DISCIPLED TO DISCIPLE OTHERS: SUCCESS STORY OF A GRADUATE SUPERVISOR IN GHANA

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Abstract

Burgeoning literature on the task of a faculty supervisor in postgraduate education is daunting given the numerous roles they are required to play. The core duty of a supervisor is to guide, arouse students' skills, help them develop their creative scholarly potential. The purpose of this case investigation was to find out how a faculty member, Prof. Bawa by bracing all the odds, are able to still supervise and successfully mentor a lot of graduate students in a public university context. The study found that students perceived Prof. Bawa in a positive light with a majority stating that he promotes conditions beneficial to students' research intellectual growth and provide apt leadership in the process. He was also found to be able to balance his numerous job schedules through incorporation of the supervision duty into his itinerary for the year. Among the qualities include humility, affable, hardworking, principled, tolerant, and kind. He personally conceives effective supervision as one in which both supervisor and supervisees are able to iron out their differences to ensure completion of the process within the stipulated time. Supervisors have to learn to try and provide the best they can to help students achieve their aims. Similarly, students must submit to supervisors, their guidance, and tutelage to minimise the usual conflicts that arise between supervisors and supervisees. The study lauds pragmatic supervisor initiatives that promote student hard work. It equally advocates for tolerant conditions for graduate students as this engenders intellectual growth and capacity.

Key words: academic supervisors, disciple, graduate student.

INTRODUCTION

Most universities today are beginning to give prioritize graduate education in order to build and keep a vibrant university to meet the increasing worldwide expectations for highly capable human resource necessary for socio-economic transformation and development. A lot of countries have transformed their economies due to the adequate attention they have given to research. Teferra's (2007, p. 9) statement gives impetus to research when he declared that, 'without strong graduate programmes, it is impossible to establish a viable research culture and innovative capabilities in a nation' With the rising recognition of the pivoted role of research in development, universities and places of higher learning are increasing commitments in support of research programmes. Indeed, any nation that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people through education, especially postgraduate education and utilise them effectively will continue to remain underdeveloped. Like elsewhere, postgraduate education in Ghana is expensive and for this reason, governments are unable to adequately fund these studies. As a consequence, almost all postgraduate programmes in public and private universities in Ghana are fee paying. The programmes are run mostly on sandwich and weekend basis to meet the needs of the working class who are capable of paying thus depriving other potential qualified, brilliant, creative, but needy students from enrolling in the programmes. Some of the programmes are by only course work whereas others require research work or a combination of the two.

One of the arduous tasks of a faculty member of a university today has to do with the ability to combine and execute their teaching, research, and community service duties as required. The onus lies on all faculty members to strike a fair balance to ensure that no aspect of the mandatory duty areas suffers unduly due to ineptitude. Today, there appear to be more students with more diverse student needs, with more diverse aims and plans to survive in the globalised world. Increasingly, the task of the supervisor is getting daunting and perhaps this phenomenon has given rise to inability of supervisors to see their students through supervision within stipulated periods. For students to complete their postgraduate work successfully requires the services of efficient supervisors. This is because quality postgraduate supervision is a sine-qua-non for successful postgraduate research work which affects quality research output. Mensah (2017), in a recent report noted how Adow Obeng, a former Vice Chancellor of UCC, deplored the practice where postgraduate students were allocated supervisors who had little or no disciplinary background in the area they are being assigned to supervise. Supervisors who are not well

grounded in a particular research area create difficulties for students in dealing with methodological issues pertaining to the study (Mensah, 2017).

Graduate student supervision is thus critical due the emerging challenging trends associated with it for even professional faculty in universities (Walker & Thomson, 2010). So what are some of these challenges? The fundamental challenges is perhaps still the duty of supervisors to help students successfully complete their thesis or dissertation in a reasonable period time; to enhance a productive and inspiring research culture in which the student grows in self-belief in their scholarly identity. In the similar manner, the supervisor instinctively also improves their own instructive approach, pedagogical repertoire and professional competence through working with different caliber of students. At the graduate level, supervision entails intense and delicate relationships so that, like other faculty tasks, graduate student supervision demands supervisors or practitioners who are open to peer learning and who have the heart to listen to students talk about their learning in an atmosphere of mutual respect and dialogue. The diversity of students we have today, I think, poses more challenges than pleasures to supervisors. For example, many supervisors work with part-time students who are usually mature mid-career professionals well established in a particular field (Walker & Thomson, 2010). These students not only have to balance graduate study, but some also have to contend with forming a new identity as graduate scholars. Others too are responsible family people (husbands and wives) who have to trail the blaze in order to combine academics with family life. Some also flirt with the impossibilities to cope with the challenging demands of graduate studies due to their 'part-time' statuses, a situation which usually breeds tension and acrimony between them and their supervisors. The result of such situations is the long period for full termination and submission of research reports for assessment. For supervisors to manage their graduate students, they may require considerable coaching skill that guarantees healthy supervision relationships.

