

Research Supervision: Postgraduate Students' Experiences in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish post-graduate students' experiences with regards to research supervision in South Africa. A purposive sample of 32 (11 male and 21 female), part-time Master of Education students registered for their dissertation at a South African University, participated in the study. A qualitative design was employed in this study. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. Data were analysed thematically. Participants identified good and bad supervision experiences. The study found that students viewed good research supervision experiences as hinging around the personality/ characteristics of the supervisor. The study found that good supervision experiences were associated with knowledgeable, friendly, supportive, available, time conscious, informative and patient supervisors. On the other hand, the study found that bad supervision experiences included supervisor not always available, not receiving research guidelines, delayed feedback, continuous change of instructions, harassment by supervisor, supervisor losing student's work and receiving 'feedback' without supervisor comments. Participants believed that research supervision would be improved if: supervisors received training in research supervision; all supervisors employed a guiding attitude; the university adopted a common research supervision guideline; student and supervisor met/communicated regularly; students chose their own supervisors and if the university could have regular postgraduate research related seminars. Recommendations to improve postgraduate research supervision were made.