EXPLORING CULTURES OF DOCTORAL SUPERVISION: NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVES FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on my narratively-framed PhD study in which I explored doctoral supervision using a small cultures approach (Holliday, 1999); thus, I viewed the doctoral supervision in question as dynamic emerging small cultures developing within a wider set of shaping influences. Specifically, the study sought to understand the experiences of doctoral supervision as narrated to me by some recently completed doctoral students and experienced supervisors from a public university in Malaysia, namely the International Islamic University Malaysia (hereafter known as the IIUM). My motivation for this study originated in my professional curiosity – as set against the IIUM strategic ambitions regarding internationalisation of higher education and Islamisation of Knowledge - about the development of doctoral supervision at the IIUM where I have been a member of academic staff for more than ten years and where, upon the completion of my doctoral education, I will be assuming a supervisory role.

As stimulated through face-to-face, one-to-one encounters, in English and/or Bahasa Malaysia, I generated narratives of supervisory experiences from six recent graduates and three experienced supervisors. These narratives were then restoried in English and analysed using holistic-content approach (Lieblich et al., 1998) to reveal the global impression and key themes of supervisory experiences of the individual participants. Findings from the narrative analysis were first interpreted through the small cultures lens (Holliday, 1999). From the interpretation, I proposed that the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision are characterised by the following features: the students' learning process; the supervisory styles; the supervisory roles; the supervisory relationships; and the expectation of students and supervisors. I then interpreted the narrative findings using a host culture complex model (Holliday, 1994) and identified eight cultural influences that may shape the construction of the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision, namely: the student culture; the supervisor culture; the host university culture; the postgraduate culture; the wider learning community culture; the national host culture; the internationalisation of higher education culture; and the Islamisation of Knowledge culture.

My study makes a number of contributions. In terms of cultures of supervision, it provides a detailed exploration of the emergent aspects of supervision as it develops amid a wider complex of shaping influences, and these emergent aspects and shaping influences extend the current literature regarding supervision. There are implications in these insights for supervisors and their students but also for university managers. Conceptually, the extension of the small cultures approach and host culture complex heuristic, from internationally – oriented English language education to internationally – oriented doctoral supervision, demonstrates the usefulness of this approach for practitioners in their particular contexts of practice as informed by a deeper understanding of the complexities involved rather than relying on large culture a priori characterisation. Methodologically, my study also demonstrates the feasibility and value of coupling narrative (rather than ethnographic) methods to the small cultures approach. Whilst not focused directly on internationalisation of higher education and Islamisation of Knowledge, the study does add to debates in this area with regard to the shaping influences these interlinked strategic objectives may have on doctoral supervision. Finally, my study adds a Malaysian non-Western perspective to the often Western-oriented literature on doctoral supervision.

DECLARATION

I hereby swear that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support for an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the IIUM (which I will discuss in detail in Chapter One) has - as delineated in its vision statement - explicitly set itself the objective of becoming an international hub of educational excellence in which modern and professional disciplines are integrated with Islamic values and moral virtues. Moten (2009, p. 62-64) observes that IIUM's administration has taken strategic objectives to promote its integration of the internationalisation of higher education and Islamisation of Knowledge agenda (see Chapter One) by, namely: shifting its focus from a teaching-based to a research-based university, increasing its intake of international students, recruiting academics from around the globe, carrying out international projects and collaboration, inculcating Islamic philosophy into its educational policies, curriculum and practices, and instilling Islamic ethics (i.e. the concept of ''tawhid,'' which signifies the relationship between human beings and God) as a guide for day-to-day conduct.

In the context of supervision, as doctoral students and academic supervisory populations have become - and continue to become - more diverse, and as doctoral education becomes further internationalised and Islamised, supervisory practices at the IIUM are also likely to become more complex. Moreover, given that supervision involves interpersonal relationships between supervisors and their students - which develop over a significant period of time (from three to eight years) - the diversity of their backgrounds and educational experiences would also add to the complexities surrounding the relationships on which supervision builds.

My curiosity about the complexities of doctoral supervision was piqued by the findings that I generated in a pilot study that I conducted during the first year of my doctorate. In the pilot study I interviewed three first-year international doctoral students about their experiences of studying at one of the Russell Group Universities. From the pilot study, I learned that while the students seemed at ease reflecting variously on their doctoral researcher training program (which at the time of the study was compulsory for all first year PhD students), the program instructors and the research facilities, some of the students were more guarded when doing so about their supervisory experiences. From what they shared with me, I could see for instance: elements of surprise, comfort, disappointment, contentment, uncertainty, optimism and unfamiliarity across their accounts of supervisory

experiences. These conflicting emotions were related to some aspects within their experiences of supervision, such as: mismatched expectations between the students and their supervisors about their learning progress; lack of academic and emotional support from the supervisors; miscommunication between the students and their supervisors; and doubts and insecurity about the supervisors' interest in their research topics. While all of these students agreed that doctoral supervision was one of the most important aspects in their doctorate, they also believed that it was the most complex one. The students' insights further encouraged me to continue focusing on the experience of doctoral supervision for my main study.

Research Aim and Objectives

In the study I aim to explore cultures of doctoral supervision at the IIUM, one of the public universities in Malaysia. In my exploration, my objectives are twofold: Firstly, I seek to understand the experiences of doctoral supervision as narrated to me by some recent doctoral graduates and some supervisors from the IIUM through a qualitative narrative inquiry approach. For the purpose of this study, I focus on the supervisory experiences of students and supervisors following the traditional model of doctorate, and not Professional Doctorate. In a traditional doctorate, doctoral candidates complete their degrees by producing a written thesis or dissertation with the support from academics or doctoral supervisors. In most cases, the doctoral candidates are required to defend their theses before a panel of examiners appointed by universities upon their thesis submission. Secondly, I utilise two non-essentialist cultural theoretical lenses as the basis for my interpretation of cultures of doctoral supervision and propose some key features of doctoral supervision as emerging small cultures and potential forces that may shape these small cultures. These objectives are framed by four research questions:

RQ1: What are doctoral graduates' narratives of their doctoral supervision?
RQ2: What are doctoral supervisors' narratives of their doctoral supervision?
RQ3: What are the key features of the small cultures of doctoral supervision?
RQ4: What are the shaping influences of these emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision?

Thesis structure

My thesis is organised into seven chapters. In Chapter One, I set the contexts for my study. Specifically, I will outline the micro-context of the study which provides an overview of Malaysian historical background and higher educational system as well as the internationalisation of higher education and the Islamisation of Knowledge as strategic objectives within the Malaysian higher education. I then provide the meso-context that provides an overview of the IIUM as the chosen research setting for the study. In Chapter Two I provide the conceptual background underpinning my study namely: some key insights of studies on cultures of doctoral supervision, a brief review of research on the doctorate and identity, the internationalisation agenda in higher education and the Islamisation of Knowledge. I will also consider how the concept of culture has been discussed in the literature of Intercultural Communication and higher education before presenting a non-essentialist small cultures approach (Holliday, 1999) and a host culture complex model (Holliday, 1994) as a valuable theoretical lens to investigate cultures of doctoral supervision in my study. In Chapter Three, I outline my qualitative narrative inquiry research design and the rationale for it, followed by a description of its implementation. In Chapters Four and Five I report on the holistic-content narrative analysis of the individual participants' restoried narratives of doctoral supervision. In particular, Chapter Four focuses on the analysis of each of my doctoral student participants and Chapter Five does so for each of my doctoral supervisor participants. In Chapter Six, I present a discussion of my narrative findings using the small cultures approach and host culture complex model as linked to the literature with which my study engages. In Chapter Seven, I conclude my thesis by reflecting on the contributions of the study and suggesting recommendations for further work.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CONTEXTS

Overview

In 2007 Malaysia launched its National Higher Education Strategic Plan as part of its effort to produce high quality individuals through holistic education and to make Malaysia a regional hub for education excellence. One of the strategic plans was to increase intake of doctoral students by local universities. Although there was a subsequent increase in doctoral student enrollment, it was accompanied by a high attrition rate and low completion rate (Sidhu et al., 2013, p. 134). Such a scenario suggests that more research is needed to help address the aspects of doctoral education that can contribute to students' completion or non-completion in Malaysian universities. Thus, my study responds to this need by exploring how doctoral supervision is conducted and managed from the perspectives of doctoral students and supervisors at the IIUM, one of the public universities in Malaysia.

In this chapter I aim to set the contexts which my study is situated. I begin with what I see as the macro context which includes an overview of the Malaysian historical backgrounds and cultures (Section 1.1.) and the changing landscape of the Malaysian higher educational system (Section 1.2). I then move to the meso-context that provides an overview of the IIUM as the chosen research setting for the study (Section 1. 3). Next, I present the micro-context of the study which includes a review of existing studies that foreground the complexity of doctoral supervision (Section 1.4) and a brief outlook on some of the studies of doctoral supervision in the context of Malaysia higher education (Section 1.5).

The Macro Context

This section presents the macro context in which my study is situated including an overview of the Malaysian historical backgrounds and cultures, Malaysian higher educational system and, in particular, noting the internationalisation agenda which is one of the key elements in the recent and ongoing transformation of the Malaysian higher educational system.

1.1 Malaysia: A Multi-Racial Nation

Historical Background

Malaysia is a multi-racial nation of about 31,633.5 million people (Department of Statistic, Malaysia, 2017) consisting of three major ethnic groups: Bumiputera (which consists of the Malay and indigenous groups); Chinese; and Indian. Malaysia was colonised by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century followed by the Dutch in the eighteenth century, the British in the nineteenth century and the Japanese (for three years) during the Second Word War, before achieving its independence from the British in 1957 (Selvarajah and Meyer, 2008, p. 693). The colonisation period witnessed mass migration of immigrant workers mainly from China and India to Malaysia. After the independence, most of the immigrant workers continued living in Malaysia and later obtained Malaysian citizenship.

Religion and Cultural Backgrounds

Religion plays a significant role in the Malaysian cultures: for the Malays, they follow strict Islamic traditions and beliefs; for the Chinese, they follow the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism; and for the Indians, they believe in reincarnation and karma (Zabid and Ho, 2003; Asma and Lim, 2001). And yet, the Malaysians live in relative harmony despite coming from different religious and cultural backgrounds, as they are free to express their identities and practice their own religions and cultural rituals. Asma and Lim (2001, p. 1) explained the unique characteristic of Malaysian cultures:

> Malaysia has often been described as a mine field of cultural sensitivies due to its diverse racial and ethnic compositions (i.e. Malaysia consists of three principal ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian). Yet, Malaysians work in apparent harmony and unity brought about by a few unifying factors, the most important of which are values that have stood the test of time.

Despite practising different religions, rituals and symbolic expressions, the Malaysians share some common values, namely: respect for elders; collective orientation; harmony; concern for face-saving; relationships, and religious orientation (Abdullah, 1996; Asma and Lim, 2001).

1.2 The Malaysian Higher Education System

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) is a ministry of the Malaysian government that is responsible for higher education institutions, polytechnics and community colleges. The

MoHE was within the purview of the Ministry of Education (MoE) until 2004, when the departments and agencies responsible for higher education were separated from the MOE and established as a full ministry under a Federal Minister. However, in 2013 the MoE and the MoHe ministries were merged into a single Malaysian Ministry of Education (MME)[1]. Two years later, in 2015, the MME was separated and the MoHE was re-established[2]. The following table illustrates the type of institutions under the administration of the MoHE.

Malaysian Higher Institutions	
Public university	20
Private University	53
Foreign University branch campus	6
Private College	403
Polytechnic	30
Public community College	73

Table 1-1: Types of Higher Institutions in Malaysia

The public universities can be further categorised into:

- five research universities - which mainly focus on research activities and teaching development;
- 11 focused universities - which provide courses in specific or technical fields; and
- four comprehensive universities - which offer courses for all levels of education, from pre-undergraduate to post-graduate degrees, in various fields.

The MoHE has jurisdiction over all such institutions and in general it exercises significant direction over most aspects of public university operations, including curriculum, employment, student admissions and promotions. Although public universities are allowed some autonomy in staff employment, educational research program development and institutional facilities operate within a specific policy environment. Research universities

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[1] Sinar Harian (2013). "Penggabungan kementerian akan seragamkan pelaksanaan dasar". Sinar Harian, 16 May 2013. http://www.sinarharian.com.my/penggabungan-kementerian-akan-seragamkan-pelaksanaan-dasar-1.160996
[2] Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi
http://www.mohe.gov.my

are relatively more autonomous regarding administration and institutional governance, academic and human resource management and student admissions. In 2013, the World Bank described the organisational structure of the Malaysian higher education and the relationship between the MoHE and public universities as one of the most top-down higher education systems in the world, resembling a steep hierarchy where university management officials display a high level of authority in comparison to higher institutions in other countries (World Bank, 2013, cited in Wan et al., 2016, p. 2).

1.2.1 The Internationalisation Agenda within the Malaysian Higher Education

Recent decades have also witnessed steady transformation within higher education institutions in Malaysia in response to the growing influence of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. In general, globalisation and internationalisation are two terms frequently used in tandem within the higher education context. While globalisation refers to "a process that is increasing the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world", the internationalisation of higher education can be described as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, service) and the delivery of higher education" (Knight, 2007, p. 23). In the context of higher education, globalisation has not only transformed the relationship between higher education and the nation, between institutions and between institutions and society, but it has also tied most of their activities directly to national economic success (Hazelkorn, 2015, p. 3). On the other hand, the internationalisation within higher education has created cross-border movement at the global level, e.g. internationalisation abroad, and at the domestic level, as well as the integration of international and intercultural dimensions of curriculum teaching and research to help students develop their international and intercultural skills without leaving their country (Tham and Kam, 2008, p. 354).

As Malaysia aspires to be a global educational hub by the year 2020, the internationalisation of higher education has become a significant force in transforming the nation's higher education sectors into a more relevant, competitive and sustainable body (Abd. Aziz and Abdullah, 2014, p. 498). This is well articulated in the latest Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025, a systematic plan for the development of the higher education sector over the coming decade. It presents a series of goals for

universities necessary in the creation of a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading higher education systems and enables Malaysia to compete globally (MoHE, 2015: p. 31). Some of the key objectives are outlined in the blueprint:

- increasing the number of international students from 108,000 today to 250,000 by 2025;
- increasing overall tertiary enrollment from 36% in 2012 to 53% in 2025 (1.4M to 2.5M);
- increasing graduate employability to more than 80% by 2025;
- improving league table performance by placing one university in Asia's Top 25, two in the Global Top 100 and four in the Global Top 200 by 2025; and
- increasing research output from 26th out of 50 countries to the top 25.

(MoHE, 2015, p. 13)[3]

To realise these objectives, Malaysian higher education has received a considerable amount of funding with the government allocating over 20% of its total expenditure to the education sector. This is a highly significant level of funding - in terms of the resources committed to higher education- as league tables suggest Malaysia is ranked 12th in the world (Wan et al., 2016, p. 2). At the institutional level, the internationalisation of higher education has transformed Malaysian higher institutions into business enterprises, actively enrolling international students as a means of revenue generation and the building of an international reputation for quality. One of the government's strategies to stay ahead of global trends is to signal to the international community the growing quality of its higher education as evidenced through international rankings. For instance, in 2014, Malaysia's higher education system ranked 28th out of the 50 countries; five of Malaysia's public universities are currently ranked among Asia's top 100; one of the public universities, the Universiti Sains Malaysia was ranked 28th in the QS World University Rankings in the subject area of environmental sciences (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025, 2015, p. 4-5).

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[3] Ministry of Higher Education Website
http://www.mohe.gov.my/muat-turun/awam/penerbitan/pppm-2015-2025-pt/5-malaysia-education-blueprint-2015-2025-higher-education

The trend of securing global international ranking has become one of the significant forces that shapes Malaysian higher institutional aspiration and sets national priorities (Wan et al., 2015; Hazelkorn, 2015). Hence, in its pursuit to achieve higher global rankings, Malaysian higher education has been encouraging the public universities in particular, to increase the quality in research and quantity of publications, especially in top-tier international journals. This move is viewed by many in government and university management circles as crucial if the desired international recognition is to be achieved (Azman and Mydin-Kutty, 2016; Chapman and Chien, 2014). In 2014, the MME published a report of the significant achievements made by the Malaysian universities nationwide, namely:

- the enrollment in public universities has increased markedly between 2002 (184,190 undergraduates, and 29,409 postgraduates) and 2013 (331,410 undergraduates and 92,743 postgraduates);

- the number of students enrolled in 2011 was more than a million, in which 93,000 were international students from more than 100 countries;

- the higher institutions generated RM1.25 billion in revenues from research and consulting services from 2007 to 2012;

- the enrollment of Masters and PhD students between 1990 and 2010 increased tenfold putting Malaysia in third place after Singapore and Thailand among ASEAN (Association of East Asian Nations) members;

- the number of research and publication between 2007 and 2012 increased threefold (the highest increase in the world);

- the number of citations grew fourfold from 2005 to 2012; and

- the number of staff increased by 40% between 2007 and 2013.

(MME, 2014, cited in Wan et al., 2016, p. 2)

Nonetheless, despite these achievements, there is a concern among local scholars that, in terms of international recognition, Malaysian universities are not performing as well as they expected (Wan et al., 2016; Ennew, 2015). For instance, there were six Malaysian universities listed in the Asian top 200, but only one university was included in the QS World Top 200 and no university was included in the top 200 of both the Shanghai Jiaotong Ranking and the Times Higher Education Rankings (Ennew, 2015; UNIVERSITAS, 2015). There is also a concern that increased pressure for research and publication might have reverse effects on universities' management and academic staff as observed by a recent study of Malaysian higher education practice by Wan et al., (2016). Their study suggested that most academic staff experienced a sense of frustration when their work performance was assessed primarily on publication outputs rather than quality

of their work (p. 7). The study also indicated that one of the challenges facing the management of the universities is how to encourage their academics to produce quality research output, when there is possibly no reduction in terms of expectation and commitment in their other work (p. 17). The study concluded that a research culture has yet to be fully accepted as part of the faculty culture in Malaysian universities and that there is still much improvement needed from the universities to foster the conducive working environment that will promote the research quality and productivity among their academic staff. The findings of the study echo a report done by the Asian Development Bank (2011). The report proposed that as academic staff largely defines the character, relevance, productivity, and quality of each university, hence the responsibility lies with the management team of each university to mobilise their academic staff to increase research output with the expected quality (cited in Wan et al., 2016, p. 4).

The Meso-Context

Like other public universities in Malaysia, the IIUM is also undergoing some significant transformation in line with the MoHE mission to be one of the world's leading higher education systems. Over the past years the educational landscape of the IIUM has shifted as the university is moving toward becoming an international hub of educational excellence and a premier global Islamic university in which modern and professional disciplines are integrated with Islamic values and moral virtues. In this section, I will present an overview of the IIUM as my research setting.

1.3 The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

The IIUM is one of four comprehensive universities in Malaysia. It was established in 1983 under Malaysia's Company Act with the support of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and several Muslim countries. At the time of writing, the IIUM comprises 14 faculties and employs 1909 academic staff, with 377 of the workforce international lecturers. Since 1987 there have been 60,785 graduates and postgraduates who have successfully completed their studies, a figure including 7,530 international students[4]. At the time of the study, the IIUM has approximately 24,218 students, including 5,086 postgraduate students. Out of this, 5,322 (22%) are international students coming

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[4] "28th IIUM Convocation Ceremony". International Islamic University Malaysia. Retrieved on 3 December 2015 http://www.iium.edu.my/news/28th-iium-convocation-ceremony

from more than 125 countries in the world. The IIUM has the highest number of international students enrolled at any other public university in Malaysia, and 51% of them are enrolled on postgraduate programs[5]. The majority of the postgraduates are full time and only a small number of students are enrolled on part-time programs.

The English language is used as a medium of instruction and administration at the IIUM. Consequently, home and international students must fulfil certain English language requirements: a score of 550 in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a Band 6.0 in the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS). Alternatively, they can sit for the IIUM-administered English Placement Test (EPT) and obtain a minimum of 6.0 points to fulfil the English language requirement. Apart from the English language, Arabic is also used as a medium of instruction, depending on the specific program of study. To enroll on these courses students may sit for the IIUM-administered Arabic Placement Test (APT). The IIUM also allows students who are unable to submit satisfactory results in any of the above tests to take up language proficiency courses at the university to fulfil the admission requirements.

PhD program at the IIUM

The IIUM offers two modes of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program:

1. PhD by Research only

To register for PhD by Research mode, students must have a minimum of one paper publication. Students are required to present their research proposal in a research proposal defence (an event that is open to the public) during their first year of study. The thesis carries 60 credit hours and the maximum number of words is 100,000 words. The minimum duration of study for full-time program is two years and the maximum is six years. For part-time program, the minimum duration is three years and the maximum is eight.

2. PhD by Coursework and Research

In this mode, students are required to complete 24 credit hours of core, specialised and elective courses. Once completed, students sit for the comprehensive exam

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[5] QS Top Universities: International Islamic University Malaysia. Retrieved 19 January 2016
http://www.topuniversities.com/universities/international-islamic-university-malaysia-iium

before they can write their concept papers. The duration of study is similar to the PhD by Research, which is a minimum of two years and maximum of six years for full-time and for part-time, a minimum of three years and maximum of eight years. However, the length of the writing or dissertation is shorter - 50,000 words - and the dissertation carries 36 credit hours.

Figure below illustrates the study plan of the doctoral program for both PhD modes[6].
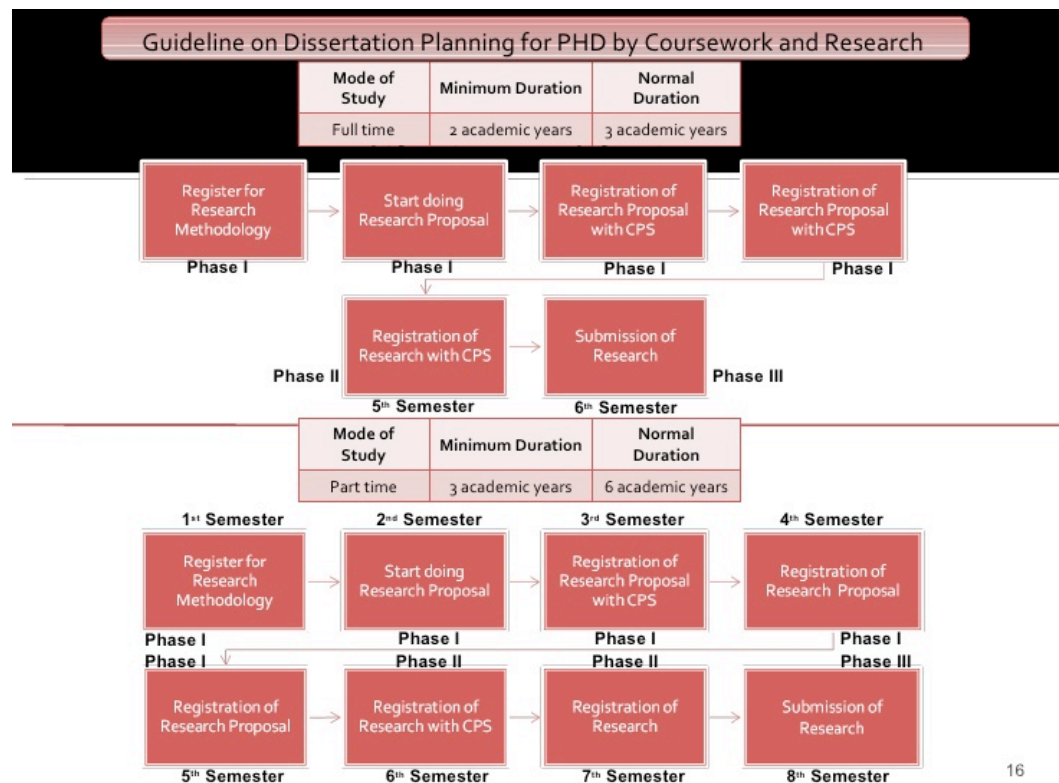
Figure 1-1: Study Plan for PhD Program

Effective from the 2014/2015 academic sessions, all doctoral students are required to publish at least one paper in a journal prescribed by the respective faculties upon submission of their theses. The new policy is in line with the IIUM's mission to increase its research output. The IIUM has also set up Key Ihsan Indicators (KIIs) to ensure a higher rate of completion among doctoral students. The IIUM projects that:

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[6]IIUM Website
http://www.iium.edu.my/irkhs/offices/office-deputy-dean-post-graduate/download

- 70 percent of students should complete their study within the normal period of four years for full-time students and six years for part-time students;

- 27 percent of full time students should complete their study within the maximum period of six years for full-time and eight years for part-time students; and

- three percent of full-time students would complete in two years and part-time students in three years.

Doctoral Supervision at the IIUM

At the IIUM, the department within each faculty is responsible in recommending the appointment of main supervisor, co-supervisor and supervisory committee. For a student doing a PhD by Research mode, (a) supervisor/s will be appointed upon admission to the program. For a student doing a PhD by Coursework and Research mode, the appointment of (a) supervisor/s takes place upon completion of the coursework. A main supervisor may supervise no more than eight students at one time but under special circumstance the faculty may allow a supervisor to exceed the maximum number of students to be supervised. In ensuring that supervisors can deliver and perform their duties, the IIUM Code of Supervisor for Postgraduate Thesis and Dissertation (Centre for Postgraduate Studies, 2013) was introduced. The code describes the main role of supervisors as "to provide guidance as well as assessing student's work … to contribute to the student's scholarly and professional development, while acting as models to nurture the maturity and confidence of students" (p. 1). The code (Centre for Postgraduate Studies, 2013, p. 2-3) also outlines other supervisory responsibilities, namely:

i. to assume responsibilities for directing the students' program under the leadership of the committee chair, who is also research supervisor;

ii. to identify weaknesses and evaluate the present standing of the students in the major and minor areas in their study;

iii. to assist the students to prepare their study plan;

iv. to advise the students to audit or attend courses relevant to their research area and do relevant background reading and starting literature survey or review;

v. to advise the students on scholarly activities such as seminar preparation, short term paper writing and presentations, and the preparation of academic discussion;

vi. to advise the students in the preparation for the comprehensive examination;

vii.   to supervise and guide the students in the process of proposing and conducting research indicating areas in the research that need amendments, corrections and revisions, and suggesting necessary changes to improve the quality of research;

viii.   to facilitate the students in conducting research;

ix.   to ensure regular contact with the student, overseeing the successful completion of the study plan within a specific time frame, and submitting the progress report to the Postgraduate Office;

x.   to certify that a completed thesis or dissertation is of an acceptable standard in terms of content, quality and presentation style and that it is ready for submission; and

xi.   to evaluate and assign an appropriate grade for research work if required by the department.

Towards the Internationalisation of Higher Education

Like other public universities in Malaysia, the IIUM is undergoing some significant transformations in line with the MoHE mission to be one of the world's leading higher education systems. In 2002, the IIUM finalised its strategic planning document - known as the IIUM Strategic Planning Report 2001-2010 - that summarised the list of strategies in becoming a leading international centre of educational excellence. Eight areas are focused on under the plan: entrepreneurship and consultancies; research and development; postgraduate; science, technology and innovation; information and communication technology; internationalisation; Islamisation and integration; student development; and staff development. Later, in 2007, the IIUM reviewed its previous strategic plan document and focused more on becoming one of the research universities. In its latest plan, the IIUM Strategic Plan 2013-2020[7], eight key result areas were introduced. The following table summarises the key results areas and their goals:

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[7] IIUM Office of Corporate Strategy http://www.iium.edu.my/csqa/services/iium-strategic-planning

Goal of each Key Result Area	
Key Result Area	**Goal**
Good Governance (Core Value)	To attain the highest standard of good governance
Quality Teaching and Learning	To produce top quality graduates through innovative and effective teaching and learning environment
Research and Innovation	To be a World Class Research and Innovation Hub
Internationalization	To be the global brand for Islamic education excellence
Holistic Student Development	To be a world renowned University for holistic student development
Talent Management	To be the University of choice of world class talents
Financial Sustainability	To ensure sufficient financial resources and be responsive to future plans and challenges
Islamization (Foundation)	To anchor the realization of the Premier Global Islamic University.

Table 1.2: IIUM Key Result Area

Towards Islamisation of Knowledge

Like other public universities in Malaysia, the IIUM is under the governance of the MoHE. However, unlike others, it has a very unique philosophy that distinguishes it from other universities in general. The IIUM's philosophy is derived from Islamic educational beliefs. Besides aiming for educational excellence, the IIUM envisions becoming a premier Islamic University for the global Muslim community. From an Islamic perspective, the main role of education is to bring balance and promote spiritual, intellectual, rational and physical growth in individuals as explained by Hashim (1999, p. 34):

> Education is designed to produce a God fearing (taqwa) servant of Allah who is aware of 'his [*sic*] individual vertical relations with Allah' (hablum minaLlah) and his [*sic*] 'social horizontal relations with his [*sic*] fellow men [*sic*]' (hablum minan).

The Islamic philosophy is delineated in the IIUM's statements of objectives as follows:

i. reestablishment of 'primacy of Islam in all fields of Knowledge' and the dissemination of knowledge in the spirit of submission to Allah (*Tawhid*);

ii. knowledge is a form of trust (*Amanah*) from Allah to human beings, and hence human beings should utilise knowledge according to Allah's will in performing their role as the servant of Allah and vicegerent (*Khalifah*) on the earth. Thus, all disciplines of knowledge should lead towards the subservience to this truth;

iii. building a comprehensive professional institution of higher learning where the teaching of all fields of knowledge is infused with the Islamic value system and the Islamic philosophy of knowledge in all aspects of learning and teaching; and

iv. preparing graduates to be spiritually strong, morally upright, mentally rational, physically fit and professionally well equipped to develop the Muslim *ummah*, achieve progress that is in harmony with Islam and defend the Islamic faith and ideals effectively.

(Hassan, 2009, p. 14)

Moreover, In accordance with the Islamic philosophy, the IIUM shall be guided by seven principles in its approach to knowledge (Memorandum and Articles of Association of International Islamic University Malaysia, 2015, p. 1-2)[8]:

1. the meaning and spirit of Surah Al-Alaq, verses 1 to 5 of the Holy Qur'an as the fundamental constituent principle of the University;

2. the acceptance of tawhid in recognising Allah as the Absolute Creator and Master of the Universe;

3. the ultimate source of knowledge is the acceptance of Allah as the Absolute Creator and Master of humankind;

4. the propagation and advancement of knowledge is a trust (*amanah*) from Allah and shall be in conformity with the purpose of Allah's creation of the universe;

5. knowledge shall be utilised by humankind as the servant (*abd*) and vicegerent (*khalifah*) of Allah on earth, in accordance with the will of Allah;

6. the quest for knowledge is regarded as an act of worship (*ibadah*); and

7. the University shall be Islamic and international in character.

The philosophy of the IIUM is also inspired by the principle of Islamisation of Knowledge. Abu Sulayman (1989, p. 85) presents a general definition of the Islamisation of Knowledge:

> The Islamisation of Knowledge is a scientific knowledge that originates from Divine norms and ideals. It is rational in its outlook, its approach, its search, its critical examination of the problems of life and its treatment of individual society, nature and the laws that govern its workings. Through the "Islamisation of Knowledge", the *Ummah* [community] is cognizant of the need and importance of the scientific and cultural achievements that the human race has inherited and achieved. However, these must be thoroughly examined and critically checked in the light of Islam, its comprehensive norms, its guidance and its ideals.

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[8] http://www.iium.edu.my/sites/default/files/Memorandum%20and%20Articles%20of%20Association%20of%20IIUM%202015.pdf

The Islamisation of knowledge agenda is reflected in the IIUM's mission statements, as follows:

i. Undertaking the special and greatly needed task of reforming the contemporary Muslim mentality and integrating Islamic revealed knowledge and human sciences in a positive manner;

ii. Producing better quality intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating quality of faith (*imÉn*), knowledge (*'ilm*) and good character (*akhlÉq*) to serve as agents of comprehensive and balanced progress as well as sustainable development in Malaysia and in the Muslim world;

iii. Promoting the concept of Islamisation of human knowledge in teaching, research, consultancy, dissemination of knowledge and the development of academic excellence in the university;

iv. Nurturing the quality of holistic excellence, which is, imbued with Islamic moral-spiritual values, in the process of learning, teaching, research, consultancy, publication, administration and student life;

v. Exemplifying an international community of dedicated intellectuals, scholars, professionals, officers and workers who are motivated by the Islamic worldview and code of ethics as an integral part of their work culture;

vi. Enhancing intercultural understanding and foster civilizational dialogues in Malaysia as well as across communities and nations; and

vii. Developing an environment, which instils commitment for lifelong learning and deep sense of social responsibility among staff and students.

(Cited in Hassan, 1995, p. 19)

The seven statements were later abridged in 2001 to four fundamentals, namely: integration, internationalisation; Islamisation; and comprehensive excellence (Hassan, 2009, p. 19).

Towards Research Excellence

The IIUM also greatly values scholarly contributions of academic staff through research in various fields as a significant feature in the creation of new knowledge. The Research Management Centre (or RMC) plays a central role in facilitating and supporting research, development and commercialisation, consultancy and publication that are imbued with Islamic values and ethics. Apart from the RMC, the IIUM Press is responsible for producing quality books and journals. Through the establishment of such centres the IIUM provides a research and publication platform for all academic staff and students. In addition, the IIUM has been expanding its recruitment and promotion strategies to support and advocate scholarly research among its staff in order to boost and diversify its research and development activities. In line with Malaysian higher education's aspiration for global recognition, the IIUM has introduced and implemented research-based performance

indicators for its academic staff in order to enhance the quality and quantity of its research publications and education provision, especially its doctoral program (Management Services Division, 2016). Given the significance of academic excellence, the academic staff are assessed using the Key Ihsan Indicators (KIIs) to measure their productivity towards meeting the IIUM's aspirations (see Appendix 1). According to the KIIs, teaching represents the biggest share of academic staff's assessment. The calculation of the teaching workloads would include one postgraduate student (Masters or PhD) being equivalent to one credit hour. However, the extra workload comes only from the teaching hours rather than supervision contact hours (see Appendix 2 for the required teaching hours of supervisors per week according to their job designation). Apart from teaching, the number of students supervised is also part of the assessment in monitoring the academic staff's development. As an incentive, staff are allowed to make certain claims depending on the numbers of students they supervise (see Appendix 3).

1.3.1 Research Setting

In the study, all of my participants were recruited from the IIUM. I recruited doctoral graduates and supervisors from two faculties of social sciences: Faculty 1 and Faculty 2. My decision was influenced by two reasons. Firstly, the field of social science is relevant to my professional educational experience, which I aim to reach a better understanding of in this study. Secondly, studies have cited that PhD completion rates are lower in social sciences and humanities in comparison to other fields, such as natural and technical sciences (Golde, 2005; Rodwell and Neumann, 2008). Studies have indicated several reasons that might contribute for the lower completion rate, such as, lack of supportive environment, a feeling of isolation, higher levels of stress and exhaustion, and a harsh learning environment (Golde, 2005; Hermann et al., 2013). In light of this, a study on how doctoral supervision is managed and conducted is significant and by focusing on faculties from one discipline I hope to garner a richer account of doctoral supervisory cultures, such as the norms and practices within the supervision in the social sciences.

Faculty 1

Faculty 1 was established in the late 1980s. The faculty offers education-oriented courses and programs for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Faculty 1 is headed by a Dean and is supported by a team of Deputy Deans, Deputy Directors and is assisted by administrative and non-administrative groups. At the time of writing, the faculty has more

than 50 academic staff, with about 11 percent of international staff (mostly from Islamic countries). A majority of the academic staff are PhD holders and the largest number of the work force is the Associate Professors followed by Assistant Professors and Professors. With regards to doctoral students, from 2011 to 2015 a total of 92 students had successfully completed their studies, of which 73 percent were international students. The majority of the students were enrolled on full time programs. The demographic representation of recent and current doctoral students by countries at Faculty 1 from 2011 to 2015 is included in the Appendix (see Appendix 4).

Faculty 2

Faculty 2 was established in the early 1980s. The faculty offers courses related to aspects of human life and Islamic studies. At the time of writing, the faculty has more than 200 academic staff, with international staff accounting for less than 35 percent of the total. Similar to Faculty 1, Faculty 2 is also headed by a Dean, who is supported by a team of Deputy Deans, Deputy Directors, and is assisted by administrative and non-administrative groups. A majority of the academic staff within Faculty 2 are PhD holders and the largest number of the work force is the Associate Professors, followed by Assistant Professors and finally Professors. From 2011 to 2015, there were 228 doctoral graduates. Of that figure, 74 percent (168) were international students. The majority of doctoral students were enrolled on full-time programs. The demographical representation of recent and current doctoral students at Faculty 2 from 2011 to 2015 is included in the Appendix (see Appendix 5).

In sum, both faculties are represented by doctoral students and members of academic staff coming from wide and diverse backgrounds. Most of the international doctoral students and academic staff come from Islamic countries. The diversity within both the student and supervisor population at the IIUM provides an interesting site for my exploratory study of the complex cultures of doctoral supervision.

The Micro-Context

1.4 Doctoral Supervision and its Complexity

In the last 35 years, studies on the subject of doctoral supervision have been undertaken by various scholars, mainly in countries such as England, Australia, Canada and the US.

Many of those studies have cited the link between good supervisory practice, low attrition rate and timely completion of a PhD (Golde, 2000; Kam 1997; Marsh et al., 2002; McAlpine and Norton, 2006). Recognising the importance of doctoral supervision for doctoral students' success, many of the studies on doctoral supervision have focused on either: the mechanisms for supervisor training and development, such as supervisory styles (Acker et al., 1994; Hockey, 1996; Deuchar, 2008); the theoretical models of the different aspects of the supervisory process (Wisker et al., 2003; Mackinnon, 2004; Grant, 2005; Gatfield, 2005); the guidance for thesis writing or data analysis (Manathunga, 2005), developing students' researchers' skills, attitudes and thesis (Ives and Rowley, 2005; Heath, 2002; Kiley, 2009); or supervision as apprenticeship for teaching and research (Pearson and Brew, 2002; Austin, 2009).

While most studies have established the importance of doctoral supervision for students' timely completion and research skills development, some studies have proposed conflicting influences supervision may have on students. For instance; Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain (1983, p. 407) showed that although supervision is the most important aspect of the quality of students' experience, it is often the single most disappointing aspect of their experience as well. Furthermore, some studies found that during supervision, tensions or conflicts may arise between supervisors and their students, which can lead to emotional problems, isolation, delays and even non-completion (Deuchar, 2008; Dietz et al., 2006; Wisker et al., 2003).

Recognising the impression doctoral supervision has on students' progress and well-being, recent years have witnessed a growing body of literature exploring potential reasons contributing to the complexity of this phenomenon. For example, Pearson and Kayrooz (2004, p. 99) claim that there has been a "lack of robust conceptual understanding of what supervision involves". Since then, many scholars have attempted to capture the multi-faceted nature of supervision. For example, Ballard and Clanchy (1993) define supervision as a combination of academic expertise and skilful management of personal and professional relations. Connell (1985, p. 38) refers to supervision as a form of teaching, complete with its method, student interaction and educational environment. Pearson (2002, p. 143) defines supervision is a relationship between a supervisor and a student set within specific educational goals and a time frame.

Recent decades have also demonstrated how globalisation and internationalisation movements have significantly transformed – and continue to do so - the educational landscape. Such transformation is clearly evident in the changing demographic of student populations and increasing numbers of students moving across borders from countries such as China, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia to Western universities for their education (Pearson and Brew, 2002; Pearson, 1999; Wang and Li, 2008). Such a changing educational environment has contributed to a number of challenges faced by students and supervisors in supervision. For instance: the different and conflicting roles for supervisors - ranging from academic and pastoral responsibilities (Deuchar, 2008; De Beer and Mason, 2009; Mouton, 2001; Grant, 2005, 2009); mismatches between students' and supervisors' expectations (Gunnarsson, 2013; Manathunga, 2005); unfamiliar academic practices, disciplinary, research and institutional cultures (Robinson-Pant, 2009; Deem and Brehony, 2000; Leijen et al, 2016; Magyar and Robinson-Pant, 2011); unequal structural power and differences between the positions of supervisor and student (Grant, 1999, p. 8) and power dynamics and emotions between men and women (Leonard, 1977; Conrad, 1994) in the supervisory relationship; differences in identity between supervisor and student (Grant, 1999) and the complex identity of international students (Tsouroufli, 2015; Devos, 2003; Haugh, 2008); and the role of gender in the success or failure of research study (Acker et al., 1994; Conrad and Phillips, 1995; Rhedding-Jones, 1997).

While the phenomenon of doctoral supervision has been explored quite extensively in the Western contexts, there is only a small body of work available on the nature of doctoral supervision and the experiences of students and supervisors in non-Western countries (Sidhu et al., 2013, p. 134). For example, Dietz et al (2006) proposed a workbook based on supervisory experiences in South Africa and the Netherlands to improve the quality of PhD supervision and mentorship in terms of funding and administration that could help improve the experience of doctoral learning. Mouton (2011) presented recent statistics on various aspects of doctoral production in South Africa including doctoral supervision. The study showed that there is limited doctoral supervisory capacity in the South African higher education system as only about one third of the nation's staff members hold a doctoral degree as their highest qualification (p. 21). McClure (2005) conducted a qualitative study of Chinese doctoral students' experience of supervision in a university in Singapore during the first six to eighteen months of their PhD candidatures. The study suggested that the majority of the students described a feeling of marginalisation when describing their

supervisory experience with the supervisors, anxiety concerning independent research work, distance from supervisors, learning roles, and communication with their supervisors (p.8).

1.5 Doctoral Supervision in Malaysia: An Uncharted Territory

In the Malaysian context, doctoral supervision is still an under-explored phenomenon as there is only a small body of work exploring the subject of doctoral supervision. Moreover, the majority of the work undertaken privileges quantitative approaches over qualitative ones, with only a few qualitative studies investigating the different facets of doctoral supervision. For example, Krauss and Ismail (2010) investigated the qualities and strategies of supervisory relationship among home and international students at one of the public research universities in Malaysia. They found that the students, in particular international students, experienced several challenges as they familiarised themselves with the new academic life, such as unfamiliar customs, food, climate, language and academic practices (p. 817). They also found that the university was undergoing a process of structural development, which resulted in some significant changes in terms of more demands for research and publication from the supervisors, which in turn affected the supervisory arrangement with their practices (p. 187). The study also illustrated that the students often, in the beginning, entered into the supervisory process expecting that their supervisors were responsible for the management aspects of their doctoral learning. Nonetheless, over the course of their study the students came to realise that they needed to assume responsibility for managing their supervisory relationship if they wanted to increase their chances of completing the PhD on time (p. 818).

Moreover, Mohd. Ismail et al.'s (2013, p. 168) study of four recent doctoral students from a small number of universities in Malaysia reported that the students experienced three major difficulties in their supervisory relationship with their supervisors, namely: lack of purposeful and positive communication (especially in the early phase of research); mismatches in expectations that may stem from students' high expectation or supervisor's lack of expertise; and power conflicts between the main supervisor and co-supervisor that may affect the progress of the students.

Trahar (2014), in her recent study of international students' and supervisors' experiences in one of the higher education institutions in Malaysia, found that from the students' point of

view there was considerable satisfaction with their academic experiences, in particular for those who come from contexts where resources were few and teaching was located within a transmission model (p. 228). The study also found that in terms of the relationship with supervisors, it varied from students who described such a close relationship that they had been invited to their supervisor's home on many occasions, to those who claimed to have received little support or feedback on their writing (p. 228). From the international academics' point of view, the study showed that they might be more sensitive to the complexities of the international classroom and of supervising students from different contexts and academic traditions (p. 229). Furthermore, at the time of writing, only one study on the subject of doctoral supervision at the IIUM had been conducted by Ibrahim and Hassan (2007) that investigated recent and current doctoral students' experiences from various faculties on the quality of supervision. The findings of the study suggested that while students were satisfied with their supervisory process, supervisors' moral interactions and personal involvements, the students were less satisfied with the faculty social and academic support (p. 47).

Despite the now expanding literature, doctoral supervision has been pictured as multifaceted and complex phenomenon and continues to remain a 'black box' and 'a privatised space' with little empirical research on the kinds of practices involved (Goode, 2010, p. 39). Although the existing studies have provided illuminating insights into the complexity of supervision, they often do not address the deeper and multifaceted issues arising from the changing demographic of student populations and the increasing complexity surrounding supervisory roles and relationships within supervision. As Winchester-Seeto et al. (2014; p. 611) observed, most of the existing studies have either involved limited demographic coverage, or were based on a deficit approach to international students, which argues that international students are lacking in independent/ critical thinking skills; are rote learners or plagiarisers; and bringing with them learning experiences that are inadequate to the host institutions' standard.

In sum, in this chapter I have presented the varying features of the contexts in which my study is situated, in terms of the internationalisation of higher education objective, the Islamisation of Knowledge agenda, and the complexity of doctoral supervision, which underline the complexity of establishing doctoral supervisory cultures. Given that supervision has a significant role in students' success, I believe that there is a significant

room for more studies which explore the complexity of supervision and the kinds of forces that constitute the emerging small cultures (a term which I will explore in detail in Chapter Two) of doctoral supervision among doctoral students from diverse, non-Western backgrounds, in non-Western settings such as at the IIUM (Lovitts, 2001, cited in Krauss and Ismail, 2010, p. 804). Thus, I hope that the insights generated from studies such as mine can shed some light on understanding how supervision is conducted and managed from the students' and supervisors' perspectives, which could inform practitioners as well as members of university management teams within the IIUM as well as other Malaysian higher institutions to new mechanisms to improve the standard quality of the structure, content and pedagogy of doctoral supervision that not only contributes to the development of research but enriches the understanding of cultural diversity (Ekblad, 2007, p. 96).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have set the contexts which my research was situated. I began by introducing the macro-context to my study, in which I presented an overview of the Malaysian historical and cultural backgrounds, followed by the Malaysian higher education landscape and the internationalisation of higher education and Islamisation of knowledge as strategic objectives. I have described the IIUM as the research setting that provides the meso-context of my study. I have also discussed the complexity of doctoral supervision by engaging with some of the key literature as the micro-context which foregrounds the significance of my study in understanding doctoral supervisory cultures between students and supervisors of different backgrounds in an internationalised and Islamised context of the IIUM. In Chapter Two, I will introduce the conceptual underpinnings of my study.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

Overview

In the previous chapter One, I have presented the contexts in which my study is set. In this chapter, I will provide the conceptual underpinnings of my study and discuss how they have shaped my thinking. I begin by presenting a review of how doctoral supervision between students and supervisors from differing backgrounds has been discussed in the literature (Section 2.1). I then provide a brief review of key studies on identity and doctoral education contexts that will provide insights into some of the issues related to identity that may shape doctoral supervision experience (Section 2.2). Thereafter, given that my focus is on cultures of doctoral supervision and shaping influences, and bearing in mind the significance of the internationalisation of higher education and the Islamisation of Knowledge as part of the IIUM's environment, I consider how the literature on internationalisation of higher education (Section 2.3) and Islamisation of Knowledge (Section 2.4) help me to underpin these two concepts as linked to the university's strategic objectives. Next, I will briefly consider some of the existing theoretical approaches through which the concepts of culture have been widely discussed in the literature (Section 2.5) before proposing the usefulness of a non-essentialist small cultures approach (Holliday, 1999) and a host culture complex model (Holliday, 1994) – in contrast to the more frequent use of the essentialist approach – as the theoretical lenses for my study, thus arriving at a conceptualisation of doctoral supervision as dynamic emerging small cultures developing within a wider set of shaping influences (Section 2.6).

2.1 Key Insights from the Literature about Cultures of Doctoral Supervision

In this section, I will provide three key insights from existing studies on doctoral supervision and consider how the studies have discussed the concept of culture in regard to doctoral supervision between students and supervisors of differing backgrounds, namely: doctoral supervision in broadly cultural terms; doctoral supervision as complex and dynamic; and doctoral supervision as an intercultural practice.

2.1.1 Doctoral Supervision in Broadly Cultural Terms

A number of studies have discussed doctoral supervision in the light of cross-cultural comparison of different educational systems and national or regional contexts. Grant (2005, p. 3) suggested that supervision in New Zealand today is not so dramatically different from supervision in other Western countries although diverse cultural norms have made their presence felt. McClure's (2005, p. 8) study of newly-enrolled Chinese postgraduate students in Singapore found that that some students showed a high level of dependency on their supervisors. He suggested that many of the unique challenges in supervising foreign students stem from cultural-based differences. Winchester-Seeto et al. (2013, p. 618), in a study of doctoral students and supervisors from diverse backgrounds at three universities in Australia, found that Asian, African and South American students seem to have difficulties in approaching their supervisors and being assertive or disagreeing with their supervisor. They argue that most of the existing studies were based on a deficit approach to international students, which argues that international students are lacking in independent/ critical thinking skills; are rote learners or plagiarisers; and bringing with them learning experiences that are inadequate to the host institutions' standard (p. 611). The deficit approach may give rise to misunderstanding of international doctoral students as problematic and often seen as dependent and demanding (Goode, 2007).

2.1.2 Doctoral Supervision as Complex and Dynamic

A number of authors argue that doctoral supervision is a complex phenomenon. For example, Grant and Manathunga (2011, p. 351) viewed supervision as puzzling:

> Supervision is a pedagogy in which our raced, classed and gendered bodies are present. Culture, in all of its varied guises impacts there. When we supervise across ethnic cultures, supervision becomes a pedagogical site of rich possibility as well as, at times, a place of puzzling and confronting complexity.

Green (2005, p. 153) described supervision as "a total environment within which postgraduate research activity is realised." Some scholars have also noted that the complexities of supervision are influenced by many aspects and are not necessarily connected to national differences. For instance, Acker (2011, p. 414) suggested that supervision is a space where doctoral students face the challenges of becoming accustomed to the departmental, disciplinary and institutional cultures. McCormack (2004, p. 321)

proposed that since the students' experiences are "individual, complex, personal and contextually mediated," there is high possibility of mismatched expectations. Välimaa (1998, p. 120) suggested that doctoral students, regardless of their cultural origins, face challenges from new cultural disciplinary and institutional frames.

2.1.3 Doctoral Supervision as an Intercultural Practice

In recent years, a number of scholars have started to conceptualise and understand doctoral supervision from an intercultural perspective. In Intercultural Communication (or IC), the terms intercultural or interculturality are used interchangeably to refer to what happens when encounters between people take place. Lavanchy et al. (2011, p. 12) proposed a detailed explanation of the terms:

> The adjective 'intercultural' is based on … the idea of an encounter with otherness or meeting of different cultures … interculturality might allow us to understand the processual dimensions of their encounters. We thus address encounters between multifaceted individuals in relation to historicity, intersubjectivity and interactional context.

Holliday (2017, p. 214) defined interculturality as:

> a more seamless process whereby we employ our existing cultural experience to engage with new cultural domains within which we can also find ourselves, and we make new sense of the existing cultural identities of ourselves and others.

In light of this, some scholars have used the concept of interculturality to seek an understanding of intercultural interactions between students and supervisors in supervision. For example, Manathunga (2007a) explored the dynamics of power and identity in doctoral supervision between supervisors and students from diverse cultures and educational systems at an Australian university. She proposed the use of three post-colonial metaphors to describe how cultures operate within doctoral supervision, namely:

- Assimilation in which students discard their own values and adopt Western ways of thinking;
- Unhomeliness in which students feel a sense of alienation as they adjust to new practices; and

- Transculturation in which students may carefully select those parts of Western knowledge that they find useful and seek to blend them with their own knowledge and ways of thinking (Manathunga, 2007a, p. 97-98).

Manathunga (2007a) concluded that an intercultural supervision is a site where students' previous cultural knowledge might surface, hence creating opportunities for supervisors to encourage their students to embrace the dominant disciplinary or academic cultures.

A study by Davcheva et al. (2011) of the experiences of doctoral supervision of four supervisors in two UK universities found that doctoral supervision could be seen as an emergent, dynamic, fluid space of meaning making and negotiation between doctoral students and their supervisors, between whom there are significant differences in background (p. 128). Drawing on cultural frameworks of Bhabha's (1990) third space, Kramsch's (1998) intercultural space and Holliday's (1999) small cultures, the authors perceived supervisory practice as situated within zones of intercultural experience. They also showed constant shifts between the supervisors' experiences of place and space (physical setting, activities and meaning that invoke certain degrees of insideness and outsideness) and the journey of crossing the borders and boundary line of relationships (the supervisor's perception and feelings of becoming and being a supervisor), and the negotiation process that takes place beyond supervision, such as, disciplinary fields, departments and organisations. The authors concluded that through the interculturality lens, doctoral supervision could be viewed "as an emergent, small culture, where supervisors and their students - each bringing their different backgrounds, values and identities - meet to interact in order to accomplish the task of doctoral research and completion" (p. 145).

Moreover, Magyar and Robinson-Pant (2013, p. 667) in their study of international doctoral students' experiences in UK universities regarded doctoral supervision as a potential space for intercultural learning. Drawing on IC perspectives, in particular Holliday's (1999) small cultures, they concluded that:

> The students were actively engaged in the process of intercultural learning. They simultaneously drew on, but also challenged and deconstructed dominant cultural stereotypes (such as the notions of respect, hierarchical relationships between teacher and student). Although they presented a picture of a homogeneous culture 'back

home' … they were also recognising and valuing a space to change cultural practices and were aware of their own learning in this respect as an important element of adapting to UK HE. (Magyar and Robinson-Pant, 2013, p. 669)

Holliday (2017), in a recent study of a small group of doctoral students at a British university, proposed a broader struggle of cultural complexity that might be shared by all students regardless of their cultural orientation as 'international' or 'home' students. He suggested that such orientation of 'international' and 'home' may bring divisive and inappropriate labels within an intercultural community (p. 206). He also viewed doctoral experience as a small culture with its own set of rituals and routines which students were actively engaged.

2.2 Concept of Identity in Doctoral Supervision

The subject of identity has been discussed as central to doctoral learning by many authors. For example, Green (2005, p. 153) suggested that doctoral study "is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production" since identity transforms how doctoral students see themselves and are viewed by others. In a similar vein, Baker and Lattuca (2010, p. 809) proposed that doctoral students develop scholarly identity by participating in "the intellectual community in the field and the home institution." They claim that students learn the required knowledge and skills that will help them make informed choices about the expected roles and values associated with their respective fields. According to Simon (2004, p. 23) identity is generally referred to as "an internalized set of role expectations" that are shaped by individuals' earlier understandings of experiences, which, in turn, shape how they respond to future situations. Far from being static, identity is often a fluid and flexible process in which individuals negotiate and adapt to a particular role many times throughout their lives (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 12).

The identity formation of doctoral students has been discussed by several studies. For example, McAlpine and Amundsen (2011) studied the process of learning and identity construction of doctoral students and found that the students' academic trajectory consists of three interconnecting elements: intellectual, networking and institutional. Another model of academic identity is presented in Carlone and Johnson's (2007) study that proposed a model of science identity comprises of three components: competence, performance and recognition. In the model, they suggested that the recognition by

members of the local scholarly community of practice as a key element in the socialisation of doctoral candidates. They claim that in order to successfully enacting a particular identity, doctoral student "makes visible to (performs for) others one's competence in relevant practices, and, in response, others recognize one's performance as credible" (p. 1190). Trede and McEwen (2012, p. 27) contended that identity formation "enables students to become practitioners with a sense of self and purpose both as members of a given community and as global citizens."

Some authors highlighted the complexity of identity of doctoral students. For instance, Manathunga (2011, p. 89) argued the identity work of doctoral students entails acute risks as they are experiencing:

> a [re]formation of identity as disciplinary ... scholars ... [they] are in a liminal, in-between space; caught between being a novice researcher and becoming an independent researcher.

This liminal status encourages students to seek recognition from supervisors not only for their scholarly efforts but also for the supervisor' support, guidance and encouragement (Wisker et al, 2003). Besides, doctoral students also require access to "the kinds of supportive community of practice offered by a research culture which nurtures" their learning (Wisker et al 2007, p. 304) which is important, as Lee and Green (1997) argued, identity is not only a product of personal desire and activity, but also of interactions with members of local academic communities.

In the following sub-sections, I will provide a brief review of studies on identity in doctoral educational settings. This review focuses on some key issues behind the doctoral identity work, such as: social and power relations, gender, and non-traditional students, which may influence the way individuals take up their positions as supervisor and student and their supervision experience.