The situation has become even more precarious given that most universities now are beginning to record increasing numbers of graduate students. According to a government report in Ethiopia, 'student enrolment grew by almost 137% in the last five years, which was significantly higher than the growth in availability of teaching staff during the same period' (Weekly English Newspaper *Capital*, 2010, p. 8). This situation typifies the state of affairs in most Ghanaian public universities where the lecturer to graduate student ratio is very high. In UCC for instance, the outlook of the SGS for 2017 – 2020 shows increased enrollment of graduate students from

current 7% of 74,549 (2016/2017 academic year) to 8.5% of total enrolment by 2020. This further increases the task of the supervisor. There have been efforts to ensure continuous improvement in completion rate of graduate students among others (SGS, UCC, 2017, p. 23). The massification of students across programme levels justifies a need for both students and supervisors to come to terms on a wide variety of issues to work together with civility, as well as with different approaches to academic knowledge writing, while at the same time, also genuinely valuing the richness of student diversity. A lot of pressure is put on supervisors who are required to help their graduate students graduate in a record time or at least within the stipulated research time. Supervisors need to develop extra skills that expand their own intuitional capacities so as to manage graduate students in the conduct of their research. The questions that emerge are, how are supervisors able to exert their influence on students to ensure completion on time?; what duties or leadership do they provide in ensuring timely completion of student research?; what kind of relationship engender speedy completion of graduate research work? These are pertinent questions needing urgent case investigation.

The Problem

The completion rate among graduate students has been described from poor to abysmal according to Lube, Worrel, and Klopper (2005) as cited in Zaitun, (2010). Some prior studies have suggested that about 50% of students who start postgraduate studies abandon the programme (Golde & Dore, 2001; McAlpine, & Norton, 2006) due to several problems that students face especially in the area of supervision. Azure (2016), in a study in Ghana, observed that supervisors create a number of problems that cause post graduate students' studies to derail. This problem has been the biggest cited in the literature on supervisor-supervisee relationship and which also contributes to the slow pace in completion rates among graduate students in Ghana. Aside this, the problem has been attributed to serious imbalances in power play between supervisors and students which usually end up delaying the thesis or dissertation completion rates.

Some studies on graduate supervision have shown with glaring content, geographical, and methodological lacuna. For instance, Latona, and Browne (2001) investigated factors associated with completion of research degrees in Canberra where we see a geographical gap. In contrast, whereas Teferra's (2007) study focused on building research capacity in universities in Ethiopia, Lee's (2007) study focused on developing effective supervisors. Further, Walker Thomson's (2010) research rather provided guidelines on doctoral supervisor with a focus on supporting

effective research in education and the social sciences. Azure (2016) appeared to be the only current study on the subject in Ghana which even focused on students' perspective of effective supervision of graduate programme using a quantitative approach. These studies show gaps. To the extent that no study was seen in Ghana to deal with how supervision among graduate students could be improved, this study becomes crucial in using a case study design to investigate the subject. This therefore motivated me to conduct the study to fill some of the gaps identified in relation to the other vital aspects on supervision which this study focused on.

Literature Review: *Model of Effective Supervision*

In attempting to delve into graduate supervision and capture the complex nature of effective supervision, researchers are known to use multiplicity of approaches with varying sophistication: from uni-dimensional metaphors, to unstructured lists of desirable traits, to complex multi-dimensional empirically-driven frameworks to study the issues. Grant and Graham (1999) suggest that the majority of these approaches to understanding and practicing supervision emerge from a liberal humanist view of social relations in which supervision is understood to be an essentially rational and transparent engagement between autonomous individuals. They argue that additional useful insights into the nuances of supervision could be gained by viewing supervision from a wider psychoanalytic perspective.

According to Johnson, (2002) there is still a tendency to equate research supervision with research teaching and responsibilities of the academic. However, some authors are of the opinion that supervision constitutes a sophisticated form of teaching (Ferman, 2000; Taylor & Beasley, 2005). In keeping with this view, Manathunga and Goozée (2007) described postgraduate supervision as "critical conversations", while Taylor and Beasley (2005) suggest that supervision is mentorship more than instruction. Whilst Green and Lee (1995) believe that 'the role of supervision remains profoundly ambiguous' they do advise replacing the notion of teaching with the broader concept of pedagogy. Connell (1985) takes a more superlative approach and describes PhD supervision as "the most advanced level of teaching…a genuinely complex teaching task". Although Green and Lee (1999) contend that this view encounters "deep-seated prejudice in the modern university which systematically privileges research over teaching". A somewhat more nuanced dualistic view is proffered by Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt (2017) who in a recent study

suggested that research in postgraduate training is unique among academic responsibilities in providing a direct linkage between teaching and learning activities and research.

