

# **POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR SUPERVISORS' PERCEPTION ON EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR: A CASE STUDY AT ONE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) is one of the Research Universities (RU) in Malaysia. In gaining RU status, a university must meet the criteria of a Research University. One of the criteria is that, RU must have quantity and quality of researcher including postgraduate students. Thus, the research done by postgraduate students could be used to enhance the quality of research through developing the knowledge in the field of study. In doing a research, one student has to work with someone called supervisor. The good relationship between students and their supervisor could make their study smoothly. What are the things that they need and what they have actually received from their supervisor? Specifically, this research aims to identify the type and level of support given to postgraduate students by their supervisors. This research was done on the basis of qualitative approach which 6 postgraduate research students and 6 supervisors have been in-depth interviewed. The data have been analysed manually and there were five themes derived from the interviews which could answered the research questions. The results have been successfully explored the experiences and respondents' perception towards effective supervisor.

***Keywords: Effective, Ph.D, Practice, Postgraduate Student, Supervisor, Supervision***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Of particular importance in terms of postgraduate education is supervision. Numerous research have pointed out that there are high proportions of postgraduate students who fail to complete their studies within the time given. The most cited reasons are problems with supervision (Buckley and Hooley, 1988; Delamont and Eggleston, 1983; Krebs, 1967; Marsh, 1972; Moses, 1994; Smith, 1989; Welsh, 1979; Winfield, 1987; Wright and Lodwick, 1989). According to Russell (1996), the examination of supervision has the potential to make an important contribution to the quality of postgraduate research. Therefore supervision is concerned as the mechanics of ensuring that the students make good progress towards completion (Hockey, 1996). On the other hand, the supervision literature indicates that ethical, technical and methodological problems can be minimized or prevented if all the participants in the relationship strive to enter it with clear expectations for their respective roles and about the rules for their interactions (Brown and Atkins, 1988; Brown and Krager, 1985; Goodyear *et al.*, 1992). Therefore, on both departmental and individual basis, the supervisor must be diligent about explicitly working with students to establish mutual expectations, responsibilities and benefits for working together and with other parties (Phillips and Pugh 2000).

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) has been announced as Research University (RU) by the Ministry of Higher Education on November 16, 2006. As a Research University, it means that UPM will be an engine of growth of the nation where scholars and students exchange ideas as well as conduct research in a conducive environment that nurtures exploration and creativity in discovering knowledge and creating wealth, leading towards an improved quality of life. UPM will also be a leader in innovation, produced world class research outputs and Nobel Prize winners. Research also act as a core of excellence in prioritized areas of the nation which can generate high impact research publications and attract the best brains for teaching and research in producing high standard graduates. In gaining RU status, a university must meet the criteria of a Research University. One of the criteria is the RU must have quantity and quality of researchers postgraduate students. In the vice chancellor's message on January 27, 2007, the vice chancellor of UPM Profesor Datuk Dr. Nik Mustapha Raja Abdullah said that we should realise that postgraduate student is an important asset in supporting the development and enhancement of RU. Thus, it is essential for UPM to reinforce postgraduate studies.

Numerous research have pointed out that there are high proportions of postgraduate student who fail to complete their studies within the time given. Many factors can contribute to that and one of the most important factors contributing to this is the kind of supervision they receive. Of course, all other aspects need to be taken into account in studying the postgraduate's experience of supervision. Effective supervision of research students is acknowledged as a crucial factor in the latter success completion of the Ph.D (Frischer & Larsson, 2000). How well they are supervised is likely to be linked to the way they choose to occupy their roles. Therefore supervision is concerned as the mechanics of ensuring that the students make good progress towards completion (Hockey, 1996). Therefore, on both the supervisor and individual basis, must be diligent about explicitly working with students to establish mutual expectations, responsibilities and benefits for working together and with other parties (Phillips and Pugh, 2000).