2.2.1 Social and Power Relation Issues

Social and power relation issues inherent in doctoral supervision have been the subject of several authors. Supervisory relationship, traditionally, is often conceptualised in terms of master-apprentice model, whereby power relations are overt and formal, with the supervisor is viewed as the expert and the student is the apprentice who learns by doing

(Nulty et al, 2009; Parker 2009). Within this traditional model, the supervisor can be seen either as a gatekeeper to the discipline and qualification of a doctoral student (Lee, 2008); a first critic of the thesis (Green, 2005; Lee, 2008); or as a figure with great influence over the direction of research, candidature and submission of the doctorate (Hemer, 2012). Nonetheless, the traditional model with its unequal, overt power relationship might contribute to the abuse of power in the supervisory relationship which can include supervisors being inaccessible, providing poor feedback, or causing more overt forms of sexual or academic harassment (Grant and Graham, 1999). Apart from the unequal power relations between a student and a supervisor, there are more complex power dynamics in the supervisory relationship (Bartlett and Mercer, 2000). For example, Grant (2003) highlighted that supervisors are restricted by disciplinary practices and institutional bureaucracy (Grant, 2003). Simons (1995, p. 100) argued that supervision can be seen as "a deeply affective relationship" which can make the relationship potentially complicated. Gill and Bernard (2008) and De Beer and Mason (2009) highlighted that the different expectations of student and supervisor might influence supervisory relationship as supervisors have to take up multiple roles including academic, pastoral, advisory and quality control.

Recent works by some authors, which draw from post-colonial and feminist perspectives, see a shift from the traditional model to a collaborative relationship (Wisker et al, 2007), a mentor or advisor relationship (Manathunga, 2007b), or a relationship between older and younger sisters (Bartlett and Mercer, 2000) whereby the power relations are less formal between student and supervisor. Apart from models of supervision, several authors have proposed different styles of supervisory relationship. For example, supervisory styles can be viewed as either 'problem-oriented' or 'process-oriented', where problem-oriented focuses on the tasks, such as thesis writing, and process-oriented concentrates on the interpersonal aspect of the relationship between supervisor and student (Emilsson and Johnsson, 2007; Goode, 2010).

Nevertheless, as Knowles (2007) claimed, even a pastoral style of supervision might contain power relations in regard to its regulatory and disciplinary aspects. Therefore, several authors have proposed some strategies to manage unequal power relations and develop successful supervision relationship. For example, Grant (1999, p. 9) proposed the metaphor "like walking on a rackety bridge" to describe the challenges faced by student

and supervisor in balancing and managing power relations inherent in supervision relationship. A supervisor who is weighed down by her/his institutional position must be cautious when managing supervisory relationship as any "small, thoughtless move can throw the student off the bridge" (p. 9). In the metaphor, supervisory relationship is portrayed as "not static but rackety, a bridge disturbed by erratic movement" (p. 9) which both supervisor and student need to be sensitive of in order to maintain a balance that will allow progress to be made. The metaphor echoes Leder (1995 p. 5), who argued that supervision is a "question of balance", hence, requires a certain situational attentiveness. In a similar vein, Misztal (2000) claimed that it is essential to strike a balance between informal and formal interactional practices in order "to create conditions for cooperation, cohesion and innovation . . . the fine tuning of informality and formality is central to the creation of social trust" (p. 10).

2.2.2 Gender Issues

Apart from power relation issues, some authors see the pedagogic practices inherent in doctoral studies as being gendered and classed, which may influence the way supervisor and student take up their positions as supervisor and student. For example, Leonard (2001, p. 7) argues that the notion of "being academic" or "research student" features a character that is:

> associated with middle class masculinity, which construct femininity and working classness as 'other', but which actually require and use the labour of women and the lower classes.

Leonard (2001) further argued that academic institution not only reflects gender identities but rather "actively constitutes" these identities by "engaging in masculine and feminine ways of thinking and talking, and sexual and other social interactions" (p. 7). Similarly, Johnson et al. (2000) studied the current practices of doctoral education and supervision in the humanities and social sciences disciplines in Australia, and proposed that the idea of autonomy and independent scholar is "profoundly masculine' (p. 139), achieved by denying feminine qualities such as emotions, embodiment and human dependency (p. 140. In a similar vein, Petersen (2014) studied narratives of doctoral supervision of two students; George and Elaine at an Australian university, and found that the students constructed and positioned themselves in relation to the gendered institutional expectations. In the study, George displayed an anti-authoritarianism behaviour towards

his female supervisor, which is a form of dominant masculinity, while Elaine exhibited behaviours that "is a well-researched form of femininity" including "ineptness, readily accepts a positioning as subordinate, and is very much oriented toward the consequences of her decisions on family and friends" (p. 833).

Some authors argue that the gendered academic culture may make doctoral experience of women students more challenging, uncertain and isolating than their male peers (Leonard, 2001). Moreover, women doctoral students might have higher levels of stress than men (Toews et al., 1997) and their lives are more likely to be more complex (Hill and McGregor, 1998) because they have to include domestic obligations on their time that are not shared by their male peers (Jackson, 2008). As a result, women students might start their doctoral studies much later than men (Chesterman, 2001, cited in Brown and Watson, 2010) and likely to enroll in part-time rather than full-time mode of study (White, 2003).

Some studies also claimed that gender disparity might continue to be the norm in most academic fields, with men occupying the majority of senior-ranked positions. For example; Ramsay (2000, cited in Brown and Watson, 2010) found that there were more than fifty percent men academics with PhDs, as compared to women academic. White (2004) found that in the fields such as education and the humanities, while women were over-represented at the junior levels, they were under-represented as senior lecturers. Thanacoody et al. (2006) found that women in academia experienced greater isolation, higher levels of stress, problems with self-esteem, and feelings of being outside the culture of their department. They often feel "marginalised", "excluded" or "ignored" (p. 9).

Moreover, several studies have shown that there are possible gender elements in doctoral supervision experience. For example, Deem and Brehony (2001) studied experiences of doctoral students in UK universities and found that some women students felt that male supervisors excluded them from informal discussions, did not seek their opinions and showed less positive mentoring behaviour in general compared to female supervisors. Brown and Watson (2010) studied doctoral experiences of eight women doctoral students at a British university and found that balancing between motherhood and domestic studies often become a source of conflict for women students which eventually dampen progress in their studies (p. 395). The study also found that in regard to supervisory experience, while gender made little difference, many of the students viewed personality of the

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supervisor as basis for the amount of support they received. Kurtz-Costes et al., (2006) studied academic experiences of men and women doctoral students at an American university, and found that women students were more concerned than men about how their decisions and experiences in academia would impact their roles as wives and mothers (p. 152). In regard to supervisors, while some women appreciated having women supervisors as "a mentor who modeled a lifestyle—combining family and a successful career—that these students sought for themselves," men, in contrast, sought supervisors who had "influential power …and thus could open doors through the force of their reputation" (p. 152). Moreover, Mahani Mokhtar (2012) studied twenty women doctoral students' experiences at a university in Malaysia and found that while some students perceived self-accomplishment, environment, and research as contributing factors, they were also driven by motherhood and domestic obligation and Islamic values which can also be associated with a form of femininity (p. 207).

Nonetheless, some studies have shown that gender is mainly constructed in situations rather than being a predictor of behaviours (Kobayashi, 2014). For example, Maher et al. (2004) conducted a survey with 63 female doctoral students and found that factors helping or hindering progress and timely completion were similar to factors identified in earlier research on progress of all students, regardless of gender. Moreover, Gonsalves (2011, p. 125) studied gender and doctoral physics education and found that women (and men) constructed their identities in ways that are compatible with the discourse of physics, and there was "no contradiction between their own gender performance and the practice of physics".

2.2.3 Non-traditional Students

Some studies have shown that diversity among doctoral students might pose a whole set of pedagogical challenges to doctoral experience (Mirza, 1995; Acker, 2011). According to Johnson et al (2000, p. 137) traditionally, doctoral education was aimed for a tiny "exemplary elite" of high-achieving students. These traditional students were seen as "always ready" (Johnson et al, 2000, p.138) and "self-motivated and self-regulating" (Grant 2011, p. 251). Some authors argued that these traditional students would display a "sense of self" which made them "respond positively ... to being 'half' supervised" (Johnson et al. 2000, p. 138), or cope better with "hands-off" supervision (Sinclair, 2004). The type of relationship between supervisor and student may be characterised by "neglect,

abandonment and indifference" (Johnson et al, 2000, p. 136). According Pilbeam and Denyer (2009, p. 303) the sense of isolation and abjection might be an inherent trait of the student experience which arises from the more individualistic cultural tendencies of traditional students.

Global movement such as globalisation and internationalisation of higher education might lead to the increased enrollment of non-traditional students (Servage, 2009). The term non-traditional students can refer to all students who are marginalised by the dominant academic scholarly culture which include "men and women who come from the non-dominant class, ethnic or race position" (Yeatman 1998, p. 23); part time, disable, international students or "students who come from contexts where social and political oppression has framed their sense of self and their familiar orders of knowledge" (Grant, 2011, cited in Naidoo, 2015, p. 341). Some authors argued that non-traditional students might not "fit the old mould of traditional students" (Yeatman 1998, p. 23). The students are also disadvantaged by an institutional culture that identifies them as 'other' (Tett, 2000). International and part-time students as well as students from countries with less individualistic cultures might also face difficulty in accessing different peer and academic culture (Pilbeam and Denyer (2009, p. 303). Subsequently, the traditional master-apprentice model of doctoral education has been criticised for being too narrowly focused, taking longer completion times and resulting in non-completion, developing dependency relations between supervisor and student, and producing doctoral students who are incapable to apply knowledge and skills (Grant, 2011; Samuel and Vithal, 2011).

Several studies have explored doctoral experiences of non-traditional students. For example, Grant (2011) studied non-traditional students in New Zealand and found that the students were critical of Western epistemologies and there were conflicts transpired between Western and Maori epistemologies. Many of the students conveyed explicit agendas to use their doctorate to develop the socio-economic position and political landscape of Maori. The study also found that some of the students faced challenges to integrate into the academic practices (p. 252). Furthermore, Tsouroufli (2015) conducted a study on the experiences of international students in a UK university and revealed that some of the students felt that they were treated with suspicion and prejudice, particularly those from Islamic background (p. 9). Moreover, many of the students expressed disappointment over the lack of strategy to support diversity, difference and inclusion by

the university. Naidoo (2015) studied the habitus of non- traditional doctoral students at a South African university and found that the students experienced pressures which could be associated with being in a transitory state which might arise from their "lack of clarity" regarding core expectations such as: 'producing new knowledge'; feelings of isolation and exclusion; lacking of recognition; and increasing need for greater access, acceptance and participation in conventional academic practices (p. 349). The study revealed that there was a mismatch between non-traditional students' habitus and doctoral education as the students might require more 'hands-on' supervision' to help them assess their own work.

2.3 The Internationalisation of Higher Education

Internationalisation is not a foreign term to higher education, as studies have indicated that some universities have, since medieval times, been international in character (Vestal, 1994; Stier, 2003). According to Knight, 2008 (p.2) internationalisation has gained its popularity in education sectors in the early 1980s. While internationalisation is a term frequently used to discuss the international dimension of higher education, several authors have argued that its definition has proven to be rather ambiguous (Yelland, 2000; Bartell, 2003; Robson, 2011). For example, Callan (2000) claims that:

> … since the Second World War the concept has been understood and applied in a highly variable fashion. Interpretations have shifted according to varying rationales and incentives for internationalization, the varying activities encompassed therein, and the varying political and economic circumstances in which the process is situated. (Callan, 2000; p.16)

Moreover, de Wit (2002, p. xvi) suggested that the term internationalisation is problematic due to the existence of a number of related terms that are sometimes used to "refer to a concrete element within the broad field of … internationalization" and also "used as synonymous for the overall term … internationalization" (p. xvi). In a similar vein, Knight (2008, p. 2) argued that there has been a great deal of confusion about what the term actually means because internationalisation can mean different things to different people:

> For some people, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; new international academic programs and research initiatives. For others it means delivering education to other countries using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques and such new types of arrangements as branch campuses or franchises. To many, it means including an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension in the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still, others see international

development projects or, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on trade in higher education as internationalization. (Knight, 2008, p. 2)

Moreover, Al-Attari (2016, p. 8) argued that the interchangeable usage of terms such as 'international education', 'international dimension', and 'globalization of higher education' may cause confusion about what internationalisation really means.

Nevertheless, there are some definitions of the term internationalisation that might have gained recognition within the research community. One of the most cited definitions of the term internationalisation is by Knight (1997, p. 8): "The process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (as cited in Knight 1999, p. 8). Knight, later, (2003) revised the original definition to read:

> Internationalization at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education. (Knight, 2003, p. 2)

Knight (2003) claimed that the revised definition makes the term broader and thus, relatable not only at the institutional level, as implied in the original definition, but also at the sector level. Since then, there is much written in the literature about internationalisation and its meanings. For example, Ruther (2002, 9) proposed that internationalisation in itself consists of two conceptual terms: international education and international dimension of higher education, which can be described as follow:

> International education focuses on the disciplinary or academic element and international dimension focuses on institutional or enterprise element. Internationalization focuses on the dynamic transformation of higher education, its institutions and the entire system, both its disciplinary and enterprise element. (Ruther, 2002, p. 9)

Kalvemark and Der Wende (2007, cited in Al-Attari, 2016, p. 9) defined the term internationalisation of higher education as:

> A systematic sustained effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets. These requirements may concern all aspects of higher education: academic programs, research, students and graduates, faculty and staff, management and administration and reforms, etc.

Mitchell and Nielsen (2012, p. 10) suggested that "internationalization focuses attention on the intentional actions of individual, groups and social institutions as they actively seek to cross nationals in pursuit of social, economic, political or cultural benefits." While there are different definitions of internationalisation of higher education, these definitions, above all, imply that internationalisation is a dynamic ongoing process that occurs across levels: national; sectors; policies; institutions; stakeholders; groups; and individuals, which "impacts upon the mission and function of higher education" (Al-Attari, 2016, p 8-9). De Vita and Case (2003, p. 383) noted that internationalisation brings new challenges and opportunities for stakeholders to engage in "radical reassessment of the purposes, priorities and processes" of higher education, which is a pre-requisite for delivering a world class internationalised education (Robson, 2011, p. 621).

2.3.1 Approaches and Rationales for Internationalisation of Higher Education

According to Knight (2004, p. 18) any approach to internationalisation that is adopted by a country or an institution will distinguish "the values, priorities, and actions that are exhibited during the work toward implementing internationalization." As there is no fixed approach nor there is a right approach to addressing the process of internationalisation, the implementation of internationalisation is dependent on the country's culture, history, politics and resources (Knight, 2004, p. 18). Knight (2004, p. 19) proposed five different approaches to internationalisation at the national or education sector level:

i)   The program approach focuses on providing programs that facilitate opportunities for institutions and individuals to engage in international activities in research, teaching and learning;

ii) The rationale approach is concerned with the motivations for internationalising higher education in terms of strategic alliances, human resources development, commercial trade, nation building and social/cultural development;

iii) The ad hoc approach emphases internationalisation as a reactive response to the emerging new development, such as: international delivery and mobility;

iv) The policy approach addresses the implementation of international/intercultural dimension in the institutional policies, such as: education, foreign affairs, science and technology.; and

v)   The strategic approach emphases internationalisation as a key element of a national strategy to achieve a country's goals, at both domestic and international level.

At the institutional level, Knight and de Wit (1999) and Knight (2004) proposed
six broad approaches to internationalisation, namely:

i) The activity approach, that is regarded as the most common approach, emphases internationalisation in terms of series of activities, such as: study abroad and student exchange program;

ii) The outcome (formerly called competency) approach regards internationalisation in terms of preferred outcomes, for example: student competencies and international partnership;

iii) The rationale approach is presented with respect to the primary motivations driving the process of internationalisation, such as: cultural diversity, student and staff development;

iv) The process approach considers the integration of an international/intercultural dimension in the teaching, learning and service functions of the institution, for example: curriculum and the policies that run an institution;

v) The at home approach refers to the institutions that concentrate on the intercultural/international dimension of a campus and are not involved in mobility programs or cross-border activities; and

vi) The abroad (or cross border) approach refers to the institutions who are focusing on their efforts on delivering educational programs across borders through a variety of delivery modes, for example: face-to-face, distance e-learning; and different administrative arrangements, such as: franchises and twinning.

Knight (2004, p. 21) claimed that these approaches of internationalisation of higher education may help countries or institutions:

> … to reflect on the dominant features of their current approach to internationalization or what approach they would like to adopt in the future. It is a useful and revealing exercise to analyze whether the dominant approach being used is consistent and complementary to the rationales and values driving the efforts to internationalize.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive nor they meant to exclude other approaches as they may vary in importance by country and region, and their dominance may change over time (Knight, 2004) and De Wit (2011).

In the literature, some authors have discussed the rationales or motivations for internationalisation. For example, de Wit (2002; 2011a; 2011b, p. 9) identified four broad rationales for internationalisation, namely: i) political rationale, including foreign policy, national security, peace and mutual understanding, which have become significant in the internationalisation after the Second World War; ii) social and cultural rationale, whereby social rationale is concerned with "the fact that the individual, the student, and the academic, by being in an international environment, become less provincial," and cultural

rationale is concerned with the kind of roles that institutions can play to integrate intercultural understanding and competence among students and staff; iii) economic rationale refers to growth and competitiveness, national educational demand and labour market; and iv) academic rationale is concerned with the development of international and intercultural dimensions in research, teaching and services, as well as the improvement of the quality and international ranking. Moreover, Knight (2004; 2008, p. 25) extended the discussion on the existing rationales for internationalisation and highlighted several emerging rationales at the national level. The institutional-level rationale is one of them. Knight (2004) argued that institutional-level rationale has greater importance in countries where internationalisation is not given much importance at the national level greater importance and may also differ more from one institution to another due to several factors such the institution mission, student population, faculty profile, geographic location, funding sources, level of resources, and orientation to local, national, and international interests (Knight, 2004; p. 25). There are five emerging rationales at the institutional level, namely: international branding and profile, student and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research and knowledge production.

Recent years have witnessed that the subject of internationalisation of higher education has taken a strong hold within higher education in a global scale (Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011). The development of internationalisation of higher education is seen as a response to the pressures of a changing world. As noted by de Wit (2011a, p. 245) the rationales for internationalisation of higher education are becoming more and more interconnected as rapid changes taking place in many parts of the world. The differing and competing rationales both at the national and institutional levels might contribute to "the complexity of the international dimension of education and the substantial contributions that internationalization makes" (Knight, 2004, p. 28). Thus, it is important for countries, institutions or individuals:

> … to be very clear in articulating its motivations for internationalization, as policies, programs, strategies, and outcomes are all linked and guided by explicit and even implicit rationales. (Knight, 2004, p. 28)

2.3.2 Internationalisation and its Components

International and Domestic Cross-Borders

One of the components of the internationalisation of higher education is increased cross-border education (Larsen et al., 2004, p. 2). While the term cross-border education is often associated with the international mobility of students and staff, at the same time, the term can refer to domestic mobility. Domestic cross-border education can be defined as internationalisation without the mobility of students and staff, in which the world is brought into the learning experience without any movement of people and where students and staff can have an international experience without going abroad (International Association Universities (n.d) cited in Tham and Kham, 2008, p. 355; Knight, 2006). This is a form of internationalisation at home that "includes the international and intercultural dimensions of curriculum teaching, research, and helping students develop international and intercultural skills without leaving their country" (Tham and Kam, 2008, p. 355). Several authors have extended internationalisation at home to the term 'cosmopolitanism' which includes the 'perspective of the local' (Caglar, 2006, p. 40) and 'Internationalisation at Home' (Teekens, 2006). Furthermore, international and domestic cross-border education has fostered the growth of transnational education, a term which generally refers to "the learners located in a country different from that where the awarding institution is based" (UNESCO-CEPES, 2000, cited in Huang, 2007, p. 422). Transnational education can also refer to both the real and virtual movement of students, staff, knowledge and educational courses from one country to another (Knight, 2002). Huang (2007, p. 421) observed that in comparison to other parts of the world, Asia has participated actively in transnational education. Some of the main driving forces for transnational education are: to gain an international standard of education; to increase higher education enrollment; and to enhance the competitiveness of education on an international level (Huang, 2007, p. 425).

The Internationalisation of the Curricula

The internationalisation of the curricula is another aspect of the internationalisation of higher education. Knight (1994, p. 6) considered the curriculum as "the backbone of the internationalization process". Leask (2001, p. 100) argued that "internationalizing university curricula is a powerful and practical way of bridging the gap between rhetoric and practice to including and valuing the contribution of international students" (p. 100). The internationalisation of curricula includes activities such as: studying abroad program, foreign language courses, interdisciplinary or area programs, or the provision of programs

or courses with an international, intercultural, or comparative focus (Bremer and van der Wende, 1995). The internationalisation of the curricula has brought transformative effects to the learning and teaching process as it is "changing fundamentally what we teach and how we teach it" Bond (2003, p. 3). Some author suggested that the internationalised of the curricula focused on a shift from a traditional teacher-centered style of learning to a more inclusive, student-centered and interactive learning (Bond, 2003; Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007) that might be necessary to prepare students for the increasingly interdependent global society (Leask, 2001; Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007). Several writers argued that the process of internationalising the curriculum might be hindered by some aspects, including:

- reluctance and resistance from the institution's internal structures to engage in the process of internationalising the curriculum (Knight, 2000);

- insufficient funding and resources in increase international awareness and expertise through international research, study, and teaching activities (Bond, 2003; Ellingboe, 1998; Knight, 2002; Taylor, 2000);

- difficulties in gaining support and promoting collaborations from diverse disciplines (Ellingboe, 1998); and

- inadequate personal knowledge or interest in internationalisation and insufficient intercultural knowledge and sensitivity (Bond, 2006).

Although there are no clear guidelines of how to internationalise the curriculum (Bond, 2003; Harari, 1992), some writers indicated that the process of doing so should be part of an ongoing, comprehensive, integrated and interdisciplinary approach to institutional internationalisation (Ellingboe, 1998; Taylor, 2000) and be based on the institutional context, goals, mission, values, and resources (Knight, 2004).

2.3.3 Internationalisation and its Challenges

The internationalisation in higher education has become a useful tool in promoting and fostering several initiatives, such as: world citizenship awareness, in which students and member of academics are increasingly motivated to cross borders and participate in activities on an international level, international collaborative research and scholarship and cross-national teaching, international entrepreneurialism among universities in recruiting

international students and academics; and control of the flow of knowledge within and across national boundaries (Mitchell and Nielsen, 2012, p. 13-14). In sum, the internationalisation of higher education benefits from the positive initiatives of collaborative projects, of cross-border educational exchange and these initiatives have contributed to the development of individuals, institutions, nations and the world at large.

While internationalisation of higher education has been seen as a transformative tool, several authors have highlighted some of its drawbacks. For example, Robson and Turner (2007) and Robson (2011) argued that in regard to the increased internationalised strategies and practices adopted by higher institutions, there might be increased tensions among academics in terms of the required time and effort needed and the restrictions imposed on their personal and professional identities as well as research trajectories. Luxon and Peelo (2009) argued that international academic staff have expressed concerns over adapting their established teaching approaches and learning theories to the new higher education context. Robson and Turner (2007) claimed that the local academic staff struggled with pedagogical and communication challenges when working with increasingly diverse student populations. Both Teichler, (2004) and Knight (2013) claimed that internationalisation of higher education might have caused damage to cultural heritage, diminished language diversity, reduced variety in academic cultures and structures, compromised quality, and even supported imperialist takeovers. Damtew (2014) stated that internationalisation has further marginalised developing and emerging regions by increasing emphasis of internationalisation on marketisation/revenue rather than on capacity building. Krstic (2012) and Enders (2007) argued that the process of internationalisation has produced disproportionate mobility flows that have resulted in a brain drain. Enders (2007) explained that:

> The vast majority of international students are from low-and-middle-in- come countries, and their destinations are in the richer parts of the world, with the U.S. as a major host country followed by Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe. The increasing flow of academics around the world is also dominated by a South-to-North pattern, while there is significant movement between the industrialized countries and some South-to-South movement as well. (Enders, 2007, p. 16).

2.3.4 Internationalisation and Higher Education Experiences

In recent years, some writers have started to explore internationalisation-related experiences within higher education. For example, Harman (2005), did a critical review of

the literature on internationalisation and higher education in the Australian context and found that there was nearly zero material on the active participation of academic staff in internationalisation, their perceptions of other cultures and people, and their language competence in speaking and reading in other languages than English (p. 131). Trahar and Hyland (2011) conducted a qualitative research and studied the experiences and perceptions of internationalisation of students and academics at five UK universities. Findings from their study revealed that while majority of the academics were aware "of the different academic traditions and cultural backgrounds of their students", the awareness was "rarely extended to theoretical and philosophical understanding of how learning and teaching practices were culturally mediated" (p. 627). Moreover, the findings suggested that there was a lack of interaction of students coming from different backgrounds both within the classroom and on campus. Besides that, the findings illustrated that there were some challenges experienced by both students and academics, such as: communication problems, imbalanced commitment to the group and interruption (p. 629). Moreover, Sanderson (2017) explored some of the personal and professional characteristics that could underpin teachers' internationalised outlooks and classroom practices. The findings revealed seven dimensions of internationalised teaching practices, namely: i) having some basic knowledge of educational theory; ii) incorporating internationalised content into subject material; iii) having a critical appreciation of one's own culture and its assumptions; (iv) demonstrating some knowledge of other countries and cultures while being open to and appreciating other worldviews; v) utilising universal teaching strategies to enhance the learning experiences of all students; vi) understanding the way one's academic discipline and its related profession are structured in a range of countries; vii) and understanding the international labour market in relation to one's academic discipline (Sanderson, 2017, p. 665-666).

2.3.5 The Internationalisation of the Malaysian Higher Education

Presently, research on the internationalisation of Malaysian higher institutions has remained limited and focused on selected areas, namely: the emergence of foreign-linked programs in Malaysia as part of the growing trend of transnational education in the world (Lee ,1999); the implications of globalisation and privatisation on the development of private higher education in the country (Tan, 2002); the impact of transnational education on the national education system and the culture of Malaysia (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2004); trade and investment of private higher education in Malaysia and the challenges of

the internationalisation of private and public institutions (Tham and Kam, 2008). In general, the MoHE regards internationalisation as a means to, namely: produce graduates that are marketable; attract international students; generate innovation through research and development; improve and empower Malaysian higher institutions to compete globally; and enable Malaysia to become a hub for excellence in international higher education (MOHE, 2007, p. 116). While the MoHE has provided a general outline of the national objectives for internationalisation, the higher education institutions (public and private) have been engaged in different dimensions of internationalisation at different levels of intensity and for different objectives (Tham and Kam, 2008, p. 354). For example, Tham and Kham (2008) studied the different challenges of internationalisation in Malaysian public and private universities and found that the internationalisation process adopted by these universities was driven by academic and economic objectives. The study indicated that while public universities regarded internationalisation as including an international dimension in all central aspects of its education (teaching, research or services) and as a means for improving international ranking, their private counterparts viewed internationalisation as a response towards globalisation, i.e. training students for international jobs and employment in multinational corporations, as platforms for student mobility and as resources for competitive educational programs.

Some authors have also discussed internationalisation and its challenges in the Malaysian higher institutions. For example, Kaur and Pandian (2010) studied the issues and challenges in Malaysian higher education and found that globalisation and internationalisation have tremendous influence on the development and reforms of the higher education sub-sector in Malaysia. As part of the influence, they proposed that the higher education institutions and business enterprises have become more alike and subsequently become more and more "commodified" into tradable products. SM Abdul Quddus and Khairil Izamin Ahmad (2016) investigated the trends and development of Malaysian higher education and proposed that Malaysian higher education governance is more oriented towards "knowledge shopping" than "identity formation" (p. 293). In order to enable internationalisation of higher education, which is one of the important national educational thrusts, the Malaysian higher institutions are now forced to focus "not merely on good-quality higher education" but also "between 'marketable' and 'unmarketable' courses" (p. 298). Subsequently, the study concluded that the institutions might continue to be influenced by "science- and technology-driven (if not biased) knowledge production to

sharpen its competitive edge" and involved in "endless competitions … to attract best students and staff as well as to generate much-needed revenue" (p. 300).

2.4 The Islamisation of Knowledge in Higher Education

In its broadest term, Islamisation of Knowledge is a diverse and evolving epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical approach which is based on the premise that all knowledge can and need to be understood from within an Islamic worldview that aims to counteract Western philosophies to education, which are characterised by their "primary reliance on the rational faculties for the discovery of truth" and that "reality is restricted to sensual experience, scientific procedure or processes of logic" (Cook, 1999, p. 347). The Islamisation agenda in education has been led by a number of Western-educated Muslim scholars, such as Ismail Faruqi, Fazlul-Rahman, Sayyid Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr Ziauddin Sardar and Syed Ali Ashraf (Milligan, 2006). Most of these scholars, in general, emphasise the significance of the Islamic educational goals as opposed to the secular, humanistic, and constructivist perspectives:

> The Islamic education goals have been laid down by the revealed religion; have objective quality; do not vary according to individual opinion and experience; and cannot be rejected by new evidence or logic. These goals include developing learners' abilities, knowledge, and skills to follow Divine guidance, worship God and attain happiness in this world and salvation in the hereafter. The best knowledge is religious; the best religious knowledge is that of one God, His [*sic*] attributes and His [*sic*] deeds. Knowledge seeking is a form of worship. If any doubt is raised about these and other doctrines, the fault is with the doubter, not with the doctrinal principles. (Niyozov and Memon, 2011, p. 15)

Most scholars consider the premises on which Western education is founded as violating the Islamic principle of *tawhid* (unity and interconnectedness of truth) as they argue that the Western social sciences and the humanities have inadequate mechanisms through which to understand both the moral and spiritual aspects; have reduced reality to its material level, and by arguing for a value neutral observer, falsely claim objectivity; and have divided knowledge into fragments (Faruqi, 1982, cited in Niyozov and Memon, 2011, p. 16). Nevertheless, most of the Islamisation attitudes towards Western education have been criticised by other Muslim scholars as being unproductive, limited, misguided and essentialised, as they fail to take into account the "diversity, context, agency, and power relationships in Muslim education across time and space among others" (Abaza, 2002, p. 302; Niyozov and Memon, 2011, p. 19).

The Islamisation of Knowledge emanated from the first international Muslim education conference in Mecca in 1977 (Cook 1999, p. 342). The conference was regarded as a landmark in Islamic education for it was the "first attempt of its kind to remove the dichotomy of religious and secular education" from the current education systems of Islamic countries (Al-Attas, 1979, p. v). The objective of the conference was to "create an education system based on Islamic principles while also accounting for the modernizing needs of contemporary society" (Cook, 1999, p. 342) as explained by Al-Attas, (1979, p. 158):

> Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man [*sic*] through the training of Man's *[sic]* spirit, intellect, rational self, objective of feelings and bodily senses. Training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his [*sic*] personality and creates an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him [*sic*] to follow the Quran and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he [*sic*] may proceed to realization of his [*sic*] status as Khalifat Allah to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe; ... education should promote in man [*sic*] the creative impulse to rule himself [*sic*] and the universe as a true servant not by opposing and coming into conflict with Nature but by understanding its laws and harnessing its forces for the growth of a personality that is in harmony with it.

The conference was considered a success, and since then more conferences have been organised around the world, including in Islamabad (1980), Dhaka (1981), Jakarta (1982), Cairo (1987), Cape Town (1996) and Malaysia (2009 and 2015) (Adebayo, 2016, p. 80). The conferences have also led to the emergence of Islamic organisations, namely (Adebayo, 2008):

- the Centre for Research in Islamic Education;
- the International Institute of Islamic Science and Technology (IIIST);
- the International Board of Educational Research and Resources (IBERR);
- the Institute of Islamic Education and Research;
- the Islamic Academy; and
- Darul-Ihsan Trust.

In addition, a number of international Islamic universities have been established in countries, namely:

- Malaysia (the IIUM);

- Bangladesh (the Islamic University Chittagong (IUC) and the Asian University of Bangladesh (AUB);

- United Arab Emirates (the University of Sharjah);

- Pakistan (the Riphah International University, Islamabad (RIU); and

- The United States (the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

(Moten, 2009, p. 70; Adebayo, 2016, p.80)

2.4.1 Model of the Islamisation of Knowledge in Islamic Higher Institutions

Apart from internationalisation of higher education, Islamisation of Knowledge is a prominent global educational trend, particularly among Muslim countries. Ssekamanya (2016, p. 3) noted that "in Muslim societies today, internationalization goes hand in hand with Islamization". He also observed that for Islamic universities to successfully partake in today's global education market, these universities need to revive the Islamic character of the early institutions of the Muslim worlds, namely the tawhidic or holistic approach to knowledge. Insights from the narratives show that at the university level, the IIUM has been making efforts at making the institution a model of an Islamic university to be emulated by others (Adebayo, 2016, p. 89), namely by: establishing the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences; producing textbooks from the perspective of Islam; hosting international and national conferences on the Islamisation of Knowledge and other Islam-related issues; and using Arabic as one of the languages of instruction and communication. This is in line with the objective of the Islamisation of Knowledge:

> The major objective of the Islamization of knowledge program is to ensure a balanced system of education through interaction between the belief systems, the knowledge system and the value system, which is lacking in the Muslim educational system as a result of their adoption of the Western system of education …. The program of the Islamization of knowledge goes beyond restricting spiritual training or knowledge about God to "Islamic Studies" as a subject on the curriculum. Rather, all other disciplines should be tailored towards attaining spiritual development. (Adebayo, 2016, p. 85)

Several authors argued that despite the establishment of some Islamic universities, there is a lack of a model for an Islamised curriculum (Naqi, 1987; Faruqi, 1988; Adebayo, 2016). The absence of a model curriculum on the Islamisation of knowledge has led several Islamic universities to design their own curricula, which "creates lack of vision and clarity about the concept of Islamic education" (Adebayo, 2016; p. 88). Nonetheless, the IIUM has been making efforts in creating and implementing a model of an Islamic university that

can be followed by other Islamic universities. For example, the IIUM's Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization adopted Al-Attas's educational philosophy in its curricula. In essence, the curricula emphasise two elements:

- *fard ayn*, which refers to the compulsory responsibility on every individual that warrants Muslim students to reason and act as faithful Muslims when addressing societal and philosophical challenges; and
- *fard kifayah*, which refers to the responsibility towards the community through the teaching of human, natural, applied, and technical sciences to ensure that students are properly qualified to solve technical and social problems in society.

(cited in Niyozov and Memon 2011, p. 15).

The IIUM has also established its own Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and produced academic textbooks that are integrated with Islamic perspectives and has conducted international and national conferences on Islamisation of Knowledge (Adebayo, 2016, p. 88-89).

2.5 Interrogating Culture

Insights gained from reviewing existing studies have informed my understanding of how cultures of doctoral supervision have been positioned and discussed in the literature. These insights have also provided my study with a starting point for further investigation of what constitutes culture. Culture is one of the most widely used concepts in social science and popular discourse but it has proven an extremely complex term in which has eluded clear definition. Theorists in fields such as anthropology and sociology have provided somewhat different versions of what culture is according to their respective disciplines. In this section, I will rehearse some of the main concepts or approaches to culture that will help contextualise my understanding of cultures of doctoral supervision. First, I will focus on how the concept of culture has been discussed in Intercultural Communication, in particular, the essentialism and non-essentialism paradigms of culture. Next, I will outline how the concept of culture is discussed within higher education.

2.5.1 Concept of Culture in Intercultural Communication

As Intercultural Communication is a field which draws on multiple disciplines, a challenge for Intercultural Communication-oriented scholars is how to position their studies amid these definitional possibilities and controversies. As a means of providing clarity about my thinking in this regard, in this section I present an overview of two major paradigms through which the concept of culture is typically viewed in the literature of Intercultural Communication, namely: essentialism and non-essentialism. Table 2-1 illustrates an overview of the two major paradigms:

Essentialist View of Culture	Non-Essentialist View of Culture
• A physical place with evenly spread traits and membership • Associated with a country and a language • Has an onion-skin relationship - which is often used to describe the different layers of cultures in which similar to an onion peels, each layer of culture is enclosed by another culture (see culture as an onion metaphor by Hofstede et al., 1997)- with larger continental religious, ethnic or racial cultures and smaller sub-cultures. • Mutually exclusive with other national cultures. People in one culture are essentially different from people in another.	• A social force, which is evident where it is significant. • Complex, with difficulty, to pin down characteristics • Can relate to any type or size or group for any period of time, and can be characterised by a discourse as much as by language. • Can flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through each other regardless of national frontiers and have blurred boundaries
What People Say	**What People Say**
o *I visited three cultures while on holiday. They were Spain, Morocco and Tunisia.* o *When crossing from Japanese culture to Chinese culture….* o *People from Egypt cannot…when they arrive in French culture*	o *There was something culturally different about each of the countries I visited* o *There is evidence of a more homogeneous culture of food in …. than ….* o *Private secondary schools in …. tend to have a more evident culture of sport than state secondary schools in …*

Table 2-1: Essentialist and Non-Essentialist Views of Culture (Holliday, 2011, p. 5)

The Essentialist View of Culture

One dominant approach to the concept of culture is the essentialist, or compositional approach, in which culture is viewed as a concrete social phenomenon representing the essential character of a particular nation (Holliday, 1999). Scholars following this paradigm classify national cultures in terms of beliefs and value systems in their work. For example, Hofstede (2001), in a study of IBM international organisations, defined national groups in terms of their collective differences and predispositions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, femininity vs. masculinity, and long vs. short-term orientation. In the study he described Americans as individualistic, (i.e. focused on self-interest), and compared them with nationals from a number of Asian countries, whom he classified as collectivistic (i.e. centred on the interests of family and the wider community). Moreover, Hall's (1976) and Hall and Hall's (1990) theory of high context and low context cultures situated national cultures on a continuum between 'high' and 'low' context, "the cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context" (Hall and Hall, 1990, p.6). According to this approach, while nationals from high-context cultures such as Japan use indirect and digressive communication styles and avoid the use of personal names, nationals from low context cultures such as German, Scandinavian and North American countries use direct and linear communication.

The Non-Essentialist View of Culture

The last two decades have seen some authors began to question the practice of 'culture account,' in which culture is defined in a simplified and reductive form, solely in terms of broad categorical terms of national cultures (e.g. individualism vs collectivism) (see Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Baumann, 1996; Sercombe and Young, 2010). Such practice ascribes "misunderstanding in intercultural communication to cultural differences, which raises the issues of stereotyping and overgeneralization" (Kramsh and Zhu, 2016, p. 43). Scholars following the non-essentialist view of culture argue that:

> culture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behaviours, but summarises an abstraction from it, and thus is neither normative nor predictive. (Baumann, 1996, p. 11, cited in Holliday, 1999, p. 242).

Moreover, the non-essentialists scholars argue for a departure from seeing culture as fixed and embodied in a number of things and shared by a group of people:

The world is not neatly divided into national categories, but the boundaries are increasingly blurred and negotiable. There is recognition of the complexity of cultural realities and of the normality of behaviours…. In one sense this complexity and blurring of boundaries is connected with the advance of globalization and the movement of people. (Holliday, 2011, p. 11)

Many scholars have built upon the non-essentialist view of culture. For example, Babha (1994) proposed the notion of a 'Third Space' and of cultural hybridity in *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha explored the notion of third space as "hybridity" (p. 277), which is "an in-between position; an ambivalent space in which third perspectives can grow in the margins of dominant ways of seeing" (p. 237). Babha's notion of the third space is further elaborated by Sakamoto (1996) who stated that: "[a] borderline culture of hybridity is a powerful and creative 'third space' through which 'newness enters the world', subverting the authority of the dominant discourse" (p. 116). Furthermore, Kramsch (1993; 1998) presents a notion of third place to represent what happens when learners acquire intercultural competence. According to Kramsch (1993) the third place is a place that "grows in the interstices between the cultures the learners grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (p. 37). The third space enables the learners to become an intercultural speaker who is able "to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use" (Kramsch, 1993 p. 38). Kramsch later (2009) reframed the notion of the third place as symbolic competence:

> … an ability that is both theoretical and practical. … A multilingual imagination opens up spaces of possibility not in abstract theories or in random flights of fancy, but in the particularity of day-to-day language practices, in, through, and across various languages. (Kramsch, 2009, p. 200-201)

Scollon et al. (2012, p. 3) proposed a notion of culture as "not as one thing or another, not as a thing at all, but rather as heuristic … a tool for thinking." Scollon et al. further argued that different approaches to culture are valuable in the sense that they each draw attention to the different ways to interpret human activity and social practice:

> Seeing cultures as a set of rules … leads us to ask how people learn these rules and how they display competence in them to other members of their culture. Seeing culture as a set of traditions leads us to ask why some aspects of behaviours survive to be passed on to later generations and some do not. Seeing culture as a particular way of thinking, forces us to consider how the human mind is shaped and the

relationship between individual cognition and collective cognition. (Scollon et al., 2012, p. 3)

In sum, the non-essentialists view culture as neither given nor static, not something you belong to or live with (Kramsch and Zhu, 2016). Street (1993, p.25) noted that, "culture is a verb," hence, rather than trying to define what culture means, we should focus on what culture does:

> … there is not much point in trying to say what culture is …. What can be done, however is to say what culture does. For what culture does is precisely the work of 'defining words, ideas, things and groups'… We all live our lives in terms of definitions, names and categories that culture creates… Culture is an active meaning making process. (Street, 1993, p. 25)

2.5.2 Concept of Culture in Higher Education

The literature on the concept of culture in higher education research can be categorised into two traditions: disciplinary-based cultures and institutionally-based cultures (Maasen, 1996; Välimaa, 1998; 2008). According to Beecher (1989, cited in Välimaa, 1998, p.120), the two traditions can be distinguished as follows:

> … the disciplinary-based cultural approach is interested in the interplay between people and ideas, whereas in the institutional culture studies culture is one of the most essential organizing concepts and the definitions are taken from the anthropological (semiotic) traditions.

Disciplinary-based Cultures

Becher's work of *Academic Tribes and Territories* (1981; 1989) has laid the basis for studies of disciplinary cultures in higher education. The central idea of Beecher's work is concerned with the relationship between (academic) people and (disciplinary) ideas, starting with the theoretical assumption that academic communities are both epistemological and social communities (Välimaa, 2008, p. 13). Beecher (1981, p. 109) argued that, "disciplines are also cultural phenomena: they are embodied in collections of like-minded people, each with their own codes of conduct, sets of values, and distinctive intellectual tasks". By analysing the structure and nature of knowledge within each discipline as the unit of analysis, Beecher proposed four general disciplinary cultures namely: the hard-pure culture of the sciences; the soft-pure culture of the humanities and the social sciences; the hard-applied culture of engineering and technology; and the soft-

applied cultures of the applied social sciences such as, education and social work. In sum, the disciplinary-based cultures approach has created a possibility for understanding the different 'small worlds' of academia and generated a variety of studies on higher education (Välimaa, 2008, p. 14). According to Maassen (1996, p. 157) the disciplinary-based cultures approach sees discipline as the main shaping force of "specific attitudes, values and behaviours of academics".

Institutionally-based Cultures

One of the most influential research which focused on institutional-based cultures came from Clark's (1970) concept of organisational saga in *The Distinctive College: Reed, Antioch and Swarthmore* in which he studied the development of several well-known liberal arts colleges in the United States. In the study, Clark found that each college went through a distinctive saga or story of triumph over difficult situations. Moreover, Clark identified some significant variables influencing the nature and strengths of the organisational cultures of the colleges such as language, symbols, ceremonies, members' sense of loyalty, commitment, and effort. The concept of institutional cultures was further extended by Tierney's (1988) *Organizational Culture in Higher Education: Defining the Essentials*. According to Tierney, institutional culture "is the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting. That is, we look at an organization as a traditional anthropologist would study a particular village or clan" (p. 4). Tierney contended that cultural studies in academic settings "will demand awareness of determinants such as individual and organizational use of time, space and communication" (p. 18). Tierney also proposed a framework to study institutional cultures which consists of six dimensions: environment, mission, socialisation, information, strategy and leadership. The objective of the framework is to give attention on the dimensions that make for "differences among institutions" which would "enable dialogue with institutions concerned rather than providing a typical pattern for analysis" (Välimaa, 1998, p. 129).

Nonetheless, some authors have addressed the problematic features of both traditions. For example, Välimaa (1998, p. 130) claimed that both traditions may be "internalist" as they focus "on processes inside the academic world and do not pay attention to the processes that influence higher education institutions or take place between society and the academic world". Weis (1985, p. 162) argued that "while both internal and external factors exert a powerful effect on the shape and form of student culture, neither determine it in any simple

sense". Välimaa (2008) studied the recent trends in the research of cultural studies in higher education and found that apart from the institutional and disciplinary cultures, there are other cultural perspectives within higher education, namely: i) Cultural traditions of students which are used as an explanatory factor for understanding differences in learning outcomes; ii) National cultures are utilised as a means for explaining typical behaviour in a national system of education; iii) Culture as a social force in which culture differences are used in comparative studies as a device for understanding some aspects of higher education between or within academics, institutions or nations; iv) Cultural change is used to investigate change in higher education reform, policy goals, institutional management, or identities; and v) Culture as a general approach for describing the social fabric of institutions, categorising universities, explaining characteristics of institutions or identifying their challenges.

2.6 Using a Small Cultures Approach and Host Culture Complex to Investigate Doctoral Supervision Cultures

The review of literature has provided valuable insights into the complex ways in which the concept of culture is discussed. First and foremost, I recognise that while the essentialist paradigm may be useful in cases where large groups or nationals are working together and the collective characteristics are exemplified, they may not be exhibited at the smaller interactional levels. The non-essentialists, on the other hand, view cultures as a complex phenomenon and that cultural differences are not necessarily associated with regional or national characteristics. According to Holliday, (1994, p. 126) in the literature on cultural influences on learning behaviour (see Adams et al., 1991; Harrison, 1990) there is much emphasis "on regional cultures which … are over-generalised and therefore distortive". Holliday uses the term "regional culture to refer to traits attached to any geographical region, from province to continent" (p. 126). Holliday further claims that such emphasis is more akin to "cultural profiling, where an attempt is made to describe common characteristics of students from one particular region" (p.126). Apart from region, religion is often the attention of this regional cultural profiling as some studies have shown the influence of Quranic teachings on the thoughts and learning behaviours among the Middle East students (see Dudley-Evan and Swales, 1980; Parker et al., 1986). Consequently, such cultural profiling might invoke stereotypes which imply that, for instance, Arab or

Japanese students are homogenous groups and exhibit similar learning behaviours. Therefore, in order to avoid over-generalisation, Holliday (1994, p. 128) maintains that:

> … it is necessary to appreciate the complex nature of culture in any context. Rather than attempting a precise definition, it is important to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of culture.

Holliday (1994, p. 128) further explains that:

> A culture of any group, regardless of size, fulfils many functions. It provides the group with tradition and recipe for action. It is social milieu which creates a shared construction of reality which regulates communication through shared rules. These rules are transmitted through a learning process which can be either tacit or conscious.

Following this line of reasoning, in this study, I considered doctoral supervision as a social milieu in which students and supervisors from different backgrounds come together and interact with each other at interpersonal and intercultural levels in order to successfully complete some common goals (i.e. thesis submission). Hence, I believe that the essentialist view of cultural traits may be of limited value in understanding the complexity of the shaping influences involved within the individuals and the contexts where the interactions take place. Therefore, in the context of doctoral supervision, the non-essentialist paradigm offers my study a more useful heuristic means to understand and explore how cultures operate at the basic level by looking at how students and supervisors interact with each other, what they say and what they think of each other. Moreover, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see Section, 2.5.2), some studies have shown that there are a few traditions and cultural perspectives within higher education that may shape how doctoral supervision is managed and conducted which can potentially affect how individual student or supervisor experiences supervision. According to Holliday, in any social situation, there will be "a complex interrelationship of cultures" as "cultures are by no means mutually exclusive … they change, constantly feeding on influence from other cultures" (p.128). Following this line of reasoning, I focused on the complexity of culture and its wider set of influences in order to achieve a greater understanding of how these influences affect the emerging small cultures of supervision.

In the following sub-sections, I will present an overview of the non-essentialist small cultures (Holliday, 1999) before describing how I utilise the small culture heuristic to

conceptualise doctoral supervision as emerging small culture. Additionally, I will introduce Host Culture Complex model (Holliday, 1994) and explain how I conceptualised the model as a valuable tool to map out the interrelationships between and within the forces which may shape the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision.

2.6.1 Small Cultures

For Holliday (1999) the non-essentialist approach to culture enables a researcher to understand cohesive behaviours of social groupings by investigating how culture operates at its basic level. He proposed a small cultures approach (Holliday, 1999) as an alternative means to understand people's behaviours regardless of their ethnicity, nationality or international differences. In general, Holliday (1999, p. 237) distinguishes culture as of two types: the 'large' culture refers to cultures that are characterised by geographical places such as countries and regions (e.g. British, Chinese); and the 'small' culture which refers to social groupings such as families and classrooms. The term small culture is also used at the same time to refer to culture as "a dynamic, ongoing process to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances" (Holliday, 2011, p. 205). Holliday (1999) further adds that sub-cultures and 'third culture' (Kramsch, 1993) are different from small cultures because their conceptualisation is still large in orientation (p. 240). The following table illustrates the differences between small cultures and large cultures:

	Small Cultures	Large Culture
Character	***Non-essentialist, non-culturist*** Relating to cohesive behaviours in activities within any social grouping	***Essentialist, culturist*** 'Culture' as an essential feature of ethnic, national or international group.
Relations	No necessary subordination to or containment within large cultures; therefore no onion skin	Small (sub)cultures are contained within and subordinate to large cultures through onion-skin relationship
Research Orientation	***Interpretive process*** Interpreting emergent behaviours within any social grouping. Heuristic model to aid the process of researching the cohesive process of any social grouping	***Prescriptive, normative*** Beginning with the idea that specific, ethnic national and international groups have different 'cultures' and then searching for the details (e.g. what is polite in Japanese culture)

Table 2-2: Small Cultures and Large Cultures Paradigms (Holliday, 1999, p. 241)

Holliday (1999, p. 248-250) explained that small cultures are constructed of four elements, namely:

- Culture as process with particular outcomes such as group cohesion or social continuity;
- cultural residues and influences, such as family or education, from which people draw but which do not necessarily confine their thoughts or behaviours;
- social construction process such as routinisation, naturalisation or institutionalisation as part of the building of cohesive behavioural norms; and
- products of small cultures such as cultural practices, values and statements of culture.

Figure 2-1 illustrates the complex relationship between the elements in the formation of small culture.
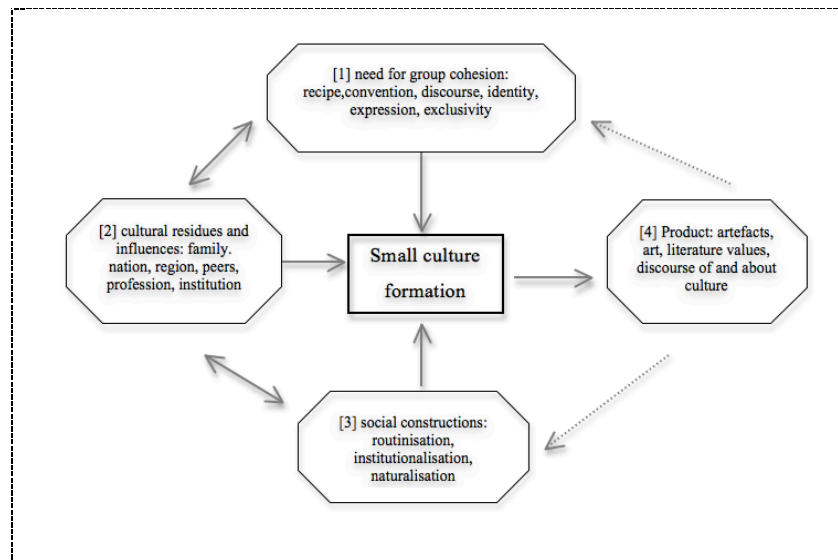
Figure 2-1: Small Culture Formation (Holliday, 1999, p. 249)

Holliday (1999, p. 257) illustrated how a small cultures approach could be useful to investigate the cultural make-up of international curriculum scenarios in language education at the University of Pune, India. He suggested that from a large culture perspective, the cultural make-up of the international curriculum scenario could be characterised as being:

> international, involving ideas, practices and expert personnel who come from other national locations – hence inter-cultural in the sense, of say, a confrontation between British and Indian ways of doing and thinking, against a potential background of Western post-colonialism.

However, within a small cultures approach, the curriculum scenario gives insights into the "intercultural conflict not between (large) British and Indian cultures but between (small) culturally different Indian elements" (p. 257) and "depicts the conflict between the (small) cultures of institutions and professional-academic activities" (p. 258).

Extending from his earlier discussion on small cultures, Holliday (2011, 2013) proposed a grammar of culture to explain the different elements of culture and their relation or connection to one another in a dialogue between the individual and social structures. The grammar provides a detailed breakdown of how to understand the working nature of intercultural communication, which enables us to read cultural events. It also acts as an invention – a map that can guide us through the different domains. The figure below presents a visual illustration of a grammar of culture (Holliday, 2013, p. 2):
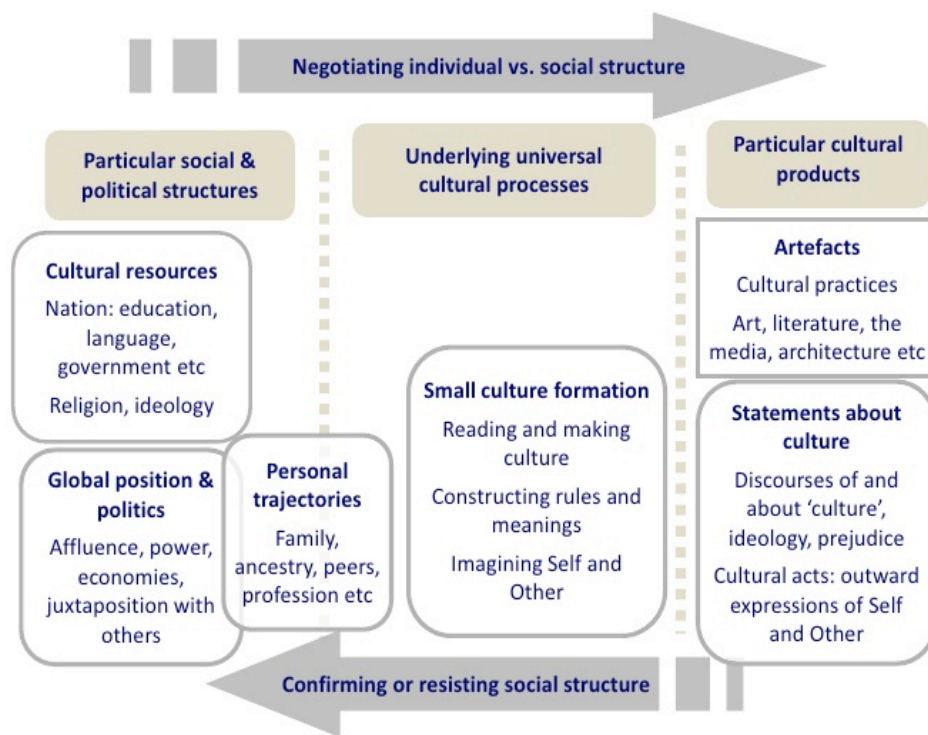
Figure 2-2: A Grammar of Culture (Holliday, 2013, p. 2)

The grammar of culture is characterised by loose relationships which represent a dialogue between three domains:

The first domain: Particular Social and Political Structures, consists of structures that make us different from one another. One of the structures is known as cultural resources, which refer to the influence that large culture or national culture - in which individuals were born and brought up – have on their daily lives. The global position structure is concerned with how we position ourselves with regard to the rest of the world: for example, the Arab World and, -Chinese Students. Personal trajectory refers to individuals' personal journeys through society, bringing with them histories from their large culture. Within this trajectory individual interacts with their particular social and political structures and the interaction can transcend into a new domain.

The second domain: Underlying Universal Processes refers to the common skills and strategies which everyone, regardless of background, engages in as they negotiate

their position within their cultural landscape. Small culture formation is the main area where individuals use their skills and strategies to read culture. In this sense, small culture formation is emerging and "always on the run … as we are always in the process of constructing and dealing with cultural realities" (Holliday 2013, p. 3).

