The Quest for Quality Project Supervision: Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship in the Education Faculty at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine dissertation supervisor-supervisee relationship in the Faculty of Education at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe and identify preferred practice on the relationship. Various elements related to supervisor-supervisee relationship, the academic and personal relationship were dealt with. A mixed approachthat was descriptive in nature was employed while the instruments of the study were questionnaires and an interview. The sample comprised of 44 (21 post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours and 23 post diploma Bachelor of Education students) and 13 (8 male and 5 female) Faculty of Education lecturers selected randomly. The results have shown a poor working relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Most of the students fail to meet submission deadlines due to inconsistencies in consultation. The study recommends the crafting of regulations that clearly guide and direct operations in student supervision to accommodate the preferred practice which should at least not disadvantage the student.

Key words: *Supervisor, Supervisee, Relationship, Dissertation, Research Project*

Introduction

Research output, a scientific product, is one of the most complex modules in higher education. Its successful completion is a key performance indicator for institutions of higher learning such as universities. However, successfully completing a research project is complex, demanding and is commonly associated with a range of problems. Students undertaking graduate studies at universities are under increasing pressure to complete their candidature

within particular time frames. One of important aspects to completing a dissertation successfully is related to the student-supervisor relationship. Supervision is a cornerstone of an academic career at institutions of learning. The supervisor is of crucial importance to students' successful completion of their dissertations as the main source of tuition, guidance, advice and support (Sheehan, 1993; Holloway and Walker, 2000). In its context, supervision, involves a supervisor (lecturer) and a supervisee (student). The final product, the dissertation report, is greatly affected by the nature of the supervision and the quality of communication between the supervisor and the student. It is the thrust of this study to explore the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. The examination of supervision relationship has the potential to make an important contribution to the quality of graduate research.

Role of Supervisors in Dissertation Supervision

Supervision is an activity undertaken by someone occupying a formal role within an organisation that has (more or less) explicit expectations and accountabilities to both the person being supervised, and the organisation which provides the context for the supervisory relationship (Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt, 2011). Supervision in the academic context is a process to facilitate the student becoming an independent professional researcher and scholar in their field. Supervision involves the fundamentals of good teaching (James and Baldwin, 1999). Good supervisors, thus, ought to show characteristic features of good teachers. They are empathic, genuine, open, and flexible. For instance, they ought to demonstrate skills in applying learning theory, evaluating interventions and supervisee learning. They respect their supervisees as persons and as developing professionals, and are sensitive to individual differences (e.g., gender, race, and ethnicity) of supervisees (Borders, 1994). However supervision is an intensive form of teaching in a much broader sense than just transfer of information. It involves more time and energy than teaching. Supervisors evidence high levels of conceptual functioning, a clear sense of their own strengths and limitations

as a supervisor, and can identify how their personal traits and interpersonal style may affect the conduct of supervision (Borders, 1994).

Good supervisors are also good consultants in that they can objectively assess problem situations, provide alternative interventions and conceptualise a problem or client, facilitating supervisee brainstorming of alternatives (Borders, 1994). The supervision of students' projects is vividly personal in character and is influenced by such as the personalities involved and the environment in which the supervisor and supervisee work. There are also bound to be considerable variations in supervisory practice between institutions as well as between faculties. For these reasons this research will try to describe academic roles of supervisors as envisioned by students and lecturers and compare this with good supervisory practice common globally.

The success of the supervisory relationship relies largely on the supervisor's role in providing the expertise and support necessary to foster in their graduate student the skills that will ensure successful project completion. Effective supervision requires supervisors to be knowledgeable and skilled in the research field (McQueeney, 1996). Brown and Atkins (1988) suggest that, to supervise effectively, one has to be a competent researcher and to be able to reflect on research practices and analyse the knowledge, techniques and methods that make them effective.

Essentially supervisors have the following as their duties in project supervision;
  a) assist their students with the selection and planning of a suitable and manageable research topic;
  b) be sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide guidance and/or have willingness to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as a supervisor;
  c) be accessible to their students for consultation and discussion of academic progress and research (the frequency of meetings will vary

according to the discipline, stage of work, nature of the project, independence of the student, full- or part-time status, etc.);

d) respond in a timely and thorough manner to written work submitted by their students, with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation (good practice suggests that turnaround time for comments on written work should not exceed three weeks);

e) assist their students in being aware of current graduate program requirements, deadlines.
(Brew and Peseta, 2004; Wisker, 2005 and Lee, 2008).

