

Preface

Initiated in 2021, the *Postgraduate Supervision in Transformation Indaba: Contexts, Challenges, Opportunities and Praxes*, involved more than eighty academics over six campuses from both the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Zululand. Stretching over 4 years, from 14 May 2021 to 30 September 2025, we have had just more than eighty short papers delivered. The academics involved represent the KwaDlangezwa and Richards Bay campuses of the University of Zululand, and the Howard College, Westville, Edgewood, and Pietermaritzburg campuses of UKZN.

Over the years, we have had several Calls for Papers, to critically and constructively reflect and develop academic evidence-based presentations on different aspects of postgraduate supervision. Some of the indaba events focused on the supervision of the phases of the postgraduate research process – the supervision of the research proposal, in-depth topic, theory and method-related studies, data-generation, data analysis and interpretation, and thesis finalisation supervision. Others called for papers focused on the how of student and/ or supervisor experiences of postgraduate supervision, viz., at Honours, Masters and PhD levels. And yet others, to reflexively reflect on blended supervision during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as supervision with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools.

So, for the final Call for Papers for this volume, and to provide an open space for all our presenters to submit their fully developed academic papers, the call was titled: *'Becoming, Being, and Excelling as a Postgraduate Supervisor in the Era of Digital Media and Artificial Intelligence'*.

Then, following our review process, and to capture the topicality of the papers, over the years, we thematised the volume, as *Postgraduate Supervision in Transformation Indaba: Contexts, Challenges, Opportunities and Praxes*.

Reflecting on the first part of our title, and from personal experience as evolving academics and supervisors, and against the background of previous indaba events, we reasoned that it is incumbent on the professoriate and our early and mid-career supervisors, to critically and innovatively engage the fact that the nature and practice of supervision is changing. It is transforming, from an add-on or marginal or even ancillary activity of the academic enterprise, to central, so that our very own-Africa-focused and -inspired and -generated research, and knowledge-led scholarship and teaching and learning, and community engagement, take centre stage. Indeed, postgraduate and especially Masters and PhD scholarships have become the prime drivers of the substance of contextually-relevant Humanities and Social Sciences

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knowledge generation. If the Masters programmes provide the space for the topical and theory and conceptual and methodological mastery of transformative epistemics, the PhD projects spearhead the generation of new knowledge, evidence-based from new data and new information generated for conceptual and theory development, from, by, with and in the service of our communities. It is incumbent on us as supervisors to provide the requisite leadership to guide and steer the research process for and with each individual student, but also to accompany students through their postgraduate studies years.

Throughout our indaba events, one of the main areas of specialisation for supervisors that emerged was the assistance with the evidence-based study of the problematic phenomenon to be studied and the related topic formulation. Another was the ‘how’ of accompanying our students through the phases of the project to completion. Others were how students form social bonds, and perform as part of their peer groups, how the groups are accompanied by supervisors, in “cohorts”, and individually, and how supervisors collaborate, in projects where a co-supervisor or co-supervisors are involved.

Mooted as a collaborative project from our own academic staff in the province, the volume has been produced with data and scholarship from within our midst and for the benefit of our current and future postgraduate supervisors. Given the topics addressed as well as the reach and scope of the published result, we then thematised the chapters into groups under those that address aspects of contextuality that impact scholarly discourse, those that primarily address challenges or opportunities in supervision, and those that were submitted that dealt with practical aspects of supervision.

It is our sincere hope that the volume will be helpful to our supervisors in our province, but also useful to fellow early career, as well as mid- and senior career supervisors in South Africa, on our continent as well as internationally. The project is continuing, and we shall have more indaba events, with more universities becoming involved, with hopefully one or more published volumes.

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