Grant and Graham (1999), noting that supervision is a complex process that requires both situational awareness and a flexible posture, neatly captures this teetering complexity through the vivid metaphor of supervision as a process of "walking on a rackety bridge". Cullen *et al.* (1994), as part of a major study carried out at the Australian National University, Canberra, produced a list of the characteristics of a 'good supervisor' which they noted was akin to lists of what undergraduates hold as pleasant features of a good lecturer: approachable and friendly; supportive, positive attitude; open minded, prepared to acknowledge error; organised and thorough; and; stimulating and conveys enthusiasm for research. These virtues, are what Abiddin, (2012) say constitute positive perceptions of students towards their research supervisors.

A more structured list of supervisory roles and attitudes was also provided by Brown and Atkins (1989). These include supervisor as a director (determining topic and method, providing ideas); facilitator (providing access to resources or expertise, arranging field-work); adviser (helping to resolve technical problems, suggesting alternatives); teacher (of research techniques); guide (suggesting timetable for writing up, giving feedback on progress, identifying critical path for data collection); and critic of the design of enquiry, of draft chapters, of interpretations or data). The rest include freedom giver (authorizes student to make decisions, supports student's decisions); supporter (gives encouragement, shows interest, discusses student's ideas); friend (extends interest and concern to non-academic aspects of student's life); and a manager who checks progress regularly, monitors study, gives systematic feedback, and plans work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

I used the descriptive single-case design to examine the phenomenon of graduate supervision in UCC. This design sets to describe the phenomena of graduate supervision as it occurs in its natural setting (Zainal, 2007). It therefore helped to provide in-depth twist to the issue regarding graduate supervision vis-à-vis what ought to be the roles of an effective supervisor. The design basically helped me to describe data as they occur, making use of narratives in the process (McDonough & McDonough, 1997) and hence this design choice. An advantage associated with the use of a case study is that it allows the investigation of an event to be done within the context

of its use (Yin, 1984), that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. Again, the detailed qualitative accounts usually generated through case studies not only help to explore the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research. Despite its advantages, the use of this design also comes with certain challenges. One of such challenges is that the researcher must begin with a descriptive theory to support the description of the phenomenon or story. Failure to do so may possibly result in a lack of rigour in the description thus attracting problems. Also, a shortcoming in the use of a single-case design is 'its inability to provide a generalising conclusion' (Zainal, 2007, p. 3).

Population and Participants

The study had as its population, graduate students in the CES between the 2016/2017 academic year who were through with their course works and writing their research. Purposive sampling was used to select four (4) of them for the interviews. As a case study, a single case, Prof. Bawa, around whom the study revolved was also chosen and interviewed.

Research Site

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) of the University of Competitive Choice was established on 1st August, 2008. It began first as a Committee on Higher Degrees, with a mandate to advise Council on the University's graduate policy and propose awards of scholarship for approval. In 1992, the Committee on Higher Degrees was transformed into a Board of Graduate Studies. This Board, a sub-committee of Academic Board was entrusted the responsibility of administering graduate education in the University until its status was elevated to that of a School on 1st August, 2008. The School has the mandate to co-ordinate graduate level academic programmes for all Colleges within the University. It also regulates and offers advice on graduate programmes of university colleges affiliated to the University of Competitive Choice. To achieve its vision and mission, the School has four-fold functions: first to draft regulations for all higher degrees with a view to ensuring that acceptable academic standards are maintained and to receive reports and consider recommendations pertaining to higher degrees and graduate diplomas from Departmental and Faculty Committee of Graduate Studies. Also, it facilitates the determination of

results of higher degrees and graduate diplomas and to make suitable recommendations to the Academic Board for the award of higher degrees and graduate diplomas.

The university, through the SGS, provides regular training or seminars to expose supervisors and graduate students to their responsibilities in the research process and expose to supervisors what graduate supervision was all about. In the lecture, Prof. Obeng also advocated for policies and guidelines on postgraduate research to be reviewed from time to time and enforced, and also frantic efforts made to counsel erring supervisors. The only way a university can inculcate high research culture and be relevant in research cycles is redouble its efforts at training and making sure students complete their theses or dissertations on time. A university cannot have high research output when it is primarily a teaching university with high undergraduate numbers. In the university of Competitive Choice (UCC), management continuous to make frantic efforts to create the necessary environment for a thriving research agenda. There are therefore adequate visible signs of massive investments in the area of equipping students and faculty with skills for research. The SGS, and for that matter, the university, sees it an onerous duty to ensure that it fosters a favorable environment that enables critical, curious, creative, and thinking. The university is committed to ensuring that it works to produce graduates who can work both independently and collaboratively, to find answers to significant developmental challenges confronting the nation. UCC management is set on a mission to make the institution a place of higher quality graduate education in the country and beyond and the new initiatives and investments attest to this fact.