Supervisees need supervisors with whom they can work with, who are seen as helpful and supportive and whom they respect as knowledgeable professionals (Holloway and Walker, 2000).

The Role of Supervisees

There are serious imbalances in the relationship between supervisors and supervisee. Generally the rules of the relationship must either favour the interests of the student or at least not disadvantage the student. Liking a supervisor, although not essential, helps as it will see student through most difficulties. A sour relationship is a recipe for disaster and often ends in depression and may even result in a failure to complete the dissertation (Holloway and Walker, 2000). In other words, good communication between students and their supervisor is the most important element of supervision. According to Brew and Peseta (2004) and Wisker (2005) supervisees have the following responsibilities; to

a) work with their supervisor to select and plan a suitable and manageable research topic;

b) make a commitment and show dedicated efforts to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue their research project successfully;

c) develop a plan and timetable for completion of all stages of their research project in conjunction with their supervisors;

d) adhere to a schedule and meet appropriate deadlines;

e) meet with their supervisor when requested and at mutually agreed times and report fully and regularly on progress and results;

f) be thoughtful and reasonably frugal in using resources provided by your supervisor and the University, and assist in obtaining additional resources for your research or for other group members where applicable;

g) conform to university, faculty and graduate program requirements, including those related to deadlines, dissertation or thesis style, conflict of interest;

h) keep in regular touch with their supervisor who should be reasonably available for consultation.

Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship

The roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee should be clear to all participants in supervision (Kohner, 1994). The relationship between supervisee and supervisors is one of the most important relationships the student will experience. Both the student and the supervisor should contribute responsibly to this relationship by relying on common courtesy, punctuality, conscientious performance and mutual respect.

A faculty or department should adopt a policy of providing equal opportunities for its students and staff (Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt, 2011). It is always important for a faculty or department to have a member of staff appointed to the position of a dissertation coordinator. The person oversees dissertation supervision and offers impartial advice to research students and supervisors. With such an arrangement problems encountered in the relationship can be identified and resolved at an early stage.

The academic relationship between supervisor and graduate student is unique. Assessing student needs in the early stages is essential. Knowing the knowledge and skills students have at the outset and the areas where they need to develop serves as the beginning of an action plan. A supervisor needs to know:

- what knowledge and skills their student brings to the project;
- the areas they need support in; and,
- how they are likely to approach the research (Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt, 2011).

Student self-assessment is an effective way to initially begin to assess where the student is starting from and to develop an action plan. Thus a good match between student and supervisor academically is a key catalyst for the development of a successful relationship and progress of a student.

Not only is it important to establish the academic relationship, it is also necessary to consider and establish a certain level of personal relationship. Personalities figure significantly in graduate supervision. The relationship between supervisor and graduate student is not only more personal than other academic endeavours but in this instance it is also long-term. The progress of a student is greatly impacted by the nature of the relationship that develops.

A relationship on a personal level may result in complications, hurt feelings and can be destructive to the academic relationship. It is suggested that the relationship can still be cordial, personal, enjoyable, and fun (Ramani, Gruppen and Kachur, 2006). Others believe that a supervisor is required to understand the student as a whole person, taking an interest in a range of non-academic activities involving family, friends, work and community as these demands may impinge on the student's academic work (James and Baldwin, 1999). Some supervisors do establish close, collaborative relationships and friendships with a student that lasts well beyond the completion of the degree. Supervisor and student spend many hours together

working towards a common goal. Given the intensity of this relationship, there is potential for the relationship to become too personal.

An important function of supervision is to give students confidence and encouragement: many of our students underestimate their abilities. Try to be as relaxed and friendly as possible, remembering that a tense atmosphere is not conducive to learning (University of Cambridge, 2012).The following is a list of suggestions that may guide supervisors in developing a caring, supportive relationship with a graduate student:
- be cognisant of the interaction between the personal and the academic;
- if an issue arises try to determine if it is a personal problem that is affecting their work;
- if you are interested and approachable let your student know early on that you are available to listen sympathetically if she/he wants to discuss a personal issue;
- be supportive and a sympathetic listener but maintain an appropriate detachment;
- be flexible in your requirements of a student in times of personal stress. (This requires you to determine whether it is a pseudo-crisis to evade their work or a genuine personal crisis);
- consider what your limits are and recognise what you think you can and should do; and,
- if there is a serious problem that requires an expert, know where to refer your student (James and Baldwin, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The research is focused on dissertation or project supervision of full-time undergraduate students in university residence. The students comprise of level 2 post-diploma Bachelor of Education who are allocated supervisors in level 2 semester 1 and expected to complete their research project in their final year level 2 semester 2 and the post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours students who are allocated supervisors in level 4 semester

