

Individual supervision – case #2: ‘I am simply not good enough’

One thought provoking case of individual supervision was a student we could call Anna. She came to AWC after having participated in one of our workshops and asked for an individual supervision session. She was writing her final master’s thesis. Before the session she sent ten pages that were a jumble of ideas of how to get started on her thesis.



First supervision session: First of all Anna and I talked for some time about her situation as a student at The Danish School of Education. She was working full time while doing her academic studies, and she had just had a period with serious stress symptoms and depression. ‘As a matter of fact’, as Anna put it, ‘I don’t know why I am doing this! I guess I’m simply not good enough.’

When Anna came to AWC, she was in the beginning of a long summer holiday and had decided that she would give her master’s thesis another (final) try. Furthermore Anna told me that she had been writing this thesis on and off for the last nine years.

After this conversation we worked with Anna’s text. The most important issue was to reach the exact research question. After some tidying up and sorting out in Anna’s text, we finally reached an agreement about a focus, a research question and a rough research plan.

Homework: Anna had an appointment with her academic supervisor shortly after her session with me, and the plan was that she should work some more on the plan we had worked out and present it to her supervisor for approval.

Second supervision session: Anna told me that her supervisor had approved of the research question, and that the supervisor had recommended some literature. Anna was apparently very optimistic about it all. After that, she told me that she had talked to her neighbor, and the neighbor had recommended that Anna should change her focus and her plan, so Anna had worked on that. This was rather worrying, considering the frail basis Anna’s thesis had at this point, and I strongly recommended Anna to stick to her plan and only listen to her supervisor and follow the plans she and I agreed on.

The situation now is that Anna has written about one third of her thesis. Most of it was written while she was sitting in AWC with frequent support from me. The very last report from Anna was that she was overworked and could not stick to her plans.

The question is whether this is a case that it is impossible for AWC to solve and give sufficient support?



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