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to identify the type and level of support given to Master/Ph.D students by their supervisors. Pertinent to its aims, the findings of this study seek to provide information about what support postgraduate students have received, and what they need from their supervisor.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Problems in Postgraduate Supervision**

Agreeing to supervise a project means undertaking to work in close collaboration with someone who is embarking on a journey within themselves: a journey which may at times profoundly exciting, but which will also certainly be difficult, risky and painful (Salmon, 1992). A research degree is about research training as well as contributing to knowledge and although it is not impossible to find ways of training oneself, the whole process is designed to be guided by a supervisor (Cryer, 2000). Both student and supervisor must wish the relationship to succeed. Otherwise, the problems in the relationship can affect the student's progress. Cryer (2000) showed that only highly committed students will successfully complete their research degrees if the relationship with their supervisors is poor. This is supported by Buckley and Hooley (1988), who

provided evidence that the student-supervisor relationship is vital to a Ph.D process. Besides, many research have found that there is a high number of Ph.D students who failed to complete their studies in the UK, and the most frequently cited problems is the nature of the supervision given (Buckley and Hooley, 1988; Delamont and Eggleston, 1983; Krebs, 1967; Marsh, 1972; Moses, 1994; Smith, 1989; Welsh, 1979; Windfield, 1987; Wright and Lodwick, 1989). In preparing for Ph.D research, students need a lot of communication with their supervisors. Therefore, a supervisor and student must have a very good relationship and be very close to each other. Furthermore, the learning system for Master and Ph.D programmes by research is not examination oriented, but thinking oriented. At the end of the programme, the students are required to submit these theses. This matter underlines that the student-supervisor relationship is very important in ensuring that the students make consistent progress and successfully manages to present his/her thesis on time and fulfil the standard (Cryer, 2000; Phillips and Pugh, 2000, Sayed *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, to some extent the student is the one who have to ‘manage’ the effectiveness of their supervisor because it will help their progress if they are well-guided while conducting the research and preparing the thesis. However, many educational institutions are inadequately prepared in terms of structures, policies, procedures and support to enable effective research supervision to take place (Moses, 1994). Bond (1991) suggests that effective research supervision is essential as, without it, students may undertake poorly planned work, or work on too large a scale which cannot be completed in the time available. Clarke (2000) and Sheehan (1993) also indicated that the supervisor is the principal source of instruction, support and guidance for the student. Therefore, it has been shown that a good supervisor, who gives timely and appropriate guidance and advice, can lead to the success of the research as well as the researcher (Claxton, 1989).

Zuber-Skerritt (1994) summarises the main problems in postgraduate supervision as: (1) Inadequate supervision: supervisors’ lack of experience, commitment, and/or time; (2) Emotional and psychological problems: students’ intellectual and social isolation; their insecurity to fulfil the standards and lack of confidence in their ability to complete their theses within the specified time or not at all; (3) Lack of understanding and communication between supervisor and student; and (4) Students’ lack of knowledge, skills, training or experience in research methods.

Another problem is that the role of supervision and the motive for supervision also seems to be unclear. In the first instance the role of supervision is being described as “the most advanced level of teaching” (Connell, 1985), “critical conversation” (Knowles, 1999) and “mentorship” (Taylor, 1995), and in the second case supervisor motives may incorporate knowledge attainment, joint publications and recognition (self-esteem) each motive carrying different expectations of students (Hockey, 1996). A further problem is the fact that many Ph.D students do not have a solid financing of their studies (e.g. lack of a Ph.D scholarship). This obliges them to work and hence prolong the duration of their training. The consequences of the above problems are late completion and high drop-out rates.

### **Criteria of an Effective Supervisor**

Effective supervision requires supervisors to be knowledgeable and skilled in the research field (Donald *et al.*, 1995; McQueeney, 1996; Sheehan, 1994). They are also

expected to take the lead in establishing a quality of relations which will give their students access to the knowledge and skills they possess (Ballard and Clanchy, 1993) and to have counselling skills (Hockey, 1997; Zuber-Skerrit, 1994). Students not only expect their supervisors to have the knowledge and ability to supervise in a particular area of research but also want them to be reasonable, serious, supportive of their work in good times and bad, and approachable (Moses, 1985). Moses (1992) considers that supervisors should act as mentors and that a mentoring relationship requires mutual aspect based on high academic standards, similar interests and regular contact.