1 and expected to complete their projects in their final year level 4 semester 2 (Faculty of Education Project Guidelines, 2011). Students in the Faculty of Education seem not to be conversant of their roles as well as of supervisors in the conduct of research. Sometimes students fail to meet submission deadlines because of sour supervisor-supervisee relationship. The supervisor-supervisee relationship seems to take a somewhat peripheral role. It is against this background that the study focussed on establishing the supervisor-supervisee relationships and suggests possible solutions to challenges faced. The following were the guiding research questions:

- How is the supervisor-supervisee relationship in project supervision?
- How can the relationship be improved on?

Methodology

The strategy that was used is the concurrent triangulation strategy because it enabled the researchers to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection concurrently and this helped the researchers to understand the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2009). In this study concurrent procedure involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time during the study in an attempt to confirm and cross validate or corroborate the findings followed by integrating the information of the overall results (Creswell, 2009).

The population comprised of 45 full-time post diploma Bachelor of Education students (2 year programme), 62 post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours students (4 year programme) and 43 lecturers in the Faculty of Education. Stratified random sampling procedure was employed to select a sample of students and lecturers. The sample comprised of 13 lecturers, 23 post diploma Bachelor of Education students and 21 post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours students.

The main methods of data collection used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in the absence of the researchers and in-depth interviews to the Faculty of Education lecturers were follow-ups to certain responses to questionnaire. The researchers also employed document analysis of the accessible written communications such as research project guidelines and workshop schedules and meetings held on research project supervision.

Descriptive statistics using numbers (n) and corresponding percentages (%) were used to analyse questionnaire data. Qualitative data gathered were analysed using the manual sort and count, grouping, and coding, classifying and categorising information to identify trends and patterns as they emerged (Creswell, 2009).

Results

In this study, quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentages and tables) and qualitative data collected using interviews were analysed using recurring themes (Shumba, 2011). Thus data analysis involved finding the frequencies of questionnaire responses falling in each of the 5-point likert scale, strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The responses made in this study are based on the majority of participants' responses in the strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) or disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) category. The responses from supervisee questionnaire are corroborated by responses from the supervisors' interviews. The data presented in this section was generated from the post Diploma Bachelor of Education Degree students' questionnaire, post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours Degree students' questionnaire and Faculty of Education Lecturers' interview in an attempt to establish their views on supervisor-supervisee relationships when carrying out research projects.

Twenty-three students were administered with a questionnaire and the following were their responses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Responses from Post Diploma Bachelor of Education Students (2 Year Programme)*

N=23

SECTION A	SA	A	% A	N	D	SD	% D
1. Module BED101 prepared me adequately to carry out research	8	10	78	3	2	0	9
2. I like my supervisor	14	7	91	2	0	0	0
3. I understand the role of my supervisor	12	8	87	3	0	0	0
4. My supervisor is always available to help me at every stage of the research process	8	6	61	4	2	1	13
5. My supervisor assisted me in selecting a suitable and manageable research topic	6	12	78	3	1	1	9
6. My supervisor is accessible to me for consultation and discussion	13	1	61	5	3	1	17
7. Allocation to a supervisor is fairly done	8	8	70	6	1	0	4
8. My supervisor responds in a timely and thorough manner to written work I submit	10	4	61	5	3	0	13
9. I am supervised by an expert in my research area	10	7	74	3	2	1	13
10. The project coordinator makes arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision when supervisor will be absent for extended periods	6	1	30	9	5	2	30
11. My supervisor assists me in gaining access to facilities of research material	4	5	39	4	9	1	43
12. I have contacts of my supervisor	16	4	87	1	1	1	9
13. My supervisor assists me in being aware of programme requirements deadlines and implications of not meeting them	7	8	65	4	1	3	17
14. There are internal mechanisms in place that support us as we do research, i.e. research guidelines	7	9	70	3	2	2	17
15. My supervisor demonstrates familiarity with the research culture	9	11	87	3	0	0	0
16. We have access to internet resources at the institution for purposes of research	15	8	100	0	0	0	0
17. The project coordinator is very supportive when I face problems with my supervisor	5	9	61	6	2	1	13

