent study, González-Ocampo & Castelló (2018) identified three categories of writing support that varied in terms of supervisors' involvement. The first category consisted of telling the students what to do, how they should write and what good research texts and genres look like (e.g. offering them good models). Supervisors representing the second category usually reviewed and edited students' texts, since, as experienced writers, they are supposed to know and manage genre conventions. In these cases, supervisors hope explicit corrections would be enough for their students to learn to deal with these conventions and their dynamics when facing particular writing situations. The third category consisted of a group of supervisors who were concerned about teaching research writing to their students and thus tended to write and discuss texts collaboratively with their students. Moreover, research has repeatedly demonstrated that the different types of writing support that supervisors are able to offer relate to their own conceptions on how writing works and the role that they attribute to writing in their activity as researchers (Coterall, 2011; Lee & Murray, 2015; González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018).

Available evidence on the impact of different supervisory support strategies on students' writing, although limited, points in the same direction. Strategies that involve supervisors and students at different levels of collaborative writing have been found to be

useful not only in developing efficient and effective writers, but also in contributing to the students' knowledge of their respective disciplinary research communities. These strategies account for the social dimension of writing, in many cases unknown to the students, and can be promoted not only through the supervisors' explicit and contingent comments throughout the writing processes, but also by involving other researchers with different levels of experience and with different roles in the process of planning, writing, revising and publishing (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Guerin et al., 2017; Florence & Yore, 2004; González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018, Lee & Murray, 2015; Paré, 2011; Kamler, 2008). Thus, in relation to the doctoral students' writing process, supervisors may take a number of decisions, make suggestions and initiate supportive steps in certain directions, but the underlying justifications and the aims of these activities remain implicit and non-transparent to the students.

Supporting authorial voice

Despite the nature of supervisory support for writing, which is often implicitly assumed, the choice of writing strategies for constructing academic texts exemplifies how doctoral students engage in dialogue with the discourses and establish connections with other authors' texts (Ivanic, 2005). These connections may encompass formal rules that provide some sort of order associated with authority and authenticity in academic writing (Nelson & Castelló, 2011).

Whereas academic writing conventions seem to be relatively invariant across European countries (Kruse et al., 2016), there might be tensions between dominant supervisory writing strategies and the expectations of doctoral students about the writing, which may influence students' authorial identity. Authorial identity as a facet of academic identity may exemplify academics' authorial voice (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009), which is mediated by the text (Castelló et al., 2009b).

It is thus not surprising that writing an academic text as an ongoing, object-directed and dialectically-structured activity (Russell, 1997) may involve asymmetric relations between gatekeepers and 'less powerful' academics (Burrough-Boenish, 2003). In such circumstances, doctoral students can continually negotiate their authorial voice as they engage in their respective disciplinary communities (Castelló et al., 2009a). These

negotiations can variously influence the textual choices made by doctoral students, who may retain partial ownership over their writing strategy. This highlights how authorship and writing practices can be complex and present challenges for doctoral students in determining how they see themselves and are perceived by others within their disciplinary communities (James & Lokhtina, 2018).

Hence, with regard to doctoral students' writing practices, education interventions concerning writing in groups (e.g. among doctoral students or with supervisors) may provide them with access to legitimate participation within communities in which doctoral students may claim membership. From an educational perspective, such formally structured activities and engaging in dialogue about them can be viewed as a tool to help doctoral students to increase their awareness of different voices and other authors' contributions to the text, as well as a way to learn to negotiate their authorial voice and academic identity.

Integrity and dealing with (the risk of) plagiarism

While co-authorship provides a space for negotiating the individual authorial voice, the voice also stands in relation to "other voices". It is important, even at an early stage, to openly discuss principles of co-authorship, e.g. who is an author and author order (Hakkarainen et al., 2014; Johansen et al., 2019). Challenges and problems arise when contributors have different expectations about co-authorship conventions. One of the major problems that arise in the case of multiple authors is inappropriately assigning authorship credit or failure to assign credit when due, giving a false impression of the true contribution (Macfarlane, 2017). Supervisors sometimes struggle with how extensive a contribution they should make to student articles for these to still be considered the students' work (Löfström & Pyhältö, 2012). In contrast, doctoral students may be perplexed by what counts as a sufficient contribution by the supervisor (Löfström & Pyhältö, 2015).

