

DISTANCE EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF PROJECT WORK SUPERVISION IN NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

Meeting with supervisors is part of the practices for any first time graduate research student. However, was the meeting effectively conducted? Did the meeting really help the student to progress in their research and did the supervisor give proper guidance and advice to the aspiring research student during the meeting? Despite several international studies that have been conducted on MA and PhD supervision, little qualitative investigation has been conducted on students doing undergraduate project work in an attempt to understand how the supervisory relationship is experienced. In response, 75 students from rural and urban schools doing Specialised Diploma in Educational Management and Leadership (SDEML) at the Centre for External Studies, University of Namibia (CES-UNAM) were interviewed using focus group interviews. The study results centred on the theme of project supervision as an academic support service with themes such as ineffective supervision feedback from supervisors, supervision feedback too little too late from supervisors, inadequate vacation school guidance on supervision and lack of commitment from supervisors. Supervisors must help their students understand that they need to manage their interactions with supervisors and fellow students doing the same programme. Students empowered with the knowledge of helping them manage their experiences as distance education students could lead to added confidence and decision-making ability, thus reducing the burden on supervisors. Students' and supervisors' combined awareness and acceptance of students as managers of the interactive supervision process could develop into an added dimension of self-regulated learning, which has been identified as an important element in graduate education (Styles and Radloff, 2001).

Key Words: Supervision, undergraduate students, focus group interviews, supervisory relationships, feedback.