Scoring direction

Each positive item receives a score based on points

| Strongly agree =5 | Agree =4 | Not sure =3 | Disagree =2 | Strongly disagree =1 |

The scoring for each negative item should be reversed

| Strongly agree =1 | Agree =2 | Not sure =3 | Disagree =4 | Strongly disagree =5 |

Twenty-three students were administered with a questionnaire and the following were their responses as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Responses from Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours Students (4 Year Programme)*

N=21

SECTION A	SA	A	% A	N	D	SD	% D
1. Module BED101 prepared me adequately to carry out research	0	12	57	6	0	3	14
2. I like my supervisor	7	10	81	3	0	1	5
3.I understand the role of my supervisor	8	9	81	3	1	0	5
4. My supervisor is always available to help me at every stage of the research process	4	13	81	1	2	1	14
5. My supervisor assisted me in selecting a suitable and manageable research topic	9	6	71	3	3	0	14
6.My supervisor is accessible to me for consultation and discussion	4	10	67	3	4	0	19
7. Allocation to a supervisor is fairly done	4	7	52	5	3	2	24
8. My supervisor responds in a timely and thorough manner to written work I submit	7	8	75	2	2	2	19
9. I am supervised by an expert in my research area	8	6	67	2	3	2	24
10. The project coordinator makes arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision when supervisor will be absent for extended periods	0	5	24	8	2	7	43

11. My supervisor assists the me in gaining access to facilities of research material	1	5	29	8	4	3	33
12. I have contacts of my supervisor	8	5	62	3	3	2	24
13. My supervisor assists me in being aware of programme requirements deadlines and implications of not meeting them	9	7	76	1	3	1	19
14. There are internal mechanisms in place that support us as we do research, i.e. research guidelines	5	8	62	3	4	1	24
15. My supervisor demonstrates familiarity with the research culture	5	9	67	2	3	2	24
16. We have access to internet resources at the institution for purposes of research	6	10	76	3	1	1	10
17. The project coordinator is very supportive when I face problems with my supervisor	4	4	38	3	1	9	48

About (57%) of the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and (78%) of the Post diploma Bachelor of Education participants expressed views that agreed and strongly agreed that the module for research methods and statistics prepared them adequately in carrying out a research project against (14%) and (9%) respectively who were in disagreement (item 1). The majority (81%) of the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and (91%) of the Post diploma Bachelor of Education have positive attitudes towards their supervisors. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and (61%) of the Post diploma Bachelor of Education strongly agreed and agreed that their supervisors are accessible for consultation and discussion (item 6). Majority (67%) of the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and (74%) of the Post diploma Bachelor of Education were affirmative on the idea that they are supervised by experts in their area.

However there were mixed reactions between the groups on whether supervisors assisted supervisees in gaining access to facilities of research material as indicated by nearly equal proportions between those who agreed and disagreed to the assertion. The responses of the four items (4, 5, 8, and 15) for both Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and Post diploma Bachelor of Education indicated that the supervisor is seen as

generally supportive in providing supervisees a sense of direction in their research endeavours, although very few thought it otherwise.

The majority (76%) of the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours and all (100%) Post diploma Bachelor of Education both have access to internet resources at the institution for purposes of research as opposed to as few as (10%) and none from the two groups respectively who stated otherwise. About (61% against 13%) of the Post diploma Bachelor of Education said the project coordinator is supportive enough when they face problems with their supervisors (item 17), whilst mixed reactions were recorded with the Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education honours (48% against 38%). This suggests that the coordinator is sometimes not very helpful when students confront challenges with their supervisors.