The third domain: Particular Cultural Products represents the outcome of the cultural activity. Artefacts refer to the big C cultural artefacts that are commonly related to national or large culture, such as literature and art, and cultural practices, such as our routine and how we behave when eating. Statements about cultures are concerned with how we present ourselves and what we choose to call our cultures (or how we would like them to be), which is not necessarily a true representation of our behaviours.

2.6.2 Conceptualisation of Doctoral supervision as Small Culture

In this study, I used a small cultures approach as an analytical tool for conceptualising culture of doctoral supervision as a social activity with its own set of behaviours and recognisable rules and routines similar to other social settings such as schools and professional groups. The small cultures approach is significant considering that often the discussion about intercultural encounters between students and supervisors has brought with it a focus on the differences that are often framed within ethnic, national or international differences. Within this approach the intercultural encounters between students and supervisors are seen as "everyday business[es] of engaging with, and creating culture" (Holliday, 2013, p. 56) that are necessary for getting on with things. Moreover, the small cultures approach goes beyond essential cultural characteristics and instead focuses on the cohesive behaviours and shared values between supervisors and students from diverse backgrounds, thus avoiding the risk of overgeneralisation about their behaviours and norms.

From the small cultures approach, the intercultural encounter between supervisor and student involves the process of a small cultures formation in which both supervisor and student make meaning of the rules and establish norms and routines by drawing on their cultural residues (e.g. national, ethnic backgrounds) and life experiences (e.g. family, friends, networks, educational backgrounds). In other words, supervisors and students are seen as active recipients of cultural instructions as they are constantly working out the

rules to make sense of what they observe by drawing on their life experiences. This process also resonates with Holliday's (2017, p. 214) study of small doctoral groups at a British university, in which he found that: "… the small culture is not the PhD program, but the dynamic intercultural relationship which the PhD students form with it, which continues to change as they develop and innovate within this relationship". Drawing from the small cultures, in the study, I conceptualised doctoral supervision cultures as:

- dynamic and emerging, as there are complex forces at play with supervisors and students constantly move from one social grouping to another;
- temporary, as it exists for a limited time (three to eight years) and when supervisors and their students meet and interact; and
- on-going where its members (doctoral students and supervisors) make sense of the rules and establish routines in order to operate meaningfully within particular contexts for shared purposes.

Within the small cultures formation, I proposed that both supervisor and student engage in the day-to-day construction of culture, whereby they "plan, solve problems, get used to things and move from one group to another through sets of routines and habits" (Holliday, 2013, p. 56) in order to produce desirable goals or cultural practices. Cultural practices are referred to noticeable elements that represent the distinct qualities of particular cultural groups and form the main feature of the cultural identity of the cultural groups (Holliday, 2013, p.6). In the context of supervision, the expected cultural practices might involve thesis submission, journal publication and participation in conferences. Figure 2-4 below illustrates my conceptualisation of doctoral supervision cultures from a small cultures approach.

Cultural Traits

Dynamic, emerging, cohesive, contextualised, meaning-making process,

Social grouping

Small Cultures Formation

Making and re-making of cultures

Supervisor ⬌ Student

Cultural Residues & Life experiences

Cultural Residues & Life Experiences

Social Construction Process
e.g. Routinisation/ normalisation

Cultural Products

Goals
Visible
i)Product (e.g.thesis, articles)
ii) behaviours (e.g. punctuality, attending meetings
Invisible
Values and beliefs

Figure 2-3: My Conceptualisation of Doctoral Supervision Cultures from the Small Cultures Approach (Holliday, 2013)

2.6.3 The Host Culture Complex

In his earlier work, Holliday (1994, p. 14) proposed the host culture complex as a tool to explore the wider, macro picture of the different cultural dimensions and organise them in a schematic way. The host culture complex is a useful model to show how each of the cultural dimension interrelate with each other, as noted by Holliday (1994, p. 28) there is a "possibility that cultures can be any size from very large to very small, from a national or tribal culture to family culture". Holliday further adds that:

> … although the final focus, on what happens between people, is micro, these relationships can only be fully understood in terms of the wider, macro picture. … It is the attitudes that derived from relationships of status, role and authority brought are by students and teachers from outside the classroom that influence those aspects of classroom interaction about which we know least. (Holliday, 1994, p. 14)

Holliday (1999) originally used the host culture complex to investigate English language classroom culture. Recognising that "classroom is a microcosm which, for all its universal magisterial conventions, reflects in fundamental social terms the world that lies outside the window" (Holliday, 1994, p. 15, citing Bower, 1987, p. 8-9), it is important for teachers to identify the forces from outside the classroom which can help them understand what happens between people because "in classroom interaction there is a combination and

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variation of different and often conflicting social contexts for the people involved" (Holliday, 1994, p. 28). Holliday (1994) further suggested that "the classroom is part of a complex of interrelated and overlapping cultures of different dimensions" and situated in a host institution, within a host educational environment (p. 28). A host educational environment can refer to any type of local or international environment, including: students' peer and reference groups such as family members or other students; teachers' peer and reference groups such as professional colleagues or training; and materials and methodologies, such as courses, which influence the host institution and in turn the classroom (p. 16). In order to fully understand the complex relationships between the influences that form the cultural make-up of the classroom cultures, Holliday (1994) proposed that we need to look at how the classroom is connected to the world outside (p. 15). Figure 2-3 illustrates how these influences can be presented schematically.
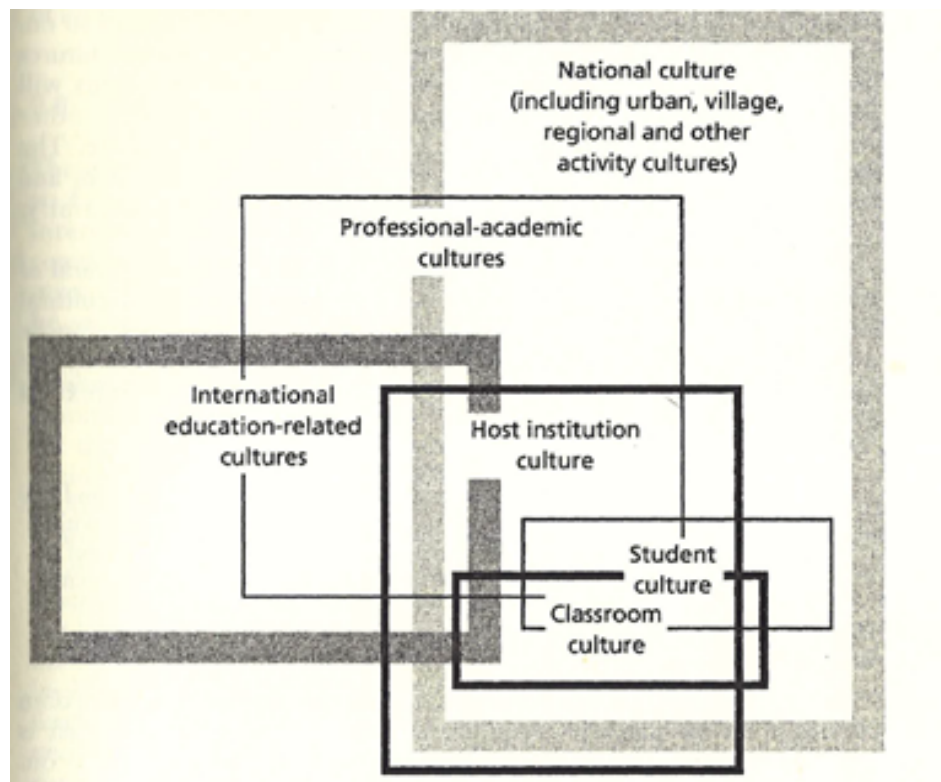
Figure 2-4: Host Culture Complex of Classroom Culture (Holliday, 1994, p. 29)

In the Figure 2-4, Holliday (1994, p. 29-30) illustrated how classroom cultures may be situated within five shaping influences, namely: national culture; professional-academic culture; international education-related culture; host institution culture, and; student

culture. The host culture complex illustrates that even though the classroom culture is mainly shaped by these cultural domains, the classroom culture is partly derived from outside the classroom:

> The classroom culture is not *completely* within the host institutional culture. Neither is host institution completely within the national culture and so on. This is because they are influenced by elements within other, outside cultures including international education cultures. Both the classroom and host institution cultures will be part of a larger educational system, which will also have a culture, which will itself be complex. (Holliday, 1994, p. 30)

Some studies indicated that doctoral supervision does not take place in a vacuum, between two minds – the supervisor' and student's - but rather involves more complex and multiple layers of social contexts: supervisors' cultures; students' cultures; interdisciplinary research cultures; university cultures, national cultures and community cultures (Manathunga, 2011; Deem and Brehony, 2000). In light of this, I utilised the host culture complex as a heuristic device to look at some of the possible influential forces within the contexts of doctoral supervision that may provide some insights into the make-up of doctoral supervision cultures. Moreover, I used the host culture complex to conceptualise how these forces may interrelate with one another in a schematic way.

Above all, I believe that the small cultures approach and host culture complex offered appropriate analytical lenses to explore the complexity of doctoral supervisory cultures in my research context. Extending these lenses to my study has provided insights into the micro view of the emerging small cultures of supervision, i.e. how doctoral students and supervisors interact and behave, and the macro view of the wider shaping influences, i.e. the broader cultural forces that may influence the behaviours of the students and supervisors. These insights can have implications for improving doctoral students' learning experiences and informing practitioners of the possible forces at work that can help improve their practice.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the conceptual background against which my study is situated. I began by discussing the main insights from previous studies that provided the starting point for further exploration for what constitutes culture in regard to doctoral supervision. Given the significance of the internationalisation of higher education and

Islamisation of Knowledge to my contexts, I then discussed how these two forces have been discussed in literature that has informed my thinking on doctoral supervisory cultures and shaping influences. I have also presented a review of studies on identity in doctoral educational settings. Although most of the studies are conducted in a Western higher institution context, I believe that the findings are valuable to my understanding of some aspects of doctoral student identity that may shape how students experience supervision. In the chapter, I have also provided an overview of the concept of culture in Intercultural Communication and higher education studies before proposing Holliday's (1999) small cultures approach as the basis for a cultural framework in my study of doctoral supervision. I have also presented host culture complex (1994) as heuristic means to look at the different forces that may influence the cultural make-up of doctoral supervision. In the following chapter, I will present my research design and its implementation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Overview

In the previous chapters, I have contextualised and conceptualised my study. In this chapter, I begin by outlining the research question that helped framed my study (Section 3.1) before presenting an overview of the philosophical ideas that underpin my research design (Section 3.2). Next, I describe the qualitative narrative inquiry as the research design (Section 3.3) before providing an overview of the data collection (Section 3.4) and analysis methods (Section 3.5) used in the study. I, then, address my ethical compliance and consideration (Section 3.6) before presenting a detailed account of the implementation of the design including the procedures of data generation (Section 3.7) and analysis (Section 3.8). Finally, I consider other important aspects of my study, namely: language diversity (Section 3.9); my researcher's reflexivity (Section 3.10) and trustworthiness (Section 3.11).

3.1 Research Questions

My study was framed by four research questions. In this section, I will provide the significant of these questions in guiding the inquiry of my study.

The first question - ***What are doctoral graduates' narratives of their doctoral supervision?*** - was formulated recognising that while doctoral students are central to the discussion of doctoral education, their voices are the least represented in the discussion of doctoral education (McAlpine and Norton, 2006; Golde, 2000). Moreover, McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) highlighted that the students' voices "have not been heard because their point of view are believed to be unimportant or difficult to access by those in power" (p. 10).

The second question - ***What are doctoral supervisors' narratives of their doctoral supervision?*** - was formulated to gain better insights into the experience of supervision from the supervisors' perspectives. Recognising that the practice of doctoral supervision will involve interpersonal relationships between supervisors and their students, I believe that the supervisors' voices also deserved to be heard. Moreover, narratives from the

supervisors will provide some illuminating insights into the experience of 'doing supervision' that will complement the students' experiences of 'being supervised.'

The third question - ***What are the key features of the small cultures of doctoral supervision?*** - was formulated to identify the main features of doctoral supervisory cultures as interpreted from the narrative analysis of the students' and supervisors' experiences using a small culture theoretical lens. Through the small cultures lens, I conceptualised cultures of doctoral supervision as emerging social processes whereby doctoral student and supervisor negotiated rules and established norms and values in order to complete supervisory tasks meaningfully. The answers to the question, I hope, will illuminate some insights into the shared supervisory behaviours, expectation and values that make up cultures of doctoral supervision regardless of race or nationality of the students and supervisors.

The fourth research question - ***What are the shaping influences of these emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision?*** - was formulated to explore the wider set of social forces that may shape the emerging cultures of doctoral supervision using a host culture complex model (Holliday, 1994). I used the host culture complex model to show the connection between doctoral supervision and the contexts in which the supervision was situated. The answers to the question provided some illuminating insights into some social contexts at work that may influence the building of doctoral supervisory cultures in internationalised and Islamised higher institutions such as the IIUM.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions Underpinning My Study

In choosing a good research design that will help me address the research questions formulated in the study, I found Creswell's (2014) discussion of a research framework useful to help a novice researcher like myself in planning my study. Following Creswell (2014, p. 34), I considered three main components that could help translate my approach to research into practice, namely; the philosophical worldview assumptions (or knowledge claims that a researcher brings to the study); the appropriate design or strategies of inquiry; and the specific procedures or methods of data collection and analysis. In this section, I will provide an overview of the philosophical assumptions that guided my study.

Creswell (2014) writes that researchers are guided by a certain philosophical worldview that will determine what they will learn and how they will learn. Following Guba (1990, p. 17) Creswell (2014, p. 35) refers the term worldview as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action." There are a number of worldviews within social research such as: Postpositivism; Transformative; Pragmatism; Constructivism; and Interpretivism. Each worldview contains important assumptions about the way in which the researchers think about their research process. In particular, these assumptions can influence how the researchers understand, namely: the basis of their knowledge (epistemology); the perceived relative importance of reality (ontology); and the relationship between the researcher and the researched (axiology). For example, the researchers within the Postpositivist worldview would be more akin to adopt the position of the natural scientists and prefer to work "with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists" (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 32).

While the researcher is encouraged to explore different philosophical worldviews or paradigms as a way of understanding the range of approaches available, some authors argue that he/she should not be forced to make an ideological commitment to a particular tradition, instead the researcher should be encouraged to become "neither ostriches nor fighting cocks" (Hammersley (2004: 557) and utilise the different worldviews as a tool to guide them, as noted by Silverman (2011, p. 24–25):

> At best, they are pedagogic devices for students to obtain a first grip on a difficult field – they help us learn the jargon. At worst, they are excuses for not thinking, which assemble groups of sociologists into 'armed camps', unwilling to learn from one another.

Following this line of reasoning, I set out below a brief summary of how I positioned my study in regard to the Islamic worldview before providing the philosophical parameters of the study, namely: qualitative, social constructivism and interpretivism. I hope by making transparent the positioning and philosophical ideas that underpin my study will "help clarify the process of inquiry and provide insight into the assumptions on which it conceptually rests" (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004, p.8).

3.2.1 Positioning My Study

Jackson (2013, p. 50) writes that "every piece of research, every researcher and every context is, in some ways, different and a host of factors contribute to interpretation of phenomena". Furthermore, the researcher's experience and his/her relationship to knowledge, as well as the process by which the knowledge is developed in the real world also contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied (Saunders et, al., 2009). Thus, it is important for a researcher, like myself, to make an informed decision regarding my research design that will not only address and answer my research questions but will help strengthen the credibility of the research (Sikes, 2004) and "secure the quality of the research produced" (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p.1).

Islamic Worldview

Recognising that, as a researcher, my Muslim identity might have an important bearing on my understanding of knowledge and the doctoral supervisory phenomenon and considering the Islamic background of my participants and the context in which my study is situated, I will briefly outline some of the main tenets of Islamic philosophy and its engagement with the knowledge system.

In the eyes of Muslims, Islam encapsulates all aspects of human life and provides a set of principles by which to live, including human behaviours, social and economic aspects and the knowledge system, as noted by Sardar (1991, p.223):

> Islam is a religion, culture, tradition and civilization all at once … Islam is best appreciated as a worldview: as a way of looking at and shaping the world; as a system of knowing, being and doing.

Islamic worldview or epistemology is derived from its theological sources: The Qur'an, which is God's word as transmitted to his Prophet, Muhammad [PBUH]) and the *Sunnah*, a term that refers to the Prophet's acts and saying that are transmitted through hadith (Ali and Leaman, 2008). Inati (1998, p.384, cited in Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 236) posited that the highest source of knowledge in Islam is revelation: "Knowledge is the intellect's grasp of the immaterial forms, the pure essences or universals that constitute the natures of things," and human senses only "prepare the way for the reception of the immaterial forms, which then provided by the divine world".

Most Muslim authors suggested that there are some aspects of Islamic worldview that are distinctively different from the dominant epistemology of Western science (Wan Mohd Nor, 1989). One of the aspects is the notion of knowledge. From an Islamic perspective, Western epistemology is considered as secular in character because it "claims for men [sic] the right to create values and legislate rules for collective behaviour as well as the authority to define how live is to be lived" (Euben, 1997, p. 35, cited in Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 237). Most of the Western worldviews believe that knowledge and meaning are produced through individuals "experience of physical, sensible existence and on the material aspects of life" and not informed by any "transcendent authority" (Adi Setia, 2010, p.5).

Nevertheless, some studies by Muslim authors, such as Fakhry (2004), Inati (1998) and Nasr and Leaman (1996) suggested that Islam has a broad and "sophisticated philosophical engagement with epistemology" (Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 235). This is evident from extensive contribution made by Islamic scholars in numerous fields, such as; mathematics, economics, engineering and geography. Knowledge or 'ilm' in Islamic epistemology has "a broader meaning and encompasses a unity of theory, action and learning" (Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012). In different schools of Islamic philosophy, the notion of knowledge is extended to include concepts such as; "al-ilm-al-huduri" (presential knowledge) and "al-ilm al-husuli" (representative knowledge) (Yazdi, 1992, cited in Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 236).

Nasr and Leaman (1996, cited in Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 236) further noted that there are other faculties within the Islamic worldview that represent a hierarchy of system, from the sensual to the spiritual knowledge, namely: "al-aql" (reason and intellect); "firasah" (intuition that is generated by reason and intellect); and "ma'rifah" (knowledge of the heart that is generated by "qalb", a function of the heart that transcends the natural world into the heavenly world). These faculties show that humans are capable of "transcending the dualism between mind or body and reasons or emotions" (Ul-Haq and Westwood, 2012, p. 237). In a similar vein, Aness (2004, p. 135) posited that Islam is a holistic philosophy because it includes different ways of knowing, (i.e. intellectual, intuition, spiritual), but through the notion of *"al-tawhid"* (immanent unity). Aness then suggested that although "religion and science are viewed as two different epistemic categories in the Western mind; they are in the Muslim eye, part of a continuum

complementing each other" (Aness, 2004, p. 135). When positioning my study, I was also influenced by Al-Attas's (1995, p. 1-2) explanation of Islamic Worldview:

> The worldview of Islam is the vision of reality and truth that reveals to the Muslim mind what existence is all about. It is a metaphysical survey of the visible as well as the invisible worlds, including the perspective of life as a whole. In this holistic perspective of life, the *dunya*-aspect of life is thoroughly integrated into the *akhirah*-aspect of life, and in which the *akhirah*-aspect of life has ultimate and final significance.

Initially, incorporating my Islamic point of view with Western-oriented philosophical assumptions in my research posed a challenge for me because both Islamic worldview and Western-oriented philosophy deal with the concept of worldview but from different stances. From the Islamic point of view, worldview is grounded in the fundamentals of the teachings of the Qur'anic revelations and the 'sunnah' of the Prophet (PBUH). Islamic worldview is seen as a revealed guidance that rests on truth and facts, and not mere assumptions (Berghout, 2006). In contrast, from Western-oriented epistemological standpoint, worldview is perceived as a result of human intellect and historical developments. In this respect, worldview becomes "more as assumptions and personal views" which in turn "leads to some sort of movable worldview which is subject to change according to circumstances" (Berghout, 2006, p. 119). However, further reading of the work of some Islamic scholars have provided me with some affirmations in relation to the positioning of my study within Islamic and Western-oriented worldviews, which gave me the confidence to carry on with my research. For instance, Berghout (2006, p. 135) stated that Islamic worldview "in human context involves both the unchangeable and preserved teachings of Islam and the processes of '*ijtihad*' and interpretations that vary from one scholar to another and from one period to another". This statement has taught me that as a Muslim researcher, my outlook of the world is not only composed of Islamic revealed knowledge but knowledge gained from the realities and circumstances of different people, cultures and situations. Moreover, Abu Sulayman's (1989) work on Islamisation of Knowledge has taught me to recognise the significance of Western-oriented philosophies as part of our achievement as humankind. Instead of rejecting them, I am encouraged to evaluate their compatibility with the Islamic views. Abu Sulayman (1989, p. 85) explained that:

Through the "Islamization of knowledge" the Ummah is cognizant of the need and importance of the scientific and cultural achievements that the human race has inherited and achieved. However, these must be thoroughly examined and critically checked in the light of Islam, its comprehensive norms, its guidance and its ideals. (p. 85)

In the light of above discussion, in the study, I echoed Ul-Haq and Westwood's (2012, p. 236) notion that as a researcher, I should look at the differences between both Western-oriented philosophy and my Islamic belief as offering some "possibilities both as alternative and complement" to approaching knowledge. My positioning of the study also resonated with Narina A. Samah's (2013) discussion of her own teaching practice at one of the universities in Malaysia. In the discussion, she noted a conflict between her Islamic and postmodernism worldviews. As a Muslim practitioner, she upholds the fundamental Islamic worldview that knowledge and way of knowing derives from God, which is in contrast with the postmodernist views that hold "such objectivist reality, absolute forms of knowledge and universal truth are impossible" (p. 92). She concluded that instead of focusing on the contradictory outlook of both worldviews she decided to focus on the constructive quality that these worldviews could bring to her study.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

A qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. Creswell (2014, p. 4) describes qualitative research in detail as follows:

> Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.

Qualitative approach represents 'a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration' (Creswell, 1998, p.9). It also focuses on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Creswell (1998, p. 9) writes that qualitative researchers construct holistic picture, use a variety of empirical

materials, such as interview, and present comprehensive evidence in a natural setting (p. 15).

Following this line of reasoning, I believe that my study, ideally, fell within a qualitative research. As a qualitative researcher I acknowledged the complexity of human interpretation of the social world and focused on understanding the experiences of supervision from the participants' point of view by seeking as much detailed information as possible about their thoughts, and values as well as their contexts. I also placed emphasis on the value of engaging with the study inductively to capture a richer and holistic understanding of the individual participants' experiences of supervision and the contexts in which their experiences are situated by using methods that will address and capture the complexity of their experiences.

3.2.3 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is closely associated with theories of knowledge in Sociology and Communication studies that assume knowledge and understandings of the world are developed jointly by individuals. The philosophical worldview of social constructivist came from works such as Vygotsky (1978) who suggested that cognitive growth occurs first on a social level, and then within the individuals. Knowledge and meanings are constructed through individual interactions with other people and their surroundings before being internalised (Roth, 2000). Social constructivism also places emphasis and value on understanding culture and context as basis for knowledge construction (Derry, 1999). It assumes that reality and knowledge is socially constructed within a context that is mediated by and situated in history, culture and language (Burr, 1995). Following Crotty, (1998) there are some characteristics of social constructivist researchers. First, recognising that individuals construct meanings by engaging with the world that they live in, researchers are more inclined to use open-ended questions to encourage the participants to share their view. Second, acknowledging that individual's meaning-making process is situated within his/her social and historical contexts, the researchers will seek to understand the context of the participants. In the process of understanding the contexts, the researchers recognise that the meanings constructed are in some ways influenced by the researchers' interpretation. Third, as meanings are constructed through individual's interaction with other people and social activities, the research process is largely inductive and requires the researchers to generate meanings from the data.

In this view, my study was situated broadly in the social constructivist worldview because I recognised that each participant has a unique experience and that his/her own way of making sense of the world "is as valid and worthy respect as any other" (Crotty, p. 58). As a social constructivist researcher I acknowledged that the meanings ascribed to the participant's experience of supervision are subjective and complex and situated within historical and cultural contexts. I also recognised that the participants construct knowledge and meanings through their interactions with other people (i.e. supervisors, peers, students) and engagement with the world they live.

3.2.4 Interpretivism

Interpretivism holds that knowledge and meanings are acts of interpretation. It is based on the premise that "to understand the world of meaning, one must interpret it" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Therefore, the interpretivist views reality as subjective and constructed by individual (Lather, 2006). Recognising that all individuals living the experience construct their own realities, and assuming that assuming that the individuals do not necessarily shared the exact experience, the interpretivist researchers then seek to "watch, listen, record and examine" those differing constructions (Schwandt, 1994, p. 119). While interpretivist values individual experiences, it also places emphasis on the value of studying 'lived experiences' to understand "the culturally-derived and historically-situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty,1998, p. 67). The interpretivist view comes from the work of Wilhelm Dilthey's writing (during the 1860s– 70s) that proposed the importance of researching people's lived experiences. Through lived experiences, the researchers can explore the social and historical contexts of the people being studied and focus on their meanings and interpretations. The researchers also should be aware of their lived experiences and the meanings they bring into the interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Schwandt, 1994, p. 131).

Following this line of reasoning, my study was situated broadly within the interpretivist worldview as I sought to understand and interpret the meanings in the participants' behaviours, values and attitudes that are time and culturally bound (Neuman, 2000). I recognised that since the participants interpret their experiences from different vantage points of their lives, their interpretation will yield different understanding. I also understood that my researcher's interpretation may play a role to the understanding of the phenomenon researched.

3.3 Strategy of Inquiry

In this section, I will focus on Creswell's (2014) second component of a good research design, which is choosing an appropriate strategy of inquiry. A strategy of inquiry refers to a set of skills and procedures that researchers utilise as they put knowledge claims into practice. It involves procedures, methodology or a plan of action that connects research methods to research insights, which in turn will influence the choice and use of methods in research design (Creswell, 2014; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In the following sub-sections I discuss the relevance of narrative inquiry as my research strategy to address the objectives of my study.

3.3.1 Narrative Inquiry: An Overview

One of the influential works on narrative comes from Bruner's (1986) modes of thoughts of ordering experience: the paradigmatic mode and narrative mode. The paradigmatic mode is associated with the development of rational thinking that research is a way of producing and distributing knowledge. The narrative mode of thought is more deeply related to everyday thinking, and of telling stories about past events, which both represent "universal human activity" (Riessman, 1993, p. 3) and "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). The beginning of the 1980s witnessed a 'narrative turn' in social science that marked a significant shift in understanding and approaching narrative as an alternative approach to investigate stories to present a view of phenomena (e.g. Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993; Lieblich et al, 1998; Barkhuizen et. al., 2014). The concept of narrative has been discussed under different headings in other fields, such as narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), narrative analysis (Polkinghorne 1988), and life story (Cole and Knowles, 2001) among others. There are a wide range of definitions concerning the precise definition of what is meant by narrative itself, as well as of methods and theoretical underpinnings. For example, Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 477) present narrative as a methodology to study experience:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use

narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study.

Creswell (2003 p. 15) presents a broad definition of narrative as:

> A form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology. In the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative.

In literature, a range of narrative strategies have been proposed to study and represent people's lives based on their stories. For example, Labov (1972) proposed a six-part model: abstract; orientation; complicating action, result; evaluation; and coda. The model offers structural analyses of specific oral personal event narratives. Mishler (1995, p. 87-123) proposed a three-part typology for classifying narrative studies according to the focal point of the research: reference and temporal order identifies the relationship between narrated events and 'real-time' events; textual coherence and structure refer to the linguistic and narrative strategies for the 'construction of the story,' and; narrative function sets the story in a wider social and cultural context. The typology summarises the key features of narrative research as a 'process' and establishes the importance of 'form and function' in narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 50) suggested a framework that consists of three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); and place (situation).

Presently, research on narrative has been conducted in diverse fields. In the field of Psychology, stories or oral accounts of individuals about their lives and experiences are the best ways of learning about individuals' inner worlds (Lieblich et. al., 1998, p. 7). In the field of Education, narrative is valuable to the study of teachers' professional lives as it helps teachers to understand their own teaching and learning processes (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) and thus can offer a lens that is suited to address issues of the complexity within the higher education context (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Narrative research in educational settings is much more than seeking out and hearing a story, as Bruner (1990, p. 115) noted, "people narratize their experience of the world and their own role in it". It is through people's stories that we can understand their views and how experiences have shaped those views. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that because "experience

happens narratively, "and "narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experiences," "educational experiences should be studied narratively" (p. 19). Above all, in my study I used narrative as it provided a lens through which I could explore the complexities and map out the relationship between selfhood, identity and the social world. It was also a heuristic device to examine the interplay between the past and present construction of self and is concerned with uncovering an emic perspective on the life course through the performance of a narrative (Bruner 2004; Lieblich et. al., 1998; Roberts, 2002; Mishler, 1995).

Some existing studies on doctoral education have adopted a narrative inquiry for several reasons. Firstly, it offers a systematic way of exploring identity. In talking about their experiences, individuals reveal who they are. In this sense, the stories that they tell about themselves reflect the identities they ascribe to themselves and the ways they wish to be seen (Taylor, 2008, p. 29). For example, Taylor (2011) adopted the narrative inquiry in a study to investigate the use of digital video in developing doctoral students' research skills. The study proposed that there are many advantages of using narrative in doctoral learning research:

> Narrative understandings of the doctoral journey ... facilitate greater attention to the affective, emotional, cultural and social dimensions of the journey; provide a means to consider how these personal dimensions intersect with institutional contexts; and make a claim for a better understanding of the relations between narrative, biography, academic identity and the university. (Taylor, 2011, p. 443)

Moreover, as narrative inquiry is well suited to exploring processes which unfold over time, it provides a means to access complex and elaborate accounts of participants' lived experiences and recognise that different meanings may be attributed to the same events at different times and thus participants' narratives are not accepted as the objective truth, but as reflections of their view of reality at that time (Murray, 2009; Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, narrative inquiry has the potential to access sensitive issues that are not accessible by traditional approaches. For example, although surveys provide valuable information about doctoral students' demographics and their characteristics, they are unable to 'represent the particularity of the doctoral experience' (Pearson, et al., 2008, p. 90). Narrative, however, involves careful listening to the individuals' lived experience, without "resorting to personality trait theory or learning style theory," which tend "to fix

students into pre-set categories and hence foreclose a genuine openness to student diversity" (Petersen, 2014, p. 833). In this regard, a narrative inquiry captures the 'particularity' of individual lives and records their perspectives on their experiences.

Following this line of reasoning and the philosophical assumptions underpinning my study, I have chosen narrative as the strategy of inquiry for several reasons. First, narrative inquiry is broadly situated within a qualitative enquiry as it captures the complexity of meaning within stories. It focuses on the individual's process of meaning-making through examination of the story and its linguistic and structural properties (Riessman, 1993). It offers the potential to address the ambiguity and complexity of the participants' thoughts, feelings and values, and the contexts in which the participants' experiences are situated. Following the assumption that experience happens narratively, I believe doctoral supervision - like any other educational experience - should be studied in a similar manner (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Moreover, narrative inquiry gives importance to human interpretation in storytelling and views stories as subjective, constructed, rhetorical, and interpretive (Riessman, 1993). Narrative inquiry presumes that stories provide a holistic context that allows individuals to reflect and reconstruct their personal, historical, and cultural experiences (Gill, 2001). Narrative understanding of doctoral supervision from the perspectives of the doctoral students and supervisors could provide illuminating insights into their personal and professional experiences and how they make sense of their identities from those experiences.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry views life stories as the product of social construction (Linde, 1993). As narratives are generally recollections of past events, they act as a portal into the history of an individual or an institution and past personal or shared opinions as well as into the present scenario in higher education (Cortazzi, 2014). Moreover, narrative inquiry highlights the teaching and learning qualities set within the individual students' and supervisors' knowledge, culture, behaviours, experience and beliefs, which would be impossible to convey in other ways (Cortazzi, 2014, p. 9). Finally, narrative inquiry has the capacity to give voice to students and supervisors by empowering them to recount their experiences and share perspectives on supervision practice in their own words. Through narrative, these voices could be made public because it takes place in a meaningful context; it conveys expression in storytelling traditions; it contains moral lessons; and it

expresses criticism in a socially acceptable way (Elbaz, 1990, p. 32). The figure below illustrates the relevance of narrative approach as a strategy of inquiry in my study.

Figure 3-1: Narrative as Strategy of Inquiry

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

By choosing narrative as a strategy of inquiry I then considered Creswell's (2014) third component of a good research, whereby I chose appropriate methods that would generate rich data about the participants' experiences of supervision. In a narrative-based research, it is common for researchers to adopt multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, journals, images, observations, or reports (Barkhuizen, 2014). In a narrative research, where multiple forms of data are utilised, they are represented as a part of the researcher's interpretation of the participants' personal lives as well as the participants' wider contextual situations (Cole and Knowles, 2001, p.13 citing Roulston, 2010, p. 25).

In my study, the data were gathered from various sources: document review, online survey and narrative interviewing. Table 3-1 summarises the data collection methods. The details of each method are presented in the subsequent sections.

Data Collection Method	Time Frame
Document Review	June 2015–September 2015
Online Survey (for recruitment purposes)	September 2015
Narrative Interviews	October 2015– January 2016

Table 3-1: Summary of Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Document Review

Merriam (1988) notes, "documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights that are relevant to the research problem" (p.150). Therefore, in my study I conducted a document review in the early stages of the study to better understand the participants' supervisory experiences in relation to the IIUM and the Malaysian higher education contexts. In the study, I reviewed the relevant policies and reports of higher education issued by the MoHE. I also reviewed the policies and documents from the IIUM, including the postgraduate program, code of supervision and supervisor's Key Ihsan Indicators. Reviewing these documents not only provided the contexts within which the doctoral supervision practice operated, but it also prepared me for the interviews with the participants.

3.4.2 Online Survey

In qualitative research, a survey is used to "observe social interactions or communications between persons in given populations, but only characteristics of the individual members involved" (Jansen, 2010, p. 2). In essence, it captures certain characteristics, attitudes or beliefs that people have. Over the last decade, online surveys have become an increasingly popular alternative research instrument because of a relatively low cost, widespread coverage and prompt results. Many studies showed that participants were more likely to respond through online surveys not only because they could complete the surveys in their own time, but they could also remain anonymous, especially when commenting on sensitive issues (Holmes, 2006; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Sarantakos, 1993). In my study, an online survey was chosen not only as a more convenient and purposeful way to recruit my doctoral student participants and to gain an overview of their demographic information, but as a tool to contextualise their supervisory processes and the quality of their supervisory experience. In the study, I constructed the online survey using Google

Docs, a Web-based survey tool (see example of the online survey in Appendix 6). The questionnaire in the survey consisted of items that I purposefully constructed to gain contextual information of some of the issues related to the students' supervision. The online questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section 1 is a set of multiple-choice questions related to demographic information; and Section 2 consists of scale and open-ended questions related to supervisory practices. Table 3-1 below provides an overview of the questionnaire items:

Section 1: Demographic Information Items

Questionnaire items	Description
Gender	Male; Female
Nationality	Home; International
PhD program status	Full-time; Part-time
PhD program mode	By Coursework and Research; By Research only
Student finance status	Sponsored; Self-funded
PhD completion status	Graduated on Time; Graduated on Extension

Section 2: Doctoral Supervisory Context Items

Questionnaire items	Description
Supervisory arrangements	Types of supervisory arrangements and supervisor background
Supervisory practices	Meeting frequency
Supervisory agenda	PhD Development; Researcher Development; Academic Development; Non-Academic (personal etc.)
Supervisory overall experiences	Choices: Poor, Average, Good, Excellent
Suggestions for better supervision	Ways to improve supervisory experiences for students

Table 3-2: Description of Questionnaire Items

3.4.3 Narrative interviewing

In narrative research, the interview is the most frequently chosen method to gather stories or narratives. The shape and form of the interview is often determined by the approach adopted to frame the particular narrative study and will require attention to the complexities of talk, which is characterised as multilayered, contextual and of aural qualities (Wiles et al., 2005). With this in mind, for my own study I adopted Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) and Josselson's (2013) narrative interview strategies in developing the interview schedule. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000, p. 60) proposed four fundamental

stages of narrative interview procedures that can be utilised to create a non-intimidating environment and to elicit stories from participants. These stages are initiation, main narration, questioning phase and concluding talk. In the study, I used these stages to frame the overall process of the interview protocol. The table below illustrates the four phases of the narrative interview.

Phases	Rules
Preparation	Exploring the field
	Formulating exmanent questions
1 Initiation	Formulating initial topic for narration
	Using visual aids
2 Main narration	No interruptions
	Only non-verbal encouragement to continue story-telling
	Wait for the coda
3 Questioning phase	Only 'What happend then?'
	No opinion and attitude questions
	No arguing on contradictions
	No why-questions
	Exmanent into immanent questions
4 Concluding talk	Stop recording
	Why-questions allowed
	Memory protocol immediately after interview

Table 3-3: Phases of Narrative Interview (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 1996)

In the study, I also adopted Josselson's (2013, p. 40) types of questions in narrative interview: the Big question - research question; the Recruitment questions - the study description questions aimed at engaging the participants with the purpose of the research; the Little q questions - starting point questions to elicit responses from the participants and start the narration; and the Pocket questions - secondary questions aimed at knowing more about the participant or the experience of interest. In the study, I utilised these types of question to stimulate the story telling process between the participants and myself. The table below illustrates an example of a list of questions used in the narrative interviewing in the study:

```
a) The Big Question
   e.g. What are doctoral graduates' narratives of their doctoral supervision?

b) The Recruitment Questions
   e.g. You have recently completed your PhD. Can you please tell me your
      supervisory experience?

c) The Little 'q' Questions
   e.g. Tell me about the meeting with your supervisor?

d) The Pocket Questions
   e.g. How did you feel about that?
      Can you tell me more about that incident?
```

Table 3-4: Example of Question in the Interview Schedule (Josselson, 2013)

Within this approach, there was a minimum structuring from my part as the interviewer, and thus the participants, in telling their stories, took responsibility for their meaning-making process (Chase, 1995). In this light, I treated the participants not as "passive vessels of answers" but as "subjects who respond to, or are affected by, the matters under consideration that should be 'activated' to relate the stories to the overarching focus of the study" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 150). In this sense, I was gaining insights of doctoral supervision experience from the perspective of those who lived it through the process of storytelling (Polkinghorne, 1988).

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

In this section, I will present the analytical methods and Procedures that I have undertaken to address the complexity of the data generated.

3.5.1 Holistic-Content Approach to Narrative Analysis

Despite the growing interest in narrative across social and educational research, there is yet a standard approach that can offer a clear definition for methods used to represent narrative analysis (Mishler, 1995; Elliot, 2008). Riessman noted (1993, p. 17) that narrative lacks a "binding theory", thus, diverse conceptualisation of narrative results in a range of strategies proposed to interpret and represent individuals' lives based upon their individual accounts. One of the strategies to narrative analysis is proposed by Polkinghorne (1995) who differentiates between two types of narrative inquiry studies: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. While analysis of narratives refers to studies whose data consist of

stories but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories, narrative analysis refers to studies whose data consist of action, events and happening but whose analysis produces stories (Polkinghorne, 1995, cited in Barkhuizen, 2013: 74). With this in mind, I believe that the nature of the inquiry of this study is well situated within the analysis of narratives in which I intended to identify and understand the shaping influences of doctoral supervisory cultures from the participants' stories of supervisory experiences.

In a narrative-based research, it is also important to distinguish the types of data produced: narrative data and non-narrative data. Narrative data refers to data that is already in the form of story, for instance life history or memoirs or completed narrative frames; and non-narrative refers to data that is not yet in the form of story, for instance interview transcripts, diaries, journals or multimodal texts (Barkhuizen, 2013). Although the distinction is not always clear, it is important to consider how researchers want to look at the data. With this in mind, in this study I chose to treat the data from the interviews as sources of narrative data. In the study, I adopted Lieblich et al.'s (1998) typology of a two-by-two model of narrative analysis. This model separates the interpretation and analysis of narrative according to four approaches: Holistic-Content, Holistic-Form, Categorical-Content; and Categorical-Form. Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 479) propose that "each approach is more suitable for some purposes than for others" and that "each of which a researcher would use to understand a particular aspect of meaning". The following figure illustrates the two-by-two model.

Holistic-Content (Focusing on the explicit and implicit meaning of the content)	Holistic-Form (Focusing on the structure of the story)
Categorical-Content (Breaking the content into unit of thematic analysis)	Categorical-Form (Breaking the form into unit of linguistics)

Table 3-5: Narrative Analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998)

Drawing on this typology, I utilised the holistic-content approach as my data analysis method as a useful analytical tool to explore the students' and supervisors' supervisory experiences within their narratives. The approach involves identifying a central theme for the whole narrative and explores how a specific segment of the narrative can shed light on the story as a whole. By adopting a holistic-content approach to my analysis, I was able to establish links and associations within the participants' narratives while preserving the essence of the individual participants' stories of supervision.

3.5.2 Using the Small Culture and Host Culture Complex as a Cultural Framework

When interpreting cultures of doctoral supervision within the data analysis, I used Holliday's small cultures approach (1999, p. 240), in which culture is referred to as small culture to present "a different paradigm through which to look at social grouping". According to Holliday (1999), a social grouping can be said to exhibit small culture when "there is a discernible set of behaviours and understandings connected with group cohesion' (p. 248). Following Holliday, I viewed small cultures of doctoral supervision as emerging, dynamic, ongoing group processes in which supervisors and students come together, make sense of the rules and establish norms and values in order to operate meaningfully. To aid my understanding of the complex elements in the formation of small cultures of doctoral supervision, I employed a host culture complex (Holliday, 1994, p. 13) as a heuristic means to look at the macro aspects of the social context of doctoral supervision that includes the potential wider societal and institutional shaping influences. In this study, my interpretation of the narrative analysis aims to bring to the fore the key features of doctoral supervision as small cultures and social forces that may shape the cultural make up of doctoral supervision cultures.

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Procedures

To undertake this study, I understand that I have to safeguard my participants' privacy, the integrity of The University of Manchester as well as the IIUM throughout the research process. To this end, I have strictly adhered to the ethical guidance for educational research from The Manchester University Research Ethics committee (UREC) and British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Prior to conducting my research, in compliance with the University of Manchester's ethics regulations, I completed the UREC application form together with Participant Information Sheet for students (see Appendix 7)

Participant Information Sheet for supervisors (see Appendix 8) and consent form (see Appendix 9) that I adapted for my study. I then submitted these documents for approval in May 2015. Apart from the documents, I have also complied with the Data Protection Act (1998), BERA and The University of Manchester Institute of Education data protection policy. Data collected during this study were stored in password-protected laptop computer and the University of Manchester's secure computer network, which is password protected and accessible only by me. Data on digital voice recorders, USB sticks, printed documents and handwritten documents were stored in a locked cupboard either at my university office or in my personal study room, accessible only by me. In the instances where I needed advice, I would share the anonymised version of the data with my supervisors. Apart from that, all data will be held for five years after collection and then destroyed.

In this study, because I intended to recruit some students who had completed their doctorate at IIUM, so I needed access to the doctoral students' database. I achieved this by emailing the designated officer from the Centre for Postgraduate Studies (CPS) and requested permission. Upon receiving permission from the CPS, I started to contact my potential participants. From the very beginning of my study, I was transparent when informing the participants about the nature of my research, the research interests and what contribution that I expected from them.

As the focus of this study is on the supervisory experiences of a number of doctoral graduates and doctoral supervisors, it is possible that participants would be identifiable by their colleagues after their results had been published. Therefore, to safeguard their reputation, unless participants directed me otherwise, I used pseudonyms to obscure the details that might lead to their identification. In addition, throughout the research process I asked participants to anonymise any references to individual students or supervisors, and I also kept data from each individual participant confidential and would not share it with others participating in the study. I also informed participants of the limits of confidentiality. Moreover, when presenting the narrative data in the thesis, I decided not to provide the raw transcripts of my participants as most of the participants voiced concern over the risk of being identified by their supervisors or colleagues. Instead, I included sections of their restoried narratives in the methodological and analytical chapters. I believe that the decision was necessary to safeguard the participants' privacy.

As my study required participants to talk about their experiences of doctoral supervision, including potentially distressing aspects of those experiences, I took the responsibility to monitor them during the research process with regard to any indications of such distress. In the event that they would exhibit any signs of or report distress, I would pause the process in order to remind them that they could withdraw at any time without giving a reason and at no detriment to them. Should any issues arise that could not be resolved satisfactorily, I would stop the interview and also inform them how to get support from the Counseling Services Centre at the IIUM. When conducting the interviews, I also made sure that sessions were conducted in a proper and safe environment at a mutually convenient time to avoid distraction or interruption to the participants' daily routine.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

In the study, I carried out the data collection process over a period of four months. The data collection process involved two phases. The first phase involved recruiting participants from the two social science faculties of the IIUM. In the first phase of the data collection, I made use of an online survey to obtain an overview of the doctoral student participants' demographics and an overview of their experiences of doctoral supervision. In the second phase of the data collection, I conducted narrative interviews with the participants from the doctoral student group and doctoral supervisor group. By utilising these two instruments I was able to gather the participants' perceptions and experiences, and then re-tell the story from the participants' perspective. In this section, I present the procedures of data collection. The figure below summarises the process that I undertook during the period of data collection.
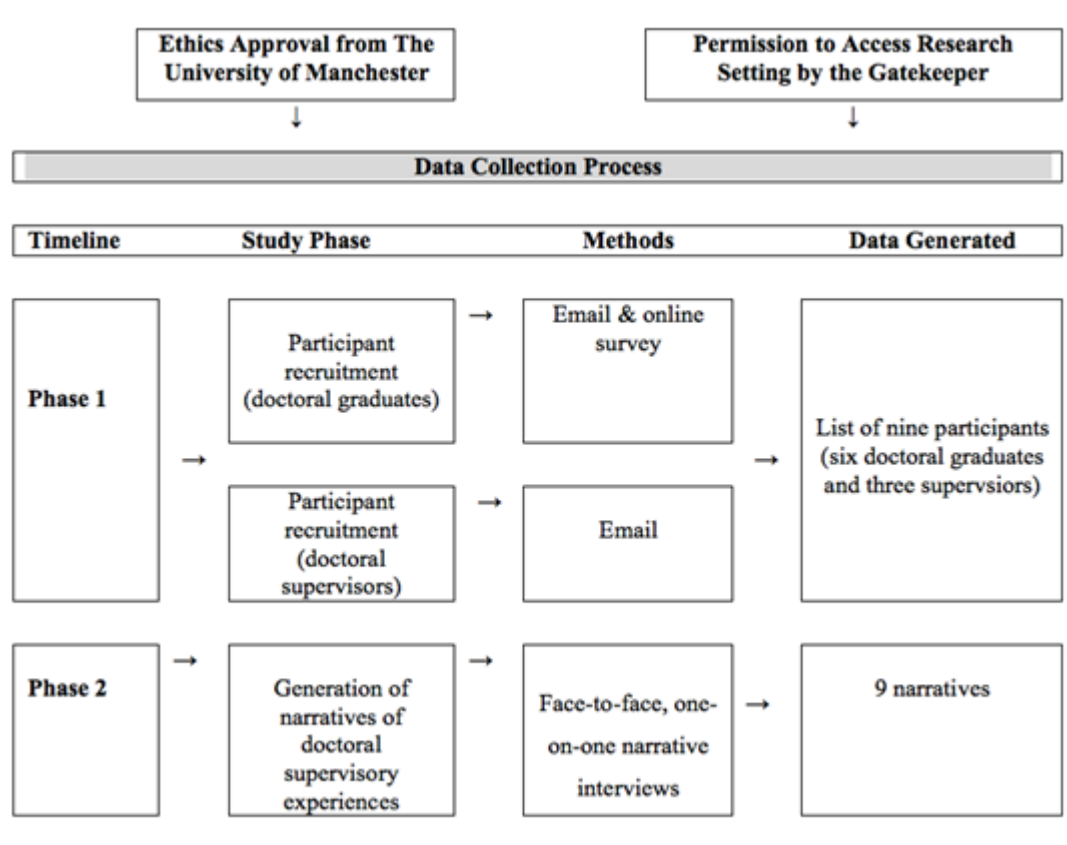
Figure 3-2: The Process of Data Collection

3.7.1 Phase One: Recruiting the Participants

In the study, I aimed to recruit six to eight recent doctoral students and two to four doctoral supervisors in order to provide a large enough sample to represent some range of supervision experiences, but small enough to allow an in-depth analysis of those experiences. In this sense, my focus was purposive rather that representative. In this section I present the recruitment rationales and procedures for doctoral students and doctoral supervisors.

i) Doctoral students

Rationale

In the study, the purpose of the recruitment process was to select a pool of recently completed doctoral students -at least two years prior to the interview- from faculty 1 and 2. The decision to recruit recently completed doctoral students – rather than current doctoral students at earlier stages of their studies - is informed by my ethical consideration. One of the main ethical principles of a researcher is his/her responsibility to minimise potential

harm. The British Educational Research Association (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012) suggests that the term harm "could include not just consequences for the people being studied (e.g. financial, reputational) but for others too, and even for any researchers investigating the same setting or people in the future". Given that the current students may have an on-going relationship with their supervisors, talking about their experiences might interfere or alter their outlook on the ongoing experiences of supervision and their relationship with supervisors that could affect their progress. Therefore, by recruiting the students who have completed their doctorates, I can minimise or avoid those potential risks.

Procedures

In the participant recruitment process, I identified potential doctoral students from the postgraduate database provided by the university. The database consists of information such as students' faculties, country of origin, year of studies, mode of studies and email addresses. The recruitment selection was based on the following criteria in order to capture some range of supervisory experiences.

- Male or Female;
- PhD traditional modes: by Research or by Coursework
- Full-time or part-time;
- Home or International;
- Graduated at least two years prior to the interview;
- Graduated on time and graduated on time extension; and
- Willing to spend time in one-on-one interview sessions.

I began by randomly emailing the first ten potential participants the background of my study and asked for their interest to participate (see Appendix 10 for a sample of the email). In the first round of selection I received two positive responses. However, one of the respondents decided to withdraw as he was leaving Malaysia to go back to his home country. Due to the poor response, I continued with the second round of selection by emailing another ten potential participants. Unfortunately, after two weeks I had received only two positive responses.

Undeterred by the setbacks, I decided to recruit prospective participants using the snowball technique. Snowball is a useful technique which takes advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts for finding research subjects (Thomson, 1997; Vogt, 1999). In the study, I utilised the technique by asking the existing participants to share details of my study with others who fit the criteria and would be interested to share their experiences. As a result, I was introduced to five prospective participants. Interestingly, three of the participants were originally in my emailing list but they never responded. From our conversation, I found that one of the reasons why I could not get through to them was due to invalid email addresses. Another reason, according to some of the participants, was that they were not comfortable talking about their experiences to an unfamiliar figure. However, after I was introduced and vouched for by the existing participants, they had a change of heart and agreed to join the study. Coming from a similar culture, I understand why it is hard for some individuals to open up and how important it is for myself as a researcher to establish some rapport with my participants and maintain that understanding throughout the study.

Interested individuals who agreed to participate in my study were then asked to complete the online survey that had been placed into a Web based survey tool in which a link was attached to their emails. The objective of the online survey was to generate an overview of the potential doctoral student participants' demographic backgrounds and their supervisory contexts. Responses from the participants were significant to finalise the selection process of the participants that will represent a wide enough range of the supervisory experience. At the end of the selection process, four recent graduates from Faculty 1 and two graduates from Faculty 2 were chosen. I then emailed each of them the Participant Information Sheet and the consent form. I also informed them that I would be contacting them after the two-week cooling period to set up a time and place for the interviews.

b) Doctoral supervisors

Rationale

For my study, I aimed to recruit two to four experienced (of more than ten years) doctoral supervisors – rather than newly appointed supervisors – because, I believe that with their expertise and extensive knowledge of how supervision is managed and conducted, they could provide a richer and comprehensive insight into their supervisory experiences. As the aim of the study was to explore a range of supervisory experiences, it was not the focus

of my study to recruit supervisors who had previously supervised the doctoral graduate participants. It was also not the focus of my study to investigate specific arrangement within supervision (i.e. same gender supervision). In the event that this did happen, it would have been purely coincidental.

Procedures

In the participant recruitment process, I identified potential supervisors from their Curricula Vitae, which are publicly accessible on the IIUM website. The selection of potential supervisors was based on the following criteria in order to capture some range of supervisory experiences.

- Male or Female;
- Home or International;
- Experienced supervisors (10 years of experience and above); and
- Willing to spend time in one-on-one interview sessions.

I began the recruitment process by choosing two supervisors at random and emailing them an invitation to participate in my study (see Appendix 11). After a number of weeks, two supervisors agreed to be involved in my study. Next, I emailed two prospective participants and invited them to participate in my study. However, after two weeks neither of them had responded. Due to the limited time frame, I decided to utilise the snowball technique. Using this technique, I approached my existing participants to introduce me to other potential supervisors who would be willing to talk to me. From this technique, I was introduced to two more supervisors. However, one of the supervisors withdrew afterwards due to prior commitments. Even though at the beginning of the study I had intended to recruit both home and international supervisors, I did not manage to recruit any international supervisors. Nevertheless, all the recruited home supervisors have had more than ten years of experience supervising both home and international students. Considering their extensive knowledge and experience and the limited time that I had in my fieldwork, I believe the decision at the time was practical and reasonable.

At the end of the recruitment process, I managed to recruit three home doctoral supervisors. I then emailed each of them the Participant Information sheet and the consent form. Initially, my plan was to contact the supervisors again after two or three weeks to set

up the date, time and location for the interviews, but due to their busy schedules all of the participants insisted on meeting earlier than the two weeks given. As a student and novice researcher in this cultural context, I believe that disagreement with someone who is in a more senior position would cause an uncomfortable situation, such as embarrassment or 'loss of face'. Thus, bearing this in mind, I respected their decisions and tried to accommodate them as best I could.

3.7.2 Phase Two: Collecting Participants' Narratives

In the second phase of my data collection process, I conducted one-on-one interview sessions with all of my participants in order to generate stories or narratives of their doctoral supervisory experiences. In deciding how to manage the process of the interviewing, I considered the following issues:

i) Time and location of interview

Prior to the interviews, I contacted all the participants either by email, telephone or text message to set up a time and a place for the sessions. The chosen locations for the interview were safe, convenient, and familiar to participants and myself. All of the interviews were conducted within normal working hours (9am to 5pm). The table below illustrates the list of the locations of the interviews.

Participants	Location
Nissa	In the University (library and café)
Edward, Jacob, Johan Adam & Alice	In their work offices
Ryan, Maressa & Bella	In public places (café and restaurant)

Table 3-6: The Location of the Interviews

ii) Length of the interviews

When arranging the interviews, I notified the participants that the session could take up to 90 minutes and they had the option to do the interview in two sessions. However, no participant took up the latter option and the interview sessions actually lasted in the range of 50 minutes to two hours and 30 minutes.

iii) The interview language

In the study, the choice of language used during the interview was influenced by several factors. Firstly, given that English is the language in which this thesis is reported, inevitably the use of English is appealing and the 'natural choice' for the study. However, as the participants come from different backgrounds I decided to leave the option of the interview language to the participants. Prior to the interviews, I contacted the participants to discuss their choice of interview language. In the case of the participants, in the event that it was decided to conduct the interview in a language that I was not fluent in, I would find a translator or intermediary to assist in the interviewing. My decision followed Tsang (1998), who suggested that using the participants' choice of language for the interview is crucial for three reasons: the participants are able to fully express themselves; the researcher can establish a good rapport with the participants; and the researcher is able to interpret and contextualise the participant's responses with "cultural understanding" (p.511). Moreover, by conducting the interview in a language chosen by the participant, I was able to establish trust and, thus keep the dynamics within the interview. In the study, the participants come from three different language backgrounds.

- **L1 user of English**

  In this study, the term refers to users who had English as their first language.

- **Lingua Franca user of English**

  In this study, the term refers to users who use English as a means of communication. It is 'a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996; p.240).

- **Professional user of English**

  In this study, the term refers to users who use English in their professional capacity, such as language teachers or educators.