According to Moses (1994), supervisors should at least have an equivalent degree to the one the student is studying for and, if this is not the case then, they must have a solid background of research involvement and publications. 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 analyze the knowledge, techniques and methods that make them effective. Frischer and Larsson (2000) and Phillips and Pugh (2000) take a slightly different view, in that they suggest that students are recommended to select a supervisor based on the key factor of whether the latter has an established research record and is continuing to contribute to the development of his or her discipline. This takes account of whether the person has recently published research, holds research grants and is invited to speak at conferences in their own country or abroad. Therefore, an effective supervisor should satisfy such criteria. Spear (2000) supports this statement and adds that often it will be sufficient for the supervisor to be competent in the general area of the student's research even if not expert in the detailed area of the thesis topic. Yeatman (1995) gave a similar view, stating that good supervisors must have a track record in successfully bringing through a large number of Ph.D candidates.

According to Burton and Brueckner (1995), the primary function of supervisions of all types is leadership, plus the encouragement and recognition of leadership in other people, either on the professional staff or among community participants. On the other hand, Phillips and Pugh (2000) and Zubir Skerrit (1994) advised supervisors to act as role models. Frischer and Larsson (2000) described three different pattern of leadership, which are called democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire leader. The democratic leader is characterised by his encouragement of group discussions and group decisions in the choice of activities. He cares for the students by checking their achievements and commenting upon them. The authoritarian leader makes major decisions for the group all by himself/herself and shows others what to do. The laissez-faire leader provides the students complete freedom of action, hands out materials but largely avoids participating in work and checking and does not evaluate and comment upon their work, except when asked. The authoritarian leader was found to achieve a greater quality of work, the democratic a greater quality of work, while laissez-faire leadership resulted in both a low quantity and quality of work.

Cullen *et al.* (1994) in his study noted indicators of supervisor effectiveness in four major categories. These categories have been supported independently by researchers over the years. For example, the importance of academic standing was highlighted by Moses (1994) and supervisory competence by Zuber Skerritt (1994), ESRC (2001) and Zhao

(2003): (1) Category 1- Supervisory style reflected in level of direction; regular meetings; making time for student; allowing students to develop original ideas; flexibility in project choice; encouraging ideas and individuality; and to a lesser extent promoting close interaction with other academics; assistance in conference attendance and publishing before completion of Ph.D candidature; (2) Category 2- Supervisor competence with respect to student project as reflected in scientific competence; familiarity with the relevant academic literature; expertise in the area of the project; and awareness of science overseas; (3) Category 3- Supervisor characteristics and attitude as reflected in approachability and friendliness; being supportive and positive; being open minded and prepared to acknowledge error; being organized; thorough; stimulating; and conveying enthusiasm. Other areas of importance may be political compatibility and a lack of obsession in supervisor with wealth and recognition; and (4) Category 4- Supervisor academic and intellectual standing as reflected in an ability to be a creative/flexible thinker; intellectual excellence; consistent involvement in own research; good publications record; seeking/achieving external funding; and to a lesser extent being professionally interactive and influential in the department.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Six postgraduate students (Master and Ph.D) from various fields of study and year were interviewed. Their supervisors (six of them) were also been interviewed at different places and time. The interviews were conducted according to the principles of in-depth interview. They were conducted based on a semi-structured interview schedule and using tape recorder to ensure accuracy. The objective is to obtain information in relation to the research questions. One of the data sources for qualitative research is direct speech of the people (informants) about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Therefore, the interviews were managed to obtain the real views of the interviewees. Since the questionnaire method unable to provide satisfactorily explanations, the interview was used as an alternative to sustain some weaknesses. A recording machine was used to record the interviews. Probing questions were asked whenever necessary to clarify and explain details related to important issues. The interview process was similar for all respondents. All interviews were held at mutually agreed appointment time. On average, each interview session lasted about an hour, depending on the response from the respondents and also 'saturation point' regarding the information.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section reviews the major findings of the research through a synthesis of the results from interview data. There are five main roles which have been identified in this research namely (1) provide comment and guidance are the main roles of supervisor; (2) An effective supervisor must easy to meet, discuss and can negotiate with student; (3) An effective supervisor must have good knowledge and experience in his/her respective field of study; (4) An effective supervisor should give personal support to student; (5) An effective supervisor should supervise students according to their ability.

The finding revealed by this research is that the reality of the role played by the respondents' supervisors is different from the role of their ideal supervisor in certain

respects. The results show that respondents are not very happy with the support and guidance about the nature of the research, the literature, theories and methodologies that they receive from supervisors and that all this does not reflect their view of an ideal or effective supervisor. However, the results indicate that most of the respondents describe their supervisors as friendly, approachable and flexible, active researchers and effective communicators.