As a measure to alleviate the plight of supervisors relative to the large numbers of students, the SGS has reviewed its policies on postgraduate education to improve completion rates. The school now among other things organises seminars for Heads/Directors of Teaching Departments and Institutes to disseminate its policies. The school has also intensified efforts at organising seminars for advisors, supervisors and examiners of research to improve graduate education (SGS, UCC, 2017, p. 23-24). In 2016, for instance, the SGS collaborated with some Colleges within the University to organise series seminars for Advisors, Supervisors, and Examiners of research graduate students with the aim of enhancing capacity for postgraduate research in the University. The seminar was organised on College basis to promote interaction among participants (SGS, UCC, 2017). The business of supervising graduate students in has become more demanding due to a variety of factors related to lack of specifically designed direction for student supervision.

Supervising graduate students in UCC creates both satisfaction and challenges for supervisors, given the increasing context of globalisation, internationalisation and different modes of graduate student diversity. The demanding job of supervision has, for some authors contributed to the (Latona & Browne, 2001; Lee, 2007, 2008) slow rate of completion among students.

Role of the Supervisor in UCC

The role of the supervisor has been outlined in the SGS guidelines for the presentation of research projects. Basically, the supervisor is to provide guidance to the student mainly on several aspects of the research. He/she must show interest in the students' research, provide guides/advises to students on topic selection to meet student career objectives, and their long term interests. The supervisor must provide critical feedback on student written work in good time and encourage student to present their work at seminars/conferences if need be (Mainhard *et al.,* 2009). He or she must be friendly and approachable and must encourage the student to work independently. They must be knowledgeable about the standards expected and also ensure that the student is aware of the short-comings of their work and progress (Mainhard *et al.,* 2009). They must ensure that the student's research is manageable in the time available. When there is a need, the supervisor must provide assistance in orientating the student towards appropriate behaviour in the oral examination and share the student's research interests.

The supervisor must be available whenever the student needs help with their research and they must help the student develop their communicative and writing skills. They must give the student information about appropriate meetings, conferences and training opportunities and provide guidance to the student mainly on technical aspects of the research (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). The supervisor must provide guidance on sources of literature that the student may consult. He or she must draw students' attention to the strengths and weaknesses in their approach to the task. The supervisor must provide guidance and verify corrections the student is expected to make after the examination of the project work, dissertation, or thesis (including viva where applicable) and must be willing to "prepare periodic reports to the SGS on student's progress" (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). He or she should refuse to allow submission of sub-standard work for examination, regardless of the circumstances.

The Man, Prof. Bawah

In the face of the challenging task, Prof. Bawa of the College of Education Studies has distinguished himself, not only in teaching and community service but also in the area of research

supervision. His praiseworthy services to students have caught attention of university management. He is an astute sportsman academic of international repute. He has an incredible coaching record in both the Ghana premier league as well as at the national level. Highly loved by his students, he does not stop at anything to offer his best in the classroom. He has an impeccable human relationship skills which endears him all and sundry. He is a member of many boards in the university and the Dean for a college within the college of Education studies. Prof. Bawa combines effectively the task of an academic with that of administrator and yet he is not daunted. He is one of the few academics on campus who is down to earth despite his wide international exposure. He is perhaps the most frequently-travelled academic because of the numerous assignments he executes. These have not in any way compromised for a second his core duty as academic of an educational institution. Easily approachable and friendly is Prof. Bawa.

His input to intellectual development is amazing and therefore cannot be overemphasized. He serves on Boards and Committees both in the university and in the corporate world. His role to the advancement of sports in Ghana is commendable. He organises coaching courses for individual teams and corporate entities to advance the course of sports. Aside these heavy schedules, Prof. Bawa also serves as a visiting professor to a number of public and private institutions in and outside Ghana. He presents research papers at symposiums and conferences at places and in a number of educational institutions worldwide. Besides, he has successfully supervised six (6) PhD students and thirteen (13) M.Phil students in the last three years, a feat had never been accomplished by any faculty member since the College's inception.

Despite his achievements, Prof. Bawa is a very humble and a liberally-minded person. One would have thought that Prof. Bawa's busy work schedules would interfere in his work as supervisors. Nonetheless, this is not the case: he continues to brace the odds to provide quality supervision to his students, making sure that they complete their programmes within stipulated periods. This remarkable feat continues to receive the applause of many within the university community. He is not inundated by his gigantic work schedules; rather he is resolved, no matter what to provide the best supervision leadership to his students with joy and alacrity.