In a narrative research, the interview questions emerge from talking to a person in a particular setting, and therefore the questions are framed using the language of the interviewees rather than the technical language used by the interviewer (Chase, 2003; Patton, 2002). Bearing this in mind, I avoided the use of research - based jargon in my

questioning. The table below illustrates the language backgrounds of my participants and the language used in the interviews:

Participants	Language Background	Language used in Interview
Ryan	L1 user of English	English
Edward	Lingua franca user of English	Bahasa Malaysia
Jacob	Lingua franca user of English	Bahasa Malaysia
Nissa	Professional user of English	English
Maressa	Professional user of English	English
Bella	Professional user of English	English
Johan	Professional user of English	English
Adam	Professional user of English	English
Alice	Professional user of English	English

Table 3-7: Participants' Language Background and Language used in Interview

iv) Overview of the Interview Process

In the study, I adopted Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) and Josselson's (2013) strategies for interviewing, where the questions were not structured but rather focused on the participants' stories of doctoral supervision, including but not limited to supervisory activities and practices. The interviews were carried out in succession over three months in Malaysia, starting from September and lasting until November 2015. All of the interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants. I also took field notes during the interview to capture the participants' non-verbal communication features and take note of my reflections after the interview.

Before commencing the interview, I went through the Participant Information Sheet and the consent form with the participants to make sure that they were comfortable taking part before signing on. After that, I thanked the participants for their participation and reminded them that the participation was on a voluntary basis and that they were free to withdraw at any time without any reasons and their identity would be kept anonymous. I also asked if

they had any questions about the study, myself as researcher or their contribution to the study.

At the end of the interviews, I asked the participants if they were happy to be contacted again for any follow-up questions. All of the participants agreed to be contacted again either by email, telephone or face-to-face meeting. I also asked how they felt about the interview session and if they had any questions or concerns before I thanked them for their participation. All of the participants gave positive feedback on their interviewing experiences. Most of them commented that the interviews were carried out in a friendly, conversational manner, which made them feel at ease talking about their experiences. However, some of them voiced their concerns about whether they had told enough stories for my research. I assured them that they had given me rich accounts of their experiences, and in the event that I might require more clarification I would contact them.

Initially, I planned to interview each of the participants at least twice: the focus of the first (face-to-face) interview was to generate narratives of the participants' supervisory experiences; and the focus of the second interview (to be conducted either in person, or online voice/video) would be to invite the participants to further elaborate some details from the first interview. However, as I managed to generate enough data from the first interview sessions further interviews were not necessary. Table 3-8 below presents a summary of data that I generated.

Data Collection Methods	Aims	Data Generated
Online survey	To recruit potential participants (graduates only) and contextualise their stories	Demographic and supervisory contexts of six recent doctoral students
One-on-one narrative interview	To generate stories about participants' supervisory experiences	18 hours of audio recordings of nine narratives/stories of students and supervisors

Table 3-8: A Summary of Data Generated

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

In this section, I present some of the practical decisions involved in the data analysis process. The process of data analysis for the participants' interview transcripts commenced during the interview stage and continued throughout transcription and data analysis and interpretation. There are two stages involved in the process. The figure below illustrates the data analysis process for the participants' narrative interviews.
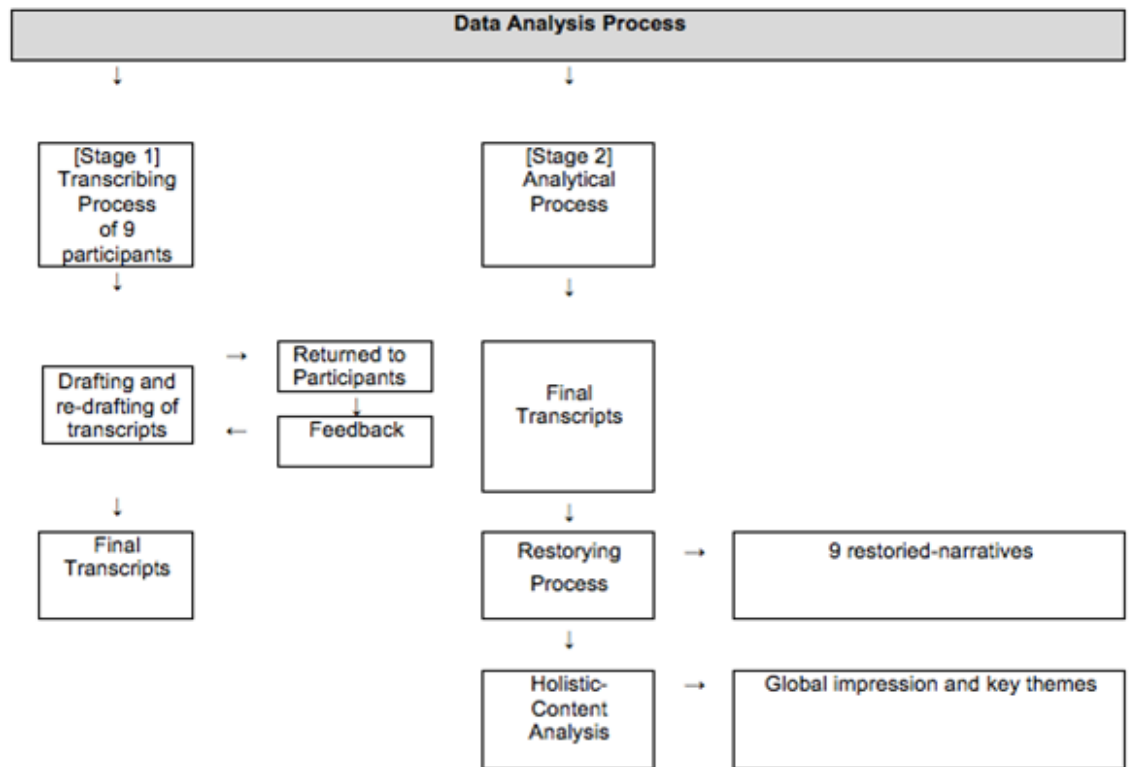
Figure 3-3: The Process of Data Analysis

3.8.1 Transcribing Process

Transcription involves the process of translation from recorded speech into written form and close observation of data through repeated careful listening in order to achieve familiarity with the data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As there is no fixed rule for transcription, approaches to transcription are based on the intended use and analytical intent of the transcripts by each researcher. Nonetheless, it is important to note that representing audible data as written words requires reduction, interpretation and

representation to make the written text readable and meaningful. In the study, I chose to transcribe the recordings of the participants' interviews purposefully to address my research objective. The overarching objective of the study is to explore the experiences of doctoral supervision as narrated by the participants in their interviews. In order to achieve this, I decided to focus on the content of what was said rather than the structural analysis of the participants' narratives. In other words, my transcription was content-focused.

In order to optimise familiarity with the data and pay close attention to what was actually there rather than what was expected, I undertook the transcribing process myself. Doing this entailed the facilitation of ideas that emerged during the analysis. In order to capture and represent the meanings of how the participants narrated their experiences, I chose to maintain the original language and the actual words used, including non-standard grammatical utterances and informal phrases in the transcript to retain the linguistic variety, which is an important feature of the participants' identities. During the transcribing process, I also decided to remove some of the extra verbal material, such as interjection, intonation, non-lexical utterances (i.e. err and emm), false starts and repetition. The purpose was to provide a relatively clean transcript in order to focus on the content.

Once I had processed the transcripts, I then emailed each of my participants a copy of the transcription and asked for their comments. By doing so I gave the participants the opportunity to amend their stories. However, out of nine participants only four responded. In each non-responsive instance, I sent a notification email that should they feel compelled in the future to provide more feedback, they have the means to reach me. The participants who responded provided some feedback in the form of correction of spelling and some data inaccuracies, such as year of studies, names of places and names of individuals in the transcription. Next, after revising the transcripts following the amendment suggested by the participants, I returned the transcripts to the participants to ensure accuracy of the texts. The process was repeated until the participants were satisfied with their transcripts. At the end of the process there were 136 single-spaced, one-sided pages of written transcripts from all participants.

3.8.2 Analytical Processes

There are two phases involved in my analytical process: restorying and holistic-content analysis. In the following sub-sections, I will illustrate the analytical process that I undertook.

i) Restorying

Upon finalising the transcripts, I began to transform the interview transcripts into a purposeful and readable layout by restorying. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that a challenge in writing narrative accounts is that often people do not tell their stories in a linear mode. In narrative research, restorying is used as a way of organising and representing narrative data into a particular format which is dependent on the purpose of the process and the extent to which the data is being manipulated. Restorying is a complex interpretive process that involves a set of analytical procedures based on the central feature of restorying a story from the original raw data (Ollenrenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p. 332). There are a number of approaches to restorying which emphasise particular features, such as element of experience (see Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), or a focus on structural forms (see Riessman, 2008). Polkinghorne (2007) noted that restorying process involves temporally ordering the events and actions that occurred in the period of time under study and then interpreting how these story elements relate to one another and contribute to the ending of the story (p: 483). For my own study, the purpose of restorying is twofold. Firstly, I wanted to highlight the participants' experiences of supervision and present these experiences in a more coherent and readable form. Secondly, I wanted to utilise the restoried narratives as narrative data for the holistic-content analysis. In the next section, I present the process of restorying the narrative accounts of each participant.

Anonymising the Data

Firstly, I anonymised the data in the interview transcripts by substituting the details of the participants so that they would not be identifiable by their peers, supervisors or students. I then excluded the interviewer's words to ensure that the participants' voices were being heard and that their stories were being told in their words. Following Atkinson (2002, p. 134):

> To end up with flowing narratives in the words of the persons telling the stories, with their intended meanings as clearly specified as possible, the interviewers' questions and comments are left out of transcriptions; only the interviewees' words appear, put into sentence and paragraph form.

In order to preserve the content in the interview transcript as well as the meanings narrated by the participants, I chose not to add too many words that were not part of the original transcripts. Instead, I retained the participant's own words, including his/her non-standard

UK grammatical utterances and informal phrases in the original transcript in order to retain the linguistic variety, which is an important feature of the participant' identity (Roberts, 1977). I only used punctuation, paragraphing, pauses and words indicating non-verbal actions to maintain the narrative flow throughout the restorying process. I also added some clarifications in square brackets ([ ]) to assist the flow of the narrative. By minimising the amount of editing in the restorying process, I aimed "to ensure accuracy of meaning (and) to capture the meaning conveyed in the words used by the storyteller" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 134). The table below illustrates the conventions that I applied in the restorying process.

Text Conventions	
...	Pause
( )	Word in ( ) indicates clarification details
[ ]	Word in [ ] indicates non-verbal action or event
??	Inaudible or I could not decipher words spoken

Table 3-9: Convention for Restorying

Reading and Outlining the Plot

To ensure that all interview transcripts were analysed to an equal depth, I applied the following process to each interview transcript. I began by thoroughly reading the transcripts whilst listening to the recordings at least three to four times. Next, I separated the actual narratives that were told by the participants from tangential conversations that may have occurred. Within the actual narratives I identified the main plots and outlined them. A plot consists of temporally linked events and actions that an individual considers significant to his or her narrative and transforms events and actions into a whole "by highlighting and recognizing the contribution that certain events make to the development and outcome of the story" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 18-19).

Once the main plot outline was completed, I began to organise and include the narrative linkages in order to provide the context for the actions and events that made up the plots. Narrative linkages represent what occurred in their stories as narrated by the participants and how these story elements relate to one another and the context for the actions and events that made up the plots that aids individuals to understand events in term of a larger whole (Polkinghorne, 2007). Gubrium and Holstein (2009) noted that the concept of

narrative linkage is useful in relation to plot specifically in understanding how the participants organise multiple incidents into a meaningful whole as:

> no item of experience is meaningful in its own right. It is made meaningful through the particular ways it is linked to other items. Linkage creates context for understanding. (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009, p. 55)

For example, when the participants link their doctoral supervision experiences to another past event in their lives, such as a childhood memory, the narrative linkages in the stories may illuminate further understanding of the events that they were describing within the context of their entire lives. I then clustered both the plot and narrative linkages in paragraphs and reordered all the narrative plot paragraphs into one single narrative by temporally ordering a description of what occurred in the lives of the participants as narrated by them (i.e. beginning, middle and end). Finally, I included headings to differentiate one narrative plot from another. This move is important to aid my understanding in the analytical process later in the study. An example of a restoried-narrative account of one of the participants is included in the Appendix (see Appendix 12)

ii) Narrative Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the study, I employ a narrative analysis approach that is informed by Lieblich et al. (1998) to examine the participants' restoried narratives which proposed five stages for holistic-content reading. For stage one, the researcher reads and engages with the text carefully and empathically. Such active reading is crucial to allow the text to speak to you and to maximise the meaning-making process. In stage two, the researcher records an initial, 'global' impression about the text and pays attention to the parts of the text that seem disharmonious to the whole. In the third stage, the researcher decides on which theme to focus and follow throughout the text. In the fourth stage, the researcher codes each theme using different colored markers. In the final stage, the reader keeps track of the results by following each theme, paying attention to the start and end point of a theme, to transitions between different themes, to the context of each theme and to their relative prominence in the text and noting a conclusion. In the next section I illustrate how I utilised the holistic-content approach in my data analysis.

Recording the Global Impression

I began by carefully reading and re-reading each of the participants' restoried narratives to garner a global impression. Recognising that the participants' narratives can be multi-layered and contradictory and influenced by many factors, and that in telling their stories they may hint, conceal or defend their stories in ways that they perceived as socially acceptable or preferable, when reading I tried to engage with the text carefully and empathically to maximise the meaning-making process (Rosenthal, 1993; Wiles et al., 2005; Polkinghorne; 1998). While reading, I attended to the explicit (who, what, where) and implicit (e.g., motives) meaning of the content of the story. I also took note of particular sections of the narratives, their significance to the narratives as a whole and to the contexts as well as to the unusual features of the narratives, such as, contradictions or disturbing episodes. In order to generate a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences, I considered five questions while reading for content. These questions were woven together in my reading of the narratives to capture a holistic understanding of the participants' stories:

1. *What story is being told by the participant about his or her experience?*
2. *What does the story mean to the participant?*
3. *What is the overarching theme in the story?*
4. *What topics are addressed or omitted in the story?*
5. *How does the story develop logically?*

Memo Writing

Whilst reading, I also kept records of my reflection or memo-like remarks, not only to aid the meaning-making process but also to assist my reflexivity and critical thinking about what I was doing and thinking. Mason (2002, p. 5) suggested that writing a memo can confront and challenge researchers' own assumptions and recognise the extent to which their thoughts, actions and decisions shape how they research and what they see. The process of writing the memo also "creates an intellectual workplace for the researcher'' (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2004, p. 163). By writing my reflections, I addressed my researcher's reflexivity by examining my own emotions, relationship, values, and beliefs about the research topic, the participants and their contexts. An example of the analysis

template used in my study that integrated memo-writing with the holistic-content analysis of narrative is included in the Appendix (Appendix 13).

Identifying Emerging Themes

I then used different coloured markers to mark emerging themes in the narratives and distinguish the identified themes from one another. I also looked for the space devoted to the themes in the narrative, its repetitive nature and the number of details the narrator provides about it, as omissions of some aspects in the narratives can also serve as a signal of crucial significance of topic in the narratives.

Following each Theme and re-organising the Themes

Once the themes were identified, I read and followed each one separately throughout the story. Whilst reading, I took note of the occurrence of each theme in the narrative the context for each one and their significance to the development of the whole story, and the transitions between the themes. I also paid attention to any events that contradict the mode, content or evaluation in the story. Next, I re-organised and clustered similar themes into several key themes that would best represent the participants' overarching experience of supervision. To aid my understanding of the main themes and subthemes within the participants' narratives, I created a visual illustration as demonstrated in the following Figure 3.4.

Figure 3-4: An Example of the Main Themes of one of the Participant's Restoried Narratives

Establishing Connections between the Themes

In the final analysis, I created a table in Microsoft words. In the table, I included all of the emerging themes within the participants' narratives and grouped them into a number of key themes. I also matched each theme with the relevant social contexts. I also included relevant narrative extracts from the participant's restoried narrative. An example of the table is included in the Appendix (see Appendix 14). The data from the table also helped establish the connection or relationship between the themes and the contexts, which in turn aided my interpretation in the discussion of cultures of doctoral supervision and the shaping influences, in which I will elaborate further in Chapter Six.

3.8.3 Presenting the Data

On completion of the data analysis, there are several decisions involved concerning how to represent the data in the write-up of the analysis in Chapters Four, Five and Six. These decisions are important to ensure that the analyses and discussion is presented in a way that is useful, relevant and significant to my study. Firstly, acknowledging that it is challenging

to capture the richness of the narratives within the word constraints of the thesis, I included key extracts from the participants' restoried narratives to ensure that their voices are heard and represented in the discussion. These extracts represent the participants' original expression of their experience of doctoral supervision in the interview. Secondly, I presented the holistic-content narrative analysis in two chapters: Chapter Four focuses on the individual narratives of the doctoral students, and Chapter Five reports on the individual narratives of the doctoral supervisors. In these chapters I presented the analyses in three sub-sections, following Lieblich et al.'s (1998) holistic-content approach. In the first section, I briefly introduced each participant to the readers. In the second section, I presented a global impression of each narrative. In the third section, I present the key themes of the participants' narratives of supervisory experience in the form of thematic description. Next, in Chapter Six, I present my discussion of doctoral supervisory cultures and shaping influence as informed by the small cultures approach and host culture complex model. In the discussion, I attended to the literature with which my study engages and included the key extracts from the participants' restoried narrative accounts.

3.9 Embracing Language Diversity in the Study

In the study, all of my participants are either bilingual or multilingual. Only one from nine participants is a native speaker of English, while the rest are non-native speakers. As a result, the recordings of the interviews were conducted either in English and/or Bahasa Malaysia. When addressing the language diversity in my study, there are three aspects that I considered.

Firstly, when transcribing I decided to retain the transcripts in the original language instead of translating into English because I believe that preserving the text in its originality optimised my meaning making process as I established closer connection to the text. During the data analysis, I analysed the interview data in the language in which they were collected to avoid loss of meaning in translation and to stay close to the original data. Allowing the participants to use their mother tongue would enable them to "express their innermost feelings and emotion with those closest to them" (Jackson, 2008, p. 201).

Secondly, when restorying I only selected and translated parts of the non-English language interview data that were relevant to my study into English. Rossman and Rallis (1998, p.

162) noted that decisions about translating quotations are subject to the intended function of the quotation in the research text and whether one perceives translated words as a direct quotation. In my study, the aim of the translation process was to bring forth the participants' words and present those words in forms that were appropriate and accessible to the readers. When deciding the most appropriate ways to translate non-English narrative extracts into English, I wanted to provide the reader with as much understanding of the participants' words as was possible. To achieve this, I employed two approaches to translation:

i. I utilised literal translation - a process of translating word-by-word. According to Honig (1997, p. 17), this approach to translation could perhaps be seen "as doing more justice to what participants have said and make one's readers understand the foreign mentality better;" and

ii. I used the conceptual equivalence approach, particularly to translate concepts or idiomatic expressions that have comparable meaning and relevance in the English language, as some linguists suggest where two languages do not offer direct lexical equivalence, efforts should then be directed towards obtaining conceptual equivalence without concern for lexical comparability (Deutscher, 1968, p. 337; Whyte and Braun, 1968:121; Temple, 1997, p. 610).

Thirdly, recognising that words in any language carry with them a set of assumptions, beliefs and values that the speakers may or may not be aware of but that the outsider usually is not (Phillips, 1960, p. 291), I decided to undertake the translation process myself. Coming from a similar linguistic and cultural background to the home participants, I was able to engage closely with the meaning-making process while translating. Studies have suggested that by being a researcher or translator with a proficient understanding of a language and knowledge of its culture can facilitate the process of achieving comparability of meanings of the words carried by the speakers to the readers (Sechrest et al., 1972; Brislin et al., 1973; Warwick and Osherson, 1973). An example of translating non-English narrative data into English using the two approaches is included in the Appendix (Appendix 15).

3.10 My Researcher's Reflexivity

Throughout the study, my main role as a qualitative researcher had always been to give voice to the individual students and supervisors in which they could share their personal narratives of lived experiences, challenges or achievements. Nonetheless, like all researchers within qualitative paradigm, I recognised that it was just not the participants' experiences that were being brought to light as I also brought my own set of interpretation of that experience (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000) noted that researcher's reflexivity is "a process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry" (p. 127). The process is particularly crucial for researcher like myself to acknowledge and describe my entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to let readers understand my positions, and then to bracket or suspend those biases as the study proceeds (Creswell and Miller, 2007). In this section, I will address how I navigated my insider-outsider dimensions of my researcher's reflexivity that may allow readers to understand my role and relationship to the subject that I was researching and the contexts in which my study was situated.

My Role as an Insider

I believe that my position as a Muslim doctoral student contributes a rich layer of understanding of the participants' narrated supervisory experiences from an insider perspective. As a Muslim, I share similar fundamental Islamic beliefs and values with the participants. I am also familiar with the local (Malaysian) collective values. As a doctoral student (though at a different university), my position would encourage the participants, particularly doctoral students, to speak more freely about their experiences. Moreover, I could, to some extent, engage with these experiences and attend to the explicit meaning as well as the tacit knowledge embedded within the narratives in regard to supervisory process, such as, supervisory meetings, conferences or thesis writing. While my experience as a doctoral student might provide me with some insights into the experience of doctoral supervision and its mechanics, my experience as a student studying abroad might resonate well with some of the international students' experiences, which would enhance my awareness and understanding of some of the complexities these students may face. I also believe that my experience teaching at the IIUM (in a different faculty and not within the doctoral supervisory roles) would, to some extent, provide some insider understanding of the IIUM's institutional practices and values.

While my role as an insider may be advantageous with respect to easy access and complete acceptance - as the participants may be more willing to share their experiences with me, (Adler and Adler, 1987) - it could potentially influence the interpretation of the findings as argued by Watson (1999, cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) that the insider researcher may bring his or her personal experience onto the participant's experience. Moreover, Armstrong (2001, cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 59) claimed that the insider researcher may have some influences on the interview that might have "kept [the participants] from considering aspects of their experience" (p. 243). To minimise this, I chose to remain purposeful by positioning the participants' voices above my own and "allowing the light to shine on their stories" (Chase 2005, p. 667).

In addition, as I was conducting a research at the IIUM -a context that is closely connected to my own professional development – there might be some ethical implications to the research process and my own professional relationship with the participants, in particular, the supervisors. As an insider, I established a relatively close connection with the participants which is based on respect and trust. In order to avoid from severing that connection and causing inconvenience and dignitary harm to the participants, the IIUM, myself or other potential third parties, I needed to balance the types of information that might have the potential to benefit the research goals against the risk of harms that could occur due to the sensitive nature of the information.

My Role as an Outsider

In the study, I was positioned as an outsider researcher with respect to my ongoing supervisory experience (as opposed to completed supervisory experiences) at one of the Russell Group universities in the UK (not at the IIUM) and my lack of experience of being either a doctoral student or a supervisor at the IIUM. In this view, I may be part of the doctoral student culture but I might not understand some of the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision as experienced by the participants at the IIUM. Nonetheless, I believe that being an outsider researcher added further layer to my understanding of doctoral supervision at the IIUM. Following Fay (1996, p. 20), there are four potential benefits of being an outsider researcher. Firstly, I would be able to conceptualise the supervisory experience more adequately as I would not be too immersed in the experience. Secondly, I would be able to see through the complexity of the participants' experiences that they themselves may not be aware of. Thirdly, I would be able to appreciate the wider outlooks

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of the participants' experiences. Finally, being an outsider may provide deeper insights into some parts of the experiences that the participants might seem to ignore out of their fear or self-protection.

3.11 Addressing Trustworthiness

Within a narrative-based research, there are several ways researchers can ensure the trustworthiness of their research insights. For example, trustworthiness can be achieved by addressing: credibility (how plausible are interpretations); rigour (to what extent can interpretations be supported by the original data); and pragmatic usefulness (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008). Bearing this in mind, in my study, trustworthiness was appropriately addressed throughout the research process in several ways. First, I have briefly discussed the philosophical assumptions or worldviews that underpin my choice of research design before providing the rationales for choosing qualitative research framed by narrative research as a strategy of inquiry. Second, I described the methods and procedures of data generation and analysis used in detail so that readers could assess the extent to which the insights were based on data relevant to the study purpose (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Mirriam, 2009). I also recorded my thoughts and working ideas in my research diary throughout the analytical process. I believe that by keeping a journal can encourage my researcher's methodological awareness and foster ongoing reflectivity which has allowed me to reflect upon the research (Rodgers and Cowles, 1993; Seale, 2002) and be transparent about my own position towards the study and context. Next, I included extracts or words from the participants' restoried narratives in the analyses so that the participant's own words would be an integral part of the analysis of the study and provide support for my interpretations of the data. Finally, I addressed the insider and outsider dimensions of my researcher's reflexivity within the context (the IIUM) and with the phenomenon under exploration (doctoral supervision) as these dimensions have provided an important reflexive aspect to my study, one that I aimed to manage transparently throughout.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the philosophical assumptions underpinnings my study and qualitative narrative inquiry research design before discussing the methods of data collection and analysis. I have also presented the ethical considerations

of my study before providing a detailed account of the implementation of the research design including the procedures used for data generation and data analysis. Moreover, I have addressed the language diversity, researcher's reflexivity and trustworthiness aspects of the study. In subsequent chapters (Chapter Four and Chapter Five) I will illustrate the individual students' and supervisors' narratives of doctoral supervision from the holistic-content narrative analysis approach.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVES OF LEARNING

Overview

In the previous chapter Three, I have provided the research questions, research design and its implementations of the study. In this chapter, I report on the holistic-content narrative analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) of the restoried narratives of six recently-completed doctoral students' experiences of supervision. This chapter is divided into two main sections. I begin by providing the demographic and supervisory characteristics of the students (Section 4.1). I then present holistic-content analysis of the individual students which consists of a brief introduction of each student, condensed global impression of the students' narratives and key themes that hold significant meaning in their narratives (Section 4.2).

4.1 Introducing the Doctoral Students

In this section, I present the demographic breakdown of the students involved in the study which is significant to the understanding of their stories. As part of the recruitment strategy, I utilised an online survey to gather information on the students' demographic backgrounds and their supervisory contexts. The data from the survey were significant in the selection process of finalising the list of students for the study and contextualising their stories of supervision. At the end of my study, a total of six students - three males and three females, ranging in age from 31 to 45 years old - were recruited. The majority of the students were enrolled in a PhD by Coursework and Research program and only one student was enrolled in a PhD by Research program. Five of the students did their studies full-time whereas one student was a part-timer. Four students received scholarships for their studies whereas the other two were self-funded. Two students had completed their doctorate within three years, three students completed their doctorate within four years, and one took eight years to complete. As requested for participation in the study, all students had either completed their studies or had passed their Viva Voce examination no less than two years before the date of the interview. A summary of the demographic description of the doctoral students is included in the Appendix (Appendix 16).

In the second part of the survey, the students were asked general questions regarding their supervisory arrangements. Most of the students felt that supervisory meetings were either very important or important. The frequency of meeting varied from two to four times a

month to once a month and only one student had infrequent meetings with her supervisor. Most of the students wrote that meetings with their supervisors were important to validate their progress, to seek inputs and guidance on their research, to avoid misunderstandings and to ensure timely completion. In addition to this, some students sought support and encouragement from their supervisors in the meetings. Most of the students reported that they had either excellent or good supervisory experiences due to the amount of guidance and support they had received to complete their students. However, one student described her experience as average due to the lack of guidance that she had received towards the end of her studies. In terms of ways to improve supervision, some students suggested a need for more systematic and strict ways to monitor students' progress and better guidelines to find a suitable supervisor. Some students also proposed that supervisors should allocate sufficient time for students; show commitment to ensure students complete on time; avoid making assumptions as to what students know; and possess knowledge of the latest trends in research. A summary of the students' responses in regard to their supervisory arrangements is included in the Appendix (see Appendix 17 and 18).

4.2 Weaving the Narrative Threads

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that narrative researchers "cannot summarize in formats that condense the volume in a way that data table condenses survey results," and that instead the "quantity of data contained in the written narrative" is ultimately determined by the researchers' decision on "which records [that] are most telling" and "practical considerations of space and imagined audience" (p.11). Thus, in this section I report on the holistic-content analysis of the experiences of supervision as recounted by each of the students and the meanings given by them to those experiences. I begin by providing a brief description of the students' background so as to set the context for the reader to better understand how their backgrounds may have contributed to their understanding of doctoral supervision. I then present a condensed global impression of the students' supervisory experiences as represented in their narratives. Thereafter, I discuss the key themes in the doctoral students' restoried accounts of their supervisory experience. As I wanted to highlight their voices, I included excerpts of their restoried narratives so as to bring their supervisory narratives to life and illustrate the 'particularity' of their stories. As a sign of respect for the participants and to remain within the boundaries of "ethical narrative research" (Riessman, 2008, p. 199) I present the narrative excerpts as closely as possible to the participants' manner of speech in their interviews.

4.2.1 Ryan's Story

I work independently. He didn't really have much input when it comes to actual material. He would read it of course before I submit it and it was often simply editorial. I mean linguistically - a simply basic stuff- and very minimal editorial remarks.

Introduction

Ryan is one of my doctoral student participants. He is an international doctoral graduate in his early thirties. The first time Ryan came to Malaysia was when he was four months old with his family. Ryan describes his father as one of the first cohort of international students studying at the IIUM. Four years later, Ryan and his family returned to New Zealand, their home country. Many years later Ryan returned to Malaysia for the second time and obtained a Master's degree at the IIUM, the same university that his father had attended years before. He returned to the IIUM for the second time to study for a PhD. At the time of the interview, Ryan had completed his doctoral degree after almost five years of hard work. After more than twenty years living abroad, Ryan hopes that he can return to his home country in the near future and start working on extending his research on Islamic Studies.

Global Impression

Generally, Ryan's narrative reflects a linear and chronological development of his experience that begins with his childhood memories as characterised by his expectations and evaluation of his own values and behaviours in his journey of self-identity and self-knowledge. Ryan begins by setting the stage with his childhood memories, where growing up he consistently questioned his own identity. Looking back, Ryan believes that growing up in a mixed-parentage family inspired him to embark on a journey that would enrich his personal and professional trajectories. He summarises that "all these affect the decision that I 've made and professionally and personally as well". Ryan's narrative of childhood evolves to his adulthood year, which is set in the university context. In his narrative, he shares how the university provided him with a dynamic setting valuable for his progress. In his narrative of learning, Ryan describes the main challenges that he faced in his doctoral journey. The final aspect of Ryan's supervisory experience centers on his personal yet professional relationship with his supervisor. In sum, these aspects form the core structures of his doctoral supervisory journey.

Key Themes

A sense of belonging

The theme of belonging is important in Ryan's narrative. He begins his narrative with a story of his family and childhood. Ryan was born to a Singaporean mother and a Kiwi father. When he was eight months old, his family moved to Malaysia following his father, who had enrolled at the IIUM. Four years later, the family returned to New Zealand. Looking back, Ryan expresses his disappointment at losing his first language when he returned home:

> *My first language just happened to be Malay. It was the first language that I have ever spoken because I was eight months old when we came here (Malaysia). When I was four years old, we returned to our home country. At first, I couldn't speak English and my dad couldn't speak Malay. After a month … I lost all my Malay language unfortunately because we only speak English at home.*

Ryan remarks that since a young age he has always struggled with identity. While "most people who come from mixed parentage have identity issues", for Ryan the issue is not so much a cultural thing as it is a religious thing. When Ryan's family moved back to their hometown, there were not many Muslims. In fact, at the time they were the only Muslim family around. Ryan recalls the dilemma of being a Muslim living in a Kiwi community:

> *… I have always … struggled with identity. Most people who come from a mixed parentage have identity issues. But for us the issue wasn't so much of a cultural thing. It was more of a religious thing because we were the only Muslims in the city where we spent good part of our childhood. We had to learn how to (be a Muslim) [pause] and since my dad is a committed and practicing Muslim, we grew up as practicing Muslims … we fasted, we went to jumaah [congregational Friday prayer] because jumaah was at my house.*

Ryan describes his father as being a strict practicing Muslim and that he and his brother were somewhat required to learn how to become one. In the process of learning to be a Muslim in a Kiwi society where there are conflicting values and practices, Ryan started questioning the possibility of having multiple identities as opposed to a single one. His questioning led him to study Islam further in his adult life.

> *In that sense, we were forced really to identify, to sort of search for that identity. On one hand, we are Kiwis, since we grew up like everybody else. On the other, we are not Kiwis because we can't eat pork, we don't drink alcohol and we pray. If I were at my mate's house, they don't give me meat. Things like these make me constantly ask: How can you merge between the two identities? Is being a Kiwi and a Muslim are very opposite to each other? Or can they be complimentary? These questions have led me to learn more about Islam.*

I found that Ryan's story about his childhood and his sense-making journey of discovering about himself interesting and significance in understanding the identity of doctoral student population in the present days. For example, as more students are leaving their home countries to study abroad, they might experience a sense of ambiguity about their own identities. A sense of difference and being in between or in liminal space may indicate hybrid identity (see Babha, 1994), a concept that is often associated with the process of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. The concept is commonly used to explain and interpret experiences of individuals who live across two or more cultures. For Ryan, the ambiguity of his identity might develop from his childhood experience living as a Muslim in predominantly non-Muslim countries (e.g. New Zealand) and his experience studying Islam in Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Jordan. Hence, it is hardly surprising when Ryan asserts that his interest in learning Islam is motivated by a desire to reinforce his sense of self, his identity and his sense of belonging.

The IIUM as the Ideal Learning Context

In Ryan's narrative, the IIUM plays a significant role in his doctoral learning experience. Ryan shares that before pursuing his doctoral study he had already been exposed to a wide range of Islamic philosophies from his earlier educational experience in countries such as Sudan and Indonesia. To Ryan, coming to Malaysia was "*a pleasant experience*" in comparison to his previous experience studying in places such as Sudan. The IIUM for Ryan represents an ideal institution for students who wish to study Islamic Studies in an English language setting:

> *… The university sorts of promise an international environment where the staff are coming from abroad, from a range of countries, and a lot of them quite well versed in classical Islamic literature, which is important. The University also provides exposure to a more secular Western approach to research and its methods.*

Ryan also acknowledges that as a researcher he needs a greater range of English vocabulary used in the Islamic studies, which will allow him to present his research to a wider, international English-speaking scholarly community. In essence, the IIUM context has provided him with the necessary skills, knowledge and platform that he needs to pursue his career trajectory as a researcher in a global context.

> *My objective is to have an understanding of Islam and to present it to … an English - speaking audience. I have to be aware of the Islamic terms in English … aware of the types of argument that exist from the perspective of Islamic studies, the type of*

questions they ask, the type of challenges … and where I could fit all this in. These things sort of ticked all the boxes for me at the time.

Apart from that, Ryan shares that Malaysia and the IIUM embody unique cultures. In his narrative, he recounts how he felt comfortable with the university's culture, whereby there is a healthy balance in the relationship between the student and teacher:

I think Malaysia, when compared to the rest of the Muslim world, is an exception really. I think it is part of the culture but also part of the university culture. They don't have that type of distinction between a student and a teacher. I think they maintain quite a healthy balance between both so they are professional enough … It was quite an enjoyable process in that regard and you didn't feel let down, you didn't feel scared or intimidated, and it was quite welcoming. They were very accessible.

Tailoring Supervision

One of the significant themes in the narrative is the changing nature of his supervision in response to the progress that Ryan was making during his studies. In the beginning, Ryan recalls that when he was struggling with his research topic and at the same time trying to manage his own family, his supervisor took an active role. As Ryan did not contact him, the supervisor made the effort to reach him instead. Moreover, instead of pressuring Ryan on his progress, the supervisor showed the utmost concern for Ryan's well-being. He gave Ryan some time and space to solve his personal problems.

I wasn't contacting my supervisor. And during that period, he would be contacting me … every couple of months just to check how I am personally first. He was quite patient, calm and he was the one who initiated contact. I didn't really see him [face-to-face] because I lived far away, but we talked on the phone and then if I had ideas and I wanted to talk to him I would call him. He was very patient and he entertained it and he let me struggle and let me wrestle with my own issues.

Once Ryan had found his own footing and was ready to embark on the next stage, his supervisor changed the way he supervised in order to fulfil Ryan's needs and situation.

Once I have finalised the topic, … I was back here [main campus] by then. And I was seeing him maybe once a month … and we started to actually work and got things done and started to develop the proposal.

In the narrative, Ryan describes himself as an independent learner and he believes that a minimal supervision would allow him some room for creativity. During his studies, Ryan reflects that his supervisor was pretty much attuned to his learning needs:

He lets you do your things … if you develop your own views, that he does not necessarily agree with, he still lets you … He is not going to force his view on it unless he has a serious issue with it or unless he considers it wrong. As long as there is a room for interpretation he would allow it even if he does not prescribe to it.

Retrospectively, Ryan reflects: "*The upside (of the supervision) is that it lets you develop organically, it lets you depend on yourself and no part of your research is dependent on anybody else*". Nonetheless, there is a contradictory view on such independent learning that in the narrative Ryan divulges that the experiences left him feeling isolated: "*At the same time it also means that you are alone … [laughs nervously]. In a way, it's not a negative thing, but you do feel alone and that your research is alone*". I found that Ryan's feeling of loneliness strikes a chord with my own experience doing the PhD. There were times during my studies that I felt isolated from my family and other research students. Feelings of isolation and loneliness have been discussed in some studies. For example, Johnson (2014) conducted a qualitative study of doctoral students' experiences at a university in New Zealand and found that while all home and international students responded that they had expected doctoral study to be "lengthy", none of the students "were prepared for the degree of loneliness, isolation and difficulty they would face" (p. 6).

The Struggles

Another significant theme of Ryan's experience is embracing and overcoming some of the challenges or struggles that he faced while studying. In the narrative, Ryan shares that his biggest disappointment was getting tangled in the university bureaucratic red tape:

When I registered for my PhD program I applied for PhD by research mode only because I knew I had to manage family and work and studying. Unfortunately, when my acceptance letter arrived it was by Coursework and Research mode. I was informed that you should just accept it and once you've started the program, you can change it. … But by the time we managed to finalise the whole transfer to my department, it had already taken a whole semester. I wasn't happy with that because it added to the whole duration and I had to pay, for my extra semester. It was like four thousand or something [sigh]. It's not that much when you compare it to other countries but it's a lot if you are shouldering everything yourself.

Besides dealing with the less efficient part of the administrative process, Ryan has to overcome all sorts of constraints that may affect his learning progress. Moreover, at the time of his studies, Ryan was married and as he was self-employed, he struggled to make ends meet. Therefore, I can understand the urgency for him to complete his studies on time. It is not surprising that these constraints affected him emotionally:

> *I think if I wasn't married, if I was funded I wouldn't have a problem but because I had to work. As a student you never know, as you don't have stable income or salary coming in. And I'm just not happy with it really.*

Ryan also shares his frustration that he missed an employment opportunity as a result of the delay in his studies. The missed opportunity, according to Ryan, was very costly to him.

> *It is costly for students. It costs you the opportunity as well. There is one job that I applied for but I didn't get it … Job in my area, in my home country is very few, very hard to come by. They don't come around that often. The fact that I missed out on the window [of opportunity], it is quite [sad] you know (long pause).*

Ryan's struggle echoes my experience as a doctoral student. Being a sponsored student, I did not have the luxury of time, as I was required and expected to complete my studies within a specific time and failure to do so might affect my employment status. On top of that, as a parent, I had to fulfil certain obligation towards my children, which made my experience a real struggle. I also agree with Ryan that when students are facing delays in their studies, they are likely to miss valuable opportunities, such as missing out on job openings or career promotion.

Organic Relationship

Another significant theme in Ryan's narrative is his relationship with his supervisor. Ryan considers his supervisor, Prof. A, as the most important figure on his doctoral journey. He considers the supervisor as his *"role model … in both a professional capacity and a personal capacity"*. Throughout their four years together, Ryan has developed a close relationship with his supervisor. He describes their relationship as organic, which grows naturally without any pressure to maintain certain standards. They started from *"a friendly sort of friendship"* and always maintained their respect for each other. According to Ryan, his supervisor was aware of the hardships that Ryan was facing: *"I'm self-funded and that [alone] represents a lot of challenges"*. Instead of forcing Ryan to come up with his drafts, the supervisor gave Ryan some space to sort out his problems: *"… once I have finalised the topic, I was back here [the university] by then. I was seeing him maybe once a month and we started to actually work getting things done"*.

In the narrative, Ryan describes his supervisor: "*a person who is scholarly in his conduct [and] scholarly in his thinking*". Such characteristic, according to Ryan, matches well with his field of study and is something that he wishes to emulate personally:

> *It was never -I'm your supervisor type of relationship –we have always maintained our respect of each other and my wife is friend to his family … I think he was quite aware that I have my own challenges and he was patient in that regards. He guided me in the research and I think there has been some time where he even helped me out financially. He maintains a very unique approach to dealing with people because he is always formal. Even though I am his friend he is always formal with me. We don't sit down and really joke on a personal level. … So, I, myself, endeavor to emulate …. a bit of his style. He is definitely a role model in that regards. He is confident, he is learned, he presents well, and he is well respected.*

Ryan feels than he has a great relationship with his supervisor and he hopes to nourish the relationship further in the future:

> *We are going to have a lifetime partnership. We click mentally as well. I think he is committed to the same type of goal I committed to. It helps a lot when your supervisor is in the same path. He is already a way ahead of you … with so much experience. Why not work together? Why not utilise that?*

4.2.2 Edward's Story

> *It is not about how old he is, but how accessible he is to you and how much support he can give you. That's what matters.*

<u>Introduction</u>

Edward is one of my doctoral student participants. He is a Malaysian doctoral graduate in his early thirties. When I interviewed him, Edward had just started his new job as an Assistant Professor at one of the public universities in Malaysia. Initially, when he began his PhD in 2012, Edward was working at the IIUM as an Arabic language teacher. He was initially enrolled on a PhD by Research in part-time mode (later on he changed to full-time mode) and worked under the supervision of Dr. James. Three years later, Edward had managed to successfully complete his studies. In the interview, Edward shares that his passion for knowledge and research has motivated him to better himself, both personally and professionally. For Edward, obtaining his doctoral degree will open windows of opportunity that will enable him to expand his portfolio as an academic and a researcher. In the interview, Edward describes his supervisory experience as an excellent learning process. He hopes to continue and transform his student-supervisor relationship with his supervisor into a collaboration-partnership between two researchers.

Global Impression

Edward's narrative generally is about his journey going through the complex process of becoming and being a doctoral student. In the journey, he has to face and navigate not only his academic but also his personal struggles. For instance, he describes how he navigated the different academic challenges posed by the different conventions from Arabic language literacy, to PhD thesis writing. At the same time, he needed to balance between his career and family. Realising that he must make it work, Edward shares the strategies that he has adopted to overcome these hurdles; namely by: being disciplined; keeping a strict writing routine; and referring to alternative media for reference and support, such, as online blogs, Facebook and research events. From there, Edward's narrative evolves to include his journey of being a doctoral student who was independent and resourceful. In the narrative, his transformation is made possible by understanding and appreciating how his supervisor supervised him. Edward describes his supervisor's approach to supervision as supportive, collaborative, knowledgeable, accessible, committed, involved, firm and flexible.

Edward also emphasises that although he was supervised by a young supervisor, the positive attributes embodied by his supervisor provided him with the skills to develop valuable research skills and high self-confidence that enabled him to complete his studies on time. In his final part of the narrative, Edward sees his experience a stepping-stone to develop his own potential. He further explains that having his doctorate is *"a kind of license to access the academic world"* and *"it is the knowledge that you gained during the process that is more valuable than your thesis"*. Drawing on his own experience, Edward hopes to develop a style of supervision that caters for the academic and research needs of the students. More importantly, he wants to provide students with a supportive and safe learning environment that fits the characteristic of PhD students as mature learners. In essence, Edward's story reflects an optimistic evaluation of his learning experience and what he has learned from the experience marks the beginning of a new chapter for him.

Key Themes

Doing PhD at the IIUM

In the narrative, Edward indicates that the IIUM has provided a conducive environment for his doctoral learning and research activity. Initially, Edward was enrolled on a PhD program at one of the Malaysian research universities, but after eight months he decided to leave the program due to several issues: the expensive tuition fee, cannot use Arabic as the

written language in the thesis and the supervisors were hardly available. Edward explains that:

> *There were many times that I had to make appointment through their personal assistants. These professors they mostly work with the Ministry of Higher Education on national educational research and most of the time they are not around and sometimes I had to take a day off to meet them but in the end, they were not around.*

Disappointed, Edward left the program and decided to continue his doctoral program at the IIUM for a number of reasons. Firstly, he was self-funded and he needed to work in order to support himself and his family. At the time, he was working at the IIUM, thus, he was eligible for a reduction in tuition fees. This alleviated his financial worries, hence, allowing him to focus on his studies. Apart from the financial aspect, Edward describes that the IIUM's environment offered him both international and Arabic language contexts as well as the opportunity to work with academics who are experts in his doctoral research:

> *The sample of my study comes from the place that I was teaching… and it's helping me a lot in writing my thesis. … This university can offer you the language environment where people are talking Arabic and there are a lot of international students compared to other university. And at the time, for my area of specialization we don't have any scholars or experts in this field, except in this university.*

While he is content with the research environment, Edward remarks that the IIUM exercises lengthy procedures that could make things challenging for students. Edward further claims that students, like him, often become caught in the complicated administrative paperwork, that more often than not delayed their progress:

> *I do find that there is too much bureaucracy here; too many processes that delay students' progress and too many forms to fill in from submitting your topic to proposal defense. I believe it prevents students from completing on time. Like myself, I began my study part-time but in the second semester, my supervisor told me to change to full-time mode so that I could submit early. I had to write a letter to the director of postgraduate study. But it was not easy because the university needs to make money and the longer time you take the better for them.*

I agree with Edward's remark about the lengthy procedures and how it can affect the students' overall progress. Similar insight has been discussed in some studies, for instance

Deem and Brehony (2000) and Golde (2005) suggested that supports from institution can play a significant role in ensuring the success of students.

Age does not Matter

In the narrative, Edward mentions that although his supervisor is considered one of the youngest supervisors in the faculty, he is competent enough. Edward recalls that he first met the supervisor, Dr. James, sometimes in late 2011. They met by chance at a work gathering and were introduced to each other through mutual friends. From their short conversation, Edward learnt that Dr. James had just completed his PhD and it had taken him only three years. Intrigued and interested to know more about Dr. James, Edward shares how he followed Dr. James on Facebook:

> *I saw him on Facebook. I added him and from there I would ask him questions related to my study. At the time, I was looking for the research gap in my study. So, he guided me in terms of how to transform the research into problem statement and how this can be addressed by research questions and objectives, supported by literature. He told me that I could complete my study quickly if not on time.*

Inspired by Dr. James' success and vast knowledge, Edward decided to approach Dr. James to become his supervisor. In the beginning, Edward recalls how his idea was disapproved by several of his friends. His friends highlighted that Dr. James was quite young and having recently completed his doctorate, he might have lack of experience in supervising doctoral students. However, Edward was undeterred and decided to go ahead with his plan. To his surprise, Dr. James agreed to be his supervisor on the condition that Edward would follow his strict guidelines and strive to complete his studies on time. Looking back, Edward relishes that he made the right decision and that they, both Edward and his supervisor, have proven to everyone that age does not necessarily play a factor in determining success in supervision:

> *His encouragement made me want to be his supervisee. I am lucky to work under him even though some people say that he is too young to supervise me. We prove everyone wrong. He is my inspiration because he completed his study on time.*

In the narrative Edward also mentions that his relationship with Dr. James is actually closer now than before, which suggests that the close bond that both Edward and his supervisor developed during their time together has left a positive impact on their present and likely future relationship:

Honestly, we are closer now since I started writing papers from my thesis and I included him as my co-author because he has helped me throughout my studies. We collaborate on research project as well. I am glad that my supervisory relationship goes beyond the academic world and continues into our daily professional work. Even now he sometimes calls me to replace some of his classes. I am happy that he is confident of my ability.

In the narrative, Edward's decision in choosing a junior supervisor rather than a more experienced supervisor is interesting because it suggests that age and seniority has less to do with good supervision. Like Edward, I prefer to work with a supervisor with lack of experience but shows genuine interest in my research than working with an experienced supervisor who gives little attention to my work. Such issue on supervisor selection has been discussed in the work of Cullen et al. (1994) that studied varying factors in supervision practices in an Australian university. The study showed that students perceived effective supervision with respect to: supervisory style; supervisor competency, supervisor attitude; and supervisor academic and intellectual standing. Moreover, the study revealed that selecting supervisors was not an easy task and students should choose carefully by reading the supervisors' work and checking them out.

Mutual Understanding of an Asymmetrical Relationship

In the narrative, Edward projects a clear indication that emphasises mutual understanding of the asymmetrical relationship between a student and a supervisor as one of the key ingredients that help maintain the dynamic in their supervision. Right from the beginning, both Edward and his supervisor had an implicit 'agreement' that requires both of them to play their specific roles in order to complete their task: the completion of the PhD. In the 'agreement,' Edward affirmed his wishes to learn from his supervisor and in return his supervisor agreed to supervise Edward on the condition that Edward would accept his ways of teaching him. The agreement helped set the roles and identities for both Edward - as the student- and his supervisor - as the teacher - for the whole duration of the doctoral study. Learning from Edward's narrative, I can propose that having a mutual understanding of what is expected from a supervisor by student and vice versa can promote better working relationship between student and supervisor. Similar insight is shown in a study by Ives and Rowley (2005) that suggested students who develop a good working relationship with their supervisors tend to succeed better and be more satisfied with their postgraduate studies.

Moreover, in the narrative, the roles and identities for both Edward and his supervisor are further imposed through the teaching and learning processes that took place during their supervision. For instance, in the narrative Edward describes how the first supervisory meeting was conducted in a direct supervisory style, whereby the supervisor did not only show but also told Edward what to do:

> *I still remember our first meeting. I brought my proposal to show him and the whole meeting was quick. He directly showed me how to improve my proposal. I felt that it was a fruitful meeting because he was kind of direct in his approach. He proposed to me some of the theories that I could use in my study and he asked me to read on my own and decide if these theories apply to my study.*

Edward describes the first meeting as a success because his supervisor's direct style of supervising gave him a clear direction to kick-start his studies. Unlike Ryan, Edward prefers a more direct-approach of supervision from the supervisor perhaps because he valued the supervisor's vast knowledge and expertise. Moreover, following the supervisor's footstep, Edward was determined to complete his studies on time. The differences in preference of supervisory styles among students have been mentioned by some authors such as Cullen et al. (1994) and Lee (2008).

In the narrative, the first meeting has provided a pattern of behaviour for the following meetings, in which both Edward and his supervisor must perform according to expectations in order for their supervision to work out. However, when one of the members fails to play his role, the task is incomplete. From the narrative, I have learned that the roles of both student and supervisor can somehow be established from the first meeting. For Edward, he was expected to take on a more independent role in his learning. When he failed to meet the expectations, he was quickly reminded of his original role and purpose in that supervisory space:

> *Never come and ask him what to do because that will be asking for trouble. I did the mistake once when he wanted to meet me but I didn't have anything to tell him. But I learnt from there … and the next time I met him I brought along some writing to show that I made some improvement. In some way, I was reminding him of my progress because I don't think he could remember everything.*

In contrast to Edward's experience, my first meeting with my supervisor was not so rigid. It actually took several supervision meetings before the supervisor and I established some ground rules. In my experience, I find it helpful for both supervisor and student to set up clear rules and expectation in order to minimise potential conflicts.

Doctoral Supervision is Purposeful

In the narrative, Edward highlights that the practice of doctoral supervision was different from his Master's degree in terms of the demands for more agency from him as the student and involvement of advanced skills such as academic reading and writing.

> *I also find that PhD supervision is different from Master's degree because you have to tell your supervisor on the progress that you make. Don't expect them to always check on you. That is how you impressed your supervisor. You must show your supervisor that you have done a lot of reading and observation.*

Similar to Edward, I too find that PhD involved a more sophisticated form of learning in comparison to my experience doing my Master's degree. One of the striking differences between doing my Master's degree and PhD is the practice of 'being critical'. Coming from a Malay cultural background, where the rules of politeness dictate one to be mindful of others' feeling, I am sometimes anxious to being openly critical of others and hurting their feelings as a result. A similar notion has been noted by Pillay (1995), who highlighted the importance of the UK readers to understand the discourse in which she conducted her studies in a non-Western context (Robinson-Pant, 2009).

In addition, Edward shares that his supervisory arrangement was unique because he was studying while working full time. As he was having difficulties being at the university for face-to-face meetings, Edward and his supervisor came to a mutual understanding to conduct supervision through alternative modality, such as Facebook and WhatsApp:

> *I guess, every supervision is unique. With my supervisor, Dr. James, it's a kind of mutual understanding. We didn't have fixed way of meeting. I didn't have a lot of face-to-face meetings with him. Usually we communicated through either Email, Facebook or WhatsApp. Sometimes I would screenshot or take pictures of my writing and send it to him. My supervisor didn't mind as long as I know when not to disturb him, like in the middle of the night. We only met in his office if I needed his signature for my candidature progress form or when I disagreed with some of his suggestion. Then we would meet up and debate it. Our meetings usually lasted from half hour to one hour.*

Another feature of Edward's supervisory narrative that I believe is significant to ensure a successful supervision experience is the different strategies or supervisory styles employed by his supervisor. Edward narrates that there were many different qualities demonstrated by his supervisor during his supervision that ranging from being supportive, collaborative, committed, involved, and firm, to being flexible throughout the three years they were together:

I feel comfortable with him because he is supportive. He always replied my messages or emails. He is approachable… If my supervisor were busy he would tell me that he received my email and that he would respond later. He also shared articles that he found. …It doesn't matter if the journals are irrelevant to my studies but the fact that he cares is a good motivation. He encouraged me to work independently but at the same time if he saw me going off track he would guide me. In general, I can say that he is firm with some degree of flexibility.

Edward also highlights another quality of his doctoral supervisor that empowered his confidence. He shares that his supervisor would provide him with the opportunity to mentor other research students. From his insight, I believe that the opportunity did not only promote Edward's self-confidence and self-esteem, but it also gave Edward a vindication of his own progress in learning:

Another reason why I feel comfortable with him is because he trusts me enough to work with his Master's students. Sometimes when he was away from campus he would ask his students to see me for advice. I feel good that he gives me the opportunity to practice the knowledge that he taught to other students. He says that I am eligible enough to impart that knowledge to other students.

My Vulnerabilities

One of the significant themes in Edward's narrative is the challenges that he faced as a PhD student, including: navigating the different conventions of Arabic Language literacy, doing academic writing, and managing family and work commitments:

My journey is a bit challenging because my thesis is in Arabic. Since I am not a native speaker I have to proof-read a lot. I need to learn how to write academically. I had to double my effort to make my thesis readable and accepted in the academic world. Every day I could only write after 11 at night because during the daytime I had to work. Sometimes I didn't have the mood to write and I had to settle some family stuff. Only then after 11 at night I had some time to focus on my study.

It is interesting that in the narrative Edward does not regard his vulnerability as incapacitating his motivation to study, but rather a reinforcement for him to strive further. I believe that being an adult learner, as pointed by Knowles (1990), Edward was able to recognise his priority in life and thus, created ways to overcome this vulnerability. This is evident in the narrative when Edward talks about managing the different commitments in his life at that time. Edward also shares some of the strategies that he utilised in order to take charge of his own study while managing his other commitment:

Discipline is very important. Every day I made sure I wrote something even if it was only one word because if not I lost my momentum. Many students think that you must wait for ideas before you write but I believe that you should just write so that your

supervisor can have a look at it. If there is nothing to read, what do you expect from your supervisor?