Twenty-one students were administered with a questionnaire and the following were their responses as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Responses from Post Diploma Bachelor of Education Students (2 Year Programme)*

N=23

Question	Responses	
1. What internal mechanisms are in place to support you in doing research?	• Access to internet	(10)
	• journals and books in the library	(6)
	• the supervisor	(4)
	• research guidelines	(5)
2. What is the duration of project completion and	• 1 semester	(7)
	• 2 semesters	(10)
	• Two months	(1)
	• Unaware	(3)
Do you think it is adequately serving the purpose?	• time allocated is limited, first semester not utilized lecturers too busy, students fail to meet deadline, time too short not serving purpose	

3. Elaborate on the relationship you have with your supervisor?	• Friendly and supportive (12) • Cordial relationship (7) • Gone to SA no contact left (1) • Good was tense initially before understanding role of supervisor (1)
4. What challenges are you facing in carrying out research?	• Time allocated too short (8) • Balancing project time and taught modules (4) • Accessibility of supervisors (4) • Schools not cooperative in data collection (3) • Shortage of resources (3) • Feedback from supervisor not immediate (1) • Lecturer busy to attend to me (1)
5. What do you consider to be the qualities or personal characteristics of an exemplary/outstanding supervisor?	• Helpful when consulted (10) • Friendly, should not harass students (5) • Gives timely feedback (4) • reliable and resourceful (4) • Approachable, available when needed (4) • Good listener and advisor (2)
6. What do you think should be done to improve supervision of projects?	• In service for supervisors (5) • Supervisors should provide a timetable for consultation and supervision (4) • Supervisors to be answerable on student failing to meet deadlines (2) • Guidelines should be clear and elaborate (2) • Supervisors to give students working timeframe (2) • Two full semesters for supervision (1) • Project to be done without other modules (2)
8. who else do you consult other than the supervisor when you encounter challenges?	• Friends (13) • Project coordinator (7) • Other lecturers (4) • None (3)

Twenty-one students were administered with a questionnaire and the following were their responses as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses from Post Advanced Level Bachelor of Education Honours Students (4 Year Programme)

N=21

Question	Responses	
1.What internal mechanisms are in place to support you in doing research?	• Access to internet	(6)
	• Prepared handouts/guidelines	(4)
	• Supervisor	(1)
2. What is the duration of project completion and	• 1 semester	(3)
	• 4 months	(1)
	• 1 year	(1)
	• No because of other commitments	(6)
Do you think it is adequately serving the purpose?	• Time too short	(3)
	• Fairly adequate	(3)
	• Yes	(1)
3. Elaborate on the relationship you have with your supervisor?	• Counselor and client	(1)
	• Friendly and supportive	(9)
	• Cordial	(5)
	• Unfriendly, not accommodative	(2)
4. What challenges are you facing in carrying out research?	• Time factor	(6)
	• Accessibility of supervisors	(3)
	• Respondents' negative attitudes	(1)
	• Resources	(7)
	• Financial problem	(7)
	• Research practice	(1)
	• Slow feedback	(1)
	• None	(1)
5. What do you consider to be the qualities or personal characteristics of an exemplary/outstanding supervisor?	• Giving timely feedback	(1)
	• Friendly	(2)
	• Be professional and supportive	(2)
	• Always available and tolerant	(1)
6. What do you think should be done to improve supervision of projects?	• Project done concurrently with research module	(2)
	• Allocation of supervisors at end of WRL	(3)
	• Immediate feedback	(2)
	• Funding students	(1)
	• Coordinator to supervise lecturers	(1)
7. who else do you consult other than the supervisor when you encounter challenges?	• Other lecturers	(10)
	• Peers	(9)
	• None	(4)

Results, in *Table 3 and 4,* show that the internet contributes the greatest support for students' research work. Some students demonstrated ignorance about the duration of project completion, although the greatest number was aware of the exact time frame. However students expressed concern over the time allocated for project completion. Participants indicated that the time is rather too short and that the first semester is not fully utilized as supervisors will be busy with other things.

Generally participants were happy with their supervisors, as the majority (12) described their supervisors as friendly and supportive. Such is an important characteristic of good supervisors. Supervisors should take the initiative in supporting and encouraging their students in research. The data also showed that participants held common views on the characteristics of good supervisors. The first character of supervisors identified was that supervisors should be helpful when consulted. Supervisors can provide useful guides to lead research students in the right pathway of the research journey. Secondly, supervisors should be reliable and resourceful.

However a major student complaint was that supervisors have been unduly slow in reading their drafts prolonging the project completion timeframe. Supervisees reported several challenges such as; time allocated is short, difficulty in balancing project time and taught modules, some supervisors.. difficult to access for consultation, shortages of resources like personal laptops . In order to ease the challenges participants proposed the following; in-service for supervisors, provision of a timetable for consultation, and a relook at the Faculty project guidelines to make it much clearer and more elaborate.

