

How to Select the Best Possible Supervisor

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Abstract

If you are going to take a thesis or dissertation during your study period having the best possible supervisor is a vital issue. Since a well-experienced supervisor makes this part of your educational program productive and fruitful, the aim of the present article was to provide its reader with a few practical advices on how to select the best possible supervisor.

INTRODUCTION

If you are going to take a thesis or dissertation during your study period having the best possible supervisor is a vital issue. A well-experienced supervisor makes this part of your educational program productive and fruitful while a feeble supervisor might make your entire educational program into a ruin.

Jonathan W. Yewdell in his article entitled: "How to succeed in science: A concise guide for young biomedical scientists. Part I: Taking the plunge" quote a nice fable, which is posted on the Nature Network, on the importance of selecting a well-experienced supervisor.^[1] This story says:

"A rabbit is happily grazing one day when it is ambushed by a wolf."

"Please don't eat me Mr. Wolf," pleads the rabbit, "I haven't completed my Ph.D.!"

The wolf spits out the rabbit and laughs until he almost chokes.

"Yeah right! A rabbit? Doing a Ph.D.? What about? Carrots? Duracell batteries? I just gotta hear this one!"

The rabbit clears its throat and intones: "On the innate superiority of rabbits over wolves."

"That's a crock for a start," scoffs the wolf.

"However, I can prove it," says the rabbit. "Come to my hole and I'll show you my results, and if you still don't believe me, then you can eat me. Deal?"

"Sure. Can I have fries with that?" says the wolf, following the rabbit down the hole.

However, only the rabbit comes out.

Months later the rabbit is grazing contentedly again when it meets another rabbit.

"How's tricks?" asks the friend.

"Wonderful," says our hero, "I've just submitted my Ph.D. dissertation."

"Congratulations! What's it called?"

It's called "On the innate superiority of rabbits over wolves"

"Unbelievable – I mean, literally. Are you sure?"

"Yes, I thought it was crazy at first too. However, I've tested the model rigorously, and that's the result I get."

"Wow" ...

Look, if you don't believe me, why not come to my hole and I can show you the results?

"Of course, I'd love to!"

"Hence, the two rabbits scurry down the burrow. In the first chamber is a workstation, covered with and surrounded by piles of books, papers, printouts, and half-eaten carrots. In the second chamber are boxes and boxes of wolf bones, all cataloged, and annotated. Moreover, in the final chamber, in a rocking chair is a large and very satisfied looking bear."

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Therefore, you should do your paramount efforts to find the best possible supervisor. Usually, universities provide you with a few options for selection. This might imply that you have very limited options to choose from. Even under such circumstances you still need to select the best one. In the present article, I will try based on my personal experiences^[2,3] provide the readers with a few practical advices on how to select the best possible supervisor. Readers may also consult related articles^[1,4-7] as well.

PRACTICAL ADVICES

- For the first and foremost advice always remember that a high-quality supervisor must have high-quality records on supervision
- The high-quality records on supervision of an academic member might confirm at the very least from two interrelated sources: First by looking at his/her CV and second by an informal talk with his/her current and/or previous students
- Therefore, you should look very carefully at the CV of any potential supervisors. Having a good record on publication especially on the prestigious journals that is, journals with high impact factor and/or h-index is an advantage. Besides having good records on publication on the issues and topics, which are related to your interests is another advantage
- Moreover, you should informally talk with his/her current and/or previous students to find out how he/she treats with his/her students. Remember that you are looking for a cooperative supervisor how treats his/her students as a grown-up scientist
- My personal experiences indicate that a potential young supervisor who has just graduated and has no previous experiences in supervisory tasks might not be a good choice to be selected
- In my point of view, such young potential supervisor might be an ideal option to be selected as a co-supervisor. The reason for that is clear as he/she might have lots of energy and enthusiast, which still need to be directed into a productive endeavor. After acting in two or three co-supervisory position he/she might be ready to work more independently

- To sum up having a seasoned supervisor who treats his/her student as a grown-up scientist is your ultimate goal. However, this is just the first step. You should make yourself ready to embark on a huge task, which is to expand the boundaries of human knowledge in your field of expertise
- For accomplishing this huge mission you should devote yourself to write a novel research proposal, to carry out the necessary experiments in laboratory or field, to analyses your obtain data, to write down your thesis or dissertation and to defend it. Moreover, in this long and exciting road to discovery your supervisor is your guide.

CONCLUSION

Selecting the best possible supervisor is always a vital issue for successfully accomplishing the final parts of a study program in the format of a thesis or dissertation. The present article provides eight practical advices on how to select the best possible supervisor.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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