What an extraordinary individual! *What are his students' perceptions about him?; How is he able to balance his numerous job schedules with the colossal demands of graduate supervision?; What sterling qualities distinguish him from his colleagues* in the area of supervision (primus inter

paris)? *What is his personal conception of effective supervision? What lessons could be shared among the faculty to improve graduate supervision in UCC?* These are vexing questions the current study focused on with a view to unearthing a practical framework for graduate supervision. These issues are pertinent because of their potency to help produce a model after his example in the area of graduate supervision in Ghanaian universities. Little research has ever been conducted by prior authors and hence, the need conduct this study with the aim of crafting a model for faculty members. The purpose of this study was therefore to ascertain the modus operandi of Prof. Bawa in terms of how he is able to manage his heavy work schedules in a way that inures to student research success.
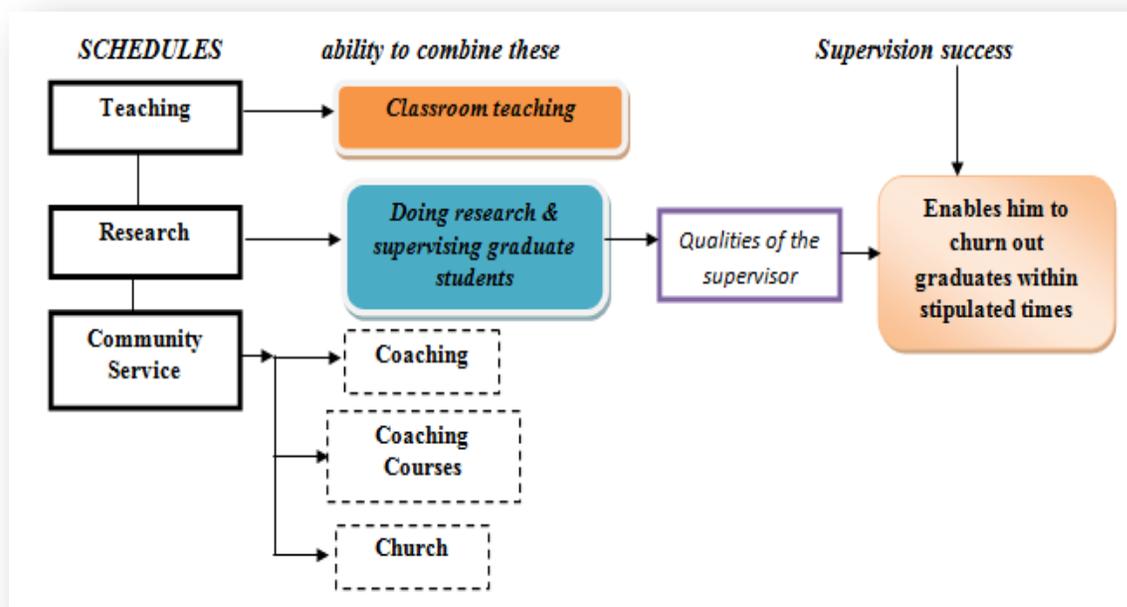

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study. **Source: Owusu (2017)**

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data personally by booking appointments with the graduate students at their convenience. As a colleague, the collegiality and the camaraderie we had built over the years easily helped me to arrive at meeting times with them. Those who were out of campus were also reached through phone and convenient appointment times booked. The interviews lasted for 20

minutes for the students whereas the supervisor interview took 40 minutes. Two weeks was used to conduct the interviews after which a week was used to transcribe the data.

Ethics

The first principle is participant autonomy (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). To guard against violating this principle, I adhered to the informed consent and also ensured a balance between over-informing and under-informing (Kvale, 1996). The student interviewees were rights to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate in the study. I constantly engaged with the participants and negotiated for their acceptance and participation (Kvale, 1996). Despite confidentiality, I also ensured confirmability, through the documentation of all activities included in the study. I made sure there was no abuse which is frowned upon by the law.

The next ethical principle which was religiously adhered to was beneficence. It is closely linked with doing good for others and preventing them from being harmed. So I carefully considered for recruitment in the study (Raudonis, 1992). An addition, I used pseudonyms in dealing with the potential cost of showing participant identities. In the study, the four interviewees were given the identities: Kofi, Ofori, Akosua, and Asantewaa which are indigenous Ghanaian names. The final principle which was strictly respected was that of justice. This refers to equal share and fairness. It was achieved due to a conscious avoidance of exploitation and abuse of participants.

Data Collection Processes

I manually arranged the transcribed text according to codes in meaningful themes and categories. As progress was made with the analysis, further sub themes and sub categories were included to identify connections, relationships and trends. The coding process for the field notes and transcripts consisted of three steps as described by Strauss and Corbin, (1990) and Guillemette and Berthiaume, (2015) namely: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The open coding process involved identification and naming of segments of meaning from the field notes and transcripts in relation to the research questions. The focus of the open coding was on wording, phrasing, context, consistency, frequency, extensiveness and specificity of comments. Consequently, the segments of meaning from the field notes and transcripts were clearly highlighted and labelled descriptively.