### **Provide comment and guidance are the main roles of the supervisor**

In the literature, it is stated that the main roles of the supervisor are to guide the student. All six interviewees (students) agreed that the supervisors are responsible for guiding their Master/Ph.D research. Out of the six interviewees, four used the word 'guide' and two used a combination of 'guide' and 'comment' to refer to the main responsibility of a supervisor. The main areas mentioned were how to obtain the literature and how to prepare the methodology. In other words, it seems that students begin their research with the impression that, the supervisor will 'hold their hand' and actively direct their work. RS and TY made the following comments about this.

RS: What the most important is supervisor must guide in our thesis preparation and correcting our thesis. Guides in terms of framework, methodology, analysis and literature review. In my case, I have to find everything on my own.

TY: In my opinion, responsibility of supervisor is he should make sure that his student gets the correct advice or guidance which eventually can produce a graduate. For example, how to find literature review and also discuss about the important aspects in my research question, research problem. My supervisor is good in terms of helping me to find literatures, but.. one thing about correcting or commenting my work, he normally takes longer time than what I have expected.

Beside guidance, there are student perceived their supervisor as the person who would provide them with the work schedule. SA and RS made the following comments.

SA: ...He/she must guide student to plan schedule, working schedule must there, when is Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, supervisor must determine that or else we cannot focus. For instance, "Okay, we meet, I want by this date you must submit Chapter 1, by this date Chapter 2...etc", it should be something rigid, maybe people say it rigid but if we do not do like that, student will lost. My supervisor has put more emphasised on this aspect. However it doesn't work that way. He took more than a month just to read my first chapter

RS: ...Beside that supervisor should provide work schedule, what things need to do so that work can be completed in time. My case...I have to manage my time properly, but sometimes there were things happened that we can't expect. So, just try my best to follow the timetable.

However, the supervisors had different opinion about their roles. Four supervisors had opinion that their role is to supervised the student or as a mentor or as a facilitator. Below are the supervisors' comments:

ZA: Supervisor is only to supervise the student. Should the student have problems along the way in their research work and they have difficulties in solving the problems then, they can consult their supervisor. The postgraduate student should be able to

work independently with minimal supervision.

KY: As a facilitator, to facilitate the process of doing a Master/Ph.D. To help them think and materialized what ever that is in their mind on paper. To help them go through the thinking and the process of doing a Master/Ph.D.

HR: To supervise and make sure that they (student) produce a quality product.

RM: We supervisors as a mentor for them (students), we try to guide them to become the best students, graduate students and to produce the best thesis. But not to spoon feed them, they need to be independent.

These results match the literature, in which many authors had highlighted the fact that the most important role of the supervisor is to guide students (Brown and Krager, 1985; Cryer, 2000; Kam, 1997; Moses, 1992; Russell, 1996; Salmon, 1992; Sheehan, 1994; Waitie, 1994). For example, Russell (1996) mentioned that a supervisor should guide students in collecting the relevant literature. The results from the interviews also indicate that, at each stage of research, students are likely needed different forms of guidance. According to Donald *et al.* (1995), many tasks of the supervisors to research students are related broadly to guidance and advice. Generally, this guidance and advice relates to direction, completeness, clarity, methodology, topic selection and data collection and also involves giving feedback on the progress of written work (Donald *et al.*, 1995). The result indicates that students need guidance especially on how to obtain the literature and how to prepare the methodology.

The findings from this study also suggest that another main responsibility of supervisors is to provide critical feedback on students' written work. The idea that it is the supervisor's responsibility to give feedback in the form of constructive criticism is an essential element in the student's intellectual development (Spear, 2000). This is also supported by Donald *et al.* (1995) and Russell (1996) who suggest that the responsibilities of a supervisor include giving feedback on the progress of the student's written work.

### **An effective supervisor must easy to meet, discuss and can negotiate with student**

Out of six interviewees (students) or three of the interviewees highlighted the fact that supervisors must be easy to reach, confront and negotiable. Below are the comments from the students:

HB: I think the supervisor must be open to students, easy to meet, to doing everything then, of course we can ask, he can ...actually we can discuss if there any problem that occurs along our research then give full support like give motivation because sometimes during research you'll get down when you have problem with your result, you don't follow the mile stone, but then, the supervisor must not too pussy, must understand also and then can give guidance, opinion, so we can exchange opinion.