Lecturers' responses on supervisor-supervisee relationship

Twelve lecturers were interviewed and the following were their responses as shown in Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Table 5: *Lecturer experience*

Question	Response	
1. What is your highest qualification?	• Prof	(1)
	• Phd	(1)
	• Med	(9)
	• Msc	(2)
2. For how long have you been involved in supervising students' projects?	• Below 5years	(5)
	• Above 5 years but below 10	(7)
	• Above 10 years	(1)
3. How many students are you currently supervising? How many do you consider ideal?	• Below 5	(7)
	• Above 5	(6)

Table 6. Supervisor support and the allocation of supervisees

Question	Response	
4. What provisions are in place to assist you in project supervision? How do you feel about lecturer support from the department?	• Supervision workshops	(7)
	• Project writing guidelines	(6)
	• None	(2)
	• Can do better	(7)
	• Workshops too theoretical	(2)
	• To invite experts from outside	(2)
5. How does the faculty ensure that supervision of projects is going on and how is the information got? What mechanisms are in place to counter desk research, plagiarism?	• Through adherence to deadlines	(4)
	• Nothing in place	(7)
	• Lecturers given a form to record on consultations	(1)
	• Introduction letter stamped	(3)
	• Instruments submitted for verification	(2)
	• None	(7)
	• Some software about to be introduced	(2)
6. How are you allocated students to supervise? Are you allocated students in your area of speciality?	• As per area of specialization	(8)
	• Random	(2)
	• Yes	(7)
	• No of late its random	(2)

Table 7. Supervisor role in project supervision

Question	Response
7. Do you give students your contact details?	• Yes (11) • No (2)
8. What is the duration of student research and is the time span adequate?	• 2 semesters (10) • 3months (1) • Adequate (2) • Adequate but students leave it until late (7) • Not adequate (1)
9. What in your opinion are the qualities of a good supervisor? How do you think you measure up to those qualities?	• Approachable(patient) (6) • Professional, thorough in supervision (5) • Immediate feedback, honour appointments (6) • Knowledgeable about research area (6) • Very well (4) • Fairly adequate (6)
10. How often do you meet the student for consultation purposes? Do you think you are accessible for consultation and discussion with your student? Do you think you have adequate time for that?	• As and when student comes (8) • As per appointment (5) • Yes (9) • Not really (1) • Yes (8) • Limited (3)
11. What do you do to ensure continuous supervision for the student if absent for extended periods?	• Never experienced (3) • Contact student via internet (2) • Refer student to colleague lecturer (3) • Alert coordinator (2)
12. If you intend to publish student's research do you include the student as a co-author?	• Main author (5) • Co- author (4) • Never did it (6)
13. Do you communicate the student's progress and /or problems to the project coordinator?	• No (5) • Sometimes (2) • Yes (5)
14. What do you use to ensure project submitted conforms to faculty submission specifications?	• Faculty submission specifications (13)

Table 8. Challenges encountered in project supervision

Question	Response
15. What challenges do you face when supervising students? What do you think should be done to improve supervision of projects?	• Allocated students not aligned to my research interest (3) • Students disinterested in project work (4) • Students start to be serious in last semester (7) • Failure to meet deadlines (6) • Too many students to supervise (1) • Inability to relate theory with practice (6) • Organise workshops for students (2) • Make students do proposal assignments (5) • Allocation should be early at start of semester (1) • Encourage students to work in groups (1) • Give students timelines (2) • Viva students after proposal (1)
16. Of the students you have supervised are there any who fail to meet submission deadlines? Explain.	• No (2) • Yes students start to be seen in their last semester (11)
17. Do you have a timetable stipulating when students come for consultation?	• No - allow one to be flexible (10) • Yes (2)

Lecturer experience in the supervision of projects is generally wide as shown by a majority whose experiences range between 5 – 10 years. Majority of participants were in agreement that supervisors' knowledge should be far greater and deeper than the student's in the specific field of research whilst some felt the student may have more depth but the supervisor has more overall knowledge about the process of research. The majority felt that students leave most of the work towards the last semester of project submission, resulting in hurried shoddy submissions by students. On the same score participants indicated that many students have failed to meet submission deadlines. Participants felt that such poor working relationship compromises the research integrity, hence the output. However the majority

of participants do not operate under timelines with students which could explain why most students disappear after some few initial consultations only to reappear when projects are almost due for submission. Students thus would miss out on supervision.