Besides, in the narrative, Edward also recounts how he fully utilised the many resources around him that aided his understanding, which in turn complemented his doctoral learning:

> *I read blogs on research method, and data analysis. Sometimes I would join seminars or research defense events. From there I met a lot of research students. I am also active on Facebook especially Doctoral Support Group. There are many online discussions among research students and I find them less boring because it is done in a less formal setting.*

My PhD: A Stepping Stone

In the narrative, Edward sees his experience as a stepping-stone to develop his own potential. His insights on how his experience has a significant impact on his professional position in the academic world are interesting and relevant to my own context as a doctoral student:

> *It's true that after you get a doctorate, you get more chance. People start to see you… it's on you now if you want to grab it or not. I think that PhD is not the ending. Having a PhD doesn't mean that you know everything but it is a kind of license to access the academic world. PhD is not about thesis writing, it is more about the knowledge that you gained during the process that is more valuable than your thesis. Without these experiences how are you going to explain to your supervisee? If you share your own hardship during the doctoral journey, you will be able to help your supervisee.*

Drawing from his own experience, Edward is inspired to develop a style of supervision that caters for the academic and research needs of the students:

> *When I become a supervisor, I will guide my students on how to find the research gap in the beginning of the study. I will encourage them to read research journals. It is about finding a new approach to a study, using new sample, new culture, or new setting.*

More importantly, he wants to provide students with a supportive and safe learning environment that fits the characteristic of PhD students as mature learners:

> *As a supervisor, you should not humiliate or insult your students. You can be more understanding and saving face by giving statement and encouraging students to read more. It is important to make the students feel that the supervisors value them. You have to nurture the relationship between you and the student because you will be seeing each other for three to four years. If you do that, the relationship lasts longer*

and you can collaborate with each other. If not, you will never see them again. Yes, they are mature students and they can work on their own but we have to guide them because research is not fixed or permanent, it changes.

Like Edward, I intend to use my doctoral learning and supervisory experience as a platform to make myself a better practitioner in the future. As suggested by Edward, as a supervisor I should take into account the characteristics of doctoral students as mature learners when choosing appropriate approach to guide them. Similar insight has been suggested by some authors, such as Knowles (1990) and Merriam and Caffarella (1991), who highlighted the importance of understanding the characters of adult learners in order to ensure meaningful learning experience.

4.2.3 Jacob's Story

It's a bitter-sweet experience…a phase that you have to go through in order to graduate. You are responsible for your own learning anyway, only you, and no one else.

Introduction

Jacob is another home doctoral graduate in his late thirties. Before embarking on his doctoral journey, Jacob worked as one of the teaching staff at the IIUM for about six months after receiving his Master's degree. In order to be promoted to full lectureship, Jacob applied for a scholarship from the IIUM to do his PhD in 2010. When his application was approved, he decided to do his PhD locally due to his personal and family commitment, and so he enrolled himself in a PhD by Coursework and Research program at the university. Throughout his doctoral journey, Jacob was supervised by a supervisory committee that consisted of a main supervisor with two co-supervisors. At the time of the interview, Jacob had successfully completed his doctoral degree and worked at the university as an Assistant Professor.

Global Impression

In general, Jacob's narrative shows an atypical experience of supervision of someone who has one foot as a doctoral student and another foot as a junior supervisor in the same context. This bi-positionality reveals a reflection of the different challenges that Jacob has faced in the past as a student, and is facing in the present as a supervisor. Embedded in the reflections are Jacob's dual perspectives on the experience of being supervised and doing the supervision. He also narrated his unique experience of being supervised by his friends

and how the experience tested their relationships. Apart from that, Jacob's narrative implies the interplay of power and status rooted in supervisory practice and the higher education institution in general. For instance, in his narrative Jacob recounted the power shifts in his social status, from teaching staff to student and from student to supervisor, and the consequences of the shifts on the power dynamic between Jacob, his supervisor and others within the university. Overall, Jacob describes his supervisory experience as a bittersweet journey that teaches him life lessons, from the highs and lows of his doctoral learning to the values and meanings of friendship.

Key Themes

Managing PhD

One of the significant themes embedded in Jacob's narrative is how he tried to manage his personal life while at the same time continuing his doctoral studies. In the narrative, Jacob narrates how he dedicated two years of his doctoral study period to completing his PhD by coursework mode. He feels that the time that it took for him to complete thirteen subjects was needlessly long. As a consequence, it did not only prolong his total study period for another year, but it also took a toll on his well-being. During that time, he felt isolated from the community:

> *I felt that the first two years I was busy with my coursework as I had 13 subjects. During those times, I felt excluded from the community. I admit that the coursework takes a lot of my time.*

However, from a supervisor's point of view Jacob contends that coursework can prepare students with the necessary skills and knowledge. Unlike doing a PhD by research, Jacob finds that by doing coursework students will receive more guidelines from the lecturers, therefore making the PhD learning process more structured:

> *I believe that doctoral coursework provides guidance and exposure to students. From my experience, all lecturers would give assignments that were related to our own research. There is a saying – killing two birds with one stone – and I found that convenient and time efficient … I think that if you want to be an academic or a lecturer, you should choose coursework. The knowledge and exposure will help students tremendously later in their profession.*

I found myself agreeing with Jacob's view of the benefits of coursework in exposing doctoral students to the many aspects of doctoral skills and critical issues relevant to their field of study. While such coursework may have many potential benefits, I have some

reservation of Jacob's claim that coursework is convenient and time efficient. Particularly, for students (i.e. like Ryan and myself) who have limited funding or under strict completion time, completing coursework may be inconvenient, time consuming and expensive. From my experience, while I value the knowledge that I gained from doing my doctoral coursework, I sometimes felt that the experience had taken my time and focus away from my main doctoral study. Especially with a recent decision made by the MoHE to limit its scholarship to a three-year doctoral program, many students who were registered in a four-year doctoral program, myself included, were left in a quandary, both emotionally and financially. As a result of the withdrawal, I had to bear the cost of the final year tuition fee and the living allowance. Nevertheless, from a supervisor's point of view, I agree with Jacob that coursework will give more benefits to future academics in terms of the level of theoretical and practical knowledge and exposure that they will acquire.

Moreover, in the narrative, when describing how he feels when interacting with others at the IIUM, Jacob admits that there was some degree of difference in the ways he was treated as a student. Although he was previously a member of academic staff, when he assumed the status as a student, Jacob remarks that he did not receive any favourable treatment from other staff. However, interestingly, once he graduated and occupied the role of a lecturer, his status was quickly reinstated. Jacob admits that with the new status, he feels that the treatment that he gets is much better:

> *Although I used to work here, but as a student, I received the same treatment just like other students. There were no privileges. They were pretty strict. Yes, it was frustrating but if I were in their shoes, I would do the same, if not the students will take advantage. I understand that as a student, you just have to bear with it. I believe that if we get rid of our ego and we go with the flow, the experience will be less stressful. For me, it was not really difficult because I knew most of the staff. However, I won't deny that there were certain individuals who made things more complicated for me. But there are also others who were willing to go out of their way to help you. The PhD period only lasts for four years. Once you completed, it will be worth it. Now when they see me or when I go to the PGR office, these people would smile awkwardly. I feel that they recognise who I am now and give me the respect that I deserve.*

In the narrative, I found Jacob's positions as both student-supervisor are interesting and relevant to my own experiences. Like Jacob, I have worked for almost ten years before I decided to further my study. When I first started it was difficult for me to adjust to my new role and status as a student. Instead of being in front of the class to teach, I sat behind a desk and listened to the instructor. However, the awkwardness disappeared once I

embraced my new student life and got to know other research students. Now that my student life is coming to an end, I am anxious to leave as I have to take up new teaching/supervising role which feels strangely familiar yet different. Nonetheless, I believe that my own experience as a doctoral student will be useful when I supervise other students. This is highlighted by Jacob when he narrates that his experience as a student has enabled him to reflect on the ways he has been supervised as a student and thus, worked on how he can improve that experience for his future students as a supervisor. For example, Jacob recalls that:

> *I still remember my first meeting with my supervisor. When I went to see him, he said to come and see him only if I had new things to present to him… So, I had to bring something for our meeting, otherwise my supervisor told me not to come. At first, I was glad that I did not have to see him that often, but I was not aware of the consequences. Three years later, I was not progressing as expected and I had to apply for extension.*

In the narrative, Jacob recalls that initially he was pleased that his supervisor would only agree for a supervisory meeting if he produced some kind of writing. Based on the narrative, I sensed that such rule has given Jacob an excuse not to see his supervisor. However, as time passed, Jacob realised that his progress was badly affected and he was forced to extend to the fourth year. I believe that by reflecting on his own experience as a doctoral student, Jacob values the importance of having regular meetings with students and establishing a better relationship with students in order to provide a more comfortable environment for his students. He believes that by sharing his expertise and experience with students will improve the students' learning experience:

> *I have become a supervisor for a year now and from my experience, it is unwise to meet your students only when they have something new to show us. Because it can take up to a month, two months, and even three months before they come and see their supervisors. To my students I will ask them to come and see me every month, just to check on their progress. At least, I want them to gain some motivation or advice from our meetings. For now, I try to make things easy for my students. Meaning, I let them focus on their own research and I keep my role as to advise them on the techniques. … I do need some training on my supervisory skills. I'm not sure how to be a supervisor actually and I have bought some books and I have booked training on how to be a good supervisor conducted by the university.*

Moreover, Jacob's remark in regard to the work distribution among supervisory committee is insightful especially to a new supervisor like myself. I believe it is important to know what kind of role each supervisor will be playing within a supervisory committee because in some universities supervisory role carries some weight in the annual performance

appraisal report. This is highlighted in the narrative whereby Jacob comments on the unequal distribution of responsibility among the supervisors. He believes that all supervisors within the supervisory committee should contribute more productively when supervising doctoral students instead of putting all the hard work on the main supervisor:

> *In terms of practicality, most students would refer to their main supervisors because they have basically the final say. Whatever it is, main supervisor's decisions are the breaking point. However, if the co-supervisors are receiving the same benefits as the main supervisor in terms of credit and promotion wise, I do think that they should contribute more or less the same.*

My Supervisory Relationship is Complicated

One of the significant themes in Jacob's narrative is his description of the complex relationship between himself and his supervisors. In the narrative, Jacob's relationship with his supervisors underwent several changes that made it complicated. For instance, Jacob shares that his supervisors are in fact his mutual friends:

> *My supervisors are actually my friends. We know each other for quite some time. My main supervisor is much older than me of about 10 years and my co-supervisors completed their PhDs two to three years before me. I am the youngest one in our supervisory group. When I approached my main supervisor, he was willing to supervise me. Although his expertise is quantitative research and my research is qualitative based, I chose him because he is fluent in Arabic and I trusted that he could supervise me. …The co- supervisors were not involved that much. Most of the time they left everything to me. I guess they trusted me, because we are friends and about the same age.*

Underlying their relationship, I believe, is the interplay of power that shapes the roles between supervisor and student. In the narrative, Jacob's personal relationship with his supervisor underwent a transformation when they entered a more professional domain – that of supervision. The transformation required the shift from a symmetrical relationship (balanced between friend and friend) to an asymmetrical one (between supervisor and student) that assigned different roles to both Jacob and his supervisors. The shift, I believe has indirectly altered the power dynamic between Jacob and his supervisors/friends:

> *I thought since I knew him, it would be easy, but I didn't expect him to be strict. To my surprise I saw a different side of him during our supervision. Everything about him changed. He was different. During supervision, sometimes I did feel upset when he gave some feedback. Usually when we met I would show him my proposal. When commenting his approach was stricter, he sounded like he did not know me personally. Sometimes he would get upset. He said that he went through the same strict experience with his own supervisor. So, at first, I was offended but slowly I began to take things more seriously and not taking it for granted anymore.*

Interestingly, the new power dynamic also brought different expectations. For instance, initially in the narrative Jacob was emotionally affected as his expectation of a friendly treatment from his supervisor did not materialise. He describes how he was surprised by the drastic changes in the beginning, but as they moved forward with the whole supervisory process, he learned that it was nothing personal. His supervisor's strict approach was in some ways influenced by the way his supervisor's personal experience as a doctoral student. Once Jacob recognised that their supervisory relationship was not driven by personal but more objective purposes, Jacob and his supervisors managed to focus on the task at hand. Four years later, when Jacob completed his doctorate his relationship with his supervisors transformed again. The transformation had replaced the asymmetrical relationship between supervisor and student into a more symmetrical relationship between two friends. From Jacob's perspective, the process of transformation was a smooth one probably because they had come to an agreement that the supervisory relationship was impermanent but purposeful. Once Jacob completed his doctorate, everything went back to how it was before:

> *Once I have completed my studies, he became his old self again. And now we are back being friends, like before. In a way, our relationship went through some changes. There was a striking difference between when he was my supervisor and now in terms of the formality and such. Now that everything is over it changed back to normal. Now that we are working together we become friends again.*

Between 'Us' and the 'Other'

In his narrative, Jacob distinguishes the different challenges faced by home and international students and also between home students who study locally and home students who study overseas. He notes that local students who are studying in their own countries face more obstacles and challenges than others. One of the struggles is managing social expectation and commitment. For instance, in Jacob's story he recalls the anxiety of thinking how other members of his social circle might perceive him on his lack of participation in their social activities. Jacob then opines how home students who study overseas do not have such obligations and are therefore able to complete their studies faster. Besides personal and academic challenges, an expectation to take part in social obligations can be an added struggle to home doctoral students like Jacob.

> *When I first started I would hang out with other students who were in the same situation as myself. In the beginning, we often shared and exchanged opinions. But after sometimes, many of us started to withdraw from the group and worked on our own…I even stopped teaching the night classes to focus on my research. To fund my studies, I had to apply for research grant from the university and used that to finance*

my data collection and other expenses. So, during those times, I felt that other people saw me as calm and collected kind of a person but they didn't know the things in my head. I was always thinking and worrying. When there were invitations to social gatherings, I was always faced with the questions of going or not going. I felt guilty either way. But overseas students they can finish in three or three and a half years and come back. No one disturbs them. Like us who studied locally, the challenges are bigger.

Moreover, when reflecting about the challenges that international students might face, Jacob tells a story of one of his friends. He narrates that most international students are able to complete faster than home students because they have less commitment and therefore are able to focus on their studies. However, Jacob observes that some of them faced similar struggles when it comes to managing family commitment:

I have a friend, he is an international student from Uganda and he completed everything within three years. He basically 'lives and breathe his research' and he mainly stayed in his room. But at the same time, he presented and published papers. Basically, he knew what he had to do to complete. Once he completed, he returned to his home country. I noticed that most international students they completed on time because they have less commitment. Some of them even did it in two years. Those without family commitment usually will graduate sooner but those with family, they have many other commitments and many would extend their studies.

Reflecting on my experience being an international student in the UK university, there are many challenges that I have had to overcome such as being away from family and friends, getting used to unfamiliar social and academic practices, making new friends and facing up to prejudices. I believe, some of these challenges (i.e. facing up to prejudice, separating from family) might not be so obvious for students who are studying in their local universities. Studies of doctoral students and their set of challenges have been highlighted by previous research such as Deem and Brehony (2000) and Tsouroufli (2015).

4.2.4 Nissa's Story

Sometimes it takes about one hour, sometimes three hours. Usually at her office but sometimes at her place … [supervision is] informal but still we do our work. It's a contract.

Introduction

Nissa is an international doctoral graduate in her late thirties. Before coming to the IIUM, she worked as a lecturer in a university in Maldives. She first came to the IIUM to do her Master's degree. After completed her Master's degree, Nissa received a scholarship from the IIUM and decided to stay on to do her doctorate. She was enrolled in a PhD by

Coursework and Research program and was supervised by a senior female supervisor. Nissa finally completed her studies in 2015 after four years of hard work. When I approached her for the interview, she was preparing to go back to her home country after graduating. She shares with me that she plans to go back and applies for a teaching position at a newly established international university. In regard to her doctoral experience at the IIUM, Nissa hopes to share the experience with her future students and colleagues.

Global Impression

Nissa's narrative in general revolves around her experience engaging with the learning environment, such as the cultures at the IIUM, the doctoral program, and choosing the right supervisor. In particular, her narrative highlights some of the obstacles that Nissa has to overcome in order to make her supervision work for both Nissa and her supervisor. I find Nissa's narrative intriguing because her story showcases some supervisory elements that can foster a conducive environment for doctoral learning as well those elements that can potentially harm the dynamic of supervision.

Key Themes

Islamic Cultures at the IIUM

One theme that I find prevalent in Nissa' narrative is the relevance of the Islamisation of Knowledge philosophy in the IIUM 's curriculum, which integrates the works of Islamic scholars alongside contemporary knowledge. She comments that there is a lack of emphasis on Islamic studies in her country, thus, studying at the IIUM gives her the opportunity to learn more about knowledge from the Islamic perspectives:

> *Maldives is a 100 percent Muslim country but if we look at the courses there is hardly what we called Islamic studies. When I started my Masters here, I learnt a lot of things. But when I did my Bachelor in Sri Lanka, most theories come from the Western culture and we were not aware of the Islamic scholars …It opens my mind to learning about Muslim scholars and their contributions to Islam. So, it was very motivational and new to me.*

Apart from integrating the Islamic perspective with the modern knowledge, the IIUM also provides its students with cultures that are laden with Islamic and local Malaysian values. Initially, I was surprised when Nissa told me in the narrative that although she comes from a different country, she is well adjusted to the local cultures. Later on, I believe that after living in Malaysia for almost seven years, Nissa has become accustomed to the local life.

Moreover, coming from a similar Islamic background might make it easier for Nissa to relate to her experience studying at the IIUM.

> *I don't feel there are differences in cultural values. I have been here for seven years and I have been exposed to cultures in Malaysia. Even with my supervisor, I didn't find any cultural differences because we are all Muslims. We share more or less the same things. Continuing my PhD here, I would say a positive thing for me because my PhD experience was totally different from my Master's experience. Perhaps if I had not gotten this scholarship and if I had gone to New Zealand I wouldn't have been exposed to the Muslim culture and the Muslim friends and I would have a totally different picture of the knowledge that I learned here.*

Doing Coursework

Another important theme in Nissa's narrative is the benefit of coursework in her doctoral learning. Like Jacob, Nissa believes that the coursework will expose doctoral students to new theories and educational practices across countries. From her experience, attending the coursework has improved her skills, especially in research methodologies. She shares that attending coursework was time-efficient because she did not have to rely on her supervisor or her research friends. She implies that as the courses were taught by many lecturers, students would have the opportunities to get to know them as potential supervisors:

> *I think [enrolling in a PhD by] coursework and research is better, than a PhD by research only because during coursework you can get exposure to the theories and the underlying issues. … [but] If you take PhD by research only mode then you will have no exposure. From the exposure that we get … we are able to identify current issues in education system in other countries. Though all of the theories are known to me beforehand but the classes give me exposure to a lot of things. Even when my friends asked me if they should [choose coursework] I would always suggest them to do PhD by coursework. And these courses are taught by potential supervisors so you can get to know them first. I found that these courses, like advance qualitative research and advance quantitative research are useful because I did mixed method, so this probably saved me a lot of time. Otherwise you have to get help from either your supervisor or friends.*

Reflecting on Nissa's insight, I agree that attending the coursework might provide a social platform for the students to meet potential supervisors besides getting exposure to new knowledge. Moreover, practitioners/lecturers might have the chance to get to know their potential supervisees. In this light, I believe that the students' engagement with the coursework offer benefits for both students and practitioners.

It's all about the Chemistry

The subject of supervisor is one of the prevalent themes in Nissa's narrative. I am surprised that despite the common view of the importance of the supervisory role in doctoral learning, there are no clear guidelines given either by the university or department on the criteria for choosing a good supervisor. Nissa shares that most of the information comes from other doctoral students:

> *We were not briefed of how to find the supervisor. We either learned it from our classmates or from the previous students who have already completed their PhDs. I think it's a good idea to have the department to have a session on this thing or they could even invite students who have completed their PhDs to share their experience as to how they go about choosing their supervisors. I think it will be very helpful to the students.*

Nissa explains that by learning from what others have said, she came to the conclusion that the first thing to look for when deciding on a supervisor was choosing someone who knew her well. I assumed that the idea behind this is to find the chemistry between prospective supervisor and student. From Nissa's point of view, appointing one of her lecturers who had taught her would be a good decision as she or he would have a good idea of Nissa's ability and competency. Nissa also reveals that some supervisors sometimes approach their prospective students in similar ways:

> *I asked the students who have already completed their PhDs from my department and of how they went about it. From their experience, I learn these things. First thing the supervisor should know you very well, that means, having to find somebody who have already taught me and who have seen my work. If I choose one of my lecturers she would have already checked my assignment, would have some ideas of what are the grades that I have got. Even the supervisors themselves are very cautious. They won't just accept any one because they will not want to end up with a student who is lazy or lousy. When I approached my supervisor, she said she didn't have any problem and there was no reason for her to not accepting me. She already taught me three classes and I scored [good marks] in her courses. She was more than happy to accept me.*

Role Playing in Supervision

Another significant theme related to supervisor in Nissa's narrative is the expected roles between supervisor and student. Nissa believes that doctoral students should be in control of their own learning and not necessarily depend on their supervisors. She views the role of supervisor as a facilitator who motivates students. In this position, a supervisor, therefore, does not have to be an expert in the student's area of studies. From Nissa's story, I believe that her opinion with respect to the supervisory role might be shaped by her own

supervisory experience. She narrates that her learning process has been greatly enhanced through working with her supervisor:

> *According to the administration, the main supervisor has to be a person from your area. I personally feel that supervisor does not have to be an expert in the students' fields. It is up to the students to convince the supervisor. A supervisor has a very minor role in comparison to the work that the student is doing. A Supervisor is like a facilitator because he/she doesn't do all the work. I don't think it's a problem because my supervisor is coming from the language area and a lot of time, she would point out to me the language errors. And she was also very firm with the quality of work. She always highlights that we shouldn't be writing our thesis just for a specific audience but it should be to a wider community. I also have a lot of positive experience. I know that it is not your supervisor job to correct your English grammar but she was very particular and very critical and she would explain how you should quote and how to rephrase. I feel that she was helping me tremendously in my writing and because she is critical I managed to improve my work. I have a lot of fond memories of her and when I am supervising my students I know exactly how to go about it.*

When describing her role as a doctoral student, I believe that Nissa takes on a more active and independent position in learning.

> *She was a very busy person … holding an important position at one of the centres, lecturing and fulfilling other duties outside the university. Despite her busy schedule she gave me ample time for supervision. Whenever I want to have an appointment with her, I would text her. Sometimes, she would be ready to meet me and we would meet for almost two hours. At other times, we would meet for half an hour … so it depends. If there were any cancellation, we would reschedule it… I have no problem with that. The supervisor shouldn't be running after the students and students should always be ready with the work to show their supervisors. I always make sure that whenever I meet her, I present something new so that she actually knows that I am also working hard or otherwise she will be disappointed. It is very important that you don't totally depend on your supervisor. For example, I did mixed method but my supervisor's expertise is qualitative so I didn't bother her. Instead I got help from my friends with the statistics and later I showed it her how I had done everything… so that she didn't have to worry about those things. I wanted her to know that everything was in place and I was really working hard on this thing and that actually saved a lot of our time.*

The insight from Nissa's story strikes a chord with my own experience. Coming from a similar academic background like Nissa and learning from my own supervisory experience, I acknowledge that there are many obligations that a supervisor will have to manage as well as overcoming the constraints that come with the job. Therefore, as a student, I have always told myself to be more proactive and in control of my own learning.

Friendly Relationship

Relationship between Nissa and her supervisor is another important theme in Nissa's narrative. At the beginning of their relationship, Nissa expected her supervisor to show some distance between them. However, to Nissa's surprise there was no significant awkwardness between them. The supervisor treated her with kindness as Nissa explains:

> *At first, I felt that since she is a professor and I'm a student, there should be a little gap between us. Yet later on as she started her supervision and during the course of the time, we became more like friends. Sometimes when I'm not able to meet her in the university she would invite me to her home and the supervision was sometimes conducted at her place.*

Reflecting on Nissa's story and my learning/teaching experiences in Malaysia, I believe it is a common practice for some lecturers to invite students to their homes as a sign of affection and generosity. Moreover, from the Islamic perspectives, Muslims are encouraged to show hospitality towards others, in particular when they have no family or friends in that place. I believe that it is crucial for supervisors to create some bonds with their students, especially with those who come from abroad as they might feel lonely in the new place. This is evident in Nissa's story in which she describes her relationship with the supervisor.

> *We have a very friendly relationship, it is not very formal, but it is not very informal either. That was a very positive experience for me in comparison to other PhD students that they have to wait for their supervisors for hours for appointment just to be told at the last minute that the supervisors could not make it. Those things never happened to me.*

The Power of Communication

The final theme in Nissa's narrative is that communication - or lack thereof - contributes to potential conflict between supervisor and student in supervision. Throughout the narrative, she describes two instances of communication breakdown that brought tension to her supervisory relationship with the supervisor. The first communication breakdown occurred in Nissa's second year of study when her supervisor went abroad for a long sabbatical leave. During her supervisor's eight-month hiatus, Nissa reflected that she was given little direction to go on with her studies. On top of that, due to other limitations - such as the technology - she was not able to reach out to her supervisor during the times in need. She believes that the gap in the communication delayed her progress:

> *She had to go to the US for eight months and that kind of delay my study. She told me that she had to leave and suggested what I could do during that time. During the time*

she was away, I was searching for my literature and doing the background, the research questions, the questionnaire. But there were many times that I actually needed her guidance but the communication [with my supervisor] was lacking back then and I wasn't able to get that help. I think now it will be totally different with the social media because during my time the Viber Application was not frequently used. Also at the time, she was involved with another university so she was busy. Now, I feel that if she had been here it would have been totally different. It would save a lot of time for my study period.

Reflecting on Nissa' experience, I believe that a good communication practice between supervisor and student is crucial to avoid potential conflicts such as Nissa's. Interestingly, other studies have shown that the supervisory relationship is often fraught and unsatisfactory as a result of neglect, abandonment, revenge of previous experience and disdain by the students (Johnson et al., 2000).

From the narrative, I have also identified another miscommunication episode between Nissa and her supervisor. In her third year of study, when Nissa submitted what she thought her final thesis draft, she was startled and confused when the supervisor asked her to change and rewrite the whole thesis:

When I submitted my first draft, I don't feel that it was read properly because after the second draft was submitted, only then all the comments and feedback started coming in. During the first draft, she didn't give much comments but only asked for changes here and there. But after I submitted the second draft, I had to change the whole thing. It shows that when I submitted the first draft she had not read it properly. It would have saved a lot of time if she read the first draft of the thesis thoroughly. I find that it's not only with my supervisor but with other students' supervisors too. They [the supervisors] hardly look at the theses. They wouldn't go word-by-word and they just browse through it and ask their students to make changes randomly.

I believe that her confusion of her supervisor's action led to her doubting the supervisor's work ethic. Moreover, a lack of transparency of how the supervisor assessed her writing became grounds for miscommunication and mistrust, which in turn affected Nissa's emotional well-being in a negative way:

I felt really sad that moment. I felt like I shouldn't have taken her as my supervisor in the first place because after so much effort and work being put into it … she told me to change the whole thing. I was so upset but I didn't say it to her. But then I think she would have understood it from my face that, I was like almost about to cry … I just couldn't say anything, so, I said that I will see her after the correction. That's all I could say because I thought that I was on the verge of finishing.

Reflecting on Nissa's experience, while I found it frustrating that Nissa was not able to confront the supervisor and express her disappointment, coming from a similar Islamic background, I believe that Nissa's respect towards the supervisor has prevented her from getting angry. Moreover, being a student, I could relate with Nissa's predicament when it comes to confronting the supervisor due to the unequal power structure between a student and a supervisor. Similar insight has been discussed by some studies such as Grant (1999) who suggested that within supervisory relationship, student and supervisor are located in a profoundly unequal power structure which has many effects. In Nissa's case, the inequality between them makes Nissa more guarded to what can or cannot be said and how things may or may not be said to her supervisor.

Above all, I believe that Nissa's narrative has highlighted that is crucial to make the operation of supervisory practice and the decision behind it more transparent and systematic, not only for the benefits of safeguarding the students' interest but for the university to prevent any misuse of power. The incident was also a turning point for both Nissa and her supervisor. After the incident, Nissa took on a more productive and positive outlook. She devised some strategies to improve her communication skills with her supervisor:

> *I told her that I didn't think I could finish on time because I already extended my study period. I have also decided to improve more positively. So, I started to show her my correction bit by bit. So that's the strategy I adapted. I felt that after doing the correction the thesis was much better. Now I am telling my friends to take the supervisor comment positively.*

Nissa's narrative shows that effective communication between supervisor and student is paramount to strengthen the supervisory relationship, to ensure completion of goals and to create an overall positive experience. From my experience, good and frequent communication with my supervisors has prevented myself from second guessing their competence and motivation. I believe that such communication is crucial to generate a sense of respect between both student and supervisor which in turn enables both parties to work towards successful completion.

4.2.5 Maressa's Story

> *I look at it as a funny journey. Whatever it is, it depends on you. If you really want to do it, you better finish it.*

Introduction

My next doctoral graduate is Maressa. She has completed her Masters' degree in an Australian university before embarking on a doctoral journey. Initially, she was interested in studying the holy Quran and exploring its relevance for language teaching, but later on she realised that it would be difficult due to her lack of background in the Arabic language. When some of her friends suggested doing PhD by coursework and research as an opportunity to learn new things, Maressa was inspired and went on to enroll in the PhD program as a self-funded, part-time student. Maressa told me that she really enjoyed doing the coursework for three semesters. Upon receiving a tutoring position at one of the public universities, Maressa was offered a full scholarship to complete her studies within a year. Determined, Maressa accepted the offer and changed her program to a full-time mode. Unfortunately, four years later, due to some personal circumstances combined with other thesis-related issues, she quit her tutor job and changed her study mode to part-time. Reflecting on the changes, Maressa admits that she struggles to balance between her studies, career and family. Nonetheless, with sheer determination, after eight long years, Maressa found the courage to submit her thesis and receive her PhD degree.

Global Impression

I believe that Maressa's narrative is a powerful account of her eight-year long journey towards finishing the PhD. In general, the narrative showcases the dynamic of doctoral supervisory cultures that are composed and stimulated by both student and supervisor characteristics, including family, commitment, profession, education and motivation. These characteristics can be powerful forces that may alter the behaviours between supervisor and student as well as change the course of direction within the supervisory practice. Moreover, Maressa recounts the shifts in attitudes and priorities between herself and her supervisor throughout the eight years. I believe that her narrative would strike a chord with others, in particular married students, who are struggling to find a harmonious balance between parenthood, career and PhD. Furthermore, the narrative chronicles Maressa's relationship with her supervisor. Throughout her doctoral study Maressa was supervised by an experienced female Malaysian supervisor. At the beginning of the study, her supervisor was always present, but during the writing stage and towards the end of her PhD Maressa felt that she was left alone. Nonetheless, from the experience, Maressa has developed a great self-confidence that motivates her to pursue more academic and research endeavors in the future. In essence, her narrative demonstrates the persistence, continued need and responsibility of both students and supervisors to work on establishing and

maintaining the shared interests in order to achieve the ultimate goal of submitting the thesis and hence complete the doctorate.

Key Themes

Changing Priorities

One of the main themes that I have identified in Maressa's experience of supervision is the constant shift in priorities, not only in Maressa's life but also her supervisor's, and the impact of the priority shift on their supervisory dynamic. For instance, after giving birth to her child, Maressa decided to interrupt her studies in the narrative, Maressa recalls that taking care of her newborn baby PhD was overwhelming for her, and she decided to take some time off to recuperate. Unfortunately, after the break Maressa found that it was hard to get back into the momentum of her studies. She even describes the feeling of being lost during the transition period:

> *I began writing after my proposal defense but then I had to take a semester off for maternity. I am not good with multitasking and I cannot juggle many things at one time. After the break, I continued my writing up. Initially my supervisor was very helpful. She would push me to write because she could feel that I was getting a bit complacent and busy. Even during my confinement, she kept asking me to get it done. She said that I could do it. She is a full spirited woman, kind of forceful, but at the time I was a bit lost.*

From my experience of being a mother, I could relate to Maressa's story of balancing parenthood and her doctoral studies. While I was doing my Master's degree, I gave birth to my son. The stress of taking care of a newborn baby had taken a toll on my health. Consequently, I had to take a break from my studies. Some writers, such as Leonard (2001) and Skjortnes and Zachariasen (2010) have reported a similar insight with respect to female students experiencing difficulty in terms of juggling between their maternal roles and PhD.

Not surprisingly, Maressa's lack of focus had a significant impact on her supervisor's behaviours. In her story, Maressa described how in the beginning her supervisor was actively guiding her through the research process and how they would meet up quite regularly. However, when Maressa failed to produce her writing, her supervisor began to lose interest. Soon, their regular meetings started to lessen. At the time, Maressa felt that her supervisor did not care about her progress, especially when she got to know about her

supervisor's plans to retire. Towards the end, her supervisor was absent throughout much of her writing period:

> *In the beginning, we would meet up once in a fortnight. She would want to see my progress and she would ask for drafts, if there were drafts, meaning I was on the right track. She guided me through the research question, the first chapter, second chapter and methodological. But during my analysis, I got stuck. When she asked for my drafts I started giving her a lot of excuses. I think she could sense that I was not into it anymore when she said to me 'to just to get it done.' She kept urging me to finish it but she never said 'come here…I want to see it.' I felt that she didn't want to have a look at it and she wanted to just get it over and done with. One day she told me that she would be retiring soon. Later, we started to meet once a month and then once in two months. Towards the end she was like never around.*

Undeterred, Maressa decided to make some major changes in her life in order to complete her studies. After she quit her job, she shares that:

> *…now I have all the time to complete my PhD. It took me four months to get it done. I don't have problem writing the thesis, it's just when something blocks my field of thoughts. So, I was really into it and managed to complete the whole thing quickly. My supervisor at the time was about to go for her retirement and she was considering taking up teaching post abroad afterwards so I needed to hurry up.*

Based on Maressa's story and my experience, I can reflect that there are many reasons that can break or disturb progress in supervision. In Maressa's story, the shift in priorities from PhD to motherhood might have altered the supervisory dynamic between Maressa and her supervisor. On one hand, her new commitment to parenthood might be affecting her focus on the PhD, and this, in turn is interpreted by her supervisor as showing a lack of commitment. On the other hand, her supervisor at the time was going through a new phase in her career, which may have taken priority over her supervision at times.

Meeting the Expectations in Supervision

Another key theme in Maressa's experience is the different expectations between supervisor and student that result in tension within the supervisory relationship. Maressa recounts that her supervisor, prefers to work with students who can complete their PhDs within the given time because completion on time indicates successful supervision, which in turn reflects on supervisors' credibility. Initially, her supervisor was on the fence regarding Maressa's lack of background in research, but Maressa's proficiency in the English language sealed the deal:

My supervisor has a good idea of the type of supervisees that she likes. She is very fussy. I think all supervisors want students who can complete within the stipulated time so that they can progress as well. During my coursework, I used to score good marks in her subjects but she wasn't happy because of my lack of research experience. She said that it would be difficult for someone without research background to do PhD. I totally agree with her now but I think at the time she still chose me because language wise I am OK.

From Maressa's story, I believe that her lack of experience in research combined with her unfamiliarity with the research topic might have created some tensions during the supervision. Moreover, her efforts to meet the high expectations set by the supervisor put Maressa in a conflicting position. The tensions will escalate when the problems are not expressed to the supervisor:

I remember when I was in Australia, my functional grammar lecturer once said: 'it is best not to meddle around the subject because even the native speakers find it hard, let alone non-natives'. But when I met my supervisor she suggested this subject for my PhD. So, I thought it was great in the beginning (laugh). I think with my supervisor if she wants you, she will impose on you the subject that she likes. …The thing is I had never spoken to her about what I wanted to do. Initially I liked the subject under my supervisor because it was interesting and there were not many experts in my area in Malaysia. But this study involves a lot of interpretation; it's qualitative study, which I find very difficult. Especially when you come to a point where you cannot interpret anymore. That's when I got stuck. And I know that if I asked for help from my supervisor, I know she wouldn't be able to help me because it would be hard as it involved a lot of interpretation.

Moreover, in the narrative, Maressa wonders if her supervisor managed to look at her final analysis because she did not receive any feedback:

During my Viva one of the panelists asked about some words that I used in my analysis… At the time, my supervisor didn't even know that word existed in my thesis. Maybe she didn't really care because she didn't read the whole thesis thoroughly.

Reflecting on her experience, I believe that for new supervisors, there are many valuable lessons to be learnt from the narrative in regard to effective supervision. For instance, having some structure in the supervision might help students frame their progress within the time given and provide some degree of guidance to these students in familiarising and strengthening themselves with the necessary subject knowledge and research skills. These lessons are emphasised by Maressa in her story:

If I'm a supervisor, I want my supervisee to plan his or her studies and I really need to see the study plan, so that I can set a strict deadline and I cannot assume that the

student knows everything. Maybe he or she reads a lot but since we are non-native speakers of English I cannot assume that the language proficiency is similar to native speakers. There will be mistake along the way because doing the PhD is like a learning process. It is the supervisor's job to lead at the end of the day … it's your responsibility too.

Rethinking Boundaries

The final key theme in Maressa's narrative is the subject of boundary or space within the supervisory relationship that can possibly affect the way supervision is managed between supervisor and student. When describing the nature of the relationship with her supervisor, Maressa defines it as "*more like a sisterly bonding, we behave like she is my oldest sister and I am her youngest sister…that is how she treated me…we have no barriers between us*". Interestingly, a similar notion of the patient, available, sympathetic female supervisor has been discussed in some studies, such as Johnson et al., (2000). Maressa further describes that:

> *…having a meeting with my PhD supervisor is always interesting. She never asked me out but when I went to see her at her office she would always offer me some food. Because I was working as a tutor, it was hard to see her at the office. Sometimes she would come to my house and sometimes she invited me to her house.*

While Maressa valued the sisterly-bond with the supervisor, she also highlights the downsides of such close bond:

> *In terms of studies …. maybe I took advantage of our close relationship because I knew she would not mind. In a sense that she will not force me to do things that I don't want to. But I now think that ideally in academia you need to have some barriers so that your supervisee will have some sense of fear and distance between both of you. A fear that your supervisor will not like you or that if you fail your supervisor will be angry. I believe that you should instil that. In my case I was not fearful of her and I was not scared of her. I felt like there was no need for me to. That was why I didn't do what I supposed to do. That's why you should create some barriers between you and your supervisor so that you cannot be too comfortable with the relationship, if you do it will take you 10-11 years to complete your PhD.*

Based on her experience, I can propose that there are blurry lines within supervisory relationship which can potentially affect students' progress. For instance, a good bond between supervisor and student can promote good communication and make the experience of supervision more enjoyable and positive. It is also a foundation for developing a better relationship between both members. However, the blurry line between the personal and professional sides of supervision can complicate things between

supervisor and student. From my experience, I believe that navigating friendship and balancing between personal and professional relationship between students and supervisors is bound to get complicated. In my experience, I found it crucial to set appropriate boundaries in the early stages of supervision to ensure better understanding on what is expected from both sides. More importantly, having clear boundaries in supervision can prevent exploitation or misuse of power and create a safe and productive space that both supervisor and student can respect and work together harmoniously.

4.2.6 Bella's Story

We are mothers, teachers and daughters at the same time and we have to juggle everything. It's not easy but you keep telling yourself you are doing this for higher reason, for the ummah, for your children.

Introduction

Bella is a doctoral graduate in her late thirties. Before embarking on the doctoral journey, she had been teaching for more than 20 years. She decided to embark on her PhD because she is passionate about knowledge. For Bella, a PhD is not the end but rather symbolises the beginning of a new adventure that she is ready to partake in:

I didn't embark on my PhD to do anything or to become somebody. PhD is all about my own passion. It is something that I have always wanted to do even before I joined the university. As a lecturer, I have always wanted to do my PhD. Of course, now I'm already at the end of my journey, there is a whole lot of other responsibilities that are waiting for me. This is only the beginning. What we want to do after this will be even more crucial for ourselves as well as for the 'ummah' (community). It is not like I got my doctorate title now and so … I'm just going to look pretty. No, it's not like that.

Looking back, getting a PhD has always been one of her goals in life, even before she started her profession in academia. She hopes to use her knowledge and her experience to the betterment of the society, not only for her personal gain. Her altruistic outlook on her role as an educator is inspired and supported by her father and her doctoral supervisor. Bella also describes her supervisory experience as excellent, and that her supervisor is the key individual to her success: *"She means the world to me. I think she plays a big factor in how fast or how slow we go with our draft, that's a big factor, we depend a lot also on her pace"*. After three years of personal hard work and good collaboration with the supervisor, Bella has successfully completed her PhD.

Global Impression

In general, I perceive Bella's narrative as inspiring because it chronicles a journey of her personal and professional lives. Her narrative is embedded with inspirational accounts of her personal struggles as a doctoral student who has to find a balance between personal needs, filial duty, academic development and research progress. Her narrative also highlights the strategies that she used to overcome all these struggles within the resources and the time that she was confined to. Moreover, I can relate to the instances in the narrative in which Bella struggled and negotiated the tensions that surfaced throughout her doctoral journey. Apart from the struggles, Bella also tells story of accomplishment when she successfully completed her studies within the given period.

Key Themes

Doctoral Learning Process: Far more than a means to an end

One of the main themes in Bella's narrative is how the doctoral process rather than the PhD title itself adds more value to her life and lays the foundation for a long-term knowledge expedition. As a PhD is a distinctive, advanced kind of degree program that involves extensive subject-specific knowledge and superior academic and research skills doctoral students like Bella will likely be exposed to many things that are both familiar and new. She shares that her doctoral experience is one of the most valuable moments in her life. From the experience, she gains many opportunities that have enabled her to grow not only as a person but also as a student, an academic and a researcher.

> *think the best part about being a student is that you get to do stuff that you are passionate about and at the end of the day, whatever you gain will be for yourself. I find satisfaction in that sense. For me it is the journey and along the way we pick up stuff. That is the part I enjoyed the most, exploring new ideas and meeting new people. These are things, which I feel any PhD student will go through when he or she embarks on the journey. From one PhD student to another, our journey can be slightly different as well. It's also a matter of how we handle things.*

Like Bella, throughout my doctoral journey, I have been exposed to many wonderful experiences. Being a new student in a new academic setting, initially, I felt overwhelmed in getting used to the new environment. However, once I became familiar with the cultures of the department, the postgraduate and the wider community, my learning experience becomes meaningful every day. Reflecting on Bella's experience, I agree that the process of doing a PhD is far more than a means to an end. Especially, since I am in the academic world, such learning experience can inform my own supervisory practices. Moreover,

Bella shares that she enjoyed engaging with the research community from within and outside the university.

> *When I joined the faculty [as a doctoral student] I was elected to hold a position in the PGR society. So, things became very interesting. You get to meet people, rub shoulders with the top management. I suppose the highlight was when you represented the university in some events and occasions. For example, we went abroad to conduct joint program. It was the first ever seminar between the IIUM and the international universities and I felt very proud because I got to oversee everything. I never thought this would happen to me as a PhD student. When I started off my PhD I thought, at the end of the day I will get my scroll, but this came as a package … you get to brush up on your soft skills.*

I believe that her engagement and participation with other research students and academic staff has not only developed Bella's soft skills but also instilled a deep sense of pride which in turn, helped develop her self-confidence and research competence. Apart from that, Bella was also given the opportunity to engage with other academics in her faculty:

> *I really look highly upon my lecturers at the faculty and the things that they have achieved. They have made a lot of contribution to the education field and also to the 'ummah' [community] as a whole. They really inspired me that someday I can be like them. I think one very important criterion I find among them is their humility; they are very down to earth. They remind me that once you have that title, it's not about how much more you know, but how much less that now you know. I also want to be somebody who is approachable. As a lecturer, you don't want your student to feel like going to our class a dreadful thing. You want your student to be excited to see you and enthusiastic to come to your class. I want them to be looking forward to having discussion with me and feeling comfortable having me as their supervisor and as a person too. I think that is very crucial.*

Drawing from Bella's narrative, I can relate to her admiration of the supervisors as role models embodying Islamic virtues. Being brought up in Islamic Malay cultures, I also look up to my supervisors as good role models. Moreover, I believe that supervision, like other teaching and learning process, not only involves knowledge transfer but the process of positive character building.

Positive Outlooks

Another key theme in Bella's narrative is her demonstration of positive qualities that enabled her to survive the journey. Bella's positive attitudes on learning are mainly influenced by her father, a retired principal. Growing up around books, Bella was introduced to the world of academia and the power of education. Naturally, her passion and high respect for academia led her to the next step in her life, a PhD.

I think my biggest inspiration would come from my father. He is a retired principal. When I was very young he always exposed us to education. These are the little things that spark your interest even as a child. … Teaching is to me the noblest profession anyone can be. So, when I wanted to do my PhD, it is a very significant step in my life. Getting my PhD for me is the biggest gift I can give to my parents especially my father.

In the narrative, Bella's regard for practicality and sensibility is significant when it comes to making important decisions that might make or break her progress in studies. For instance, initially she wanted to go abroad for her PhD. When her application for scholarship to study abroad was not successful, Bella had to decide what to do next. Putting the needs of her family first, she decided not to pursue it any longer but instead chose to do her PhD locally. Again, when deciding on the most suitable university to do her studies, Bella focused on the learning context that could optimise her learning process. In the end, she decided on the IIUM because the university's international position appealed to her:

First, I wanted to do my PhD abroad. I got the offer but I didn't get the scholarship. So, to make things practical and convenient for everybody, including my family especially, I decided to do it locally. I feel that here is the only university that have English language atmosphere, which is very crucial in my studies. There is another university, but English is not spoken hundred percent there and the international students are not so many there in comparison to here. For other student whose previous education is not in English, it might be intimidating but it has the edge.

Based on her experience, I believe that when managing expectations in our studies, being practical might help doctoral students to focus on the realistic goals that are achievable within the available resources. This is evident in the narrative when Bella had to reconsider her options:

When you embarked on a PhD journey, it's guided by your own passion and I have been teaching for the past 20 years. I was too ambitious as I wanted to do a lot of things but my supervisor told me diplomatically that realistically I only had about two or more years and it was OK to get it done quickly.

Determination is another important trait that enables Bella to persevere with the challenges in her studies. When she first started her doctoral program, she initially approached one of the lecturers to become her supervisor, but due to his tight schedules, he was unable to accommodate the request. Nonetheless, he recommended Dr. Sarah, who is also a renowned figure in the field. Bella then braved herself to approach Dr. Sarah, but things did not go so well at first because for some reasons Dr. Sarah was reluctant to accept any

new students at that time. Determined to make it work and also conscious of the limited time frame, Bella and Dr. Sarah came into an agreement that would allow Bella to demonstrate her academic competence, which in turn would convince Dr. Sarah to make a favourable decision. Bella's persistence and hard work is evident in her narrative:

> *Initially I already knew whom the person that I wanted to be my main supervisor but there was a little twist in my story. I had someone in my mind but he is an expert so apparently was highly sought after by so many students at that time. But he immediately recommended another professor. … I decided to approach the suggested supervisor. Initially she was reluctant. After some discussion, I told her that I would enroll in her class and after that she could decide if she wanted me to be her student or not. I thought that was a fair decision for both of us. Luckily, she agreed. So, for my coursework I attended her course that was actually relevant to my study…I just gave it my best shot and she gave me an A. So that sealed the contract and confirmed our relationship and the rest was history.*

In the narrative, I have also identified that being flexible and optimistic might help Bella to cope with unexpected or confined circumstances. For instance, when arranging supervisory meetings with her supervisor, Bella was considerate of what worked and what did not. Due to the supervisor's lack of time, Bella would arrange their meetings early in the morning. She would also set the agenda and make the necessary preparation for the meetings. Her ability to adapt positively to the changing situation enhanced her learning process, which in turn promoted progress in her studies:

> *We didn't get to meet each other as often as we wished because she was someone important at the faculty. She would go by her office timetable and I always experienced meeting her very early in the morning. So, before the meeting I would send her materials, sometimes through email, that she needs to look at. When I met her, we used our time wisely and tried to spend quality time together. I made sure I was ready with a checklist of questions and she would be ready with her feedback and so it was quite professional in a sense. In a month, we tried to meet at least once fortnightly but when I was nearing the end of my stage…the final submission, we met even more often, almost weekly at the time.*

 Like Bella, I try to maintain an optimistic attitude when facing stressful situations. I believe that being optimistic helps me focus on the situation at hand. Moreover, being optimistic is particularly important in supervision when both supervisor and student are trying to get along. Moreover, in the narrative, Bella admits that there were times when she was frustrated with herself and her supervisor. But instead of giving in to her frustration, she stayed positive and continued to improve her work. Looking back, her supervisor's 'meticulous' approach made her success possible:

I would say that every time we meet…I left the discussion room, somewhat a swollen head, but with the supervision you received; you know where to go; you know what you needed to do, so, you were not left with so many questions unanswered. I like to think of it as positive. Sometimes when we submitted our work to our supervisors we have done our best but when it was returned to us there would be a lot of marking, all red marks, so it was kind of painful but you must stay positive. I believe in the Malay saying that 'kalau tak dipecahkan ruyung manakan dapat sagonya' [when there's no pain, there's no gain]. I really hope that when my supervisor was highlighting my weaknesses, I could learn and improve further. How fast or how slow we go with our drafts, it depends a lot on her [the supervisor] pace. Sometimes it can be a painful experience too because my supervisor is very well known for her meticulous work. She was very particular about every single thing in the chapters that I've had written. But she also tried to push me to become an excellent student.

Support Systems

Given that the doctoral journey is full of twists and turns, doctoral students, myself included, more often than not, will rely on our own wits and find a solution for every problem that we encounter. However, I believe that students do not have to be alone because there are many resources or avenues where they can find supports to help them through the learning process. In my experience, the postgraduate community offers a good support to doctoral students. The community also provides a positive environment for novice researchers, like myself, to present our study in a non-intimidating setting. This is pertinent in Bella's story as she talks about the different roles that she played on top of being a student. She implies that being either a mother, a teacher or a daughter, comes with a set of challenges that she must overcome. She believes that overcoming these challenges is rewarding because her efforts will not only benefit the wider society but the next generation:

Besides being a student, you are also a mother at the same time. There are many factors that you just cannot control …because there are so many things on your plate. I cope by putting my faith, submitting myself and my effort to the Almighty. We are mothers, teachers and daughter at the same and we have to juggle everything. It's not easy but you keep telling yourself you are doing this for higher reason, for the 'ummah', for your children.

Bella shares that when juggling the different roles and responsibilities she found psychological and spiritual stability to carry on with her daily life from her faith as a Muslim. In Islam, women as mothers bear a greater responsibility and ultimately receives a greater reward as stated in the Holy Quran:

And We have enjoined man [sic] in respect of his [sic] parents – his [sic] mother bears him [sic] with faintings upon faintings, and his [sic] weaning takes two years -

saying: "Be grateful to Me and to both your parents, to Me is the eternal coming. (Sura Luqman, 31:14).

A similar notion has been discussed in a study by Mahani Mokhtar (2012) that found Muslim women students are influenced by their Islamic values. The study showed that the students "regard their academic pursuit as a form of *Ibadah (obligation to Allah),* and they are determined to make the journey successful," (p. 197).

Besides her faith, the supervisor became one of Bella's closest sources not only for academic and research-related support but also for her emotional wellbeing. Bella narrates that her supervisor was an important source for motivation for her to carry on with her studies. More importantly, her supervisor taught her to find a healthy balance between commitment to her studies and her family. She also describes the transition of the roles assumed by her supervisor throughout the duration of the studies, from being a supervisor, a friend, a buddy, to being a supporter:

> *For the period of three years she was a teacher in my class. Then we started the supervision and in the beginning, I think there was a lot of advice and guidance, like a mentor. After two years, we became more like, buddies. Of course, we are teaching in the same institution but I was able to share a lot more than just my thesis. I think the advice she gave me goes beyond just my academic requirement because I know she realised that a lot of things are actually a combination between work and family. She wanted me to finish my thesis but at the same time she also wanted me to balance it with other things in life. So, she began as a mentor but after a while when you started writing she was a supervisor, then she was a friend, buddy and finally supporter.*

In the narrative, Bella describes that her supervisor employed different approaches when supervising other students. For example, when supervising one of the international students, her supervisor would show more support:

> *My experience with her has really taught me a lot. I know several other friends who are also under her supervision. She would address us differently because everyone has different sets of needs. Like my international friend, my supervisor was helping her in a slightly different way because she knows that this girl has a husband who's also doing his PhD and that they got other constraints. I think it's good that she keeps them motivated. I'm sure it's not easy studying abroad for these people, leaving behind your loved ones. It's very important to know that your student is not just a student but also a mother, part of the society.*

However, realising that she could not rely solely on the supervisor, Bella also reached out to other research students for support. In the narrative, Bella reflects that reaching out to

other research students, in particular those who were supervised by her supervisor, gave her some encouragement and reassurance that she was not alone in her journey:

> *I have a friend who is also under my supervisor and there were times where we would just meet her [the supervisor] together so I would be sharing and learning from how my supervisor supervised the other girl and vice versa.*

Apart from her that, the social media websites and professional networking can also provide necessary support for doctoral students like Bella, who enunciated that she kept herself updated with the issues relevant to her field by reaching out to social groups on Facebook and professional networks:

> *PhD journey is lonely but there are always other avenues such as Facebook; the supermom doctoral group; and the postgraduate society. I tried to get myself involved by choosing relevant workshops. I got input from my supervisor as well but because of the limited meetings that we had, I tried to keep abreast with the current trend from networking with other teachers from language centres.*

I can relate to Bella's experience as I believe that access to different support systems is crucial to help doctoral students to familiarise themselves with the new learning environment, make sense of their new identities, and cope with the challenges that come with it in order to promote better engagement with their studies, which in turn can expedite their progress in completing their doctorates.

Shifting Perspectives

Another significant theme in Bella's narrative is the shift in her perspectives when she underwent an identity transformation from being a language lecturer to a doctoral student. She recounts that studying at the IIUM, where she used to work as a lecturer, was an eye-opening experience because she was able to better comprehend the issues that are faced by both supervisor and students. On one hand, she recognises that while the majority of doctoral students are able to be independent and in control of their own learning, there are some students who need guidance in order for them to succeed. On the other hand, from a supervisor's point of view, she admits that it is impossible to indulge a student's every whim on top of the supervisor's extensive list of responsibilities and deadlines:

> *In my case it's a bit interesting because I am a lecturer at this university and at the same time I'm doing a PhD here. Because of that I understand both sides so I don't have bias. As a PhD student, you have to be independent but I know that certain students have to be spoon-fed. At the same time, I do understand as a lecturer you*

cannot be providing everything for them. I think the biggest challenge for any supervisor is to juggle between jobs as a supervisor and other academic duties because whether you like or not, you have your own roles to fulfill. Supervisors are also researchers and authors. So sometimes it's not easy for them as they have deadlines.

From the narrative, as a student and a practitioner, I can relate to the importance of Bella's identity transformation on her values and beliefs which in turn might shape her future professional identity as a supervisor. Like Bella, my supervision and doctoral learning experiences, in general, might inform my meaning-making and decision-making process as a new supervisor.

Moreover, in the narrative, Bella highlights both the positive and negative changes in her perceptions and attitudes towards different aspects of her studies as she went through her supervisory experience:

> *I wouldn't deny that there were instances where appointments were cancelled or postponed because she [the supervisor] had to attend something else. It deprived you a bit of not seeing her because we had to finish our PhD in so and so years. Postgraduates when they go back to their own countries, they would have a different learning environment. I think we should be instilling good values and not tell them what to do per se. We need to help the students tackle their problems, so that they can find their ways. PhD is not just about intelligence, it is about perseverance and strategies, and also people skills.*

Reflecting on her experience, I agree with Bella that it is important for supervisors to avoid neglecting their students' welfare amidst their busy schedule. As Bella contends, for most doctoral students getting the PhD is only half of the battle. The other half begins when they try to apply the knowledge, expertise and experience in their own contexts or home institutions. Therefore, it is crucial for new supervisors like Bella and myself to consider this aspect in our supervision to ensure that doctoral students' needs can be met in the most efficient way.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented holistic-content analyses of the students' experiences of supervision. The analyses were presented in the forms of six individual learning narratives consisting of three elements in which I began with the introductory description of the students' backgrounds, followed by a general impression of their stories and the discussion of the main themes embedded within their experience of supervision. These narratives highlighted the particularity within each of the students' supervisory experiences,

including their individual cultural traits, learning styles, challenges, attitudes and behaviours, which either, facilitate or impede their learning progress towards achieving a timely and high quality doctoral completion. Webster and Mertova (2007: p. 20) noted that "stories allow us to watch what an experience can do to people who are living that experience".

In the study, as the students recalled their supervisory experiences they unfolded the stories or narratives of those experiences. The narratives, in turn, are associated with significant learning events that have stood "the test of time and retained a place in living memory, where many other details have faded not to be ever recalled" and carried with them a development of new understanding as a consequence of the particular experience (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 72-73). As the narratives of learning unfolded, I came to learn about the students' challenges, aspirations, behaviours and values taking place within their practice of supervision. More importantly, I gained a deeper and richer understanding of the complexity, wholeness and richness of the individual students' experiences as well as the wider contexts within which their learning narratives were situated. In this chapter, the learning narratives provide valuable insights into the supervisory cultures from the perspective of doctoral students that help set the context for the discussion in subsequent chapters. In the following chapter, I report on the holistic-content analyses of the doctoral supervisors' experiences, which provided insights into the professional and management perspective of doctoral supervision.