MN: Effective supervisor is the one that always guide, always meet student and ask student's problem.

TY: Criteria of an effective supervisor are he must be able to give help and guidance in producing a good quality thesis. Help especially in giving ideas. Others criteria are easy to discuss, easy to meet and always give articles, books, etc.

However none of their supervisors mentioned that this aspect is one of their main important roles. As mentioned by Brown and Krager (1985), Hockey (1996) and Russell (1996), the supervisor should make equal information, time and energy available to all students and should also meet regularly with students. Research has shown that constant, thoughtful supervision and availability is the key to successful graduate programme completion (Donald *et al.* 1995; Holdaway 1991).

### **An effective supervisor must have good knowledge and experience in his/her respective field of study**

All the interviewees highlighted the fact that supervisors must have appropriate knowledge of their specialty. A supervisor who is knowledgeable and expert in the student's field of study makes a good impact in guiding and advising them. The required knowledge is academic knowledge, such as having a Ph.D in the special field and having published a lot of journal articles as well as books. Experience of supervising Ph.D candidates and working in a related industry can also be helpful in guiding students. SA and RS made the following comments:

SA: Have knowledge about our research topic, professional and responsible to his/her student. Supervisor cannot neglect the student that he/she has personality clash because we student need guidance but if our supervisor cannot give us guidance, it is difficult then.

RS: First he must be knowledgeable in our research topic. Secondly, his expertise in guiding us from chapter one to chapter four and not less important is in terms of language.

This is supported by the supervisors. Three of them had the same opinion about it. ZA, RM and NM made the following comments:

ZA: ...but in general the supervisor should know well on the research concern before embarking with postgraduate student.

RM: They should be a good mentor, they should be knowledgeable in terms of their discipline and of course the supervisor should be exemplary in terms of publications, in terms of presenting papers in the conferences. So they should be the masters in their own discipline, in their own rights.

NM: Good supervisor must be knowledgeable in the field that he is supervising, number one, he must be knowledgeable, he must be experienced and equally important, must be kind.

It has also been found that an effective supervisor must have significant knowledge and experience in the field of study. This is emphasised by many authors, including Donald *et al.* (1995), McQueeney (1996), Moses (1985) and Sheehan (1994). This study has also found that student will be have more advantages if the supervisor is an active researcher who has written books or journal articles that can be drawn on in the research. This is supported by Brown and Adkins (1988), who suggest that, to supervise effectively, one



has to be a competent researcher and to be able to analyse knowledge, techniques and methods.

### **An effective supervisor should give personal support to student**

The word personal support in this context means motivation, socialising and help with things that are unrelated to the research. Most of the interviewees (the students) are working student and have families. It is good for a supervisor to say hello, take notice of a few things about the background and come up with a few stories about personal life before starting a meeting. It is not only the student that have to talk about themselves, for the supervisor can also take this opportunity to talk a little bit about himself, his family or other things beyond academic issues in order to warm up before the meeting session begins. This could break down the tension a little bit or might motivate the students. HB, MN and SA made the following comments:

HB: My supervisor always give motivation to me because sometimes I felt so down, sad and everything to do this research, sometimes so lazy to do this and this and he (supervisor) will give me some motivation what to do. Okay, he will give opinion why....give the guidance how to face that problem.

MN: Usually during our meeting, first we will talk a little bit about my family. How's your family? Then we will talk about current issues on environmental. Only then we discuss about my research.

SA: Normally, we discussed about other things first like how's my life and she (supervisor) will talks about her student. Then we talk about my thesis, the issues arise, at what stage I'm that time ant etc.

This is supported by the opinions from some supervisors. They normally asked their student's life first before start discussing on their research progress. NA, RM, NM and TY made the following comments:

NA: When they (students) came in, I usually ask how they are, and how everything is going on and then towards the end maybe we talk a little bit about personal things again as a closure.

RM: My relationship with my students is more like a mentor and mentee. So I give them advice not only advice on their academics but I also give advice on their personal problems. So that I can lighten or sometimes solve some of their problems.