Research supervision workshops for supervisors are rated by many as too theoretical and not enriching. Participants suggested the bringing in of experts from other institutions as this creates a platform for the sharing of practice. This is shown in majority of participants indicating that they fairly measure up to qualities of good supervision practice.

Common challenges on supervision as espoused by supervisors include; students disinterested in project work; students who start to be serious in last semester; failure to meet deadlines; and inability to relate theory with practice. On publication of student research there were mixed feelings from participants. Some felt the student's name should appear first because the student is the driving force behind their research output whilst some felt that the supervisor's name should appear first because the student only acts as an assistant researcher with the supervisor doing most of the work.

Discussion

The data above show that the majority of participants held common views on the characteristics of good supervisors, as envisaged by both supervisees and supervisors. The data collected provides insightful information which reflects even the research students' expectation on a good supervisor. The first character identified was that supervisors should be knowledgeable in research practice. Supervisors can provide useful guides to lead research students in the right pathway of the research journey. Knowledgeable in this regard means the ability to provide with a lot of theory in research methodology (Yeoh and Doan, 2012). Accordingly Brew and Peseta (2004) notes that, supervisors should be sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide guidance and have willingness to gain that familiarity before

agreeing to act as a supervisor. However from supervisee point of view this area should improve as they suggest in-servicing of supervisors.

The second character identified is that supervisors should be approachable by students. Supervisors should take the initiative in supporting and encouraging their students in research (Yeoh and Doan, 2012). In other words a good supervisor should be patient and friendly, dedicated and caring. They (supervisors) should always be with their supervisees throughout the research journey. However a lot seems lacking in this regard as supervisors lamented on supervisees who disappear for prolonged periods of time only to reappear close to submission of the final report. The supervised should not feel lonely or frustrated in this journey, because they need encouragement and inspiration.

A major highlight on supervisor weaknesses was about slow feedback and lack of a clear cut time plan on expectations. Findings from this study thus reveal little or no interest from supervisors to follow up on students' work. Supervisors should set schedule on regular meetings with their students for the purposes to solve their research problems and fill the gap in supervisor-student relationship (Spear, 2000). Besides, supervisors should have great commitment with their students and be sensitive to their needs in order to produce high quality of supervision (Spear, 2000). According to Brown and Krager (1985), the supervisor needs to be sensitive to students' time and competence limitations, and to assist them to become aware of their own limitations and any constraints on them. Therefore it can be concluded that supervisors should invest their time and energy to follow up students' work and understand their students' needs and then support them timely.

According to Spear (2000), one of the criteria to build up a good supervisor-student relationship is through effective communication. Supervisors who interact well with their students, willing to listen, respond and understand students' needs as well as wise in exchanging opinions with students without embarrassment can build up close relationship with supervised students. However, findings in this study reflect limitations in constant communication

between supervisor and supervisee as shown by the supervisees who show signs of seriousness in their last semester of submission. Such discontinuity in communication compromises the quality of the final report, as a result of a failure to cultivate an academic relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. According to Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt (2011) say failure for a match between student and supervisor academically has a negative impact on the progress of a student.

Way Forward

A proper supervisor-supervisee relationship is not entirely met in institutions regarding several aspects of supervision. A good relationship between student and supervisor is important and ensures student research project is completed successfully. During their research, students expect feedback to be constructive and want it as quickly as possible. As an effective supervisor, there are certain important practices that should be trained in supervisory system in order to complement research and supervision needs. Supervisors should timetable their meetings with students and should be able to account for a student's progress or lack of it. Supervisors also need to read around the area being researched on by the student.

Departments/faculties, whose mandate is to ensure students' success in their studies, should have some checks and balances on student progress. Since a project is done over two semesters, by the end of semester 1 the coordinator should be furnished on every student's progress or lack of it. Such information is vital to identify and assist students whose progress is tantamount to late or no submission at the end. These important practices need to be trained and applied in order to enhance student success in research. Workshops organized within the faculty level should adopt a practical orientation to supervision expectations.

Generally the rules of the relationship must either favour the interests of the student or at least not disadvantage the student. A good match between student and supervisor both academically and personally is a key catalyst

for the development of a successful relationship and progress of a student (Chiappetta-Swanson and Watt, 2011).

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