CHAPTER FIVE: NARRATIVES OF SUPERVISING

Overview

The preceding chapter Four has illustrated the individual doctoral students' holistic-content analysis of their restoried narratives of supervisory experiences. In this chapter, I report on the holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) of the doctoral supervisors' restoried narratives of supervisory experiences. This chapter is divided into two main sections. I begin by briefly introducing the supervisors (Section. 5.1). I then present holistic-content analyses of the individual supervisors which consisted of brief background of each supervisor, condensed global impression of the supervisors' narratives and key themes that hold significant meaning in their narratives (Section. 5.2).

5.1 Introducing the Doctoral Supervisors

In total, three doctoral supervisors - two males and one female –have agreed to take part in the study. All of the supervisors at the time of the interview held academic positions, either as professor or associate professor, and two of the supervisors held top management positions in their respective faculties. Each supervisor has received their doctoral education from UK universities and has had more than ten years of supervision experience, working with both home and international students. The following table illustrates the demographic summary of the supervisors.

Name	Gender	Faculty	Experience
Adam	Male	Faculty 1	More than 10 years
Johan	Male	Faculty 1	More than 10 years
Alice	Female	Faculty 2	More than 10 years

Table 5-1: Demographic Summary of Doctoral Supervisors

5.2 Weaving the Narrative Threads

In keeping with the characteristic of a narrative research, the narratives excerpts of the supervisors remain closely to their manner of speech and formed the basis of the data for the holistic-content analysis. In this section, I present the supervisors' holistic-content analyses in the following way. I will begin with a brief description of the supervisors' background information in order to introduce the reader to the individual supervisors. This is followed by a global impression of the supervisors' narratives, which includes the global

impression of their overall supervisory experiences. Then, I present the key foci or themes that hold special meaning in the supervisors' restoried narratives.

5.2.1 Adam's Story

When it comes to supervision … it is not one size fits all …but we have …in certain ways agree that …you have to give feedback and don't just keep it inside your drawer for months.

Introduction

Adam is an experienced supervisor who has more than 10 years of working experience at the university. He completed his PhD in 2004 in the UK and since then has supervised both Masters and PhD students. At the time of the interview, Adam had supervised about eight home and international PhD students. He told me that three of his students have graduated while others are at different stages of their PhD studies. When I was interviewing him, Adam was holding a key administrative position at the Postgraduate Department, where he was responsible for the academic wellbeing of postgraduate students, especially PhD students. This position I believe has provided Adam's story with dual perspectives - as supervisor and administrator. In the narrative, Adam defined supervision as "*giving feedback on time … and willingness to meet students whether you are busy or not. It is your job as an academic and your responsibility to ensure students' progress.*" When describing his role in the supervision, Adam believes that his role is akin to being a teacher rather than a facilitator:

> *I look at myself as a teacher because if we say facilitator, it is not right, because facilitator you facilitate only and yes… some students they have enough knowledge and they have experience before this, so they can do it on their own but for those who come here with nearly zero research knowledge we have to teach and guide them. Even in language.*

Global Impression

In general, Adam's narrative is interesting because it reveals two different perspectives of doctoral supervision: from a supervisor's point of view; and from a management point of view. On one hand, supervision is seen as a medium to educate students with necessary knowledge and research competence. On the other hand, supervision is viewed as a platform to realise the university's objective in ensuring students' timely completion and increase research publications. Embedded in these perspectives is how Adam, through supervision practice, negotiated and balanced his roles between the academic and management aspect of supervision. On top of that, the narrative proposes the kinds of

challenges faced by supervisors like Adam when supervising adult learners coming from different cultural and educational backgrounds.

<div align="center">**<u>Key Themes</u>**</div>

Administrative Challenges

One of the important themes in the narrative is Adam's view on the different type of administrative challenges that can potentially affect performance among supervisors. Adam recounts that the changing working environment of the IIUM has made the university lose some of its characteristic that made it unique. The changing environment is part of the IIUM's plan to achieve its targeted performance as a research university, in which the university has introduced a forty-hour work week for its entire academic staff. Adam shares that some of his colleagues felt that the new working requirement did not take into account the nature of doctoral supervision, which is different from other professions:

> *… With the recent development, where you are expected to record your time in and time out, the university will be the same as other institutions which is not unique anymore and most of our colleagues are not happy because being an academic is not the same as being an administrator, because we work differently at different hours. To me the university has to preserve its uniqueness.*

Another challenge is that, according to Adam, the university's administration does not seem to take into account the supervisors' time and efforts that go into supervision in the supervisor's teaching credit hours:

> *Recently when we supervise the students, it is not included in the credit hours. Maybe in the future the university should look into this. Even if you supervised ten students, credit hours are still 12 and some lecturers feel that it is a burden for them because research supervision needs a lot of work. You have to entertain students, when they come to see you have to read their drafts and show them which one should be amended. Reading raw material is totally hard because some students just write and jump from here to another without sequences of ideas. There is no flow and you have to read it carefully and advise them. In our Kulliyyah we have to fill in the progress form after the supervision session. Again, it's a lot of work to do.*

Furthermore, Adam remarks that the current trends of globalisation and internationalisation in global higher education are transforming the portfolio of the university from solely transmitting knowledge to a more business-oriented model. Consequently, the transformations can potentially affect the quality of the doctoral students being accepted onto the PhD program:

> *Sometimes I feel that we are so lenient in terms of selecting our students. Why is that? Because we are competing with others. For example, the university will easily admit students to do either by research or coursework. If we reject them, they will go to other universities. We are living in the world where education becomes a business and I feel that is the biggest problem now. It is like quality vs. quantity and it happens everywhere.*

Adam's concern echoes my own unease about the implication of education being treated as a business opportunity. While I am optimistic about the increasing number of research students every year, I am also concerned about the welfare of the supervisors as they are required to supervise a large number of students while undertaking substantial teaching and research responsibilities.

Supervision is Rewarding

Another main theme in the narrative is the reward of supervision for Adam. Adam explains that by supervising doctoral students a supervisor can reap the benefits from the extensive knowledge gained from the literature reviewed and important findings discovered from the studies. Another benefit is an opportunity for supervisors to collaborate with their doctoral students in publications. Adam suggests that such collaboration is not only important to supervisors' academic development but can contribute to their career performance indicator, which is crucial for job promotion:

> *I like being a supervisor because when we supervise our student there is much information we can get. Their research findings can help us improve our teaching and learning in class because in Malaysia, not many students like to read articles in journal. Our undergraduates, most of them never read journal because academic journal is only found in the library. So, we can share the results of findings with our students. That is why our university is trying to promote and to encourage staff. It has become one of the performance indicators of the university for supervisors to do research because research can contribute to quality teaching. If I have more students, the chance to publish paper is higher for me. That is why I always request at least one article from each student. So, we collaborate with our students. We cannot do that if we don't have students under our supervision. It helps us.*

Reflecting on Adam's story, as a potential supervisor, there is much knowledge I can gain by supervising doctoral students. Besides that, I can utilise and share the knowledge with other students. This sharing of knowledge I believe can enrich the teaching process and encourages mutual self-interest between supervisors and students. Apart from that, Adam recounts that his appointments as an external examiner exposed him to different supervisory approaches in different universities:

Recently I have been appointed as an external examiner for local and international universities. This can help improve our supervision because from there we can see different supervisory approaches from other university and see how hard their students complete their PhDs. Maybe we feel that our students are good but other universities might be better than us. From there we can share ideas and strengths. Other supervisors should do the same. We shouldn't just confine ourselves within our own working environment here in this university.

Adam's narrative informs me that there is a window of opportunity for knowledge sharing between supervisors. From Adam's experience, I believe that it is important for supervisors to reach out to scholarly community in order to receive exposure of how other supervisors in different universities manage their supervision practice. Such exposure can inform and help new supervisor like myself to improve my supervisory practice.

Supervising Adult Learners: The Challenges

Another significant theme in the narrative is the many obstacles faced by Adam when supervising doctoral students.

In my experience, there are lots of challenges [laugh] when you have to deal with adult learners. The most challenging thing is when I receive students from Arab countries because they are not so good in methodologies. So, we have to guide them carefully. Sometimes they attended the Research Methodology class but when they want to apply it they actually need some systematic guidance; like how to write proposal, how to come up with research problem, research question. In Arab education, there is normally a focus on the library research, compare to us, I mean in this kulliyyah (faculty) almost all of our research is based on fieldwork. So, most of them have no experience, in terms of doing fieldwork research. This is what I observed clearly.

From Adam's experience, students coming from a weak research backgrounds might pose the most challenge to supervisors, mainly because of their lack of knowledge in research methodology. This might be a result of their prior educational background system, which prefers library research to empirical approaches. Adam believes that the lack of exposure to Educational – based research might put the students at a disadvantage because they need more guidance in conducting fieldwork-based research. Moreover, Adam shares that when supervising home students, although they posed few challenges to supervisor research-wise, they are also struggling.

Supervising Malaysian students is challenging, though the challenges are not as many as supervising international students … but if the student are not from Educational background, they face problems, because the nature of the research itself is different in Education. Sometimes they do not know how to select sample in

qualitative research and they do not know that for interview it is not necessary to have a big number of respondents or participants. So, we have to guide them.

Reflecting on Adam's narrative, I believe that these challenges might be due to the students having different disciplinary backgrounds and educational research histories rather than coming from certain countries. Moreover, the students' attitudes towards their own learning might be another reason for lack of progress in supervision. This is evident in the narrative when Adam recounts that when students are too dependent on their supervisors it will slow down their progress. As a result, supervisors are left with additional responsibility to equip students with basic competencies in both academic and research aspects of their study, which they could have acquired earlier, either from their Master's program or course work:

> *This is also one of the challenges when some students want to depend on us. Students should know that they have to read a lot. Yes, we should only guide them but what is happening now is different. Sometimes we have to show them the correct way. But if you have a good student your work is easier. For example, I have a good student, a university lecturer. From the start, he knows a lot of things. I only have to guide him in term of the flow of idea. What I found here is that many of our students when they are here, they do not know how to pick up ideas and put them in sequence. There should be a course on that maybe in academic writing. But I have always told the students that they have to put in their mind the 'V' concept …meaning starting from general idea and narrowing it down. But sometimes they do it the other way.*

Apart from academic and research difficulties, some doctoral students struggled to manage their own study plan appropriately. Consequently, they had to extend their study duration. Adam shares that some of the students put the blame on the coursework. However, Adam believes that the blame is unsubstantiated because the students' progress is largely dependent on their own initiatives and motivation:

> *Recently I was appointed as one of the key persons in charge of the postgraduate students. It was indeed a burden for us to request for extension period of studies for our students. There are too many cases where studies need to be extended. Some students blame the coursework because to them, they have to complete the coursework first and then the research will come later. And because of that it delays their progress. To me, smart students will try to do a study based on the research issues discussed in the classroom. This means that our students here do not work very well on their own. To me as a student you have to plan your research from the beginning – when you register as a research student - because if you register but your mind is still blank, I'm sure that you cannot complete in four years.*

Interestingly, Adam also explains that there are situations where supervisors are responsible for students' lack of progress:

Some students blame the supervisors. I agree with that because in my line of work, I have met some students who came and complained to me that some lecturers did not welcome students and when students submitted their writings to the supervisors, they had to wait for one to two months. So that is not good because it will delay their study time. Without feedback students cannot move on. So far, we don't have a system to monitor supervisors but now as the university tries to encourage students to graduate on time, our Kulliyyah is trying our best to come with a system to monitor and help supervisor to know student's progress better.

Based on Adam's experience, I believe that it is unfortunate that some students are not able to progress in their studies due to supervisors' lackadaisical attitudes when giving feedback. I am surprised that there is a lack of system by the university to monitor how supervisors engage with their students, but I am pleased that according to Adam, the university and his department are aware of the seriousness of such monitoring. They are presently trying to find a suitable system to help supervisors to be more constructive with their students.

Foundation of a Good Supervision

Another prevalent theme in the narrative is Adam's recollection of his own personal supervisory experience and how it shapes the understanding of his current supervisory practice:

I can still recall my own supervisory experience. My supervisor, maybe because I am from Education so we know research methodology, didn't have to work as much as I work now. But he told me that the most important thing is methodology. If your methodology is correct, the findings will be correct. If the methodology is incorrect, how can you get good result? Both must be together; hand-by-hand. He was very good and I was even invited to his house and he was very friendly, so, there are two ways of communication, which is very important.

I agree with Adam that it is advantageous for students to have a good and relevant research background as it will aid their learning. Moreover, having students who are able to work independently under minimum supervision will be the most ideal situation for many supervisors. In my experience, the amount of guidance and support from my supervisor varies as it depends on my progress and needs. I also agree with Adam that a good communication practice between the student and supervisor is crucial to ensure success in supervision which in turn will contribute to PhD completion.

Apart from research background, Adam also makes comparison between how he was supervised as a student in the past and his own supervision practice as a practitioner.

According to Adam, within the Malaysian higher education context, most PhD students, whether home or international, still display a lack of motivation to focus on their own studies. He feels that the lack of focus on the students' part is putting more responsibilities on supervisors:

> *I still remember when I was in the UK, we have to strive and work hard and nobody is there to monitor us: the university did not monitor us, the supervisor never called us. It solely depended on me. I completed my studies in three years and 8 months, which is pretty common. I saw him [the supervisor] once a month, sometimes once in three months depending on my progress. But then the monitoring system in the UK is not the same as ours. In the UK we are free, … nobody observes you because we are adults … we should know ourselves and our research. Even if you do not submit within two years, it's not a problem, but you always receive letter from the university to pay the tuition fees. In Malaysia, we cannot do that. Monitoring system is very important even though the students are adult learners. Maybe our thinking was different when we were abroad but here we are responsible for our students.*

I can relate to Adam's experience studying in the UK context. Like Adam, I was encouraged to take control of my own learning and set my own pace. In contrast to Adam's experience, the monitoring of doctoral students in my UK university is highly regulated. My supervisor and I were required to submit report of our supervision progress regularly on eProg, which is an online system provided by the university. As a result, I was able to monitor and record my progression milestones. Moreover, the system provides a platform for supervisor and student to highlight any arising matters to the department and university in an orderly manner. While Adam believes that the practice of independent learning is not suitable within Malaysian higher education context, I believe that independent learning is not an impossible task if postgraduate students are given the appropriate motivation and guidance to develop necessary skills that will enable them to focus and take control of their own learning.

Supervision: One Size Doesn't Fit All

Another significant theme in the narrative is that Adam's opinion of how every supervision is different from one student to another. In the narrative, Adam recounts that it is more challenging when supervising students from different cultures such as those from the Arab countries. As a result, he often modified his supervision approach according to the students' level of competence in language and research skills:

> *Some students are willing to be polished but some of them are difficult … especially those who come from the Arab world because the culture is totally different from here (Malaysia). So, I use different approaches. With my Arab students, if their*

standard of Arabic language is not as good as expected, they have to sit with me for one hour to an hour and a half to correct how they write research objectives. We have to do it slowly and I have to tell them from A to Z here (in my office). I will see them more often in the beginning but once they have completed their research proposal I let them go.

While Adam indicates that supervising students from countries such as Arab can be problematic, in contrast, I believe that such view is not universal as shown by Välimaa (2008) that there are different cultural forces at work within higher education context besides national-based cultures. Moreover, in the narrative, Adam finds that face-to-face meeting sessions work best with his doctoral students, especially when it comes to giving feedback on written products. In particular, face-to-face meeting is crucial during the writing of research proposal:

> *I usually request my students to see me face-to-face and not through online. Sometimes they just send their works through email, but to correct written work in email for me is not enough. They have to come and see me and we, then, discuss face-to-face. I prefer face-to-face especially during the stage of completing research proposal because if the proposal is clear it will ease them to work independently in writing up the whole thesis.*

While there are easier methods of communication due to the advent of technology (i.e. Skype, FaceTime), but with respect to providing feedback to students I agree with Adam that face-to-face approach can help improve the quality of communication between supervisor and student which in turn helps expedite the supervisory process.

Furthermore, in the narrative, Adam shares that he prefers to maintain certain boundary between the students and himself. He believes that as a supervisor he is responsible to accommodate students' academic and research needs as best as he possibly can, but he prefers not to meddle in their personal issues:

> *I try not to be strict with the students and I welcome them… and try to guide them in a proper way, otherwise they cannot complete their thesis. I put a boundary between me and students… and focus more on academics. They should settle their problems with a counsellor but not with the supervisor. I only deal with research. Sometimes they want to share their problems, but I told them, No! You are here as a researcher. So, we talk about that. Your problem you have to settle on your own.*

Finally, Adam contends that although supervision is conducted differently from one supervisor to another, there are some common guidelines to supervision that supervisors should follow:

When it comes to supervision, it comes from the experience of a particular supervisor … it is not one size fits all … In the academic world, though we have different views -maybe your style is different than others - in certain ways we agree that if students give you materials you have to give feedback and don't just keep it inside your drawer for months.

In regard to good practice to supervision, in my experience as a doctoral student, I mostly valued my supervisor's timely feedback on my writing. As noted by Adam, providing proper and prompt feedback to students not only enables the students to progress in their research but also helps prevent potential disaster that can hinder the students' development in completing their studies.

5.2.2 Johan's Story

I describe my role and relationship as professional but sometimes personal. We advise them so that they can solve their problems on their own.

<u>**Introduction**</u>

Johan is an experienced supervisor who has worked at the IIUM for more than twenty years. He was a school teacher before he accepted scholarships from the IIUM to pursue his doctoral degree abroad. In the interview, he explains that his decision to work at the university is due to the university's unique mission and vision, which empowers the roles of educators beyond the academic domain and classroom:

I love this university because of its vision and mission. It has motivated me to be here to realise the aspiration of the Muslim worldwide, which is the integration of the Western and Muslim scholars and to seek how we can enrich the knowledge and educate Muslims students so that they become good human beings, not only for the Muslim community but for the rest of the world.

After years of hard work, he came back to Malaysia and started working at the university as one of the academic staff. Two years later, Johan began to supervise doctoral students. At the time of the interview, Johan has supervised more than 30 Masters' students and at least ten doctoral students. Majority of his doctoral students come from neighboring countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Brunei. He also supervised students from Bangladesh, and African countries such as Nigeria and Uganda. Some of the students have either completed their studies or still in the process of completing.

<center>**Global Impression**</center>

In general, Johan's narrative chronicles some of his visions on what makes a quality supervision practice. Johan dictates that supervision involves three main elements: First, supervising students is part of an academic's job. Second, supervision is one of the resources for supervisors to expand their knowledge. Third, supervision equips students with the relevant knowledge that will enable them to complete their studies:

> *I take this as my main responsibility as an academic. Second, is to get more knowledge. Supervision in itself is a type of learning from our students' work as you get more knowledge from them. And we try our best to help those students by sharing our knowledge and our experience so that we can develop their knowledge and hopefully they can then complete their studies.*

Apart from that, supervision practice is all about making the correct decision that caters to the students' academic needs and supports their professional and personal growth. Recognising that each doctoral student is unique, Johan believes that a good supervisor will take into account each student's unique situation when practicing supervision so that the student can gain more from each session. Moreover, Johan's narrative documents some of the challenges faced by some doctoral students and offers the appropriate strategies for supervisors to help students overcome the difficult phases in their lives.

<center>**Key Themes**</center>

Understanding Doctoral Students and their Complexities

One significant theme in the narrative is the challenging situations a doctoral student may face that can potentially alter the course of supervision. In Johan's experience, interruption or delay in students' progress can be caused by internal and external factors:

> *For international students, in the beginning they wanted to do their fieldwork in their home countries but they have financial problems, so they have to do it here. We allow that but we have to inform the committee of all the changes. For some PhD students -who have financial problem and have to move back to their countries due to financial or personal problems - you really cannot do anything except contacting them and advising them to send letter to the IIUM, to either defer or leave formally. But some of them did come back for their theses. There are some students who completed their coursework but when it comes to writing the thesis, it's a problem. I normally just advise them to go back to their countries and keep writing. I have to push and encourage them because they have their own commitment.*

Based on Johan's insight, I learn that having financial and personal problems will often cause students to make drastic changes in their studies. For instance, students coming from

abroad might have to make changes to their living arrangements, for instance, moving back to their home countries. Consequently, these changes might put supervisors in a bind: On one hand, most supervisors prefer students to complete their studies on campus where the learning environment will be more conducive with regular access to face-to-face meetings. On the other hand, most supervisors realise that there are some factors that will make it impossible for some of their students to do that as some students might have to relocate to their home countries either due to financial problems or personal matters. Nonetheless, Johan maintains that despite these challenges, he persistently encourages and motivates the students to progress in their studies. For instance, when some of the international students experienced financial problems to conduct fieldwork in their home countries, Johan helped them to do their fieldworks in Malaysia instead. Another example is when some students left the university and started working, he keeps in contact with them and provides constant advice to help the students resolve their problems.

According to Johan, another factor that might hinder success in supervision is when the students are preoccupied with other commitments that distract their focus on the studies:

> *Some are, by right should not be working, but some of them are self-sponsored and have to work as part-time teachers just to get by. Sometimes they have to cancel the supervisory appointment due to other commitment. But we still monitor their progress. Some of them came here for a short duration of time because they are working full time in their country. They submitted their work and then went back to their countries. I have two students from Bangladesh and they work as permanent staff at one of the universities there and have no time to come here and I have to monitor them through email. That's the biggest challenge in completing their work. … So, we have to monitor the students through email.*

Johan's insight on the many obstacles facing by self-funded students is relevant to Ryan's and Edward' narratives, whereby they had to juggle between work commitments and PhDs. Recognising that these obstacles can potentially disrupt the students' progress and contribute to non-completion, I agree with Johan that supervisors should utilise alternative means, for instance, using email, Skype or FaceTime, to keep constant monitoring of the students' progress in order to motivate them to complete their studies.

Besides challenges that are specific to international doctoral students, local students are also facing some hardships that can greatly affect their studies, as highlighted by Johan in the narrative:

The problem with the local students is when they haven't completed their studies but their study leaves are expiring. For example, teachers are given three years by their employers and after the three years, they sometimes completed their theses halfway and then they tend to drag the time. There are cases where we advise these students to change their program mode from full-time to part-time so that they can extend their study duration up to eight years.

According to Johan, one of the biggest challenges is some home students are often required to start working after their study leaves ended but they did not complete their studies. Johan recounts that the situation is common among home student teachers. Understanding that it is crucial for the student teachers to secure their jobs and income, Johan would advise them to transfer their doctoral program to part-time mode to give them sufficient time to balance between their profession and studies.

In sum, reflecting on Johan's narrative I have learned that supervising doctoral students will have its own set of challenges, regardless whether the students are locals or international. Similar finding is suggested by Pearson et al. (2008, p.98) that "in many ways being 'international' or 'domestic' makes little difference of being a doctoral candidate, although there are some differences". With respect to the challenges, I believe that as a supervisor, I need to be supportive of my students' situation and take proactive approach to support the students to complete their studies, as demonstrated by Johan.

Recipe for Correct Supervision

Another important theme in Johan's narrative is a list of essential elements of good supervision that can help supervisors in their practices. Johan narrates that it is crucial to ensure that the topics chosen by students are within his expertise in order for him to guide the students better. He explains that the process of pre-screening the students' topics can be done by carefully reading the students' research proposals:

Normally here, [at the IIUM] students will approach us to get our consent to become their major supervisors and we then normally ask the student their interest in research. If we can do it, we then accept it and submit the form to the PGR office. Once the committee approve the names of the major supervisor plus the co-supervisors…we can begin our work. The students then have to bring their concept paper and from there we can know if they have a clear [topic] or if the research is researchable and manageable and if they really want to do their PhD. The most important thing is I have to ensure that their topic is relevant and within my research area, if not I have to advise them to get another supervisor.

Like Johan, I agree that it is crucial for supervisor to pre-screening their potential students before making a decision to accept them. Moreover, looking at the students' proposal might provide some information to the supervisors of the nature of research, its feasibility and contribution to the body of knowledge. In my experience, I submitted a short summary of my intended research topic and a copy of Curriculum Vitae to my potential supervisors as part of my effort to provide relevant information that is necessary for their decision-making process.

Moreover, Johan shares that supervisory sessions with his students provided a valuable opportunity for him to get an initial picture of the students in terms of their motivation, subject and research knowledge. According to Johan, the meeting is conducted:

> *... based on their needs. Sometimes in a week they meet us three or four times because they need our advice. I just monitor and if there is no problem they can go ahead [with their research]. If there is a problem, they will come here. So that is my approach with the supervisee.*

Johan suggests that the supervisory meetings can provide a good opportunity for supervisors to gather information from the students, for instance, the kinds of support that the students will need from their supervisors, which in turn can help the supervisors to devise appropriate strategies to help the students to progress in studies. In the narrative, Johan explains that the first meeting is always important to him:

> *Normally the first meeting is very important for my supervisee and I as a supervisor. We spend the longest time and sometimes it takes four hours for the first supervision because we want to know what the students really want to do. We have to brainstorm especially the topic and the objective, the research methods and respondent, the conceptual framework and also research framework. They must be clear of what they want to do because they have taken all the research method classes. So [in the meeting] I just make sure that they understand that and have a clear focus in their research. After that our meeting will be once in fortnight. Another crucial time is when they want to collect data.*

In my experience, I valued every supervision meeting with my supervisor because most of the teaching and learning process occurs within that space. Furthermore, I regard my supervision meeting as an opportunity to update my supervisor with some of the things that happened in my life and to seek some advice on certain challenges that I was struggling with.

In the narrative, apart from having meetings with students, Johan shares that setting up some routines in supervision can help both supervisor and student to focus on the task at hand. Johan recalls his own supervisory experience where both he and his supervisor established certain routines between them during supervision:

> *The way I supervise my students is greatly influenced by my own [experience with my supervisor]. The most important thing is we had regular supervision at the university. My supervisor is Welsh and she is very good. Our regular meeting was once in two weeks and just for half an hour. In the meeting, normally, I brought two to three pages of my work. I, then, met her to discuss the work that I submitted in the previous meeting. For every meeting, I had something to give her and she would give her feedback … It was not on the spot supervision. That's what she advised me – to meet with something. And when she got a problem she would cancel the appointment. And if I got a problem I would do the same. So, it was a win-win situation.*

Like Adam, Johan admits that his past supervisory experience as a PhD student has, to some extent, influenced the way he supervises his students. He describes his own past supervision as a "win-win situation" and adopts some of the routines into his own practice. With respect to supervisors being influenced by their past supervision experience, a similar insight has been discussed in previous studies, such as a study by Lee (2008) that claimed the quality of supervisors' own supervision is influenced by their experience when they were postgraduate students.

In the narrative, Johan shares that his supervisory routines have helped his students to maintain their respective roles, which in turn, promote the students' progress in the studies:

> *…That is one of the effective ways of supervision and I agree with her and I try to apply this with my students. I prefer face-to-face as it's the best and I tell the students to write on paper … so at least we have something to discuss.' I also take it as a way to monitor their progress. If there's problem I can correct it on-the-spot. We can discuss the problem and give advice on their drafts, so it's easier for them to refer back. So, if you don't have anything you don't come, you come with something.*

Like Johan, I too agree that having some routines with your own students not only helps in strengthen supervisor-supervisee relationships but it can also provide students with a sense of control over their studies. In my experience, my supervisory routine makes the completion of tasks (i.e. reading, drafting) more manageable. Besides that, sticking to a routine can minimise conflict, as both supervisor and I, have had a clear picture of what is expected from each other.

Furthermore, in the narrative, when it comes to allocating time to meet students, Johan believes in the importance of being flexible but purposeful:

> *I am not too rigid with time … To me time is not ours as it belongs to God and we share it with the students beneficially because we have different urgency with different needs. So, for me flexibility is important. That's my way in terms of correct time management. And the meetings are always done here in my room, [because it is] easier (laugh) and we need somewhere where no one will disturb us … and where it's convenient to discuss. We don't want to have it at the meeting room as it is too formal and that is not our place.*

Johan explains that he is not strict with the time he spends with his students because different students have different needs and require different degrees of support. Moreover, when choosing the right location for supervision, Johan consider aspects such as comfort, privacy and convenience of the location as he prefers a more informal environment for the supervision meeting with his students.

Finally, Johan proposes that it is important to maintain good professionalism in supervision. He asserts that as a supervisor, he tries to provide appropriate support, advice and feedback for their students to ensure that the students can complete their studies:

> *A good supervisor must be professional; should know what PhD thesis is, it's need and urgency. … To my PhD students I will advise them to read a lot and refer to the latest publication, either books or journal to update the references in their research. And to always go on with their work. Don't go back to the chapter one until they have completed all five chapters [only] then they can start revising and updating.*

Besides that, Johan always encourages his students to reach out to other learning community:

> *I always advise my students that doing PhD is not a one-man or one-woman show. It's a cooperative learning. You don't have to show that you are a champion or that you can do your PhD alone … that's not the way to study because it's a team work and collaborative learning. From my experience doing PhD, my seniors would share with us how to solve the problems.*

I agree with Johan that it is important to motivate students to establish a good rapport with other research students because such rapport can promote diversity understanding and stimulate critical thinking as they learn to clarify ideas through discussion with others. In my experience, I took the initiative to participate in some training courses that were offered by the postgraduate office. I also collaborated with other research students to conduct some

workshops for other students. I believe that my experience of connecting with others has given me the opportunity to hone my public speaking and presentation skills in a safe, friendly and non-intimidating environment.

My Roles as a Supervisor

The final theme in the narrative in which I find important is the different roles occupied by Johan as a supervisor and how these roles affect the ways he supervises his doctoral students. From the narrative, it is reasonable for me to suggest that Johan's perception of supervisory roles is informed and shaped by his definition of what a good supervision should entail:

> *A good supervision from my experience is, first one must know what is the correct or the appropriate form of supervision to cater to all the proper destination of our research. Be flexible in time, correct their mistakes accordingly, and most importantly [we] should know the limit of our topic of our research. Some of our friends here have no limit; they keep on adding more sub-headings. What I appreciate about my supervisor is she was very consistent when giving her advice. In supervision, consistency is very important when we inform the student what to do.*

Johan asserts that a good supervision is one that addresses students' appropriate research focus and targets, practices flexibility, provides effective feedback and recognises research limitations. From Johan's insight, I believe that being consistent when providing advice to students is one of the most important elements in supervision to avoid misunderstanding. Particularly in instances where the supervision practice involves more than one supervisor, there is likely to be some difference of opinion between the supervisors. Nonetheless, as noted by Johan, there is one clear advantage when having more than one supervisor for students: *"the advantage is when all the supervisors work and collaborate together helping the students because no one is expert in all discipline."*

Furthermore, Johan explains that his role in supervision is partly influenced by the university's code of supervision. As the guidelines only provide a general instruction for supervisors with respect to how to conduct and manage supervision, it is important for supervisors to incorporate other components in supervision to make it work for their students:

> *In terms of supervision, … our university gives some outline of the responsibilities of supervisor. We have to follow that but we can [also] exercise some flexibility. We do what we have to do, what is convenient to follow and do it professionally but not emotionally, cooperatively but not individually. We advise them [the students] so that*

they can solve [their problems] on their own. … when they are silent … I tried to call them, email them and sometimes they will respond that they have families and work commitment. Sometimes, they share with me just like a father and son or a father and daughter. Everyone has a problem so we have to solve it together. When they have financial problem, I advise them to apply for the endowment fund. I have to advise them because they don't know.

In the narrative, I believe that Johan perceives his role primarily as an advisor who assists students with their academic, research as well as personal matters. Specifically, he provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge and directs them to the proper channels. Furthermore, I agree with Johan that in order for supervisors to conduct their supervision effectively, the university should play a more active and supportive role as Johan highlighted in the narrative.

What we requested actually from the management is our supervision should be counted as part of our teaching load. [Once] I had 16 supervisees in one semester, the most in the faculty in one semester [laugh]. Sometimes, three or four students come here for advice and seek supervision. Sometimes it takes one to two hours depending on their needs and my free time.

In conclusion, like Johan, I hope that the university's management will revise the supervisory teaching hours by including supervisory duties as part of the supervisors' teaching workload. Like Johan, I believe that the revision is crucial to recognise and appreciate the amount of effort and time put into supervision by supervisors.

5.2.3 Alice's Story

I don't teach, I just facilitate…I don't have to say too much. You should be able to find the information on your own without having to ask the supervisor- 'Am I doing it right?'- all the time'.

Introduction

Alice is an experienced supervisor in her middle 50s. Her vast teaching experience, of almost 20 years, within as well as outside the IIUM has exposed her to the many aspects of teaching within the higher educational system in Malaysia. She begins her narrative by recounting her own supervisory experience in a UK university. Alice recalls that her own experience was mediocre at best. She explains that when she first started her PhD, her main supervisor was also pursuing his PhD. At the time, she felt that the supervisory arrangement was hindering her progress. After careful consideration, she decided to quit her doctoral program and enrolled at another university and managed to successfully graduate on time. Although Alice was reluctant to tell her story in further detail, I could foresee that the experience taught

her that supervision should be conducted in a professional manner that can provide guidance to students and at the same time develop their competence.

> *I didn't have a good supervision experience at one of the universities in the UK. At the time, my supervisor was doing his PhD while supervising me. … So, I had to move to another university. … That was the past and I don't want to talk about it. It's actually a lesson to be learnt that while you supervise you take it seriously and you try to give guidance as much as possible but at the same time we want them to be independent.*

When defining what supervision is, Alice believes that good supervision not only provides students with relevant subject knowledge and research skills to develop their competence to work independently, but also to instil in them the confidence to make use of the knowledge and skills in their future profession. Over the years, Alice is proud to share that some of her former doctoral students have achieved considerable success in their own profession despite having a tough time during their doctoral studies:

> *A successful supervision is basically when students can do their research independently and … after their experience with you they can do research independently and supervise other people. In the process, you have to give them a lot of guidance. I have seen a few students who gave me a tough time during the supervision period, but now I can see that they are doing well with their research and they are publishing. I can see that they manage to do things independently and they hold good positions.*

Global Impression

I find that Alice's narrative is significant in a sense that it illustrates the changing demographic of the doctoral student population and how the changes affect supervision practice in modern times. One of the significant themes in her narrative is the challenge when dealing with doctoral students from different educational, social and economic backgrounds. For instance, Alice reveals the different set of complications that she has had to go through when supervising students from war-torn countries in comparison to supervising students from different educational systems. Her narrative also unearths the supervisor's extending responsibility that goes well beyond supervising students' academic and research progress. Furthermore, her narrative engages us with the different strategies needed by supervisors to cater to their students' needs. For example, Alice integrates the use of technology into her supervisory practice as one of the efficient ways to keep track of the students' progress. Finally, embedded in the narrative is Alice's self-reflection on how the supervisory experience has enriched and improved her personal and professional outlooks.

<center>**Key Themes**</center>

PhD as a Training Ground

One of the main themes that I have identified in Alice's narrative is the role of PhD as a preparatory stage aiming to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to enable them to become experts in their respective fields, while at the same time develop their competence and confidence as researchers. For Alice, the knowledge and skills that are taught on PhD programs are valuable tools that need to be learned and utilised by the students:

> *PhD, I would say is just a training ground so that if a student can come up with a good method, he or she can find a good problem and conduct his or her research [correctly]. You don't really solve a problem but [it is more about] how you achieve your objectives and what kind of questions to ask … then most probably you will be able to do the same later on … but if you are guided most of the time, you may have problems later on especially when you decide to join the academia… I think doing the coursework is actually good for the students especially the research methodology subject because many of are not exposed to various methods. The different courses may give students some ideas of how to approach their research and at the same time when they go back [to their work place or home countries] they can teach these courses, at least at the undergraduate level. If they do PhD by research mode alone they may not be able to teach other courses. So, they are more useful to their universities if they have attended these courses.*

Alice also believes that a PhD program with integrated coursework as part of its course offers more benefits in comparison to a research mode PhD. I agree with Alice and based on my experience, coursework can expose students to a variety of subject materials and research methodologies that can aid their learning needs and in turn contribute to completion of their PhDs. Moreover, young academics, like myself, can take advantage of the opportunity and later on share the learned knowledge and skills with our peers and students.

Another interesting highlight in Alice's narrative is that although students may be exposed to many subjects in the coursework, not all of them are relevant to the students' research. From her past postgraduate experience, Alice reflects that when she attended her coursework, she discovered that only a few of the subjects were relevant to her study and there were other important subjects that were not included in the coursework. Moreover, from a supervisor's point of view, Alice admits that time constraints often limit the breadth of content taught in the courses. Recognising the important role of coursework to provide some kind of exposure to the current trend in their fields to the students, Alice tries to

introduce new methods in research in her own teaching. Nevertheless, it is up to the students to decide which of the knowledge gained is relevant to their research needs as she explains:

> *The coursework will teach you a lot of things but it's only when you do the research then you know which one is relevant or to your research. That's what I felt when I was a student. I learnt so many things but when it comes to doing the research only a few of them were relevant and there are those that are not covered. And you cannot cover everything anyway in the coursework because of the time limitation. But what is important is that they [the students] are exposed to the idea especially language students. Like myself, I teach technology and in my technology class I found that they are not really exposed to the latest approach… So, [these] classes are important for them before they decide on …what they would be writing about.*

Dual Roles of Supervisors

Another significant theme in the narrative is the diversity of roles played by Alice. For instance, Alice describes two main roles that she has to perform when supervising her doctoral students:

> *My style of supervision if I were to describe it is …just being a facilitator…I don't teach, I just facilitate. I just help in giving guidance, but you, as a postgraduate student should be able to come up with something. I don't have to say too much. You should be able to find the information on your own without having to ask the supervisor- 'Am I doing it right?'- all the time. I think that's the part that is also challenging…to make them independent. They should be able to come up with their own ideas but sometimes you have to tell them what to do.*

Based on Alice's insight, I have identified that there are two different sides of being a supervisor. First, a supervisor has academic responsibility, in which Alice contends that her style of supervision is akin to a facilitator. As a facilitator, her role is to facilitate the learning process in terms of providing the necessary guidance for the students to enable them to work independently. Once the students are confident and able to progress in their research, Alice will oversee their development without interfering too much. However, this process is not always straight forward because some students need extra guidance from supervisors. Second, a supervisor has some pastoral responsibility. Supervision practice involves an interpersonal relationship between a supervisor and a doctoral student that can last for at least three years, hence, it is likely that both supervisor and student develop some kind of bond with each other. Especially for students coming from abroad, like myself. My supervisors were the closest persons that I may come into contact with in my daily life besides my family and close friends in the UK. Thus, I am not surprised that the roles of a

supervisor can go well beyond the academic into the students' personal and emotional domains as highlighted by Alice in her narrative:

> *In order for you to produce a PhD student…. along the way you become close to the students and you learn a lot about them, about their families, about their countries and you cannot just distance yourself from them. They are part of you because they don't have anybody. As you do your research you may have all kind of problems. So, who else can they share this with if not with you. You also have to be almost like a counsellor … telling them how to cope with their life. The problems that they have are different from one person to another… like the one in Palestine is talking about war but the one here (local students) maybe marriage. These are all personal problems and yet they have to do their PhDs … And you have to understand their problems and get them focus on their work. So, you listen and yet at the same time get them to do their work. In a way, you are telling them that if you can focus on your work, you may be able to forget your problems.*

Recognising that each student comes with his or her own personal-related issues and that for some these issues can be debilitating to their studies and well-being at times, Alice suggests that a supervisor must play a productive role in ensuring that the students are getting the right kind of guidance and support to resolve their problems. For example, Alice shares that she listened to her students' problems while at the same time encouraged them to focus on their studies. In retrospect, I have learned that the supervisors' roles are not only confined to academic and research, but more importantly the supervisors might be expected to provide some pastoral supports to guide students in managing their personal affairs.

Supervision and its Challenges

One of the main foci in the narrative is the different challenges faced by Alice when supervising her students. According to Alice, one of the key challenges is supervising students who are lacking in either an academic or a research background. Moreover, students who are not proficient in the English language also pose some difficulties. Alice believes that if those students are left unassisted, they will not be able to complete their studies. Another challenge for Alice is when dealing with some of her students who have experienced severe forms of hardship, such as living in war-torn countries. Although on paper, the students might have the right academic qualifications, but in practice it is difficult to gauge how much research experience they have had in their previous education. Nonetheless, Alice believes that every student has the potential to succeed and it is important for supervisors to recognise this. Although the students may struggle in the

beginning, with the right knowledge and skills, and under the proper guidance of their supervisors, the students can achieve success in their studies. Alice shares that:

> *…In some cases, but we cannot generalize, but you tend to see if they come from certain countries you have to give them more guidance. It's difficult especially when they come from certain background and they struggle with their English, the structure and everything. I think if you don't assist these students they will never get their PhDs. That's why you are there …to help the students to do their research. That's why supervision is different from one student to another. When they already have the experience of doing research and also in publishing their work, it's much easier because they have an idea of how, of what is expected, when to write something academic, but when you have students that come from certain systems that do not require the students to do any research you would face more problems. So maybe people from war torn countries, you don't know what they went through in class or in their own countries and how much research they did when they were in their own countries. Their result may be good but they may not have enough exposure. With these students, you have to give them more guidance because the potential is there. It's just a matter of giving them the right information. They may struggle but once they manage to do it, I think they will be able to survive.*

I agree with Alice that as supervisors we should not generalise our students solely based on their previous educational backgrounds or nationality as every supervision is different for every student. Moreover, I find that Alice's notion that students coming from certain countries may require more guidance from the supervisor is thought-provoking because it raises concern about the diversity within the student population and how it adds to the complexity of supervision practices. Alice's experience resonates with some of the existing studies (Acker 2011; McCormack, 2004) that suggest that most students experience greater adversity in adjusting to the new unfamiliar culture of doctoral program or host university culture.

Apart from differing educational and research backgrounds, Alice points out that students who display a lack of commitment can pose a challenge for the supervisors. Often, these students tend to procrastinate and deliberately ignore deadlines when it comes to submitting their work:

> *Some students are more independent and sometimes you have very good students but they don't see you and they don't do their work. Sometimes you feel like it's not difficult if the students just follow the instruction but my problem is that they don't give me what I want and I have to chase after them.*

Another obstacle is concerned with some of the students from abroad who tend to abuse their student visa, as Alice reveals:

…some of the international students … sometimes they tend to misuse their visa … because they want to come here to work, they would delay submitting their drafts, and just the introduction alone takes months."

Moreover, Alice observes that home students, in particular, who work while doing their PhDs, often fail to prioritise and manage their time wisely, which in turn hinders their progress. Such bad practice does not only delay their progress but reflects negatively on the supervisor's credibility:

Sometimes I really got angry with them… I don't like these students with attitude problem - especially because we are talking about our reputation. Local students are the same because they are working and tend to focus on their works. They can keep working but they should be able to manage their time since they have already made a commitment they should do it properly. When your students take longer to finish their thesis than expected it looks bad on you.

Besides work commitment, Alice narrates that sometimes it can be challenging to conduct face-to face meetings with the students when they are not within the vicinity of the university. As a result, more often than not, Alice has to find alternative means to reach the students. Moreover, arrangement for supervision becomes more complicated when the students return to their home countries, where access to communication is restricted. Alice admits that when it comes to providing feedback, face-to-face meetings, in comparison to long distance or online supervision, offers more support for students. This particular modality of face-to-face supervision I believe provides a more direct contact between supervisor and student, which can promote better progress:

…When the students are away, then you would have to give your feedback online and that will be more demanding and challenging because it's difficult to communicate with them. Like in countries such as Palestine, the [internet]access is not as good as the ones that we have here in our country. So that's really challenging when they are not in front of you, and you will give priority to the others who come to your office. So, it will take months to look at their work and the comments that you want to tell them are not easy to convey through emails. Sometimes with our own local students when they are not in Kuala Lumpur you have to do the same. You have to do it online. And that's more challenging than face-to-face … thing like rearranging the drafts is easier when it's face-to-face.

In conclusion, in regard to the different challenges, I have identified that it might be inevitable for supervisors to invest a considerable amount of work and time into preparing the students with the necessary skills in order for them to be able to conduct research and complete their studies successfully. As a result, I believe that supervision is different from

one student to another because it has to be tailored according to the needs of the individual students.

Benefiting from Supervision

The final theme in Alice's narrative how supervision can improve Alice's role as a practitioner. For Alice, supervision is rewarding in several ways:

> *To a supervisor like me supervision makes you think critically because if you are not critical it's difficult to see the problem in your students' work. It also helps you because this experience helps when you are an examiner. If you don't have the experience, when you examine other students' theses it will be difficult because you will not know what students have gone through in order to come up with their thesis. But that doesn't mean that you can be lenient about it.*

Based on Alice's insight, I have learned that doing supervision can enhance supervisor's critical thinking, which is important when he or she becomes a thesis examiner in the future, as highlighted by Alice that by reading through her students' theses, she is able to hone her skills when evaluating written work. Moreover, supervisory experience can aid the supervisor's understanding of the amount of work and time put into the writing of the thesis by the students. Such understanding I hope can inform the supervisors, like myself, of the gravity of our supervisory roles and responsibility towards our students.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reported holistic-content analyses of the doctoral supervisors' narratives that complemented the students' narratives of learning in illustrating the different facets of doctoral supervision. Within these narratives I have presented the stories of Adam, Johan and Alice and illustrated the complex make up of their individual contexts and other influential forces, such as university policy, the students' personal, educational and research backgrounds, commitments and attitudes that might have shaped how their supervision practices are conducted and managed. Moreover, embedded in the narratives are the different ways in which their supervisory experiences have affected their personal and professional lives. Taken together, the narratives provided insightful views of the pedagogy, professional and management aspects of the cultures of doctoral supervision from the supervisors' point of view in an internationalised higher education institution context. In Chapter Six, I present my interpretation and explanation of the insights based on the narrative analyses of the students' and supervisors' experiences of supervision as linked to my research questions and the literature with which my study engages.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Overview

In the previous two chapters (Chapter four and Five), I have presented holistic-content analyses of individual narratives of supervisory experiences of both doctoral students and supervisors. In this chapter, I aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of doctoral supervision cultures from a non-essentialist small cultures approach to culture. I begin by conceptualising doctoral supervision cultures from the small cultures approach and host culture complex (Section 6.1). I then present five key features of the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision from across the students' and supervisors' narratives as interpreted using the small cultures approach (Section 6.2) before considering eight potential shaping influences of these emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision as informed by the host culture complex model (Section 6.3).

6.1 Doctoral Supervision as Small Cultures

In the study, I seek to unravel the participants' restoried narratives into a meaningful discussion of what constitutes cultures of doctoral supervision by drawing on Holliday's small cultures approach (1999). In the previous Chapter Two (see Section 2.6.) I have discussed how Holliday distinguishes between the two uses of the term 'culture' in research. While the essentialist paradigm understands 'culture' in ethnic or national terms, the non-essentialist paradigm understands 'cultures' in cohesive behaviors within any small social grouping or activities. According to Holliday (1999, p.237) where large culture constructs are vulnerable to reductionism, the small cultures avoid ethnic, national or international stereotyping as the small cultures are always in flux and constantly emerging. In this study, instead of focusing on the issues of how Malaysian doctoral students experience supervision or what international students think of their supervision, I chose to focus on the small cultures involved between students and supervisors from differing backgrounds. The move from a focus on, for instance, Malaysianness *per se* to a focus on the emergent cultures between students and supervisor from different backgrounds can liberate my discussion of doctoral supervision cultures from ethnic, national or international differences of individual students, thus avoiding the risk of 'otherness' and making stereotyping and overgeneralising assumptions.

In the analysis, I looked for the evidence of small culture formation (see Section, 2.6.1) within and across the participants' restoried narratives of doctoral supervision experiences, such as: elements of shared behaviours or values; rules, norms and routines; common goals; within the activities that are taking place within supervision. Next, I searched for social contexts within the participants' narratives which might provide access to their personal or institutional history, personal or shared opinions and present scenarios in higher education (Cortazzi and Jin, 2009; Cortazzi, 2014). These social contexts represent the forces that may shape the emergence small cultures of doctoral supervision as informed by the host culture complex model. Table 6-1 gives a summary of the elements that I looked for in the participants restoried narratives that may provide evidence for the formation of doctoral supervision as small cultures and potential shaping influences.

Elements	Description
Significant behaviours, norms, or routines relevant to supervision	PhD-related programs (coursework, tutorial), the teaching aspects (giving feedback, tutoring, facilitating) and learning aspects (meeting with supervisor, academic reading, thesis writing, coursework), and research practices (conducting fieldwork, interview, data analysis)
Participants' beliefs and values that are relevant to their experiences of supervision	Roles, motivation, perception, views.
Contexts that hold significant meanings within the participant's doctoral supervisory experience	Demography (family background, religion, traditions, previous educational background), location (country of origin, institution), time, or relationship (family, friends, supervisors, other research students)

Table 6-1: Elements of Doctoral Supervision Cultures

6.2 Five Key Features of the Emerging Small Cultures of Doctoral Supervision

In this section, I present five key features of the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision by drawing on the small cultures approach as my analytical lens:

6.2.1 The Student's Recursive Learning Practices

From the insights of the narratives, I identified four key practices involved in the students' learning process within their supervisory experiences. The first practice refers to the feedback discussion with the students' supervisors. The modalities of the feedback practice

are often personalised according to the supervisor's preference or life circumstance of the student. For instance, some students, like Edward, and Ryan narrated that their feedback sessions are not necessarily conducted via face-to-face meeting in the supervisors' offices, but through emails, over the telephone, online video calls or text messaging.

The second key practice concerns how the students learned from their supervisors' feedback which enabled the students to identify further works to be improved. Often, the feedback from the supervisors consisted of lists of work to be improved or revised. Upon receiving the feedback from the supervisors, some students took some time to respond to the feedback. I found that the students' response to the supervisor's feedback might influence the amount of progress achieved in their studies. For instance, Edward's positive reaction to his supervisor's feedback helped him to focus on things that matter in his studies. In contrast, non-favourable response to the supervisor's feedback might inhibit the student from making progress in his or her studies. For instance, Jacob reflected that in his first supervision meeting, the supervisor commented: "*… he said to come and see him only if I have new things to present to him …. Otherwise my supervisor told me not to come*". Instead of responding favourably to the feedback, Jacob decided to forgo his supervision meetings. Jacob, later, realised that his decision may have delayed his study progress: "*At first I was glad that I did not have to see him that often, but I was not aware of the consequences. Three years later, I was not progressing as expected and I had to apply for an extension*". Moreover, from the narratives, I found that good feedback practices from the supervisors not only helped the students improve their writing but developed their confidence and competence as researchers. For example, Edward shared that he felt: "*comfortable with my supervisor because he is supportive. He always replies my messages or emails. He is approachable. …the fact that he cares is a good motivation*". Similarly, Nissa narrated that the feedback that she received from her supervisor inspired her not only to be a better student, but also a better practitioner:*" I have a lot of positive experience, …. I have a lot of fond memories of her, so, when I am supervising my students, I know exactly how to go about it*".

The third key learning practice refers to how students facilitated their knowledge formation and development by carrying out learning strategies that enabled them to address or identify relevant issues to be improved in their research or writing. I have identified several learning strategies namely: employing library research; reading relevant journals; piloting and conducting fieldwork to generate data; enrolling on relevant courses to get exposure;

developing an academic writing style and consulting the requisite experts for guidance. These are evident in some of the students' narratives, such as Edward who shared that: "*I have to proofread my writing a lot… learn how to write academically … double my effort to make my thesis readable and accepted in the academic world*".

The fourth key practice within the students' learning process is their engagement with the wider learning communities - within and outside the higher institutions (e.g. PGR students; peers; professional groups; social media groups) – that enabled them to communicate their concerns and understanding of the new knowledge before submitting their completed work to their supervisors. From the narratives, I found that the students' learning processes are further enhanced through their engagement with the wider learning community. Moreover, there are instances when the students' engagement with the learning community could potentially provide new insights into some areas that needed improving or knowledge, which in turn led to a better understanding of their own work. I believe that such engagement might have facilitated reciprocal learning experiences between the doctorates and members of the community that are beneficial to the students to increase exposure to the different perspectives that may enrich different aspects of the students' research topics; utilise the wider community as part of the students' support system in which they could develop a sense of belonging and seek comfort; and expand career advancement and professional collaboration with other academics and researchers. For example, Edward and Bella shared some of their experiences engaging with the wider community through online blogs, Facebook, PGR seminars and research activities.

In sum, these insights suggest that the students' learning practices were not linear but rather recursive, whereby the student could be seen shifting flexibly back and forth between stages. In the narratives, some students, such as: Edward and Bella, sought information or advice from other research students within the learning community before deciding on the appropriate strategies to address their problems. Other students, for instance, Nissa, and Jacob sought feedback from their supervisors during their knowledge formation to check on their 'readiness' to progress. Figure 6-1 below illustrates the students' learning practices.
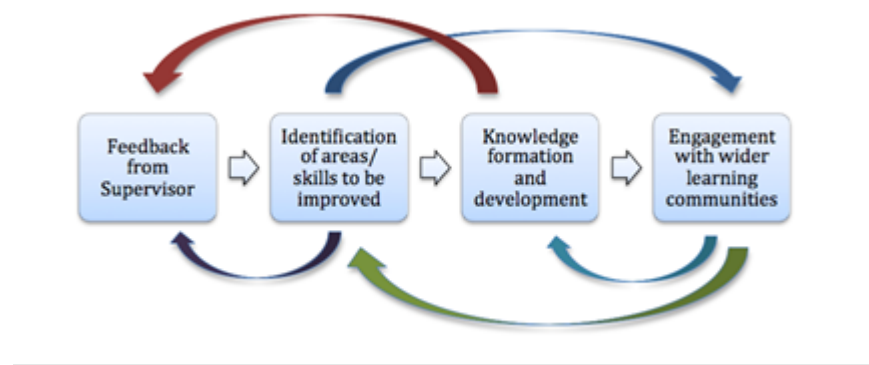
Figure 6-1: Recursive Learning Practices of Doctoral Students

What can I propose from this is that the students were not passive recipients of instruction but rather active interpreters of their supervisory realities. This is evident through their dynamic participation in the knowledge formation and development stage, in which the students developed a set of personal qualities towards their learning, namely:

- Autonomy – when the students learned to take control of their own learning by using appropriate and efficient means;
- Reflectivity – when the students continuously observed and reflected on their own thoughts and actions; and
- Resilience – when the students learned to adapt and manage amid their academic and personal challenges.

The insights from the narratives suggest the students who displayed a higher commitment to these qualities may have more successful supervisory experiences, than those who did not. These qualities can promote the students' meaning-making process of the new knowledge in light of their personal, cultural or professional positionality and allow them to act upon those meanings by making any necessary changes to their behaviors, routines and values in regard to their supervision.

Above all, these insights suggest that the students' learning processes were recursive in character, whereby the students were actively interpreting their realities of supervision and acting upon them through their reflexivity and engagement with their own learning community as shown by these four key learning practices.

In sum, I believe that by utilising the small cultures approach to explore the students'
learning experiences, we can gain a deeper understanding of how doctoral students learn
by looking at what they do, thus, avoiding overgeneralisation of how they would learn
based on their 'large' cultures prescription. For example, one common misleading
assumption is the perception of Asian students as a single group who bring with them a
learning experience that favours rote, surface, reproductive and teacher-centred (Ninnes et
al., 1999; Ballard and Clanchy, 1991). Nonetheless, several studies have shown that such
overgeneralisation of international students have been deconstructed and challenged for
being prejudiced and failing to consider other aspects at work (Biggs, 1990).

6.2.2 The Transitional Continuum of Supervisory Styles

From the insights of the supervisors' narratives, I have identified that the supervisors did
not exclusively use one single supervisory style or preference as there was a range of
supervisory styles implemented throughout their supervision. Based on these insights, I
propose that the supervisory styles can be described by means of a transitional continuum
ranging from linear to a more holistic supervision. I believe it is transitional because the
supervisors moved flexibly from one end of the continuum to another as their students
showed improvement in their learning, thus requiring a less structured approach. Figure 6.2
illustrates the supervisory continuum.