NM: I take the students as my own family, brother and children. Usually we talk a little bit about their life, their family before we start our discussion on their thesis. I think we, supervisor have to strike friendly atmosphere with the student so that they can talk to you freely, no tension, no barrier, so people can work better under the condition.

KY: Normally, when the students come and see me, I ask them, Are you okay? How are you today? And so on. And then after that when we settle down with the emotion and so on, we discuss the detail of the project so that student will get acquainted so that they are not afraid of seeing their supervisor.

This study also found that a good supervisor should give personal support to students which indicate that most students need their supervisor to advice and consultation, and highlights the fact that emotional awareness is also a necessary attribute of a supervisor. This was mentioned in the literature, Haksever and Manisali (2000) who suggested that the student's requirements from a supervisory relationship are as follows: (1) personal help: support, motivation, socialising, help in organising accommodation and other things that may be required but are unrelated to the research; (2) indirect research related help: providing contacts, both industrial and academic, providing equipment and initial help in locating references; and (3) direct research-related help, namely: critical analysis of work, help with methodological problems, precise direction and help with the management of the project. A combination of these three approaches can be used in the supervision of research students depending upon the situation and requirements. This is also supported by Donald *et al.* (1995) and Salmon (1992) who stated that the supervisor should support students by placing appropriate emphasis on pastoral care and providing advice, sympathy and encouragement.

### **An effective supervisor should supervise students according to their ability**

Students who are studying for a postgraduate have different background and experiences. Some of them might have difficulties but some might not. A good supervisor has ensured that he knows his students well and that he treats them as they are. KY and RM made the following comments:

KY: This is two different cases, for Master's student and Ph.D student. Ph.D student is different, normally for Ph.D student, I give them freedom, of course within the limit of the topic and so on. And then the scope has to be agreed by the committee and of course we will guide, normally we will guide, not 100% but just enough for them to carry out the project so that they will learn on their own how to manage their project and how to get result on their own, but of course with a proper guideline but not 100% guidance. For masters, is quite little bit different from Ph.D programme. Normally the guidance that we give to the master's student, probably between 60 to 80 percent and then they have to be on their own, at least we can produce student that can survive on their own.

RM: Of course I treat them differently based on their ability. We have a variety of student who came in and I see them as an individual unit of strength and weaknesses. Some student they need very much step by step help and then the others will need very little, they are very independent in terms of their studies and they need little guidance but the majority, those who need step by step guidance and mentoring and I treat them as an individual needs arises but I also tell them not to be very dependent to the supervisors because you are going to be a scholar in the future, hopefully, they need to be independent in their studies and they need to find the resources by themselves so we just expose them to certain guidelines how to find the resources, and I sometimes lend them my books and journals or papers to them so that it will make easier for them to write something but in the long run they have to find the resources themselves.

However, none of the supervisors mentioned about this role as an important element to them. Notwithstanding, this result is supported by the literature, in which Welch (1980) identifies three styles of supervision. The first is a highly directive approach, which is very structured with the student being given a lot of advice in the early stages. When the student gains confidence and ability, this level of control is diminished. The second

approach is highly directive at the beginning and at the end of the project, with a highly non-directive period in between. The third approach is described as highly directive with close monitoring of the student throughout the whole project. The reason why there are three approaches is that students are not homogenous in terms of academic ability, personality attributes, motivation or attitude.

## CONCLUSION

This research has explored the experience, practices and problems of Master/Ph.D students in UPM regarding supervision. In doing a Master/Ph.D, students face problems with their research, their supervision, and their personal problems. It is not easy to overcome all these problems without enthusiasm, strength, support and commitment. Furthermore, the person who is closest to them in a professional relationship is their supervisor. Therefore, they need more support and guidance from their supervisor especially from the beginning of their study. Most of the respondents revealed that the reality of the role played by the respondents' supervisors is different from the role of their ideal supervisor in certain respects. The results show that respondents are not very happy with the support and guidance about the nature of the research, the literature, theories and methodologies that they receive from supervisors and that all this does not reflect their view of an ideal or effective supervisor. This is due to they perceive a postgraduate studies should involves cooperation between the student and supervisor in order to achieve objectives. Without good supervision from a good supervisor, problematic situations will arise which can affect student's progress. Therefore, they need more cooperation from their supervisor.

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