Plagiarism may constitute another challenge for co-authorship. Codes of conduct for researchers define plagiarism as research misconduct along with falsification and fabrication (e.g. ALLEA, 2017). Yet, many authors view plagiarism as a developmental issue, or an issue arising from cultural and ideological differences, or simply different expectations rather than a moral transgression *per se* (e.g. Pecorari, 2003; Hayes & Introna, 2005; Angelil-Carter, 2005; Valentine, 2006; Abasi & Graves, 2008; East, 2010). Individual supervisors may

represent different takes on this question, and their stance is likely to influence their supervision practices (e.g. Löfström et al., 2015).

The responsibility for the integrity of the work presented in a publication extends to all authors (e.g. the Vancouver Protocol, ICMJE), and the fact that supervisors are responsible as co-authors of the writing they publish together with their doctoral students may cause some supervisors to be cautious in co-authoring with their supervisees. However, supervisors can also be guilty of plagiarising the writing of their doctoral students (cf. Löfström & Pyhältö, 2014). The expanding use of text-matching software is changing the landscape of supervision and writing (Löfström et al., 2017). It may add a safeguard against plagiarism, but it may also signal distrust towards doctoral students.

Co-authorship practices: The future

This article has explored co-authorship by drawing on four dimensions of the writing process and identified a number of challenges that both doctoral students and supervisors may experience in different disciplinary and national contexts. Key challenges and sustainable co-authorship practices that can address these challenges include:

1. *Helping supervisors to support early career researchers' writing development*

We identified the idea of writing as a developmental process related to research competences and identity development as a challenge in supervisors' writing and co-authorship. We further identified the supervisors' own conceptions on how writing works and the role they attribute to writing in their activity as researchers to be a challenge in connection to strategies and activities to support doctoral students' writing.

2. *Supporting doctoral students in adopting a long-term developmental diversified approach to writing*

Learning to write in academic genres requires a sense of self as a writer. Writing retreats for doctoral students may offer opportunities not only for writing but also for reflecting on their writing strategies. As supervisors' writing practices may shape their supervisory practices, supervisors may benefit from opportunities to reflect on writing and authorship, some of which might take place together with doctoral students.

3. *Helping students to develop and support their own voice in writing*

We identified the importance of raising awareness among doctoral students of the authorial identity that they project in their own writing. It may be important for doctoral students to be involved in *writing communities*. This may help them to grasp the nature of the educational relationship in which they engage with supervisors and fellow students. In doing so, doctoral students may have an opportunity to explore collaborative writing approaches and to understand how their participation in writing communities may help them negotiate issues of co-authorship and support their own voice and identity (cf. Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Lokhtina, 2018).

4. *Strengthening integrity and trust*

In order to preserve trust, it is vital that the practices employed are transparent and protect the rights of both doctoral students and supervisors (Hakkarainen et al., 2014). Most recognised journals nowadays use text-matching software to ensure the originality of the work they publish. It may be important for doctoral students to learn that everybody's writing is subjected to the same procedure in the publication phase, irrespective of academic rank and position. Guidelines for authorship and identifying when and how to negotiate it (e.g. Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2018; ICMJE, 2018) provide a basis for both supervisors and doctoral students to negotiate co-authorship on equal grounds.

While higher education institutions are keen on increasing scientific publication output, institutional support for doctoral students in developing their authorial voice and strengthening solid practices for authorship and co-authorship may not be the primary targets of investments. A discourse of 'publishing or perishing' permeates much of academia (McGrail et al., 2006) but we do not identify a similarly powerful discourse relating to sustainable writing practices, authorial voice or integrity. Therefore, we hope that this synthesis serves to instil an alternative discourse about writing with focus on development of authorial voice, support, and integrity. Development of resources and programmes to realise these important aspects of writing may require reconsideration of the role and practices of writing as well as institutional support mechanisms. Increasing support for doctoral students in navigating authorial identity and integrity alongside writing instruction is bound to strengthen writing communities in the long run.

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