The axial coding was done by reviewing and examining the initial codes that were identified during the previous procedure. Categories and patterns were then identified during this step and organised in terms of context and coherence. Selective coding was the third and final coding procedure. This involved selective scanning of all codes that were identified for comparison, contrast and linkage to the research question as well as for a central theme or "key linkage" that might occur. The codes were eventually evaluated for relevance to the research aims. Form the discussions, it follows that the analytic process was further dictated by the inquisitive questions to identify thematic relationships from the categories via both the inductive and deductive reasoning.

Ensuring Data Credibility

To ensure data credibility and transferability, the transcribed interview data were presented to the respondents to validate and sign off. After this, the entire transcribed text and field notes were carefully read to obtain a complete picture of the content and context before the process of abstraction and coding where units of meaning are identified. 'Codes, names or labels were then assigned to specific units or segments of related meaning identified within the field notes and transcripts' (Henning *et al.*, 2004, p. 104).

Data Analysis Procedures

A qualitative content analysis process was used for data analysis. It incorporated Creswell's (2013, pp.182-188) analytic spiral process which was described by Marshall and Rossman (1999, pp.152-159) and Watling and James (2012, pp. 385-395). The process entailed recording data with the use of an audio recording device in addition to field notes. The field notes were taken as backup and also provided milieu to the interviews. Word for word transcription of the responses from the interviewees was done immediately after the interview sessions to ensure a speedy completion. To ensure that the researcher became acquainted with the data for the purpose of analysis and interpretation, the original interview of the completed verbatim transcription was listened again. Transcription notation symbols, comments, and the taking of field notes as suggested by Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004, pp. 76-77) were used to get non-transcribable text in a bid to get a complete picture about the phenomenon being explored.

RESULTS

The findings of the study have been organised based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are his students' perceptions about him?

This question sought to find students' perceptions about Prof. Bawa. The data was generated from the four students under his supervision. The students were unanimous in their description of their supervisor. In sum, students perceived him in a positive light with a majority saying he promotes conditions beneficial to students' research intellectual growth. He was also described by some of the interviewees to be one person who provides apt leadership in the supervision process. One of them said, *'Prof. is an exceptional individual who is so is even more concerned about his students' work more than the students'* (**Kofi**). On this same issue, Asantewaa said, *'... hmm, I tell people that man, unlike those I personally know has students' interest at heart… he is not like the pull-him/her-downs'. 'Everyone loves him'* (**Asantewaa**). Ofori and Akosua only described him as a, 'good person with a heart of work with students' (**Ofori** and **Akosua**).

These comments reveal a positive perception of his students about him. This outcome concurs with an earlier study by Cullen *et al.* (1994) in an Australian National University, Canberra, which produced a list of the characteristics of a 'good supervisor' and which undergraduates held as pleasant features of a good lecturer. They said a good supervisor was approachable and friendly; supportive, positive attitude; open minded, prepared to acknowledge error; organised and thorough; and; stimulating and conveys enthusiasm for research. These virtues, are what Abiddin, (2012) say constitute positive perceptions of students towards their research supervisors. The list of qualities Cullen *et al.'s* (1994) compare with the ones enumerated by the graduate students and these make up the positive perceptions of students about Prof. Bawa. In other words, the students implied that Prof. is approachable and friendly; has supportive, positive attitude; is open minded and prepared always to acknowledge error. Above all, they suggested also that Prof. is organised and thorough; stimulating and conveys enthusiasm for research. He endeared him very well to his students due to enviable qualities he possesses. As a result, he earns a lot of respect and honour form all and hence the positive impressions of students about him. Supervisors ought to be approachable, affable, open-minded, and supportive in order to 'disciple' students effectively and efficiently.

Research Question 2: How is he able to balance his numerous job schedules with the colossal demands of graduate supervision?

This research question was to find out the extent to which Prof. Bawa was able to balance his busy schedules with the massive demands of his supervision job. Only Prof. Bawa's response generated the needed data for the analysis. It was deducted from the submissions of Prof. that he was able to combine and balance his work through incorporation of the supervision duty into his itinerary for every year. In response to a question on how he balances his schedules, he said, '*..hum it's not been easy but I try to plan and plan well*. As if Prof. was actually saying to become, a good, supervisors must plan. In doing so, their work schedules must be incorporated into the supervisory task such that none of the tasks unduly suffer neglect. A lot of supervisors in Ghanaian public universities are not able to work efficiently to help students complete in time because of a general lack of planning and synchronizing their work activities into their work calendars. Prof. said,

> '*a number of things I do. I first prioritize. You know, it's important to prioritize as academic in order to plan your schedules well. The questions you should keep asking is, 'what's essential in the long run? Your job puts food on your table and so it requires more attention since it helps you to make a living. Also, I don't overwork myself too much. I'm someone who does not allow myself to be pushed to some limits. The reason is I may get exhausted and break down so I do one thing at a time.*
>
> *I make time for what matters most. I don't forget to give myself treats from time to time. Doing too much can drain or sap your energy. It's good to make time for fun to reinvigorate you. Once I get my work done, I take some time out with loved ones after all, life must go on after hard work. I've seen that these things I do help me balance my life and work schedules'.*

These responses from the Prof. reiterates a need for planning. A good academic discipler is one who plans ahead of time and ensures that the first things get done first. This finding did not match with any research outcome in the literature but it still yields insight in the sense that it teaches supervisors to plan and manage their time properly.