Supervisory Role	Teacher				Facilitator/Advisor
		<<<<<	Supervisory Relationship	>>>>>	
Supervisory Styles	Linear				Holistic
	More instructive & directive, less personal, & more academic oriented				Less instructive & directive, more colloborative, personal & pastoral
Supervisory Modality	More structured feedback, regular one-on-one, face-to-face interactions				Less structured feedback, on a needs basis interaction, flexible modality: email/ text messaging

Figure 6-2: Doctoral Supervisory Styles

Within the continuum, a linear supervision involves a more structured and directed style of
supervision in which the supervisors often assumed the teaching roles and the students'
progress would be closely monitored. Each step along the line of students' development is
well defined and communicated. Insights from the supervisors' narratives suggest that a

more linear supervision was usually applied at the beginning of the supervisory process, in which the supervisors would initiate frequent meetings with the students, who were new or unfamiliar to their research subject, discipline or methodology. Some of the supervisors, for example Adam and Alice, shared that a more structured supervision was often required for students who were coming from a different educational system and students with almost zero empirical research experience or with a lack of language proficiency (in either English or Arabic) as these students struggled the most as noted by Alice. Moreover, the linear supervision may be provided at a specific point in time as highlighted by Johan in his narrative:

> *Normally the first meeting is very important for me as a supervisor and my supervisee. …Then after that our meeting will be in once in fortnight and sometimes another crucial time is when they want to collect data.*

Subsequently, a more linear approach to supervision would be required, in which the supervisors would work alongside the students to improve their research and language skills. At the other end of the continuum is a holistic approach to supervision, whereby a more independent and collaborative approach towards learning would be integrated by the supervisors when supervising their students. I have learned that the holistic supervision involves a considerable amount of trust on the part of the student, in which the supervisors believe that the students possess sufficient subject knowledge and research skills to carry on with their doctoral learning with a minimum supervision. The holistic supervision can also take place towards the end of doctoral learning as the students show significant progress, competence or confidence in their research. For instance, Johan narrated that his approach to supervision catered to the students' needs:

> *Sometimes in a week they meet us three or four times because they need our advice, through email or through SMS…I just monitor [their progress] if there is no problem they can go ahead …if there is problem they will come here.*

From the narratives, I have further identified four significant characteristics between the linear and holistic supervisory styles. Firstly, in linear supervision, the supervisors preferred frequent one-on-one, face-to-face interactions with their students, in comparison to holistic supervision in which the supervisors were more flexible with the choice of modality as they interacted with their students through email and text messaging on a needs basis. Secondly, in holistic supervision, most of the interactions between the supervisors and students were in the forms of advice and suggestions, in comparison to linear supervision where the interactions involved structured feedback. Thirdly, in regard

to relationships, while the supervisors were more reluctant to engage in non-personal topics of discussion in linear supervision as they focused on developing the students' academic and research competence, the supervisors through holistic supervision were more inclined to discuss non-academic matters with their students as part of their strategy to bring the relationship beyond the PhD domain. Fourth and finally, the power dynamic within the holistic supervision was more balanced in comparison to linear supervision as the supervisors assumed a less authoritative role.

These insights I believe concur with existing studies that depict supervisory styles as complex and containing different dimensions: subject knowledge, research expertise, interpersonal skills and teaching qualities. Recognising that students have diverse needs for support, I believe that it is crucial for supervisors to be able to move "flexibly between the various models" (Delany, 2008, p. 8), in particular when students make sudden changes in their studies or when students experience difficult situations, such as personal or financial issues (Grant, 2005). Similar insights have been discussed in previous studies. For example, one of the dominant approaches used to describe supervisory style is Sinclair's (2004) hands-on and hands-off pedagogy offered an intervention continuum ranging from more to less supervisory input. Lee (2010) offered a more holistic view to supervision, encompassing five interrelated dimensions: organisational; sociological; psychological; philosophical; and emotional, all of which can be integrated depending on the situation (p. 22). Gatfield (2005) suggested four types of supervisory styles ranging from the most demanding to the least structured: contractual, directorial, pastoral and laissez-faire.

6.2.3 The Multifaceted Dimensions of the Supervisory Roles

From the narratives, I have learned that the supervisors assumed multifaceted roles in their supervisory practices. In general, roles can refer to forms of behaviours, obligations and norms in social settings conceptualised by people to be appropriate and purposeful in social contexts (Stark, 2007). From the small culture perspective, I propose that a supervisory role can refer to types of behaviours, customs and responsibility in doctoral supervisory settings that is deemed to be fitting by supervisors and the management of the university. In the narratives, I found that while each supervisor described his or her supervisory roles differently from one to the other (i.e. as teacher, as advisor and as facilitator), for some supervisors these roles are neither fixed nor permanent but fluid and responsive to their students' needs throughout supervision. For example: In Adam's narrative, he maintained that his supervisory roles were mainly for teaching and guiding

students in both the academic and research aspects. In doing so, he established some boundaries between the students and himself. Nonetheless, unlike his past postgraduate supervisory experience, in which he was often left alone to take control of his own study, he offered more guidance to his students because he felt responsible for the students' wellbeing. For Alice, while her main role was more of a facilitator, whereby she equipped students with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable the students to become experts in their respective field, she was also at times involved with counselling the students on non–academic issues, which enabled the students to re-focus on their studies. Similarly, for Johan, while his main role was more advisory, he also provided moral and emotional support to the students so that the students *"can solve it [the problem] on their own"*. Figure 6.3 below shows the interconnecting dimensions of supervisory roles from the supervisors' perspectives.
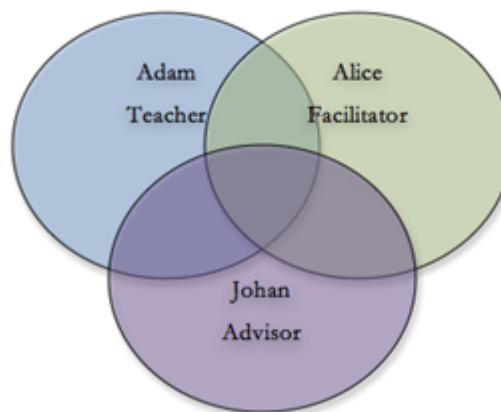
Figure 6-3: Supervisory Role from Supervisors' Perspectives

However, from the students' perspectives, I found that the roles of supervisors were more complex in nature. For example, Ryan described his supervisor not only as a role model with great personal and professional qualities but both Ryan and the supervisor *"developed a friendly sort of friendship. … We have always maintained our respect for each other … It becomes like that now that I consider him as my family"*. Moreover, Edward maintained that his supervisor's role underwent transition from academic-oriented roles (e.g. teacher) to professional-oriented roles (e.g. colleague, collaborator): *"I am glad that my supervisory relationship goes beyond the academic world and continues into our daily professional work"*. Similarly, Bella revealed that her supervisor exemplified different roles throughout their supervision: *"… She begins as a mentor but after a while when you started writing*

she is a supervisor, then she is a friend, a buddy and finally a supporter". In the narratives, Jacob shared that his main supervisor occupied many different roles throughout their supervision, ranging from being as a friend, a teacher, an examiner to being a colleague. Jacob commented that: *"…Our relationship went through some changes. There is a striking difference between when he was my supervisor and now that we are back as friends in terms of the formality and such"*. For Nissa, her supervisor was her biggest critic, which motivated Nissa to be more responsible and focus on her own studies: *"Because she is critical I have improved my work"*. Nevertheless, for Maressa, she regarded her supervisor as part of her family: *"She was very close with me. … We have a good relationship, to some extent, I think of her like my older sister from a different mother"*. Figure 6.4 below illustrates the different roles assumed by the supervisors from the students' perspectives.

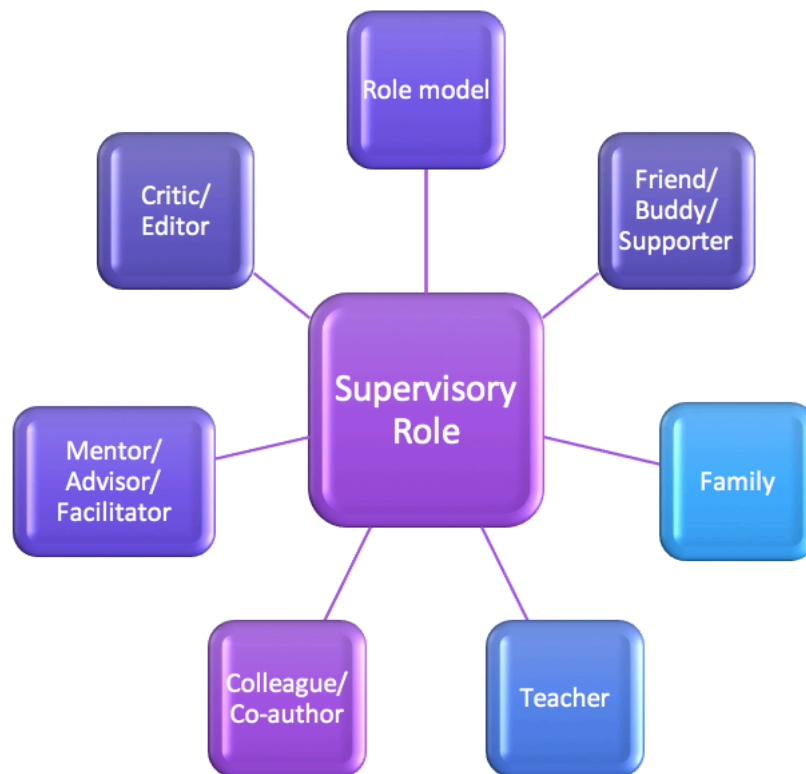*Figure 6-4: Supervisory Roles from the Doctoral Students' Perspectives*

Similar findings of the multifaceted roles of supervisors have been highlighted in the literature. For example, Evans and Pearson (1999, p. 196) described the teaching role in supervision as multifaceted. On one hand, it can assume a role similar to that of master and apprentice. On the other hand, it occupies the role of a 'critical friend' guiding the

'student' through the doctoral process. Yet, at times it can also be a 'gate-keeper of science' to monitor a student's progress. Moreover, Mouton (2001) suggested a combination of guiding, advising, ensuring scientific quality and providing moral support were parts of a supervisory role. Furthermore, Fraser and Mathews (1999) listed three qualities of supervisory roles: being expert in their own research field; being supportive; and maintaining a balance between creativity' and criticism in giving feedback. In addition, Connell (1985, p. 38) suggested that teaching is one of the traditional approaches to a supervisory role and one that is emphasised in supervision. While Mueller (2004) proposed that the supervisory roles as advisor and facilitator may be viewed as strategies within mentorship (which is a concept refers to the relationship between experienced and inexperienced individuals), Manathunga (2007a) suggested that the supervisory role within mentorship can also involve academic, psychological, personal and social supports.

6.2.4 The Complexity of the Doctoral Supervisory Relationship

With respect to relationship, I found that in the context of doctoral supervision, the supervisory relationship can refer to a specific type of kinship existing between a doctoral student and a supervisor (or supervisors in joint supervision) during a supervisory period that can last from three to five years or even longer. While some existing studies have suggested that supervisory relationship can be gender sensitive (Gilbert and Rossman, 1992; Nelson and Holloway, 1990), interestingly, insights from the narratives show that gender makes little difference. Based on the insights, I can propose that doctoral supervisory relationship is potentially made complicated by several aspects, namely: implicit contract of learning; familial bond; and resilience.

Implicit Contract of Learning: In the context of doctoral supervision, the contract of learning can be understood as an implicit understanding between a student and a supervisor, through a well-defined process of negotiation and mutual understanding that determines the supervisory objectives (i.e. submission of thesis), activities (e.g. meetings, pilot study, fieldwork) and the means by which the objectives are to be achieved and evaluated (e.g. progress report, proposal defense, viva). In other words, I believe that the contract of learning creates mutual accountability between supervisor and student in working towards their shared objectives. Like any other contract, (e.g. in the classroom) the learning contract is non-permanent and might end once the supervisory objectives have been fulfilled (e.g. submission of thesis). From the narratives, I believe that the asymmetrical power relation between student and supervisor is more apparent in the

learning contract, in which there is a mutual understanding between supervisor and student. For example, the supervisor would assume greater status than a student, through his or her role as experts and distinguished members of a learned community; and the student might assume a lower status as a novice researcher. This is apparent in Edward's and Nissa's narratives.

> *…he told me that if I really wanted to learn from him, I must do my best and follow his way if I want to succeed. (Edward)*

> *…My supervisor is a very strict lady. When it comes to work she wants quality. I wanted somebody who is strict but at the same time will help me produce something that is of quality. (Nissa)*

Affectional or Familial Bond: The second aspect that might contribute to the complexity within the supervisory relationship is the affectional or familial bond, in which a student and his/her supervisor may begin with a closer relationship prior to their supervision, for instance, Jacob and his supervisors; or tend to remain in proximity to each other and the tie between them is often replaced with a bond between a son and a father (e.g. Ryan's story) or between sisters (i.e. Maressa's story). Moreover, I find that the affectional bond in supervisory relationship might create more permanent ties between student and supervisor as the relationship is expected to continue after the supervision is completed. For example, Ryan shared his hope for the future in regard to the relationship with his supervisor: "*We develop a friendly sort of friendship. … We are going to have a life time partnership*".

Resilience: The third aspect is that the supervision relationship is resilient in character as it has the ability to recover from or overcome hardship or struggle. This is evident within the narratives of the students, such as Nissa and Maressa. Moreover, the supervisors showed the capability to manage unexpected hurdles and disappointment and continued to move forward and make progress in their supervision as shown by Johan and Alice in their narratives.

Based on the above discussion, while these aspects can enhance and strengthen the supervisory relationship between the students and supervisors, I propose that they can also potentially complicate the relationships in two ways. Firstly, although the learning contract aspect of the relationship might provide students with a more structured (i.e. guidance, goal oriented) approach to their learning process, but it also might lead to abuse of power and

mistreatment of students. Some students, like Nissa and Jacob recounted instances where the supervisors did not read their drafts properly or were reluctant to have consultations with their students. Moreover, seeing the supervisor as an "authority figure" might limit the students' learning and critical ability to make informed judgements about their own work (Wisker et al., 2003, p. 388), thus making them more reliant on their supervisors. Secondly, while the affectional bond aspect to the relationship may promote a closer relationship between student and supervisor, it might also prove challenging to maintain objectivity. Based on some of the students' narratives, I have discovered that the affectional bond might involve strong emotional and moral consequences that can have a potential impact on either the student's or the supervisor's live as the boundary or space between student and supervisor can become fuzzy or blurry. For instance, Maressa highlighted such experience in her narrative: "*I am not fearful of her; I'm not scared of her. I feel like there is no need for me to. That was why I didn't do what I supposed to do*". My finding echoes Parker-Jenkins (2016, p. 5) who noted that the blurry lines between supervisor and supervisee could be particularly tricky when a relationship becomes personal as well as academic as both student and supervisor become vulnerable. Moreover, a supervisory relationship that is becoming too personal can jeopardise the professional aspect of the learning experience (Phillips and Pugh, 2010).

In sum, I propose that the supervisory relationship is a powerful bond that can connect individuals from different backgrounds to work together towards achieving common goals. The insights from the narratives revealed that through challenging times, the supervisors reached out to their individual students and used various means to ensure the students' problems were addressed and they could go on with their studies. At the same time, the students focused on the positive or rewarding aspects of their learning experiences, improved their attitudes towards their supervisors and developed their academic and research skills. Nevertheless, while a good relationship makes the teaching and learning process more rewarding both professionally and personally, I have found that it is also a fragile one as the relationship between student and supervisor is susceptible to conflicts and pressures. In the supervision relationship, conflicts might arise when either the students or supervisors fail to fulfill their part of the learning contract. Tensions may also emerge when students and supervisors fail to maintain an appropriate relationship boundary between them. Above all, I believe that doctoral supervision relationship is complex and susceptible to conflict, as noted by Grant (1999, p, 1, cited in Mackinnon, 2004, p. 398) who described that the relationship between supervisor and student is akin to

"walking on a rackety bridge" in the sense that it is located within a profoundly unequal power structure and influenced by other complicating factors involved in its maintenance. Moreover, a friendship-based relationship between supervisor and student might prevent the supervisor from giving honest and objective feedback as the boundaries becomes blurred (Sullivan and Ogloff, 1998). These insights also concur with Moses (1984, p. 163), who suggested that supervisory relationships could be "fraught with danger of misunderstanding" even when student and supervisor come from similar language and cultural backgrounds.

6.2.5 The Polarised Expectations of the Students and Supervisors

From the narratives, I have identified a range of polarised expectations of students and supervisors. On one hand, the supervisors expected their doctoral students to display qualities in three main areas. Firstly, doctoral students should demonstrate some understandings in the subject discipline that they wish to research on, possess some background in research methodology and have a relatively clear idea of their research topics. For example, Johan elaborated his criteria for recruiting doctoral students:

> *Students have to bring their concept papers…and from there we can know if they have a clear [idea] …if the research is researchable, manageable…and if they really want to do their PhDs. The most important[thing] is I have to ensure that their topic is familiar …within my research area.*

Secondly, students should possess a good command of the language of instruction (i.e. English or Arabic) and be familiar with the academic writing and reading skills. For instance, Adam highlighted the lack of writing skills among his students: "*…many of our students when they begin their studies, they do not know how to pick up ideas and put them in sequence*". Thirdly, students should display a good attitude towards learning by being able to work independently, showing motivation and commitment to timely completion, displaying good ethics and values, showing independence and accountability for their own learning, and respecting and adhering to the guidelines set by the supervisor and the university. For example Adam pointed out that lack of independence among students might hinder their progress to complete PhD on time:

> *…as a student you have to plan your research from the beginning when you register as a research student. If you register but your mind is still blank, I'm sure that you cannot complete [your studies] in four years.*

On the other hand, most of the students had high expectations of their supervisors. They anticipated that their supervisors should embody many qualities. First and foremost, supervisors should be experts and professional in their own academic fields and research. Besides that, supervisors should be role models of good moral. This is apparent in Ryan's and Bella's description of their supervisors. Moreover, according to some students, the supervisors should be accessible and available for consultation and provide constructive feedback sooner rather than later. In addition, some of the students believed that the supervisors should be involved in the students' research by showing a keen interest in the students' research and provided a collegial and supportive learning environment. This is strongly insisted by Edward who shared that: "… *it is not about how old he is, but how accessible he is to you and how much support he can give you. That's what matters"*. In a similar vein, Ryan shared that his supervisor was there for him despite holding an important position in the university. Furthermore, supervisors should show some empathy or understanding of their students' current situation. This is evident in Bella's story about her supervisor. She narrated that her supervisor showed empathic understanding towards other students based on their circumstances: "*She would address us differently because everyone has different sets [of challenges]"*.

Based on the insights, I believe that these expectations can potentially become sources of conflict between the students and supervisors. Some supervisors narrated that most of their students did not meet these expectations as some of them possessed lack of research experience and substandard academic literacies, thus making supervision more challenging and time consuming for both supervisor and student as more time and effort needed to be utilised to develop those skills. For example, Adam explained that some students still required "*systematic guidance*" in "*writing proposal, how to come up with research problem … research question*" even though they attended Research Methodology class. Adam further elaborated that some of the students were still dependent on the supervisor: "… *some students they want to depend on us. This is a big problem. They just wait for the supervisor to give them … ideas. Students should know that they have to read a lot*". Adam's concern is supported by Alice who commented that: "*I think that's the part that is also challenging …to make them independent. They should be able to come up with their own ideas but sometimes you have to tell them what to do"*. Moreover, Alice observed that some of the students displayed poor time management skills and lack of responsibilities in their own studies. Furthermore, Alice noticed that some students from abroad abused their

student visa to work here and the local students focused more on their work or personal commitment rather than their PhDs.

In sum, I believe that the supervisors' concerns are justified because the students need to be equipped with relevant knowledge and research skills prior to starting their PhDs. Apart from that, the students need to possess positive and motivational traits that will enable them to be in control of their own studies. In the narratives, Alice expressed her worries that the supervisors would often take the blame when the students were not able to complete their studies on time: *"When your students take longer to finish their theses than expected, it looks bad on you"*. I also have found that within the narratives, there is some tension arising from the polarised expectation between the supervisors and the university. For instance, Adam and Johan voiced their concerns about the increasing numbers of doctoral students that the supervisors are required to supervise. On top of that, the supervisors are required to undertake substantial teaching and research workload that makes supervision more challenging. Subsequently, both Adam and Johan highlighted the urgency for the university to revise the current supervisory workload in order to alleviate supervisor's increasing workload.

Moreover, although the university offers training and workshops to help improve the students' language proficiency, academic literacies and research skills, some supervisors highlighted that the students continued to struggle, especially during their thesis writing. For example, Adam proposed that the university should make some revisions to the admission policy and the selection process of students to ensure that only qualified students would be selected into the doctoral program:

> *…sometimes I feel that we are so lenient in terms of selecting our students. Why is that? Because we are competing with others. For example, the University will easily admit students to do either by research or coursework. If we reject them, they will go to other universities. We are living in the world where Education becomes a business; I feel that is the biggest problem now. It is like quality vs quantity and it happens everywhere.*

In the narratives, the students also recounted their frustration and concerns about their supervisors. For example, Nissa pointed out that there were some supervisors who failed to read their students' drafts properly, refused to provide regular feedback or showed little interest in research. Moreover, Nissa questioned how the supervisors provided feedback to their students: *"I don't know how they do it. Do they just browse through it and then say 'change this area' or 'change that area' so randomly?"*. Similarly, Jacob shared his regret

for not completing his studies on time. He wondered what went wrong in his supervision: *"… in my case I heard that my supervisor was excellent but during my time, my experience was different"*. Like Nissa and Jacob, I agree that polarised expectations could potentially create disappointment and embittered feelings between supervisor and student. I believe that the feedback process can be more transparent and systematic. From my own experience, the feedback from my supervisor was always and clear which was very useful to ensure good progress in my studies. Nevertheless, I believe that individual students are responsible for their own learning and together with a good supervision from the supervisors, the learning process will be more enjoyable and fruitful. Similar view is shared by some of the students, such as, Jacob who admitted that being a supervisor changed his outlook on what he expected from the students. Furthermore, in the narratives, one supervisor shared Nissa's concern about poor feedback from the supervisor. For example, Adam revealed that there had been some cases where supervisors failed to provide prompt feedback to students and when such cases happened, Adam believed that *"… is not good because it will delay their study time … without feedback students cannot move on"*.

In sum, the polarised expectations between students and supervisors and between supervisors and the university management team, if not properly addressed can potentially become sources of conflict. Similar insights have been discussed in the literature. For example, studies have indicated that in situations where student and supervisor come from different backgrounds, the possibility of mismatched expectations is greater (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991; Kiley, 1998; Wisker et al., 2003). Ballard and Clanchy (1991, p. 74-78) proposed a range of aspects, which could contribute to mismatched expectations between student and supervisor, including: different personalities, a student's lack of scientific skills and different attitudes to teaching and learning. Moreover, Kiley (1998, p. 199) suggested that expectations involved the roles and responsibilities of both student and supervisor and their personal and professional motives for undertaking supervision. While Gunnarsson et al. (2013, p. 6) noted that within supervision conflict might arise due to the duality in the supervising situation, to support and demand at the same time, Epstein et al. (2005, p. 87-90) highlighted common problems associated with all doctoral students that might affect their learning progress, including: over-ambition and enthusiasm; resisting or avoiding engagement in theoretical debates; partial or naïve understanding of the field of their proposed work; health, family and financial difficulties. In addition, McAlpine et al.

(2012 p. 520) proposed that students' academic issues need to be understood and resolved within their current personal contexts.

6.3 Doctoral Supervision Cultures and Shaping Influences

In the previous chapter Two (see Section 2.6) I have described how Holliday (1994) employed the host culture complex to explore the complexity of classroom culture. In this study, I proposed that it is within the host culture complex conceptualisation that a consideration of the possible forces shaping the developments of doctoral supervision cultures can be best explored and understood. Following Holliday, (1994, p. 131) in order to study the complexities of culture, I believe that it is important to look at culture "in terms of a whole complex of interlocking and overlapping cultural influences, some of which will be regional, others of which may not".

In my study, to adapt the host culture complex for doctoral supervision, I replaced "the classroom culture" with "the supervision culture". Within the higher educational context, the small culture of doctoral supervision is located within the postgraduate research culture which is situated within the host university culture. In the host culture complex, the host university culture may derive influence from the host national culture, which higher education policies and principles may underpin and govern how doctoral programs are operationalised in the universities within the nation. As part of the university involvement at the global level, the university culture may also subject to influences from the global cultures. In the context of the IIUM, the internationalisation of higher education and the Islamisation of Knowledge cultures might play some roles in shaping some of the university's policy and practice as stated in the IIUM strategic objectives. Moreover, at a micro level, doctoral supervision may derive influences from each individual student's and supervisor's culture and his/her engagement with the wider learning community culture. The following Figure 6.5 illustrates the visual conceptualisation of host culture complex of doctoral supervision that is constituted of a range of potential overlapping cultural influences.
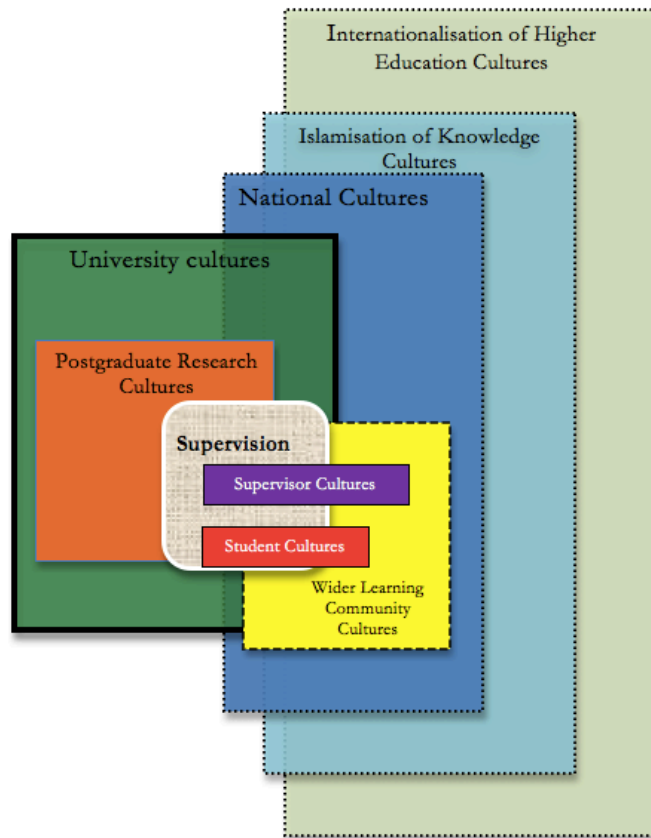
Figure 6-5: Host Culture Complex of the Shaping Influences of Doctoral Supervision

In the following sub-sections, I will describe each of the cultural influence that might shape the emerging small cultures of supervision based on some insights from within and across the participants' narratives.

6.3.1 The Student Culture

In my research context, the student culture can refer to the residues of student' personal life experiences that may shape their learners' expectations and roles, which in turn might influence the interaction with supervisors for example; childhood, family and friends, pedagogical experience derived from their educational background, ideal learning styles, educational belief); their 'large' culture identity into their realities of supervision (i.e. derived from their national, religion or ethnic characteristics); and the students' personal, social and professional motives (e.g. motivations, aspirations, ambitions, roles) and socio-economic (e.g. financial, status- and job-related situations). Based on the insights from the students' narratives, I learned that the students' various backgrounds might play a significant role in shaping their doctoral supervisory practices and values. For example,

Ryan maintained that his childhood and early educational experience abroad greatly influenced his decision to come and study in Malaysia. In addition, Ryan's prior knowledge and personal commitments (family and professional) influenced his preferred learning style in which he explained: *"I work independently. He [the supervisor] didn't really have much input when it comes to actual material"*. Another striking insight comes from the supervisors' narratives. For instance, both Alice and Adam remarked that supervision became more challenging with students coming from certain backgrounds, such as: from a more traditional and teacher-oriented educational systems, from countries where English or Arabic language is not the main language of instruction; from conflict-affected and war-torn countries and from insufficient research-oriented backgrounds. Similar insights are noted by Epstein et al. (2005, p. 87-90) that as students come from different educational systems in different universities in different countries, they might bring with them different levels of language competence, research skills or education training. In my study, as most of the students are non-traditional mature age students, they might bring to the doctoral experience their work and life experience that is diverse in character. One of the striking characters is the different set of challenges that they have to endure. For example, Edward narrated that his unfavorable experience doing PhD in another university led him to choose his next supervisor wisely. Edward narrated that his new supervisor understood his predicament as a part-time and self-funded student and provided appropriate supports for Edward to complete his studies on time. One of the supports provided by his supervisor is being flexible in supervision. Similar finding has been illustrated in a study by Deem and Brehony (20002) that showed student status, such as, part-time or full-time can influence students' learning experience.

Another challenge is finding a good balance between life and PhD. For example, Bella and Maressa shared their stories of having to juggle the roles between motherhood and doing their PhDs. Their struggles as women students have been noted in some studies (e.g. Leonard, 2002; Skjortnes and Zachariassen, 2010; Mahani Mokhtar, 2012) that discussed issues concerning the role of gender inequality in higher education and how these might impact women pursuing their PhDs. However, the insights from the narratives suggest that even male students, like Ryan and Edward, might experience similar predicaments as they strived to find a good balance between taking care of the financial aspect of the family and focusing on their PhDs. The students' narratives echo my own experience as a mature age doctoral student. Being married with two small children while at the same time completing my doctorate has not been an easy feat. Often, I found it difficult to find a healthy balance

between my study and my family. Nevertheless, I managed to overcome most of the obstacles due to the consistent support from my family, friends and supervisors. Above all, I propose that the diversity within the student culture might bring implications for supervision in terms of appropriate learning and teaching practices, provision of resources and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate students' progress (Green and Powell, 2005).

6.3.2 The Supervisor Culture

From the narratives, I identified that the supervisors' personal, cultural and professional backgrounds might influence how supervision was conducted and managed. One main finding is the influence of the supervisors' 'large' culture values on their supervisory practice. For example, Alice, Adam and Johan, regarded their main responsibility as Muslim educators to educate their students to become competent researchers with good ethics and values. They also viewed their roles as contributing to the betterment of the Muslim community by educating their students with the appropriate skills and values that can benefit society. In the narratives, Johan regarded his supervisory role as an '*amanah*' for the younger generation. Apart from deriving influences from the Islamic values, I learned that the supervisors not only carried with them residues of their life experiences living and studying in the UK context, but also their psychosocial (e.g. their motivations, aspirations, ambitions, roles, and responsibilities) and pedagogical residues (e.g. disciplinary-based or institutional- based). In addition, some of the supervisors brought with them professional experiences and values that they may have created and co-created from their engagement with previous students or from their interaction with other academics, non-academics, the department and the university. For example, Adam shared the importance of learning and collaborating with other practitioners. A similar notion was highlighted by Grant (1999, p. 8) who observed that supervisory relationships can be influenced by the "shadow figures and relationships" of supervisors' past experiences.

Moreover, I have identified that while some supervisors preferred to maintain a more traditional approach to supervision, others opted to embrace new approaches to supervision (i.e. utilising technology). For example, for Adam and Alice, they preferred face-to-face supervision rather than other forms of communication; for Johan, he did not have any preference, but insisted on face-to-face supervision for the first meeting with the students. However, I learned that the decision on the appropriate approach to supervision is not always an easy one as there are many aspects that the supervisors needed to consider, including: the students' background experience; the nature of research topic; the support

from the faculty; and other restrictions such as time and finance. For instance, Adam listed several challenges that may inhibit the students' success in doctoral studies, namely: incorrect approaches to research (e.g. correct results vs. correct methodology); lack of knowledge on research, poor English/Arabic language proficiency, poor time management, negative attitude towards learning (procrastination and dependent student) and different educational systems (e.g. traditional, didactic and teacher-centred vs. student-centred, independent and technology-infused learning). Similar insights have been discussed by other studies that showed different sets of challenges for supervisors to adapt to their current supervisory requirements while at the same time trying to maintain their own academic values (see Henkel, 2000, p. 208; Ylijoki, 2008, p. 81).

6.3.3 The Host University Culture

Based on the insights from the narratives, I identified that the host university culture is another main influential force that may shape the small cultures of doctoral supervision. For example, some of the students narrated positive experiences with regard to the university's internationalised and Islamised outlooks with respect to its diverse student and supervisor population, Islamic-oriented approach and the use of English or Arabic as a medium of instruction.

> …This university is probably in my opinion …the ideal institution for Islamic Studies in English and you are getting what Muslims would argue … more authentic ... image of Islam. (Ryan)

> … When I started my Master's program here (the IIUM) I learnt a lot of things. It opens my mind a lot with how Muslim scholars contributed to Islam …so this … gives me new motivation. (Nissa)

> …This university can offer you the language environment where people are talking Arabic, and there are a lot of international students [here] compared to the other university. (Edward)

For some supervisors, they were drawn to the university' Islamic characteristics, its values and promise of integration of modern and Islamic knowledge and the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of the Muslim community. For example, Johan was inspired by the university mission with respect to its "… *integration of the Western and Muslim scholars and how we enrich the knowledge and educate Muslims students*". Nevertheless, while the IIUM cultures provide a conducive learning and research environment, I found that some students and supervisors narrated a less positive experience with regard to the university's complex administrative procedure. On the one hand, some students felt that

the procedures should be more transparent and less complicated. For instance, Ryan remarked that he was upset with the delay in his Viva Voce examination: *"I had to wait for about a year roughly for the whole thing and apparently I was told that's quite normal if not quick in Malaysia"*. Edward went through a similar predicament when he applied for a conversion from part-time to full-time study mode: "*I do find that there is too much bureaucracy here, too many processes that delay students' progress … I believe it prevents students from completing on time"*. On the other hand, some supervisors highlighted some possible areas that the university can improve to better enhance supervisory experience. For instance, Johan mentioned that the supervisory workload can involve long hours of mentoring or meeting with the students, hence, it should be considered as part of the academic workload credit. In a similar vein, Adam pointed out that there was no standard in monitoring how supervision was managed by the practitioners. Subsequently, there were some cases whereby the supervisors failed to provide efficient feedback to the students, hence affecting the progress of the students. Moreover, Adam remarked that the university might be slowly losing its unique characteristic with respect to its implementation of a strict attendance system. Like Adam, I too believe that such rigid attendance system might be unsuitable for practitioners who need some degree of flexibility to practice their creativity and autonomy. Above all, based on the narratives, I can propose that the university culture is complicated and its complexity has some influential effect on the supervision practice. Similar insight has been discussed by Sporn (1996, p. 41) who claimed that universities are complex organisations with unique set of features, such as: their objectives are ambivalent as there are different standards goals in teaching, research and service; universities are people-oriented as different stake-holders have different expectations; and there are different interests between the professionals and the management team.

6.3.4 The Postgraduate Research Culture

Apart from the university culture, I learned that the postgraduate research culture can potentially influence supervision practice. Within this research context, the postgraduate research culture refers to a range of PhD–related programs that are offered by the university, including: doctoral modes of education such as types of doctorate (traditional PhD or Professional Doctorate); mode of study, either research only or coursework and either full-time or part-time mode; workshops and conferences; academic literacy program (either assessed or non-assessed) and research-oriented training. The postgraduate research culture can also include PhD housekeeping programs such as standard regulation to

monitor students' attendance and progress and to make formal assessments such as a proposal defense, thesis submission and viva examination. One striking insight from the narratives suggests that the students enrolled on a PhD by research and full-time program (see Ryan's and Edward's stories), had more time to focus on their main study in comparison to those enrolled on a PhD by coursework and research. In the narratives, Bella, Nissa, Maressa and Jacob took one to two years to complete their coursework before focusing on their main research. For example, Jacob commented that: *"In the first two years of my study I was busy with my coursework as I had 13 subjects. The coursework takes a lot of my time"*. Another key insight is that despite the longer study duration, these students admitted that they gain many valuable experiences from the coursework with respect to more exposure to subject knowledge and research methodology. Moreover, attending the coursework provided an opportunity for the students to get to know their instructors or lecturers as potential supervisors. This is apparent in Nissa's story: *"… if you choose somebody who doesn't have any experience of being with you, it will be very hard and you have to start fresh"*.

Similarly, some supervisors agreed that the coursework provided the students with sufficient exposure to their subject knowledge. As the coursework involved reading and writing assignments, the supervisors believed that this coursework could prepare the students with the appropriate doctoral knowledge and research skills and more importantly writing skills in which the students will be expected to practice later on in their main studies. For example, Alice highlighted that:

> *… coursework is actually good for the students especially the research methodology subject because many of them are not exposed to the various methods. The different courses may give students some ideas of how to approach their research.*

Like the students, I too agree on some of the benefits of attending coursework. As part of my doctoral program, I attended six modules of research coursework. The coursework covered a wide range of subject matters ranging from research methodology, literature review to current issues and skills in research. I believe that the coursework has enriched and extended my knowledge on some of the current trends in research. Moreover, I agree with the supervisors, that the workshops and trainings within the postgraduate research centre can develop and improve the students' academic literacy skills including speaking, writing and reading skills. Apart from academic literacy, workshops and conferences that are organised by the postgraduate research centre can expose students to a range of

research–related knowledge, including: research paradigms, strategies, data collection instruments, fieldwork and data analysis. Above all, the coursework, workshops and trainings embedded within the postgraduate culture are crucial for doctoral students and novice researchers who have almost zero experience in conducting research in fieldwork. Existing studies have also shown the importance of exposing students to the doctoral learning and research cultures to prevent mismatched expectations between students and supervisors (Clark and Neave, 1992; Wisker et al., 2003).

6.3.5 The Wider Learning Community Culture

From the narratives, I identified that the wider learning community culture might play a significant role in shaping the cultures of supervision. Within this research context, a wider learning community culture can refer to the various types of social groups, inside and outside university, where students and supervisors have either temporary or more permanent memberships, such as peer group, social media group, postgraduate group and professional teaching and research associations. From the narratives, I learned that some students have recounted many instances of meaningful and positive experiences when engaging with their learning community. While the purpose of their engagement was mainly for knowledge sharing and networking reasons, the learning community also offered informal support systems to help the students manage their day-to-day lives as highlighted by Bella and Edward in their narratives.

In a similar vein, Alice commented that some of the courses offered by the university might not be relevant to the students' needs, thus, the students needed to reach out to their wider learning community. I agree with Alice that since coursework or workshops that are offered by university might be limited, it is advisable for doctoral students to seek guidance and knowledge from their wider learning community. Some existing studies have shown that engagement with wider learning communities is significant in doctoral students' learning (Deem and Brehony, 2000; Lovitts, 2001) as they can provide a crucial learning environment for students in which they can become competent, integrated, and valuable members of the community (Hopwood, 2010; Pyhältö et al., 2009). Another highlight from the narratives is the importance of wider learning community for supervisors in regard to promoting collaboration with their peers, practitioners from other institutions, or members from other teaching and research groups. For example, for Adam, his engagement with the wider learning community acted as a platform to learn about how other practitioners conducted and managed their supervisory practices in their own

contexts. I agree with Adam that it is important for supervisors, in particular new supervisors to get in touch with other practitioners and learn from each other to improve their supervisory skills among other things.

6.3.6 The Host National Culture

From the narratives, I have identified that some of the Malaysian cultures may have considerable shaping influences on the interactions between the students and supervisors during supervision. In general, national culture can refer to the set of norms, behaviors, beliefs and customs that exist within the population of a sovereign nation. The insights from the narratives suggest that the students' and supervisors' attitudes and behaviors in supervision may be influenced by some of the characteristics of the Malaysian cultures and values. For example, one aspect of Malaysian cultures emphasises the value of respect for elders or seniors. This is evident in the narratives when the students demonstrated respect for their supervisors who were either older or occupied more senior position than them. Such respect might be related to social hierarchy in Malaysian society, where unequal power relations are seen as legitimate and proper (Asma and Lim, 2001). This was apparent in the narratives when the students preferred to address their supervisors using honorifics such as 'sir,' 'Dr.,' and 'Professor'. Moreover, the act of preserving face is considered as important for maintaining good relationships. Preserving face in the context of Malaysian society, can refer to maintaining a person's dignity by not embarrassing him or her in front of others and any confrontational behaviours with someone older or of higher rank may cause embarrassment or loss of face situations that could potentially harm his/her reputation. This is evident in the narratives when some students preferred to avoid direct and confrontational communication styles with their supervisors during agreement or conflicts. Instead, they sought a solution in a respectful way through indirect communication by expressing their thoughts and feeling through gestures or tone of voices. For instance, although Nissa was disappointed with the supervisor, she assumed non-challenging attitudes towards her supervisor during periods of conflicts: "… *I didn't know how to go about it … I didn't say it to her but then I think she would have understood it from my face"*.

However, I believe that the desire to preserve harmonious and face-saving relationships could make it challenging for both students and supervisors. Some supervisors, like Adam and Alice have recounted instances when they felt frustrated with the students' reticent

behaviours as they expected the students to take a bigger role in their own learning by demonstrating the ability to think critically and voice their own opinions. Previous studies showed that the students' difficulties to directly approach supervisors for help or to express disagreement publicly with their supervisors could be influenced by power differentials and cultural norms (Wang and Li, 2011; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2013). Moreover, Maheshwari and Malfroy (2001, p. 255- 256) stated that in Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, a person's age is commonly related to authority, which carries important weight in interpersonal relationships between doctoral students and their supervisors, which might lead to social awkwardness. From my own teaching and learning experience, in both Malaysian and the UK contexts, I observe that while the supervisor and student relationship is quite informal in a Western setting, whereby they address each other by their first names, it is not the case in the Malaysian setting for the relationship can be quite formal, such as those relationships between a master and the apprentice that are commonly found in traditional educational settings (Lee et al, 2017).

6.3.7 The Internationalisation of Higher Education Culture

Based on the insights from the narratives, I found that some aspects of the internationalisation agenda might have been infused into the learning, teaching and researching provision of doctoral supervision in several ways. Firstly, there is an emerging presence of different student-supervisor combination that is international and intercultural in character. For instance, all the supervisors received their tertiary education from abroad and throughout their career as practitioners, they have worked with both home and international students. Moreover, some students, like Maressa, Nissa and Ryan have experienced living and learning abroad. Apart from that, there is an increase intercultural interaction between home and international students. Such interaction creates awareness of how other students learn, hence, instilling a sense of understanding and respect among each other. For instance, Jacob shares that: *"… there are many international students, like from Nigeria. Some of them have many challenges, mostly financial problems … but they are very hardworking"*. Another aspect of the internationalisation agenda is an increase demand for learning, teaching and research collaboration at regional and international levels. For instance, Ryan and Edward planned to write and publish research papers together with their supervisors. Moreover, in the narratives, students like Bella and Edward, shared stories of undertaking research activities, engaging with research networks and participating in either national or international conference. For example, Bella shared her excitement taking part in an international project where she had the opportunity to

represent the university and work with other scholars within the international academic community.

Furthermore, within the supervisory roles, some elements of the internationalisation agenda were apparent in the narratives of some supervisors. For instance, Adam recognised the importance of research and publication in the scholarly community and attempted to instil such culture among his undergraduate and postgraduate students by encouraging them to read academic journals and articles. While Adam put emphasis on research and publication, Alice focused on the use of technology and latest software in her teaching and supervision practice. These insights from the narratives resonate with the characteristic of the internationalisation of the curriculum discussed by some authors such as Knight (2000), Ellingboe (1998) and Velayo (2012). Aulakh et al. (1997, p. 1, cited in Webb, 2005, p. 112) suggested that internationalisation goes beyond the increased presence of students from different countries. They proposed key objectives of internationalisation of education within the learning and teaching such as: encouraging teachers and students to learn from one another; creating interdependence between students; and offering high quality courses, which are internationally relevant. Similarly, De Vita (2007, p. 164) proposed internationalised learning and teaching practices to include certain features, such as promoting a more participative and student-centred approach in which the practitioner assumes a role as facilitator to instil independence and accountability among students.

Nevertheless, based on the insights, I have identified some possible challenges to supervision practice as the result of the internationalisation of higher education culture. One of the challenges is highlighted by Adam, one of supervisors, who questioned the declining standard of university admission in regard to postgraduate program. He hinted that perhaps the university might be "*so lenient in terms of selecting our students*" because of the increased competition between universities and the reputation race that "Education becomes a business". Similar insights have been discussed by Ylijoki (2008, p. 81) that education and research in higher education institutions have been increasingly regarded from an economic perspective, which might bring in the:

> values and practices of the private sector (i.e. focus on productivity, external grants and funding, commercial partnerships), which is in contrast to a more traditional view of education which focuses on the individualistic pursuit of knowledge, the freedom to follow one's own research interests, a profound devotion to research without external constraints, and making an enduring contribution to one's field.

In the same vein, Delamont et al. (2000, p.151) observed that supervisors continually need to work through "the balance between autonomy and accountability, between professionalism and managerialism, and between research productivity and creativity" as they are pressured "to produce a text rather than the ideal thesis as the personal exploration".

6.3.8 The Islamisation of Knowledge Culture

From the narratives, I identified that the Islamisation of Knowledge agenda might have a potential shaping influence on the small cultures of supervision practice. According to Rosnani Hashim (2005, p. 137): "the goal of Islamic education is to produce good people who will achieve ultimate happiness (sa`adah) in this world and the Hereafter". Apart from producing individuals with good character, Islamic teaching puts emphasis on the character of teachers as role models to the students in thinking, worship and conducts. This is reflected in the narratives in which some students described their supervisors as notable Muslim scholars and role models. For example, Bella regarded her supervisor as a figure who embodied great compassion and knowledge. For Ryan, his supervisor encompassed a true Muslim scholarly character, both in personal and professional lives. Like them, I shared similar view that the role of a teacher or a supervisor (in this research context) is not only confined within the process of imparting of information and knowledge, but it should encompass the teaching of good character and conduct. My view is partly influenced by the Islamic teachings by my parents at home and my teachers in school. Growing up, I was taught from an early age to be respectful to my teachers because teachers, in Islam are regarded as bearers of knowledge and role models of good behavior. Such view is in line with the Islamic view that teachers are regarded as 'mu'allim' (i.e. a learned one, knowledge deliverer) and a 'murabbi' (i.e. a role model) (Nasr, 1987). In addition, teachers play the role of a 'mu'addib' in being responsible to transmit skill and knowledge and inculcate *adab*, which is the discipline of mind, body and soul" (Hashim, 1997, p. 57). Even in times of conflict, Islam encourages each Muslim to demonstrate and practice good manner or 'adab' with each other. In the narratives, Jacob, Maressa, Bella and Nissa demonstrated non-confrontational attitudes during critical moments in their relationship with their supervisors. These attitudes I believe might reflect the Islamic 'adab' that puts emphasis on "concern for others over concern for self in the form of forgiveness, kindness and overpowering one's anger," (Mohammad Tahlil Azim, 2017, p. 19) rather than a sign of student's reticence or inhibition. While these behaviours might derive from the students' Islamic upbringings, I propose that the Islamisation of Knowledge culture might

have accelerated the Islamic goals in "producing Muslim professionals who live in accordance with the al- 'aqidah, as-shari'ah, and alakhlaq al-karimah" (Ssekamanya et al, 2011, p. 95).

Another important insight is the influence of Islamisation agenda with respect to the relationships between humankind and God. According to Nasr (1984, p. 7) while education prepare humankind for happiness in this life, "its ultimate goal is the abode of permanence and all education points to the permanent world of eternity (al-akhirah)". Moreover, the main objective of education in Islam "lies in the realization of the complete submission to and harmony with the will of Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity" (Al Migdadi, 2011, p. 13). In the narratives, I believe the desire to attain education to obtain favour of Allah and rewards for the hereafter is prevalent among some of the students and supervisors. For instance, Bella and Ryan regarded their education goals to not only serve themselves, but also to benefit others in the wider community. In a similar vein, Johan and Adam considered their supervisory roles as a servant of Allah with the responsibility or 'amanah' to deliver knowledge to students so that the students can benefit from such knowledge and serve others. Such desire also echoes my own goals as a Muslim student and practitioner as I believe that seeking knowledge is a scared responsibility and obligatory for every Muslim.

Besides building a relationship between humankind and God, Islamisation of knowledge culture might have a shaping influence with respect to the supervisory relationship. The insights from the narratives propose that Islamic manner (*adab*) might play a significant role in the ways which the students interacted with their supervisors and supervisors with their students. In Islam, *adab* encompasses a comprehensive code covering almost every aspect of social behaviours and is emphasised both in education and in the educational process. Al-Attas (1980, p. 11) explained *adab* as "the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potential". In the narratives, Bella, Ryan, Nissa, Jacob and Maressa practiced *adab* in their interaction with the supervisors in terms of showing respect for one another, behaving in appropriate and respectful ways, building trust, practicing tolerance and 'husnozon' or having positive thoughts about others. Moreover, Adam, Johan and Alice, also inculcated elements of *adab* in their supervision practice by encouraging their students to manage their studies well, and improve their learning habits. This is in line with the Islamisation agenda which considers

the training of *adab* as an important duty for Muslim teachers (Al-Attas, 1979). This is supported by studies done on work by Islamic scholars such as Al Biruni, Imam Malik and Abu Hasan al-Basri, that indicated students are not only encouraged to seek knowledge but develop a range of approaches to learning that support an independent style, student-centred learning, reflection, reasoning and problem solving-based learning (Nasr, 1978).

While the insights from the narratives do not indicate significant downsides of the Islamisation of knowledge agenda with respect to supervision, a study of the experience of Islamisation of knowledge in the IIUM by Ssekamanya et al. (2011) suggested several challenges in the implementation of Islamisation agenda in Islamic higher education context. One of the challenges is that many Western educated academics demonstrated lack of knowledge about Islamic heritage. Besides that, the study found that the implementation of Islamisation agenda might become more challenging with the increasing number of students, particularly when:

> … there are more and more students enrolled in IIUM without knowing even the basics of Islam … Given the increasingly competitive higher education market, it is becoming increasingly difficult for IIUM to be selective. (Ssekamanya et al, 2011, p. 102)

Interestingly, a similar notion is expressed by Adam with respect to the increased emphasis of quantity over quality of students enrolled in doctoral programs by the university, which in turn could influence the culture of doctoral supervision. Moreover, based on Alice's and Adam's narratives, I believe that the poor attitude of some of their students might reflect Ssekamanya et al.'s (2011, p. 102) findings that "*Many [students] do not seem to have the desire and commitment to acquire an Islamic character*", which makes supervision in Islamic higher education context potentially challenging.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented my discussion of some key features of doctoral supervision as small cultures and potential shaping influences that shape doctoral supervision through the lens of the small cultures and host culture complex. I began by describing the five key features of doctoral supervision, such as: the students' recursive learning process; the transitional continuum of supervisory styles; the multifaceted dimensions of supervisory roles; the supervisory relationship complex; and the polarised expectations of the students and supervisors. Thereafter, I proposed the eight potential

shaping influences that may shape the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision, namely: the student culture; the supervisor culture; the postgraduate research culture; the wider learning community culture; the host university culture; the host national culture; the internationalisation of higher education culture; and the Islamisation of Knowledge culture. In the following chapter, Conclusions, I will provide an overview of my findings, potential contributions and recommendation for further work.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In the preceding chapters of this thesis, I have provided the motivation, contexts, conceptual underpinnings, research design and its implementation, holistic-content narrative reports and discussion of the key findings of the study. In this chapter, I will conclude the thesis by providing an overview of the findings of my study (Section 7.1) and how these findings can contribute to my own professional development (Section 7.2); doctoral supervision practice and policy (Section 7.3); body of knowledge (Section 7.4); and methodology (Section 7.5). Finally, I will outline the recommendations for further work (Section 7.6).

7.1 An Overview of My Study

This thesis has reported on my doctoral study, in which I explored the cultures of doctoral supervision as narrated to me by some recent doctoral graduates and supervisors in an internationalised and Islamised setting of the IIUM (see Chapter One). My study was framed by four research questions:

RQ1: What are doctoral graduates' narratives of their doctoral supervision?

RQ2: What are doctoral supervisors' narratives of their doctoral supervision?

RQ3: What are the key features of the small cultures of doctoral supervision?

RQ4: What are the shaping influences of these emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision?

To address these research questions, I employed a qualitative – narrative approach, through which I generated narratives of supervisory experiences from six recent graduates and three experienced supervisors through face-to-face, one-to-one narrative interviews in English and/or Bahasa Malaysia. These narratives were then restoried in English and analysed using Lieblich et al.'s (1998) holistic-content approach (see Chapter Three). The emerging key themes of doctoral supervision were then generated, presented, interpreted and discussed in light of the research questions of the study. In my exploration of doctoral supervision cultures, I have positioned this study within the small cultures approach (Holliday, 1999) and host culture complex (Holliday, 1994) to conceptualise doctoral supervision as dynamic emerging small cultures, are situated within a wider set of culture complex of shaping influences (see Chapter Two). In the following paragraphs, I provide a brief summary of how each research question was addressed in the study.

The first research question - *What are doctoral graduates' narratives of their doctoral supervision?* - was addressed in Chapter Four. The narrative analyses suggested emerging key themes of the individual doctoral graduates, including: the challenges doing PhD; Islamic cultures at the IIUM; the power of communication; and meeting the expectations. These themes provided windows into understanding the complexity, wholeness and richness of each of the doctoral graduates' supervisory experiences including their personal backgrounds, educational experiences, challenges and aspirations as well as the contexts in which their doctoral learning narratives were situated.

The second research question - *What are doctoral supervisors' narratives of their doctoral supervision?* - was answered in Chapter Five. The analyses of the supervisors' narratives suggested emerging main themes of the individual supervisors, such as: supervision is rewarding; the foundation of a good supervision; understanding doctoral students and their complication; and supervision and its challenges. These themes complemented the doctoral students' narratives of learning and provided rich insights into the supervisors' personal backgrounds, supervisory experiences, challenges and rewards. In addition, these themes propose the different facets of doctoral supervision, such as the professional and management aspects of supervision from the supervisors' points of view.

I addressed the third research question - *What are the key features of the small cultures of doctoral supervision?* - in Chapter Six by using a small cultures approach to explore and understand doctoral supervision as dynamic emerging group processes between supervisors and students. Insights from my exploration suggested five key features of the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision, namely: the recursive learning processes of the students; the transitional continuum of the supervisory styles; the multifaceted dimensions of supervisory roles; the complexity of supervisory relationship; and the polarised expectations of the students and supervisors.

The fourth research question - *What are the shaping influences of these emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision?* - was also addressed in Chapter Six. I utilised a host culture complex to explore the different shaping influences that may shape the emerging small cultures of doctoral supervision. In the exploration, I identified doctoral supervision as situated within a wider set of potential shaping influences, namely: the student culture; the supervisor culture; the university culture; the postgraduate research culture; the wider learning community culture; the host national culture; the internationalisation of higher

education culture and the Islamisation of Knowledge culture. These shaping influences might interrelate and derive influence from each other.

Based on the findings of the study, I can suggest that doctoral supervisory cultures are complex phenomena which derive influence from within and outside the university cultures, as well as partly from the student and supervisor cultures. In the following sub-sections, I briefly discussed how my findings can contribute to my professional development; the doctoral supervisory practice and policy; the conceptual understanding of cultures of doctoral supervision; and the methodology of coupling a qualitative-narrative research to a small cultures approach.

7.2. Contribution to my Professional Development as a Practitioner

In the preceding chapters (see Introduction and Chapter One), I have explained the motivation behind the study and the IIUM as an appropriate context for exploring cultures of doctoral supervision, which I need to develop greater understanding of as part of my professional development as a new supervisor (upon completion of my doctoral study). The findings of the study, I believe, contribute to my own professional supervisory development within the context of the IIUM in a number of ways.

Learning from the findings of the study, I can propose that there is a broader network of complex shaping influences that may help practitioners like myself determine what may and may not work in my own supervisory practices. When supervising doctoral students, I will be aware of the different social forces, such as the student culture or the postgraduate culture, that may aid or hinder the progress in supervision. Moreover, I am more informed of the diversity within the student population and the implications of such diversity may have on my supervisory practice. I have also developed a better awareness that each student faces a different sets of challenges including personal, financial and emotional challenges. In light of this, I will take these challenges into consideration when making supervisory-related decisions, such as: frequency and modality of supervisory meetings; supervisory tasks and goals (e.g. fieldwork, writing article for journals).

