

Understanding the Master's Degree Research Supervision at Community Campuses of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Research supervision has become increasingly demanding for graduate students towards the successful completion of their research. However, there are limited studies on how supervisors supervise the research students and what their experiences are in the context of Nepalese higher education. This phenomenological qualitative study explores the Master's degree research supervisors' perceptions and their lived experiences on supervision of Master's thesis. Thematically analysing the data collected from six purposively sampled supervisors of three public campuses of Nepal, this paper reports the findings that research supervision practices in community campuses of Nepal lack sociocultural pedagogic practice for developing research skills in the students. Furthermore, it examines the supervisors' roles, supervisor-student relationship, and the challenges the supervisors faced during research supervision. In this paper, I argue that the research supervisory process in Nepal needs to be socioculturally situated for producing independent researchers.

Keywords: sociocultural practice, research supervision, higher education, supervisory feedback, scaffolding

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1. Introduction

As one of the teaching faculties of the Tribhuvan University affiliated campuses in Nepal, I have observed students and supervisors talking about challenging experiences of research and research supervision at various occasions. Being interested to explore the supervisors' perceptions and experiences of master's degree thesis supervision, I reviewed the related literature which indicates that postgraduate research supervisors have experienced various moments of satisfaction and dissatisfactions rooted in the supervisory styles, supervisor-student relationship, feedback system, and the perceptions of supervisors in western contexts. However, how supervisors supervise the students' theses and what perceptions and experiences they have in the community campuses of Nepal is yet to be explored. Therefore, following the phenomenological research design, this study explored the master's degree research supervisors' perceptions and lived experiences on supervision gathering data through semi-structured interviews from 6 purposively sampled supervisors of three Tribhuvan University affiliated community campuses of province 1, Nepal. Analysing the collected data thematically through Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, it argues that the master's degree research supervision in community campuses of Nepal still follows the traditional product-oriented approach as ritual rather than imparting research knowledge and skills through sociocultural pedagogic practice.

2. Literature review

Universities around the world have undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programmes in various disciplines. They also have research programmes which require thesis writing. In most of the universities, thesis writing is a part of their curriculum and a basic requirement for the Master's or doctoral degree award (Roberts, 2010). Thesis writing is the process of writing the final product of systematic study which is supervised during a period of time by the supervisors. A thesis refers to a research product completed by a university student as a part of research (Hornby & Cowie, 1995) or a dissertation that offers a unique idea (Robinson, 2008). The word 'thesis' comes from the Greek word "tithenai" which means "to place or to put forth" something like a proposal (Parija & Kate, 2018). It is an in-depth study of a topic that contributes to novel information in the field of research (Parija & Kate, 2018), it may provide support to the students as well as the supervisors in developing the art of collecting, recording, and critically analysing the information instead of accepting them blindly. Thesis writing, as a final phase of achieving a master's or higher degree, is viewed from two conflicting perspectives (Ylijoki, 2001). The first perspective is the academic nature that emphasises the high ideals and objectives of bridging the world of science, scholarship and research. The second perspective is that a thesis is an inherent and necessary part of higher studies that guarantees the academic qualification and status. In the process of thesis writing, the students first acquire the basic knowledge and facts from books, research articles and lectures and they start working independently later. Aittola (1988) opines that from the entire process of thesis writing as a product of research, students become a producer of knowledge by gradually transforming themselves from consumer of knowledge. The growing demands of research based education, graduates and university management have focused supervisors' development of supervisors and also changed the concept of private supervising to mentoring and team supervision (Manathunga, 2005). However, many students and their research supervisors face a number of challenges in the research process.

Research supervision is the fundamental part of research programmes and the significance of academic research supervision cannot be underestimated. Research is the systematic investigation of the several phenomena in the field of education and social sciences (Koh-Ichiro, 1976) whereas supervision is an intervention provided by a more senior member to a more junior (Milne, 2007). Lategan (2008) defined postgraduate supervision as the active engagement of a supervisor in supporting the students to identify the line of inquiry, delineating the area of a project and supplying the guidance for successful completion of it along with the dissemination of the findings. Postgraduate supervision plays the role in developing new generations of academics and researchers through guiding their research project which might add to academic knowledge (Searle, 2015).

Generally, postgraduate programmes at the universities require students to conduct a research and write thesis. In this context, many universities across the world have taught programmes which do not require thesis writing. Research supervision is dynamic, fluid and determined by continuous practices and changes without being prescribed by institutional policies (Grant et al., 2014). The way of supervision in universities might have changed along with the changes in defining postgraduate research education in the education system. Supervision is meant to integrate research management and support systems for the diverse group of national and international students (McCallin & Nayar, 2012). They further illustrated that these factors impact the institutions offering research degrees, the students seeking research education and the supervisors managing complex issues in a contestable funding environment.

