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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to provide new knowledge about ethical issues in doctoral supervision by analysing conflicts and roles that are assumed and acted out in supervision practice. This analysis was based on a literature review of various studies from the field of educational sciences, social pedagogy, doctoral supervision in theory and practice, and theories and practice of teaching and learning. The literature review identified several ethical issues relevant to doctoral supervision. These issues mostly arose from disappointed expectations, for instance, in the supervisor’s or doctoral student’s knowledge/competence, cultural viewpoint, roles, participation, language proficiency, and criticism/feedback. This analysis found that conflicts and the roles adopted and acted out during a supervision situation were not static – multiple roles could be assumed simultaneously, and the roles changed frequently. These changes provided opportunities to prevent or remedy ethical issues and conflicts in supervision. Changes could also lead to the creation and replication of a stable relationship between the doctoral student and the supervisor. To prevent ethical issues and conflicts, the relationship between a doctoral student and a supervisor should be characterised by mutual respect, responsibility, integrity, and recognition. These components are necessary to: (1) create the conditions for successful knowledge development in supervision, (2) complete a third-cycle education programme, (3) qualify the doctoral student to hold a doctoral degree, and (4) prevent ethical issues and conflicts connected with doctoral student supervision, through the constructive alignment of various elements in the third-cycle programme.