Furthermore, I have developed an understanding that a good supervision takes considerable time and effort on the part of supervisors and students. Apart from that, I have learned that supervision demands mutual understanding and involves an implicit contract of teaching learning between myself and student. Having such an understanding of the importance of

shared responsibility and mutual respect between the student and supervisor, I hope will encourage other practitioners to be more accountable and responsible when considering the best approach to supervise their students. Finally, I have realised that the expectations between student and supervisor may be different as for most students obtaining a PhD is only half the battle, and the other half begins when they try to apply their knowledge, expertise and experience in their own contexts or home institutions. Therefore, I will consider appropriate mechanisms to prepare and support these students, namely by: addressing relevant skills that students may need in their professions; providing appropriate references or resources that students may refer to in the future; and introducing students to relevant networking groups that may offer some support to students. Finally, I am also more perceptive of the different expectations between supervisor and student, and between supervisors and university management, that might support or complicate my role as a supervisor.

7.3 Contributions to Doctoral Supervisory Practice and Policy

The findings of the study, I believe have the potential to promote more transparent and best-practice supervisory guidelines to be adopted by doctoral students, practitioners and university management teams for the benefits of enhancing the learning and supervising experiences of doctoral students and practitioners in the IIUM and other equally similar contexts. In particular, I hope the findings of my study can contribute to the improvement of the existing codes of doctoral supervision at the IIUM and other equally similar contexts by promoting awareness of how doctoral supervision is conducted and managed from the students' and supervisors' perspectives. Moreover, I believe that these guidelines are crucial and timely given how diversified supervisors' roles have become in meeting the needs of doctoral students with different personal, academic and research backgrounds and providing the guidance needed by students in order to meet the necessary competence to complete their PhDs on time. Therefore, in this section I will outline the proposed best-practice supervisory guidelines for doctoral students, supervisors and members of university management team.

1) Doctoral Students

I propose five strategies which may help doctoral students improve their supervision experience and doctoral learning in general:

i.   *Prioritising objectives*

Students can learn to prioritise effectively by setting up a list of attainable goals within the realistic time frame. Being too ambitious or nonchalant about their studies will hinder their study progress;

ii.   *Engaging with supervisor and others*

Students can engage with their supervisors, lecturers/ instructors and other research students. Moreover, they can get involve with the postgraduate community in order to familiarise themselves with the new environments and gain supports from others;

iii.   *Preparing self*

Students can prepare themselves for their meeting with supervisors by acquiring relevant academic and research skills. A good mental, financial, emotional and physical preparation is also important to help improve the students' supervision and learning experiences;

iv.   *Communicating effectively*

Students can make the effort to communicate effectively and establish good rapport with supervisors. A good rapport between student and supervisor may minimise mismatched expectations and prevent conflicts; and

v.   *Being resilient*

Students should not let adversity hinder progress in their studies. They can be resilient by taking control of their own learning and finding solution for arising challenges. There are many avenues for the students to seek supports from. For instance, besides supervisors, students can ask for advice and assistance from academic advisor, finance officer, counsellor or postgraduate coordinator.

2) Doctoral Supervisors

There are six approaches which might improve the supervisory experience of supervisors:

i.   *Managing supervision*

Supervisors can manage and organise their supervision efficiently by having a clear set of objectives for each student. Supervisors also can take into consideration their teaching and research commitment when accepting new supervisory roles to ensure that each student gets appropriate attention and supervision;

ii. *Being flexible*

Supervisors can practice flexibility when addressing their students' needs as each of the students may have different requirements;

iii. *Showing empathy*

Supervisors can show some consideration towards their students' feelings and life situation as doctoral students come from various backgrounds and face different challenges. Recognising that each student's situation is unique, supervisors can respond appropriately to the situation, hence, a better supervision relationship between a supervisor and a student;

iv. *Seeking for support*

Supervisors should know that they are not alone. They can seek support from their peers, colleagues or departments when they feel that things are getting too much for them to handle. Getting support may promote supervisors' well-being and help them to regain focus on supervision;

v. *Communicating expectations*

Supervisors should communicate their expectations and worries to their students appropriately to prevent confusion; and

vi. *Monitoring progress*

Supervisors should monitor students' progress constantly to prevent delay or incompletions. Any irregularity should be addressed immediately by reaching out to their students and department.

3) University Management Team

I propose six strategies that could be utilised by university management with respect to improving the supervisory experience of students and supervisors:

i. *Specifying objectives*

Management team could specify and make clear objectives of supervision to supervisors, students and support staff to avoid potential confusion;

ii. *Distributing roles*

Management team could distribute appropriate roles between main supervisor, co-supervisor and supervisory committee according to the guidelines given by the department and institution;

iii. *Creating one-stop-centre for students*

Management team could create an online one-stop-service centre for all doctoral students to come for advice pertaining to supervision, i.e. selecting the right supervisor, preparing for supervision meetings;

iv. *Making transparent the rules*

Management could make transparent the obligations and responsibilities of all key players: student, supervisor, co-supervisor, supervisory committee, department, postgraduate office and institution in order to protect individual student or supervisor welfare;

v. *Setting up a system*

Management could set up a systematic approach for supervisor to receive and provide feedback to students efficiently; and

vi. *Supporting supervisors*

Management team could consider one-stop-centre to support supervisors to resolve non-academic matters pertaining to supervision and their well-being.

7.4 Conceptual Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

Conceptually, I believe, the findings of the study make a number of contributions to the subject of doctoral supervision cultures and body of knowledge. First, in this study, I aimed to focus on understanding of the complexity of supervision cultures and its wider set of contexts, rather than relying on large culture a priori characterisations. This has led to the extension of Holliday's (1999) small cultures approach and host culture complex (1994) heuristics from - internationally oriented English language education - to doctoral supervision for practitioners in their particular contexts of practice. I proposed that the extension of these heuristics can map out the cultural complexity of doctoral supervision in a more meaningful way and increase mindfulness of the complex cultural considerations and the complications that might result from them. Furthermore, by proposing the non-

essentialist small cultures and host culture complex heuristics, I hope to motivate other practitioners to unravel the complexity of their doctoral supervisory cultures by analysing the cohesive behaviours and shared values as they work together with the students to fulfil the goals of supervision.

Second, the findings from the study can extend the knowledge about the learning processes within supervision from a doctoral student's perspective which is considered central in supervision (Emilsson and Johnson, 2007). The insights of my study proposed that doctoral students were not passive learners but rather active interpreters of their supervisory realities through their demonstration of autonomy, reflectivity and resilience. Subsequently, I believe such understanding of how doctoral student learns may help bridge the gap in the mismatched expectations between students and supervisors in regard to supervisors' high expectations of student autonomy (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991).

Third, I believe that the findings from the study can add to the body knowledge with respect to the types of supervisory styles or approaches from experience doctoral supervisors' perspective. In the narratives the supervisors do not exclusively use one single supervisory style but rather move flexibly from one style to another in light of their students' progress. The flexibility within the supervisory styles may add to the body of knowledge about how supervisors conduct their supervision. Such understanding of the supervisory styles, I hope, can be beneficial to students' learning experiences as they have diverse support needs, as noted by Delany (2008, p. 8) it is crucial for supervisors to be able to move "flexibly between the various [supervisory] models". Moreover, the flexibility within the supervisory styles may serve an important role within supervision in particular when students make drastic changes in their studies or when students experience difficult situations, such as personal or financial issues (Grant, 2005).

Finally, whilst I do not focus directly on the internationalisation of higher education and Islamisation of Knowledge agendas, I believe that the insights from the narratives can add to debates in this area with regard to the shaping influences these interlinked strategic objectives may have on doctoral supervisory cultures, particularly, in the Islamic higher education context. On one hand, these insights suggest that the internationalisation of education strategy may increase the pressure on higher institution, in particular, supervisors, to raise doctoral completion rate as well as academic and research standards.

Apart from that, the internationalisation movement might change the cultural composition of today's doctoral student and supervisor populations which adds to the complexity within supervision and its relationship as students and supervisors have to navigate their differences in order to achieve success in any given task. On the other hand, the Islamisation of Knowledge mission might transform higher institutions as a potential platform to instil Islamic perspectives in the various branches of human knowledge by integrating the professional sciences with Islamic perspectives and internalising Islamic manners or 'adab' and ethics through the process of knowledge instructions such as doctoral supervision.

Above all, I believe that the Islamisation agenda goes hand in hand with the internationalisation objective to produce competent scholars and professionals imbued with both Western knowledge and Islamic *adab* who can contribute to the overall development of the community at a global level. Moreover, both strategic objectives have, to some extent, shaped cultures of doctoral supervision whereby the supervisors and students work together to achieve and maintain greater understanding, tolerance and respect despite their culturally unique backgrounds (De Vita, 2007 p. 165), above and beyond its traditional focus on academic and research excellence. These findings I believe can represent a reciprocal contribution to the broader understandings of supervisory cultures in the contexts of internationalised and Islamised higher institutions like the IIUM and add a non-Western -Malaysian - perspective to the often Western-oriented literature on doctoral supervision.

7.5 Methodological Contribution of My Study

Methodologically, I hope that the findings from the study demonstrate the feasibility and value of combining narrative research (rather than ethnographic) to the small cultures approach. By extending narrative methods to the small cultures approach, I gained an entry point for understanding cohesive behaviours, shared norms and values between supervisor and student by exploring how doctoral students and supervisors recount their experiences of supervision and how they make meaning from those experiences. Moreover, I believe that the narrative understanding of doctoral supervisory cultures provided illuminating insights into the individual students' and supervisors' personal and professional qualities which were set within particular knowledge, culture, behaviours, experience and beliefs, which would be impossible to convey in other ways (Cortazzi, 2014, p. 10). While stories

or narratives are essentially individual constructs of human experience, thus, have limitations that may affect objectivity in presentation, I believe that through the participants' narratives I was able to understand the many facets of doctoral supervisory experiences as narrated to me by the participants as noted by Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 237), "good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life". In sum, I believe that using narratives research in my exploration of supervision cultures was appropriate which foregrounded the significant of data relating to "singular and particular rather than to large samples and statistical generalisability" (Bathmaker, 2010, p. 3). In addition, as noted by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001, p. 4, cited in Bathmaker, 2010, p. 3) the individual narrative accounts "retain more of the 'noise' of real life than many other types of research".

7.6 Recommendations for Further Work

Throughout this thesis, I believe my study produced an understanding of cultures of doctoral supervision as complex, dynamic, emerging small cultures situated within a wider set of culture complex of shaping influences. However, as a novice researcher, there are two main limitations to my study. Firstly, due to the time constraint and poor feedback from the supervisors, I was not able to recruit international supervisors. I believe that if I am given more time, I might be able to recruit one or more international supervisors for the study, which could provide illuminating insights into the supervision experience. Secondly, my study involved a small number of participants from two faculties of Social Science, hence, it cannot be claimed that the findings in this study are representative of all supervisors and students across all backgrounds and field of studies. Therefore, I propose that further study with a larger number of participants, of greater diversity, of different fields and of different doctoral programs will provide more insights into cultures of supervision. In this section, I will present some recommendations for further work:

- Firstly, my study generated insights of doctoral supervision cultures of completed doctoral supervision. I, therefore propose that a research on doctoral dropouts and their supervisory perspectives will be valuable to learn about shaping influences that contribute to such incompletions;

- Secondly, as my study sought experiences of doctoral supervision from students' and supervisors' perspectives, I suggest further research into doctoral supervisory cultures

from the perspectives of university management team and support staff, which will be beneficial and illuminating; and

- Finally, my study only provided a snapshot of recent graduates' and experienced supervisors' experiences of supervision, thus, the application of generalisations to the wider cohort of the IIUM doctoral students and supervisors is limited. Therefore, I recommend a longitudinal study which examines the experiences of the supervision of students and supervisors over their whole candidature.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this study, I have developed a deeper understanding of doctoral supervision phenomenon which is made possible by learning from the students' and supervisors' narratives of supervisory experiences. Such understanding I believe is beneficial to my own professional development as a new supervisor as it enriches my awareness of the complex nature of supervision practice and its different potential shaping influences. I have also developed a great sense of respect in regard to the different set of challenges that each student and supervisor had to overcome in his/her experience. Above all, I am honoured and blessed that I have been given this opportunity to share these wonderful and enriching stories of supervision of my participants with readers of the thesis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Key Ihsan Indicators for Supervisor

Area / percentage	Item
Job Output (unlimited)	Teaching
	Supervision
	Research
	Publication
	Consultancy
	Innovation
	Network and Linkages
	Research and Recognition
Personal Quality (10%)	Leadership Qualities
	Managing Ability
	Discipline and Integrity
	Proactive and Innovative
	Teamwork and Relationship
Community Contribution (15%)	Academic Related Contributions
	Community Services
	Key Result Area (KRA) Projects

Appendix 2: Supervisor Teaching Hours per Week

Designation	Required/ Maximum Teaching Hours
Dean	3
Director	3-6
Deputy Dean	6
Head of Department	6-9
Professor	9-12
Associate Professor	12
Assistant Professor	12

Appendix 3: Claiming Entitlement for Academics

No of students on top of maximum teaching load	Maximum Amount Claimable
1	RM 400
2	RM 800
3	RM 1200
4	RM 1600
5	RM 2000
6	RM 2400
More than 7	RM 2400

Appendix 4: PhD Students Demographic by Countries in Faculty 1 from 2011 to 2015
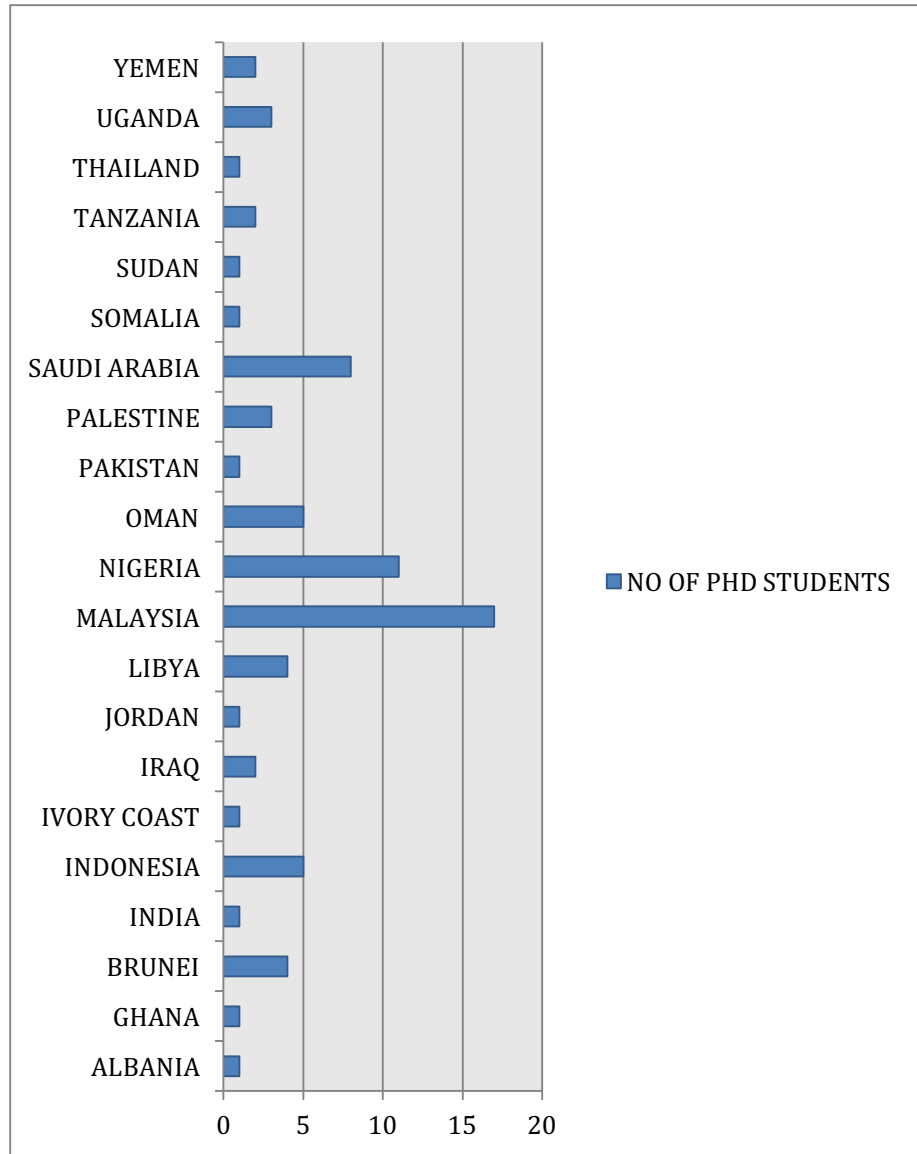
Appendix 5: PhD Students Demographic by Countries in Faculty 2 from 2011 to 2015
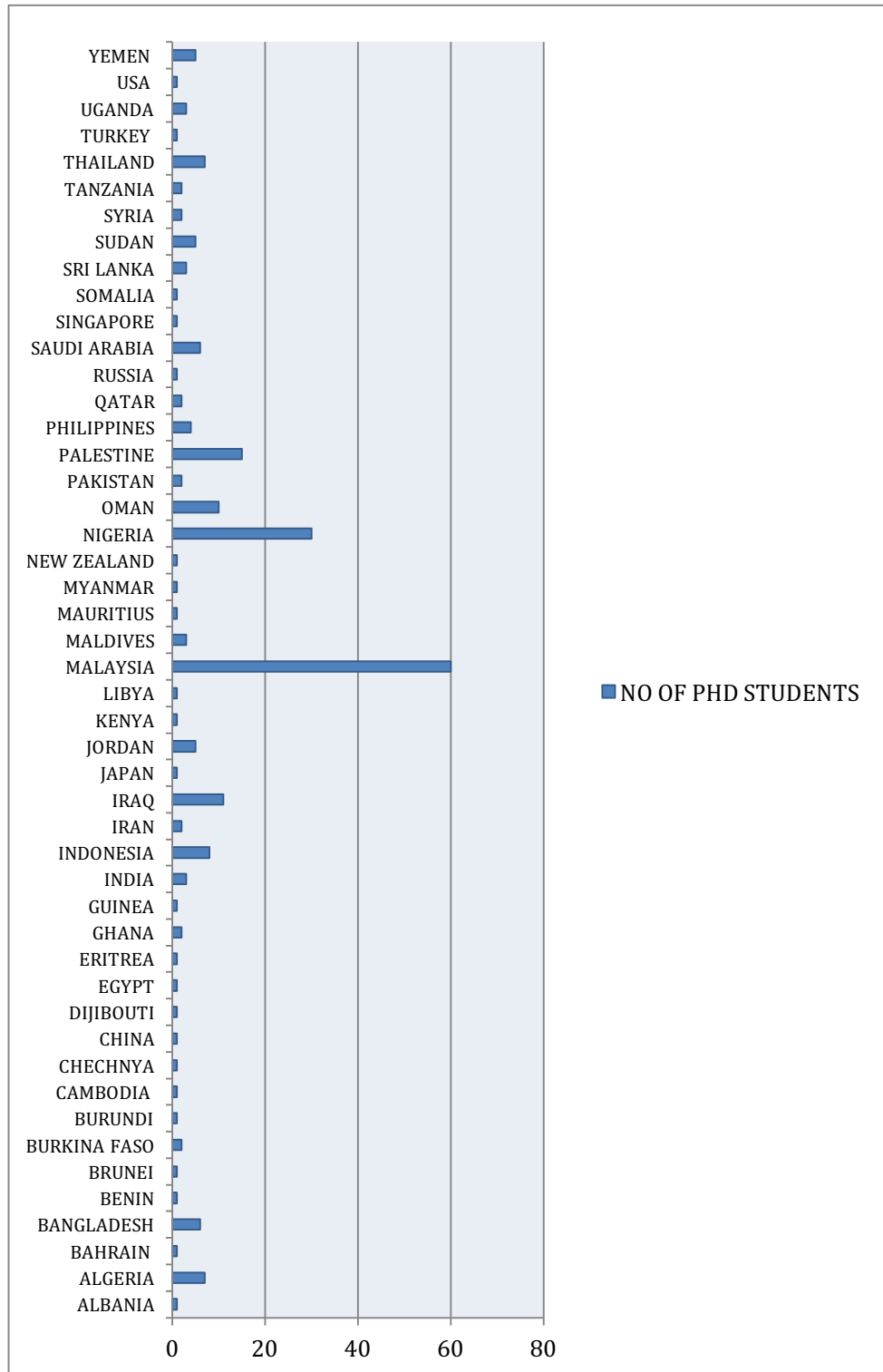
Appendix 6: Online Survey

Exploring the Cultures of Doctoral Supervision

Dear participant!

You are invited to participate in the questionnaire. The questions are being asked as part of PhD research project. The aim of the questionnaire is to collect demographic data regarding the doctoral supervisory practices at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The research intends to cause no psychological harm or offence and to abide by all commonly acknowledged ethical codes. All data obtained from this research study will be stored confidentially. Only the researcher will have access to view any data collected during this research. Please acknowledge that you voluntarily agree to participate in the research by filling the following questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of 25 items concerning your demographic profile and supervisory experiences. The questionnaire should take around 15 minutes of your time. If you have any questions regarding the completion of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me at: rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Many thanks for your help.

Sincerely,
Rafidah Sahar
Doctoral student
Manchester Institute of Education
University of Manchester

SECTION A - DEMOGRAPHIC

Gender *

[Female ⌄]

Age

[⌄]

Nationality *

◉ Malaysia

◯ Other: [_____]

The Kulliyyah from which you obtained your PhD degree

[⌄]

PhD program you were enrolled in *

[Full Time ⌄]

PhD mode you were enrolled in *

[By research only ⌄]

Your current PhD status *

[Graduated ⌄]

Did you *

◉ graduate on time

◯ graduate on time extension

◯ Other: [_____]

How would you describe your student finance status? *

◉ Self-funded student

◯ Sponsored student

◯ Other: [_____]

SECTION B - SUPERVISION

This section aims to collect data regarding your supervisory practices

Please choose your supervisory arrangement

Please select one answer only

○ One principal/main supervisor only

○ One principal/ main supervisor and one co-supervisor

○ One principal/ main supervisor and two co-supervisors

○ One principal/ main supervisor and supervisory committee

○ Other: [_____]

Please specify the nationality of your ...

	Malaysian	International	Mixed
principal/main supervisor	○	○	○
Co-supervisor/s/Supervisory committee	○	○	○

How often did you attend supervisory meetings with your

	Infrequently	Once a month	Two to four times a month	More than four times a month
Principal/main supervisor	○	○	○	○
Co-supervisor/s/Supervisory committee	○	○	○	○

How important do you think to have frequent meetings with your

	Not important	Less important	Important	Very important
Principal/ main supervisor	○	○	○	○
Co-supervisor/s/Supervisory Committee	○	○	○	○

Based on your response, please write why you think that frequent meeting with your supervisor/s is important/not important?

[text box]

How often did you discuss the following subjects during supervision with your main supervisor?

	Never	Infrequently	Sometimes	Always
PhD development (Research topic, literature, draft writing)	○	○	○	○
Researcher development (Conferences, publication)	○	○	○	○
Academic development (Trainings, workshops)	○	○	○	○
Non-academic (Family, personal, career)	○	○	○	○

How often did you discuss the following subjects during supervision with your co-supervisor/supervisory committee?

	Never	Infrequently	Sometimes	Always
PhD development (Research topic, literature, draft writing)	○	○	○	○
Researcher development (Conferences, publication)	○	○	○	○
Academic development (Trainings, workshops)	○	○	○	○
Non-academic (Family, personal, career)	○	○	○	○

How often were you involved in setting the agenda for supervision meeting with your ... ?

Your involvement in the planning of what would be discussed in a meeting

	Never	Infrequently	Sometimes	Always
Principal/ main supervisor	○	○	○	○
Co-supervisor/s/Supervisory Committee	○	○	○	○

How would you describe your supervisory experiences?

[⬍]

Based on your response, please write why you think that your supervisory experience was poor/average/good/excellent

[text area]

In your opinion, how can supervisory experience be improved?

[text area]

Please indicate your current place of residence

The country where you currently lived in

○ Malaysia

○ Other: [_____]

If Malaysia, please specify the state

[_____ ▼]

Are you interested to participate in an interview session?

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, which arrangement best suits you?

○ One-on-one in person interview

○ Online video interview

○ Telephone interview

○ Other: [_____]

How can you be reached for further communication?

Please leave your email address or contact number

[_____]

[« Back] [Submit]

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

[████████████] 100%: You made it.

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet for potential doctoral graduate participants

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Doctoral Graduate,

You are being invited to take part in a research study being undertaken by Rafidah binti Sahar, a second year doctoral student from Manchester Institute of Education, The University of Manchester. The study aims to explore the cultures of doctoral supervision at the International Islamic University Malaysia. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Thank you for reading this.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen to take part in the study because you are a doctoral graduate from the international Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be invited to take part in one-one interview sessions.

What happens to the data collected?
Your responses will be used as part of the doctoral thesis.

How is confidentiality maintained?
Your personal data will be replaced with pseudonym and system of coding to ensure confidentiality.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
No payment will be given for participating.

What is the duration of the research?
It is anticipated interview session will last for 60 to 90 minutes. This could be broken into two interviews if more convenient to you.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The outcomes of the research will be published as part of the doctoral thesis, book/chapter contribution, peer reviewed scientific journal and conference presentation.

Contact for further information
The researcher can be contacted by email, rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Contact for Support
In the event that you are experiencing distress as a result of your participation in the research, support services are available from the Counselling Services Centre at the International Islamic University Malaysia by telephoning 03-6196 4409.

What if something goes wrong?
If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with the researcher, please contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Richard Fay at richard.fay@manchester.ac.uk

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Coordinator by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

Appendix 8: Participant Information Sheet for potential doctoral supervisor participants

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Doctoral Supervisor,

You are being invited to take part in a research study being undertaken by Rafidah binti Sahar, a second year doctoral student from Manchester Institute of Education, The University of Manchester. The study aims to explore the cultures of doctoral supervision at the International Islamic University Malaysia. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Thank you for reading this.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen to take part in the study because you are a doctoral graduate from the international Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be invited to take part in one-one interview sessions.

What happens to the data collected?
Your responses will be used as part of the doctoral thesis.

How is confidentiality maintained?
Your personal data will be replaced with pseudonym and system of coding to ensure confidentiality.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
No payment will be given for participating.

What is the duration of the research?

It is anticipated interview session will last for 60 to 90 minutes. This could be broken into two interviews if more convenient to you.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The outcomes of the research will be published as part of the doctoral thesis, book/chapter contribution, peer reviewed scientific journal and conference presentation.

Contact for further information
The researcher can be contacted by email, rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Contact for Support
In the event that you are experiencing distress as a result of your participation in the research, support services are available from the Counselling Services Centre at the International Islamic University Malaysia by telephoning 03-6196 4409.

What if something goes wrong?
If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with the researcher, please contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Richard Fay at richard.fay@manchester.ac.uk

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Coordinator by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

Appendix 9: Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below

Please Initial Box

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above research and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service.

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and notes may be taken during the interview.

I agree that any data generated, once anonymised, may be represented for PhD thesis, book/chapter contribution, peer reviewed scientific journal and conference presentation.

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant	Date	Signature

Name of person	Date	Signature
taking consent		

Appendix 10: E-mail content to doctoral graduate participants

Dear doctoral graduate,

I am Rafidah Sahar, a second year doctoral student from Manchester Institute of Education, Manchester University. I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD study. The aim of this study is to understand the cultures of doctoral supervision that will illuminate the understanding of how supervision is managed and conducted in the context of the International Islamic University Malaysia. The study also seeks to identify the cultural influences that may shape the norms and practices of doctoral supervision.

I would welcome your participation, which would involve a one-on-one interview, which would take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. This could be broken into two interviews if more convenient to you, and will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you. Please be assured that your participation is on voluntary basis and you have the rights to withdraw from the study at any time. Your identity will remain anonymous, if you choose so, and will be replaced with a pseudonym.

Please find attached the Participant Information Sheet and Consent forms for your perusal. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Rafidah Sahar: rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk.

Many thanks,

Rafidah Sahar

Doctoral student
Manchester Institute of Education
SEED, University of Manchester
rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Appendix 11: E-mail content for potential doctoral supervisor participants

Dear doctoral supervisor,

I am Rafidah Sahar, a second year doctoral student from Manchester Institute of Education, Manchester University. I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD study. The aim of this study is to understand the cultures of doctoral supervision that will illuminate the understanding of how supervision is managed and conducted in the context of the International Islamic University Malaysia. Malaysian. The study also seeks to identify the cultural influences that may shape the norms and practices of doctoral supervision.

I would welcome your participation, which would involve a one-on-one interview, which would take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. This could be broken into two interviews if more convenient to you, and will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you. Please be assured that your participation is on voluntary basis and you have the rights to withdraw from the study at any time. Your identity will remain anonymous, if you choose to do so, and will be replaced with a pseudonym.

Please find attached the Participant Information Sheet and Consent forms for your perusal. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Rafidah Sahar: rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk.

Many thanks,

Rafidah Sahar

Doctoral student
Manchester Institute of Education
SEED, University of Manchester
rafidah.sahar@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Appendix 12: An Example of Restoried-Narrative Account of one of the Participants

Ryan's Story of Supervision

My Family

I was born in New Zealand. I was raised as Muslim in New Zealand, my mom's Singaporean, and my dad's Kiwi. My dad was into Islam when he married my mom in Singapore and then they went to New Zealand to live there. After I was born, my dad actually went to the IIUM. He was the first batch of the first intake. My first language just happened to be Malay in the sense that it was the first language that I ever spoke because I was eight months old when we came here. When I was four years old, we returned home and I forgot… I couldn't speak in English. So, until I was four years old my dad couldn't speak Malay and I couldn't speak English. And then we went home, after a month or so I lost all my Malay unfortunately because we only speak English at home.

Growing up

I stayed there in New Zealand. At that time in the 80s there were not many Muslims there. I have always tried to … struggle with identity. Most people who come from mixed parentage have identity issues ... But for us the issue wasn't so much a cultural thing. It was religious things because we were like… the only Muslims in the city where we spent good part of our childhood. We were the only Muslims in that whole city. We had to learn how to [pause] and my dad is a committed Muslim. He is a practicing Muslim. So, we fasted, we went to jumaah [congregational Friday prayer] because jumaah was at my house. So, it was a masjid [mosque] as well you know [laugh] as we were the only Muslims [laugh] and yes in that sense we were forced really to identify, to sort of search for that identity - how are we Kiwis, we grew up like everybody else but we are not- we can't eat pork, we don't drink alcohol, we pray. If I were at my mate house they don't give me meat for example. Things like these and this sort of- you know- we were constantly asking how you merge between the two. Is being a kiwi and being a Muslim a very opposite or can they be complimentary? This has led me to learn more about Islam.

Educational Experience Abroad

I did correspondence and I went to an Indonesian pesantren [Islamic boarding school]. I went to a pesantren for probably a total of about a year but in two different places because I had visa issues at the time. I went back to Brunei for a few months after that [to] finish my A levels. I think when I was turning 18 years old, I went to Sudan by myself and studied Arabic there for a year [and] came back from Sudan in 2000. From there I continued to my degree program. I did my bachelor degree in Islamic Studies. The program gave you a good foundation of a wide range of Islamic studies. I stayed there [In Jordan] for some time, about eight months before I came here [Malaysia]. I left Malaysia in 2005. I went to visit my dad in Brunei for a while. I went to Australia for a while. Then I joined the IIUM in 2006, for my master's degree and then went to Australia … and got married in 2009.

Choosing to do a PhD at the IIUM

I have lived in the Muslim world for some years now and I sort of … I feel comfortable there. I have had some challenges –of people challenging your faith, having to look for the masjid [mosque], having to look for type of food - these challenges helped you. One of the reasons I chose the IIUM, believe it or not, was that my English was deteriorating quite significantly after being in Sudan, as everything was in Arabic. The IIUM was probably in my opinion at that time and probably still is now the ideal institution for Islamic Studies in English. This is what led me to register at the IIUM. It sorts of promise that having staff coming from abroad, from a range of countries, and a lot of them quite well versed in classical Islamic literature, which is important. And also having the exposure to the more secular Western social historical sort of approach to research, and the methods associated with that, and how it's relevant to New Zealand and to the type of issues that we face there. My objective was to have an understanding of Islam to present it to what is fundamentally or essentially an English-speaking audience. I have to be aware of the Islamic terms in English religious philosophical terms, aware of the types of argument that exist from this perspective of Islamic studies, the type of questions they ask, the type of challenges they face and where I could fit all this in. These things sort of ticked all the boxes for me at the time.

Finding the Right Supervisor

I was under the understanding that there were two supervisors because when they came to the Viva there was this fellow - a representative from the Kulliyyah - who had read my thesis but I didn't know who that person was until the Viva. I'm quite aware that at the IIUM they do practice two supervisors. And a lot of people they do go to both. Myself … I like to believe that I'm quite a capable student and know what I'm doing. I work independently and I don't need a co-supervisor. Perhaps they considered that and they [from PGR office] just let me do that what I needed to do. The fact that my supervisor is the senior member of the faculty, well respected … may have assisted. Maybe if you were a junior supervisor they would insist but because you are a senior supervisor to many PhD students before, perhaps that factored into it. There are processes but [laugh] I did this the other way. I found my supervisor and he filled up the form and, usually what will happen is that there is a departmental meeting and they pretty much say 'Do you have any objection to this? If the person, the intended supervisor, has no issue with it, usually the department wouldn't have an issue with it unless there is an exceptional case.

My PhD supervisor was my supervisor for my Master's dissertation. I pursued him. I went to him and I said look I'm impressed. And I think I impressed him. I'd like to think that I impressed him in class with my questions. He was a Deputy Dean at the time. So, I went to his office and said 'Look can I be your Research Assistant? Can I learn from you? Can you be my supervisor? And he said yes. And how did I come to select him? I think I took two of his classes in one semester. And I really like the way he impressed me because… I myself have a sort of basic grounding in classical Islamic Literature and you want to make it relevant, relevant in terms of how you express it, how you communicate, it and how you sort of understand it and relate it to current issues and this was what he was doing… and I was happy with that. He wasn't simplistic.

He was good…. he has been at the IIUM for a long time. He knows how things work on paper and off paper. It helps because he said, 'Hey look you can't just leave it and not follow up. If possible you better go, see them and just remind them that you are there.'

This implies that he was aware of the inefficiency, of the challenges that administrative processes suffer from. I believe it is a sort of an individual problem … based on the person -the staff- not so much the processes. People are not fulfilling their process or doing their jobs properly. He was really good with that. He was always there and always accessible despite the fact that he was holding an important position at the faculty and he always has time for you. He would fit it in somehow. He helps me to close my research, to bring closure … to come to an end, come to a conclusion. Those sorts of lecturers you have the best and the worst. People who are really scholarly -you are not talking your basic specialist- you are talking [about] a person who is scholarly in his person, scholarly in his conduct, scholarly in his thinking, and I found that my supervisor embodies this.

My Supervisory Journey
Essentially, when I started my PhD I was doing so with the intention of continuing… expanding my Master's research in Al Biruni, in making it a bit more focused, so on and so forth, but I was really struggling at the time. Because I felt there were insufficient references when it comes to Biruni, very introductory, very repetitive mostly based on secondary sources. I was struggling with it. I actually tried to give up a couple of times and changed my topic. I think I presented two different proposals during this time. And it didn't help because I wasn't happy. And my supervisor… he was very patient and he entertained it. He listened when I presented my argument. He is a very patient man, very wise I found, very far sighted you know. He can see five, six steps ahead of what we see, which is very useful. Anyway, he let me struggle and let me wrestle with my own issue.

I was in Alor Star at the time, when I myself wasn't convinced with the topic that I initially started. I wasn't contacting my supervisor. And during that period, he would be contacting me. He contacted me every couple of months just to check how I was personally first. He was quite patient, calm and he was the one who initiated contact. I didn't really see him because I lived far away, but we talked by phone and then if I had ideas and I wanted to talk to him I would call him. I can't remember how regular it was because I myself wasn't very clear at the time, but once I had decided finally or finalised the topic then the rate that I would see him … the frequency of the [meetings] you know it was OK, once every couple of months. I finalised [my topic] when I was still there so I would talk to him by phone. Sometimes I saw him but it wasn't often.

Once I had finalised the topic, in building the whole proposal section, I was back here by then. I was seeing him maybe once a month. He wanted me to see him once a month. We started to actually work on getting things done, starting to develop the proposal, the proposal that I actually submitted and completed my PhD with. I think the ball had already started rolling and I had created clarity on the issue. I found the whole new body of supportive literature that wasn't directly about Al Biruni per se but it was about the social political environment in which he lived and this helped me a lot because it contextualised the study and constituted a major chapter in my thesis. It also gave me a lot of material from which to better articulate my argument.

Our meeting was usually informal. I would let him know I would be coming because we are friends. We developed a friendly sort of friendship. It was never I'm your supervisor [kind of relationship]. We have always maintained our respect for each other and I think my wife is a friend to his family. It becomes like that now I consider him my family. Usually what would happen is that I would set the [matter] to discuss. Sometimes we wouldn't define what we were going to talk about. I would just go there and we would

have a meeting. So naturally we would discuss things pertaining to the thesis, whatever it may be. I myself would know what I wanted to talk about and he may also have wanted to ensure I had met these landmarks, this milestone within this timeframe.

I work independently. He didn't really have much input when it comes to actual material. He would read it of course before I submitted it and it was often simply editorial. I mean linguistic, basic stuff and the very minimal editorial remarks - make more footnotes on this, don't forget to include this reference, for example, or consider this argument. It was good. I would say he did advise me per se but I have learnt from his style because he is quite a competent presenter. I have always been impressed with his talks and if he has a talk, I will make a point to try and get there because he is very informative, he is very well learned and I enjoyed his talks. His mannerism in the way he presents, I had myself, I endeavor to emulate and to an extent I think I have emulated a bit of his style. He is definitely a role model in that regard. He is confident. He is learned. He presents well. He's well respected.

He maintains a very unique approach to dealing with people because he is always formal so even though I am his friend he is always formal with me. We don't sit down and really joke on a personal level. If we talk, we talk about our academic things, but we are friendly with each other. He has time for the person he spends time with but if he doesn't like somebody, if he is not comfortable with somebody, he doesn't spend time with him or her. He will be there; if he likes you he makes special time for you.

My professor, he always wanted me to present [my research]. Along the way he encouraged me to present. He always encouraged people to present and I think that if he finds you capable he leaves you [alone]. He lets you do your thing and he only really… even if you develop your own views that he himself is not sure with or does not necessarily agree with, he lets you. This is your idea, your reasoning, so be it. He is not going to force his view unless he has a serious issue with it. Unless he considers it wrong. And so long as there is room for interpretation, he will allow it even if he himself does not subscribe to it. I think that was his approach to it really and the upside is that it lets you develop organically, it lets you depend on yourself, it means once you finish you can indeed do the job, no part of your research is dependent on anybody else. When it comes to replicating… doing it at another future time, helping out as you can but at the same time it also means that you are alone...[laugh]. In a way, it's not a negative thing, but you do feel alone and your research is alone.

I actually worked with my supervisor as a research assistant on research projects, research grants, and that's when we produced the two articles. He was good because he actually helped me. I did pretty much all of the work, and I got all the money. So, it's fair but he was there. He advised me to get it. He guided me through the process. To date, we have published two articles together. And I assisted him in other numbers of scholarly sorts of projects… and I think we have developed a good bond.

The Good Things: What I cherished the most
It was a pleasure, especially coming from a place like Sudan, where things don't work efficiently. I think Malaysia, when compared to the rest of the Muslim world, is an exception really…as it is quite good. Malaysia, I think it is part of the [Malaysian] culture and also part of the university culture that there is no obvious distinction between a student and a teacher. The [staff]maintain quite a healthy balance between both so they are

professional enough. I think there are many people who you may find capable, who are interested, and they are there to help. Certainly, I think all over the world, when it comes to teaching there are some people who are not interested … passionate enough about what they do. So, when you have staff that specialise in the field, which they are passionate about, and for somebody to show interest, it's encouraging … it's refreshing.

I thought the people are quite nice … friendly at the IIUM. I think there are enough people at the IIUM who are quite friendly and would allow the students to become like their children or their 'anak angkat' [adopted children]. It was quite an enjoyable process in that regard and you didn't feel let down, scared or intimidated, it was quite welcoming. They were very accessible. I found that most people maintain office hours. You don't really have to deal with many people. Mainly your supervisor pretty much and people in the administration mostly did their jobs. There might be one or two days of delay but they [are] efficient enough and I didn't have any problems with that at all. There was this one guy, he is in charge of this process of submission at the school level and the Kulliyyah level, and he was really good. He would explain [things] to me. He would be responsive and he kept you sort of calm.

My Frustration
I registered for my PhD but I deferred it one semester, so starting 2010 I actually started but I registered in 2009. When I registered for my PhD thesis I applied for a PhD by research program because I knew I had to manage family and work and studying. Unfortunately, when my acceptance letter arrived it was by Coursework and Research mode. I was informed that I should just accept it and once I start the program then I could change it. I said sure and I accepted it. But by the time I had actually started my course, my supervisor had already moved back to the main campus. I was dealing with a different administration and they didn't accept my request to change to a PhD by research only. By the time we managed to finalise the whole transfer, it had already taken a whole semester. I wasn't happy with that because it added to the whole duration and I had to pay for my extra semester. It was like four thousand or something like this [sigh]. It's not that much when you compare it to other countries but it's a lot if you are shouldering everything yourself. I was working at the same time because I was self-sponsored. I was working at a university college in Kedah. The Rector was my friend, we did quite well there and it was good but because I was married I needed to support my family now and I was there [in Kedah] for two years until 2011. I wasn't happy with that because I actually had to attend classes from Kedah to the main campus. I took the bus, early at night and arrived at 'fajr' [dawn] time, went to my morning class and went back the same day [laugh]. It was very tiring and I did that for a couple of months and I managed to finally … I think I took two courses.

I have now recently completed everything. I actually submitted about a year ago in 2014 and it was just so awful (sigh). This is probably the thing that I was most upset with … the administrative part as I had to wait for about 13 months and apparently, I was told that's quite normal if not quick in Malaysia. It's a problem in Malaysia. I think it is safe to conclude nationwide that this is a very inefficient part of the process. In general, when it comes to submission you need to submit notice of intention to submit and I think you are supposed to do it within three months before your final thesis submission. So, you would expect within the three months they would already identify the committee members or the different examiners so that when you do submit it you can begin the process, but that wasn't the case.

And what I did was I made sure … I actually put all their [examiners] details and made it as easy as possible to contact them. I found people online and my supervisor recommended these people in this field and I said [to myself] you should find one yourself or suggest someone yourself and it will be quicker because you don't have to worry. So, I made sure all the fax numbers - they still use fax, e-mail, phone numbers, anything - all the details were there. And the people who were suggested did indeed become the external reviewer. But the fact that this process started after I had submitted, had added three to four months to the whole process. So, it's not so transparent.

People who graduate with PhDs are either funded or self-funded. If they are funded they have limited time. They have to go back. They've got a time limit. People who are self-funded can't continue doing this forever. They have to start making money. They've got people to look after. It is costly for students because it costs you the opportunity as well … all sorts of different costs. And I'm just not happy with it really because I wanted to apply for a job back in my home country. There is one job that I applied for but I didn't get it. In my country, jobs in my area are very hard to come by. They don't come around that often. The fact that I missed out on the window, it is quite (sigh) you know (long pause).
I think if I wasn't married, if I was funded, I wouldn't have had a problem but because I had to work … as a student you never know if you will have an income coming in. I myself have been self-employed for the last three or four years. I started doing business … I do editing, academic editing, and that doesn't guarantee you money. I pretty much have my evening to do all my work. Really, I'm a person who can really work when I'm in the mood... it only took me six or eight months of solid work to finish. If you already know what you are doing and if you've got your book … you just read and write because to me language is not an issue, research is not an issue.

The Dynamics of our Relationship
In my experience, it was personal. I developed a personal relationship with him. I think we like each other so we developed this. But I think it is very easy to be business-like when people don't have that rapport with their supervisor. I think he was quite aware that I have my own challenges. I'm self-funded and that represented lot of challenges and he was patient in that regard. He pointed me and guided me to the research and I think there were sometimes where he even helped me out financially, like personally. He helped me a few times. He has been compassionate … in that regard he was very understanding, caring, and these have helped me at a personal level and its freed me up a little bit to focus on my research and I think generally I liked him. I consider him a role model and I say that in both a professional capacity and a personal capacity at the same time.

He was committed to the study of Biruni for a while and I think it's fair that he is recognised for his contribution although I am the one who did the writing, a lot of the thoughts that were developed belong to him. The seeds of the thoughts belong to him. He guided me on the path to discovery. We are going to have a life-long partnership, we click mentally as well I think and he is committed to the same type of goal I'm committed to so it helps a lot when your supervisor is on the same path already … way ahead of you. He has so much experience, why not work together … why not utilise that?

Reflection
I think for me if I could summarise ... I felt that it was a quite an enjoyable process. I didn't really experience too much frustration, at least unexpected frustration. I knew there was inefficiency but it was largely expected so it was already being accounted fo r… other than

that I learned a lot. It's all based on my one supervisor. There wasn't any other factor involved but I do hope that other people in a similar situation can have a similar or better experience.

Future plan
I'm planning to develop my thesis into a book, jointly published between my supervisor and myself. That's my plan for the next two years if I am still in Malaysia.

Appendix 13: An Example of Memo Writing in Narrative Analysis

Extract from Ryan's Restoried Narrative	**My Reflection Memo**
My Family I was born in New Zealand. I was raised as Muslim New Zealand, my mom's Singaporean, and my dad's Kiwi. My dad was into Islam when he married my mom in Singapore and then they went to New Zealand to live there. After I was born my dad actually went to the IIUM. He was the first batch of the first intake. So, my first language just happened to be Malay in the sense that it was the first language that I ever spoke because I was eight months old when we came here. When I was four years old, we returned home and I forgot… I couldn't speak in English. So, until I was four years old my dad couldn't speak Malay and I couldn't speak English. And then we went home, after a month or so I lost all my Malay unfortunately because we only speak English at home.	*Firstly, he identified himself as someone who was born in NZ and raised as a Muslim in NZ. His mom is a Singaporean, and his father is Kiwi. His father converted to Islam when he married R's mother. He narrated his special connection to the IIUM, the university through his father. The connection to IIUM is special and nostalgic. Just like his connection to the country, Malaysia. When he returned to NZ, he lamented on losing his first language. Perhaps he was also referring to the loss of his first identity- Sense of belonging & Identity?*
Growing up I stayed there in New Zealand. At that time in the 80s there were not many Muslims there. So, I have always tried to … struggle with identity. Most people who come from mixed parentage have identity issues ... But for us the issue wasn't so much a cultural thing. It was religious things because we were like… the only Muslims in the city where we spent good part of our childhood. We were the only Muslims in that whole city. So, we had to learn how to [pause] and my dad is a committed Muslim. He is a practicing Muslim. So, we grew up as practicing Muslims. So, we fasted, we went to *jumaah* [congregational Friday prayer] because *jumaah* was at my house. So, it was a masjid [mosque] as well you know [laugh] as we were the only Muslims [laugh] and yes in that sense we were forced really to identify, to sort of search for that identity - how are we Kiwis, we grew up like everybody else but we are not- we can't eat pork, we don't drink alcohol, we pray. If I were at my mate house they don't give me meat for example. Things like these and this sort of- you know- we were constantly asking how you merge	*He continued telling his story of childhood –of the only Muslim-Kiwi family in a place in NZ. He talked about his identity conflict. Is he Kiwi first or Muslim first? He recalled his feelings of confusion, alienation and curiosity of having to negotiate the different values. Interestingly all of these motivated him to learn more about his religion.*

between the two. Is being a kiwi and being a Muslim a very opposite or can they be complimentary? This has led me to learn more about Islam. **Educational Experience Abroad** So, I did correspondence and I went to an Indonesian pesantren. I went to a pesantren for probably a total of about a year but in two different places because I had visa issues at the time. I went back to Brunei for a few months after that [to] finish my A levels. So, I think when I was 18 … turning 18, I went to Sudan, by myself and I studied Arabic there for a year [and] came back from Sudan in 2000. From there I continued to my degree program. I did my bachelor degree in Islamic Studies. The program gave you a good foundation of a wide range of Islamic studies. I stayed there for some time, about eight months before I came here [Malaysia].	*He had colourful and global educational experiences. This in a sense reflects his personal as well as academic journey to understand himself. His doctoral journey represents the next chapter in his journey to explore his curiosity about his religion and the country where he had lived during his childhood. Found sense of identity in religion and experience abroad. This is relatable to Holliday's small cultures.*

Appendix 14: An Example of Establishing Connection between the Themes of one of the Participants' Narratives

Emerging Themes	Key Themes	Contexts	Examples of Narrative extracts
- Mixed parentage - Conflict of identity - Negotiating between values - Fitting in cultural practices	Theme 1: Multiple identities	1. Student's Cultures Personal trajectory - Family - Childhood - Moving to Malaysia - Returning to NZ	- So, I have always tried to struggle with identity… we were forced really to sort of search for that identity (Ryan, Para 2)
- Critical reflection on studying abroad and exposure to the Islamic philosophy - Familiar surroundings, similar values, international recognition, educated staff, good facilities,	Theme 2: IIUM as the learning context	1. Student's culture (early educational experience in different Islamic countries) 2. The university culture (IIUM mission) 3. The national culture (Malaysian culture)	-…the ideal institution for Islamic Studies…having staff coming from abroad, range of countries (Ryan, para: 3)
- Doing coursework, writing proposal meetings with supervisors - Independent learning, - Observing, dealing with bureaucracy - Academic (writing, lack of references, supports	Theme 3: The Struggles	1. PGR culture (research & academic literacies	- I felt there were insufficient references… give up a couple of times and changed my topic (Ryan, para: 5) - I work independently. He didn't really have much input (Para 6)
- Scholarly attributes - Islamic exemplary relationship goal (lifetime partnership, Role model) - Making Future (personal and professional growth)	Theme 4: Organic relationship	1. Student's culture 2. PGR cultures (supervisor) 3. The university culture -Islamic philosophies (Mualim and Murabbi)	- Impressed with his talks because he is very informative, …definitely a role model in that regards (para: 7) - Maintains a very unique approach … I am his friend he is always formal with me. …let you do your things (para: 7)

| - Personal (family responsibility, expectation, time, motivation, support) - Financial (travelling, tuition fee, family) - Delay (administrative inefficiency, bureaucracy, attitudes, lack of transparency, support) | Theme 5: Tailoring supervision | 1. Student Culture personal 2. The university culture (institutional bureaucracy) | - If they are funded they have limited time and they have to go back. They got time limit (para: 8) - People who are self-funded they can't continue doing this forever. They have to start making money (para: 8) - It is costly for students - It costs you the opportunity as well (para: 8) |

Appendix 15: An Example of Translating Non-English Narrative Data into English

Translation approach	Examples	
	Non-English narrative data	**Translated narrative data in English**
Literal translation	*Bagi saya, bahaya perkataan 'kalau ada benda baru datang ni' sebab bila student dengar, dia tak akan datang, sebab dia tak ada benda. Sehingga boleh jadi sebulan, dua bulan dan kadang-kadang tiga bulan baru jumpa. Kalau saya, saya nak student saya datang juga sebulan sekali. Saya nak tengok apa yang dia dah buat. Sekurang-kurangnya dia rasa, bila dia datang jumpa saya, dapat dengar motivasi, dengar nasihat.* *-Jacob*	From my experience, it is unwise to meet your students only when they have something new to show us. Because it can take up to a month, two months, and even three months before they come and see their supervsiors. To my students I will ask them to come and see me every month, just to check on their progress. At least, I want them to gain some motivation or advice from our meetings. -Jacob
Conceptual equivalence translation	*Daripada pengalaman saya buat coursework, semua lecturers punya assignments mesti berkaitan dengan research kita yang sebenar. <u>Bak kata – satu peluru dua ekor burung-</u>. Katalah you dah buat Research Methodology, so subjek kuantitatif atau kualitatif semua tu akan related to your field or research. So, <u>kita senang dan mempercepatkan kita</u>.* *-Jacob*	From my own experience doing coursework, all lecturers would give assignments that were related to our own research. <u>There is a saying – killing two birds with one stone -</u>. For instance, once you have attended a course on Research Methodology, you will be exposed to qualitative and quantitative approaches, which are related to your research. So <u>I found that convenient and time efficient</u>. -Jacob

Appendix 16: A Summary of the Doctoral Students' Demographic

Participant (Student)	PhD Mode	PhD Prog.	Country of birth	Faculty	Current Employment
Ryan	Coursework and Research	Full time	New Zealand	Faculty 2	Self-employed
Edward	Research	Full time	Malaysia	Faculty 1	University Lecturer
Jacob	Coursework and Research	Full time	Malaysia	Faculty 1	University Lecturer
Nissa	Coursework and Research	Full time	Maldives	Faculty 1	University Lecturer
Maressa	Coursework and Research	Part time	Malaysia	Faculty 2	Private college lecturer
Bella	Coursework and Research	Full time	Malaysia	Faculty 1	University lecturer

Appendix 17: A Summary of the Doctoral Students' Responses in regard to Supervisory Arrangements

Student	Study period	Overall Experiences		Supervisor	Meeting Purpose & Frequency		Comment
Ryan	4 years	Excellent	I was given space to grow independently.	Main & 1 Co-supervisors	For guidance, motivation & validation of progress	Once a month	The system is pretty good as it is.
Edward	3 years	Excellent	I received good guidance and motivation to finish on time.	Main & 1 Co-supervisors	For guidance, motivation & validation of progress	2-4 times/ month	Supervisor should be aware of the new trends and software in qualitative and quantitative research.
Jacob	4 years	Good	I got good advice.	Main & 2 Co-supervisors	To help complete on time	2-4 times/ month	No comment
Nissa	4 years	Excellent	I received comprehensive guidance in the basic component of research	Main & 2 Co-supervisors	To avoid conflict & have clear understanding of thesis	2-4 times/ month	Supervisors should give full commitment to ensure students finish on time.
Maressa	8 years	Average	In the beginning I received good guidance but towards the end it was lacking drastically.	Main Supervisor	To avoid conflict & have clear understanding of thesis	Infrequent	Supervisors need to provide consistent, persistent and continuous monitoring. Supervisors also need to avoid making assumption on the students' ability.
Bella	3 years	Excellent	I received excellent input.	Main & 2 Co-supervisors	To check/ validate progress made	2-4 times/ month	There is a need to match student with the right supervisor.

Appendix 18: Summary of the Participants' Experiences of Supervision

Items		Edward	Bella	Ryan	Jacob	Maresa	Nissa
Meeting frequency	1st supervisor	2-4 times a month	2-4 times a month	Once a month	2-4 times a month	Infrequently	2-4 times a month
	Co-supervisor/ Committee	Infrequently	Infrequently	Infrequently	Infrequently	-	Infrequently
Value of meeting	1st Supervisor	Important	Very important	Important	Very important	Important	Very important
	Co-supervisor/ Committee	Important	Very important	Not Important	Important	-	Not important
Reasons for meeting		To validate progress made and get guidance	To endorse progress	Guidance and insights and motivation	To graduate on time	-To avoid conflict - have clear understanding of thesis	Focus on research, and not to disappoint supervisor
Topics of discussion with 1st supervisor	Phd Development	Always	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always
	Researcher Development	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Infrequently	Infrequently	Sometimes
	Academic Development	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Infrequently	Never	Infrequently
	Personal Development	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Infrequently	Sometimes	Sometimes
Summarised Categories		Hisyam	Ayda	Shafiq	Amar	Maresa	Nissa
Topics of discussion co-supervisor/ committee	PhD development	Always	Always	Never	Sometimes	-	Infrequently
	Researcher Development	Always	Always	Never	Never	-	Never
	Academic Development	Always	Always	Never	Never	-	Never
	Personal Development	Always	Sometimes	Never	Never	-	Never
Agenda setting meeting	1st Supervisor	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Infrequently	Always
	Co-supervisor/ Committee	Sometimes	Always	Never	Infrequently	-	Infrequently

Overall experiences	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Average	Excellent
Summary of supervisory experiences	Received good guidance and motivation to finish on time	Got excellent input	Given room to grow independently	Received good advice	Received good guidance in the beginning but supervision was drastically lacking afterwards.	Received comprehensive guidance in the basic component of research.
Suggestion to improve supervision	Supervisor should be aware of the new trends and software of statistical analyses	Need to match student with the right supervisor	The system is pretty good as it is	None	consistent, and continuous monitoring; avoid assumption on the student ability.	Supervisor should give full commitment to ensure student finish on time