Postgraduate research supervisors have experienced various moments of satisfaction and dissatisfactions during the supervisory process. Wisker and Kiley (2014) reported that the thesis supervisors and examiners had learnt lessons from the students' writing particularly in terms of expression, presentation, conceptual level, and argumentation, and applied them in supervisory practices later. Similarly, other researchers (Ali et al., 2016; Woolderink et al., 2015) later reported that both supervisors and students valued the supervisor's personality, knowledge, skills, communication, and coaching as the major factors contributing to effective postgraduate research supervision. Karn (2009) in Nepal's context found that thesis students had expected their supervisors to provide readymade solutions beginning from topic selection to report writing.

Maxwell and Smyth (2011) theorized the complex nature of postgraduate research supervision as teaching pedagogy extending the scope of it beyond supervisory relationship through tripartite view of it. They argued that "supervision is the creative and synergistic relationship of interweaving activities concerning the students, knowledge and the research project" (p.221). The supervisory relationship may not only be confined with the supervisor and the student alone. It goes beyond the traditional relationship and embraces the distinct relationship with the knowledge (Green and Lee, 1995). Similarly, another phenomenographic study of Bruce and Stoodley (2013, p. 226) identified nine categories namely "promoting the supervisor's development, imparting academic expertise, upholding academic standards, promoting learning to research, drawing upon students expertise, enabling student development, venturing into unexplored territory forming productive communities and contributing to society" on the higher degree supervisors' experiences as teaching which they claimed to offer a collective awareness of supervision as teaching.

Regarding challenges of postgraduate research supervision, Ghadirian et al. (2014) in a qualitative study at Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) argued that thesis supervision can have more challenges that require more attention and planning for modification on the rules, regulations and bylaws, an improvement on mentorship, conducive research atmosphere, active monitoring and evaluation in the training and supervisory process. In a similar context, another qualitative inquiry by Yousefi et al. (2015) reported mainly four challenges faced by supervisors in the supervision process: contextual problem, role ambiguity, poor reflection, and ethical problems. In another Canadian qualitative study, Bruce et al. (2008) earlier had reported some key issues and challenges in postgraduate research supervision such as deciding a project and a thesis, identifying a supervisor, developing a student-supervisor mentoring relationship, and conducting analysis at a distance. Later, Nasiri and Mafakheri (2015) summarized the existing literature on postgraduate research supervision at distance mode and highlighted some challenges and strategies of supervising. They indicated that the supervisor and students might not have understood each other's background and had limited communication. When the supervisor and the researcher do not understand each other's background and nature, the relationship cannot hold the trust and eventually the researcher might not get the support as expected.

The communication between the supervisor and the research student is the key factor in successful completion of research. However, various barriers might occur in the communication between them. A study of Doyle et al. (2018) on the experiences of supervising African students in New Zealand reported that the growing internalisation of higher education was posing complexities in intercultural communication between supervisors and students due to the variety of English. Similarly, Wang and Li's (2008) study in Australia showed the cultural impact on dissertation writing particularly in developing the competence and confidence level in the students and suggested that the supervisors needed to understand the multicultural international students' unique pedagogical needs and

expectations with intercultural sensitivity to overcome the culturally embedded challenges in thesis writing. Similarly, Jonck and Swanepoel (2016) reported time limitation and workload as the most challenging task for the postgraduate supervisors and students including other challenges such as limited freedom to work independently, insufficient availability and commitment of supervisor, the frustrating attitude of the supervisors, and diversity in feedback. Another qualitative study (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011) in South Africa found that the insufficient knowledge of supervisors in the relevant field, change of supervisors in the middle, lack of sufficient supervisory support, supervisor's workload as the challenges faced by the students.

The above literature indicated various challenges in postgraduate research supervision such as workload of the supervisors, linguistic and cultural diversity of learners, misunderstanding, and miscommunication between supervisor and students, and lack of knowledge in the study area in various western contexts. However, what challenges of supervising Masters students in community campuses in Nepal exists and how the supervisors cope with them during the research supervision process in the context of Nepal were not investigated. So this study attempted to investigate the lived experiences of Master's Degree research supervisors particularly focusing on the supervision process, supervisors' experiences, challenges and their roles from the Vygotskian sociocultural approach.