Research Question 3: What sterling qualities distinguish Prof. Bawa from his other colleague academics in the area of supervision?

This question sought to elicit from students the qualities Prof. Bawa possesses which stands him out as an exceptional supervisor as has been alluded to by one of the interviewees. Among other things, the students said he is humble, affable, hardworking, principled, tolerant, and kind. The majority said he is an individual who readily irons out his differences with students as a way of getting the work going. Some said, ' *... Prof. is humble; you cannot imagine a man of his caliber. Sometimes, he calls and when you call and for one reason or the other he doesn't pick, be sure he will return your call and even apologize'* (**Kofi**). Akosua said, ' *... he combines hard work with principles'*

In the literature, Azure (2016) suggests, among other qualities such as humility, affability, hard work, being principle, tolerant, and kind as crucial for effective graduate supervision. He personally conceives effective supervision as one in which both supervisor and supervisee, like in this study, are able to iron out their differences to ensure completion of the process within the stipulated time. Supervisors have to learn to try and provide the best they can in helping students achieve their aims (Azure, 2016). To complement his efforts, students must learn also to submit to his guidance and tutelage so as to minimise the common conflicts associated with supervision relationships. The study advocates for supervisors to mandatorily promote hard work and tolerance conditions beneficial to students' research intellectual growth and provide apt leadership in the process and a supervisor necessarily requires these qualities in order to do effective supervision.

Research Question 4: What is his personal conception of effective supervision?

This question sought to find out about Prof's conceptualization of effective supervision and how his personal philosophy in life dovetails into this conceptualization. Prof. made startling revelations. According to him, effective supervision is one in which both supervisor and supervisee try to iron out their differences (academic, personal, ideological, philosophies etc) to ensure successful completion of the process of supervision within the stipulated time. For him, supervisors have to learn to provide the best they can to help students achieve their aims. For example, Prof said, '*...effective supervision is supervising your student to the best of your ability and becoming proud to be associated with their work'* His concept of effective supervision

succinctly captures the guidelines proposed by the university of Competitive Choice, SGS document which urges supervisors to be available whenever the student needs help with their research and they must help the student develop their communicative and writing skills. They must give the student information about appropriate meetings, conferences and training opportunities and provide guidance to the student mainly on technical aspects of the research (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). The supervisor must provide guidance on sources of literature that the student may consult. He or she must draw students' attention to the strengths and weaknesses in their approach to the task. The supervisor must provide guidance and verify corrections the student is expected to make after the examination of the project work, dissertation, or thesis (including viva where applicable) and must be willing to "prepare periodic reports to the SGS on student's progress" (UCC SGS, 2016, p. 8). He or she should refuse to allow submission of sub-standard work for examination, regardless of the circumstances.

In explaining the issues, he outlined certain philosophies in life which have sharpened his concept of effective supervision. For him, supervision is one that makes extra demands on the supervisor and student in a mutual beneficial manner so as to accomplish the task of producing cutting-edge research. In this regard, he said he did not subscribe to supervisors who leave the entire work to the student (though admitting that the student owns the work) which often resulted in shoddy research work. He further said,

> *'... supervision here requires that as a supervisor you work extra hard and have a mindset that you want to leave an academic imprint. That had been my philosophy and I just work extra hard to see my graduate students graduate the time they should. My personal goal is always to challenge my students and watch them grow and develop their full potential'.*

Without mincing words, Prof. Bawa made it emphatic also that he sees any research supervision assignment to him as an opportune period to learn new things. In his own words, he reiterated that, *'I also see supervision as an opportunity for me as a researcher to learn new things that are emerging on the research market'.* I think this kind conceptualization of research supervision lends credence to the spirit of continuous learning which, according to Walker and Thomson, (2010) sees student research supervision job as critical due the increasing challenging trends that are associated with it for even professional faculty in universities.

Research Question 5: What lessons could be shared among the faculty to improve graduate supervision in UCC?

