

The Research Experiences of Supervisors and Postgraduate Research Students at One South African Higher Education Institution

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Abstract : Successful postgraduate supervision involves possessing research capabilities, being knowledgeable in specific disciplines, understanding interpersonal relations, exercising mentoring/guidance skills and having appropriate knowledge of own institutional regulatory systems for postgraduate studies. On the other hand, postgraduate students are expected to know what the postgraduate journey entails and the elements and requirements of a postgraduate study. This paper sought to explore and analyse the research experiences of supervisors and postgraduate research students at one South African higher education institution. The study was qualitative in nature and a case study design was followed. The sample was purposively selected and comprised 25 postgraduate students and 20 postgraduate supervisors from one Faculty of the said university. The study findings revealed that there was no clear contract or memorandum of understanding between the postgraduate students and their supervisors. As a result, both supervisors and postgraduate students were not aware of their responsibilities. Both supervisors and postgraduate students complained about the non-availability of postgraduate facilities and resources for postgraduate students. The results further revealed that the allocation of students to supervisors who are not experts in a particular field was a challenge for both postgraduate students and supervisors. The results also revealed that the supervisors were not happy about the commitment of the postgraduate students towards their studies. The supervisors also complained about the postgraduate students who cannot work independently. Based on the findings, the authors recommended that a memorandum of understanding between a postgraduate student and a supervisor might solve some of the challenges. We further recommended a match between the supervisor's expertise and the student's focus area.

Keywords : feedback, mentoring, postgraduate, supervisors, student, memorandum of understanding

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