

Challenges encountered in scaffolding undergraduate research projects: the case of three universities in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study set to explore problems associated with the undergraduate research supervision process. The study utilized the qualitative case study design. Three universities namely; Great Zimbabwe University, Midlands State University and Zimbabwe Open University- Midlands region were included in the study. Data was collected from 15 university lecturers who supervise undergraduate research projects and 45 students undertaking undergraduate research projects. Participants were purposefully selected on the basis that they would provide rich data on the supervision of research projects. Focus group discussions and questionnaires were the data tools used to solicit data from the participants. The study revealed that the supervisors' inadequate research skills and expertise, students' research incompetencies, non-supportive relationships of supervisors with students, and negative feedback from supervisors hamper students' research progress. The study recommends strengthening research supervision skills through training of research supervisors. Basic research skills need to be introduced to students before embarking on the research.