This question was posed to make deductions from the interview responses from Prof. Bawa. The answers are deductive based on the responses obtained from Prof. Bawa and the graduate students who were interviewed. It was apparent that supervisors have to learn to try and provide the best they to help students achieve their aims. In the same manner, students must submit to the guidance and tutelage of supervisors so as to minimise the common conflicts associated with supervision relationships. Presumably, supervisors have to prioritize their supervision activities that entail properly time management. When supervisors fail to do this, they get overwhelmed by events given the numerous activities which compete for equal attention. Also, supervisors ought not to push themselves too hard. They must consciously make time for themselves since overwhelming pressures resulting from the conundrum of graduate supervision can be fatal. It is insightful to note Prof.'s words which emphatically stated that,

> '*... I don't forget to give myself treats from time to time. Doing too much can drain or sap your energy. It's good to make time for fun to reinvigorate you... life must go on after hard work. I've seen that these things I do help me balance my life and work schedules'.*

The lesson here is that life is what is most important and therefore, health should not be substituted for hard work in any way. One needs to develop a personal philosophy to supervision. in his words, Prof. Bawa intimated that, *'... some philosophies I developed years ago have helped me in the discharge of my career duties as an academic, ... '* philosophies, I think, help the individual supervisor to chart a course that can benefit students. Mostly, supervisors, try to 'disciple' or treat their students in similar ways as they were 'discipled' or treated. For many supervisors, it is pay-back time where students are antagonized and made to *'suffer'* needlessly. In a study in Ghana, Azure (2016) observed that in graduate supervision, supervisors create problems that cause students' studies to derail.

Supervisors should rather depend on principles and not necessarily on the experiences with their supervisors and the ordeal they went through to be where they are. The use of preventive and supportive behaviour strategies is found to be more helpful than corrective ones. Being objective is paramount to dealing with student issues. If need arises to correct student behaviour, supervisors should plan to give the culprit a fresh start and treat them as equally as other students. Little student efforts should be positively be reinforced to elicit further desirable forms of

behaviour. Faculty encouragement is needful for student research success. In I have come to know how valuable faculty encouragement and motivation is for student intellectual growth. In his own words, Prof. Bawa said, *'I consciously and deliberately motivate my students ... in the research supervision period'*.

In addition, it was found that respect for the student is important. Supervisors need to accord their students the uttermost respect and dignity required. Prof. said, *'I treat them with respect and dignity; mutual respect is the key word'*. It is often very easy to disrespect your students particularly because the privilege to supervise can, if not well managed, turn a supervisor into a tyrant dictator. From the word go, supervisors need to make it clear to students the need to work hard and own their work. For Prof. Bawa, '*That is one thing I think does the trick'*. These are necessary for 'discipling' graduate students.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Universities today are giving priority attention to graduate supervision in higher education since it aids in to build and keep universities vibrant to meet the increasing expectations of society. Working directly with a supervisor to develop of a research project also lies at the core of most degrees thus making supervision very key. In diverse, ways, graduate research paves the way for the production of highly capable human resource necessary for the socio-economic transformation and development of our countries. A lot of countries have transformed their economies due to the adequate attention they have given to research. Teferra's (2007, p. 9) statement gives impetus to research when he declared that, 'without strong graduate programmes, it is impossible to establish a viable research culture and innovative capabilities in a nation' building. It is in this light that this study helps to address some of the most frequently occurring challenges in supervision among graduate students and includes concrete mentoring strategies that help supervisors promote independence and initiative in their 'disciples' or mentees, bridge power differences in the relationship, set boundaries, communicate effectively and support their students. For a successful discipleship of graduate students, the relationship must be devoid of suspicion; supervisors must earn the trust and respect of supervisors. Faculty supervisors have to manage their time in order to succeed and prioritize well in order to 'disciple' efficiently.

Supervisors must possess clear-cut qualities such as humility, approachability, selflessness among others in order to make other students graduate 'disciples'. In order to succeed and make more

disciples, supervisors need to see graduate supervision is one in which both supervisor and supervisee try to iron out their differences to ensure that the research project is successfully completed within a stipulated time. Supervisors and students have their cut-out roles and they must all play these roles well in a mutually beneficial manner. Supervisors should try and provide the best they can to help students achieve their aims. In the same vein, students must submit under the tutelage and guidance of supervisors. These when done, would minimise the common conflicts between supervisors and supervisees. Then the desire to disciple others in research would become a fait accompli. This study advocates for the use of pragmatic supervisor initiatives that promote hard work and ensure tolerant conditions for graduate students aimed at fostering students' research intellectual growth and capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SGS of universities need to intensify workshops, courses, and resources to assist faculty supervisors and graduate chairs who mentor (disciple) and support graduate students and to enhance graduate supervision and raise its profile among students. The graduate studies must institutes supervision conversation series where stakeholders (students, university management, and faculty) are called and quarantined to discuss pertinent emerging issues that challenge and threaten successful supervision. The forum should also be used to discuss germane issues in graduate supervision and further explore opportunities for mentoring young scholars in various disciplines. Supervisor participants should be given the opportunity at such forums to ask questions and share supervision strategies.

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