3. Methods

Based on the phenomenological approach (Byrne, 2001) to guide and provide necessary philosophical and methodological underpinnings throughout the research process, this study captures the essence of supervisors' lived experiences in Master's degree research supervision in Nepal's public campuses. The varied perspectives, perceptions and experiences of supervisors have been captured through the semi-structured interview and interpreted as stated by Heidegger et al. (1962). I as a key instrument in the research have explored the research supervisory perceptions, experiences, challenges, feedback and relationships. As the study follows phenomenological design, it attempts to find the meaning in participants' actual experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). So I have identified the essence of postgraduate research supervisors' lived experience, understanding and perceptions on postgraduate research supervision as suggested by Van Manen (2016).

As informed by Cohen et al. (2018), I have used phenomenological semi-structured interview as a principal means of gathering information from purposively selected 6 supervisors from three community campuses of Province No. 1 to serve the research objectives, requiring the information on what the supervisors are experiencing and what they value and believe on. I asked them open-ended questions with greater flexibility and freedom to express their ideas. To capture the essence of the phenomena (Ehrich, 2005), I followed the process of phenomenological interview for valid, accurate and profound information making sense of multiple channels such as verbal, nonverbal, spoken and heard. Phenomenological approach attempts to capture the essence of lived experiences of the participants and support to make meaning. With the idea of Creswell and Creswell (2018), I developed an interview protocol including major points such as basic information about the interview, introduction, opening questions, content questions and the probes before sitting for the interview. I interviewed and used the data in the study. During the interview, participants were given the choice of medium of expression.

Out of 6 masters' degree research supervisors, six supervisors (three from each campus) from two community campuses were interviewed through zoom on and around their supervisory experiences. Two supervisors were the head of department in English education having at

least 15 years of teaching and supervising experiences. Other supervisors were all having a minimum ten years of experience. All of them were working in the campuses as full time faculties. After having rigorous interviews on zoom and analyzing the received data thematically. The data were first coded, analysed and categorised into various themes such as the supervision process, challenges of supervision, and roles of supervisors. The participants and their campuses were mentioned with pseudonyms as given in the following table.

Table 1.

Details of the participants

Supervisors	Gender	Campus	Position	Experience	Subject
Guru	Male	Suryadev	HOD	15 years	English
Naranath	Male	Suryadev	Lecturer	More than 15 years	English
Kalyan	Male	Janahit	HOD	15 years	English
Tirtha	Male	Janahit	Lecturer	11 years	English
Shankar	Male	Suryadev	Lecturer	12 years	English
Benjana	Female	Damak	Lecturer	5 years	English

4. Results and discussion

The master's degree research supervisors in community campuses have experienced distinct types of supervisory practices since their working contexts; modality and culture were different from other university teachers. The following themes have been drawn from the analysis of the interview data and discussed in relation to existing literature on research and research supervision.

4.1. Thesis supervision process in community campuses

The analysis of the data revealed that the community campuses at Masters degree have the common practices of thesis supervision. After organizing thesis writing orientation, students are requested to submit at least three research topics to the Department. Then, the department head or the faculties along with the students discuss and finalize one of the topics for further preparation of the proposal. Then the supervisor is assigned to the students randomly. The supervisors expressed that the students used to be assigned to the supervisor on the basis of their area of course instruction at the beginning. However, in the later days, the number of thesis writing students increased on the campuses so that they could not manage subject specific supervisors. Regarding the supervision on the specific area of expertise, some of the responses were really interesting. For example:

Well, the process of supervising the students in the past was almost common for all of us. In the past, there used to be a meeting of the faculties at the department but not for thesis writing. Nowadays, the department meeting finalizes the name list of the students at the very beginning who are capable of doing or who are ready for doing the research. The students who are interested to write thesis are asked to come with a research title, title means any problem that they have, any kind of experience that they have. Sometimes, we also give them, the potential areas for research and ask them to read some books as well. , We also ask our students to come with an application along with alternative titles. We say to them to submit the proposal. And after submitting the proposal, we will assign them the supervisor. Whenever, there will be around 10 to 15 students then there will be a meeting of the department again and they are invited for the interview of the proposal itself. After this interview of the proposal, we

will be assign the responsibility of supervising after the super supervising assignment is given by the department. That would be the final one (Guru at Suryadev Campus).

The practices of supervision were found common to the campuses to some extent beginning from orientation and ending with thesis viva by external examiner. However, supervisors have unique experiences of supervising the research students. For example, Kamal from Janahit campus, who was also the Head of Department, asserted that the process of supervision is not the same. He said, “We call the students for orientation but very few of them come to attend. Whoever comes to the orientation also decline from the contact for a long time. And they come only a few months before the deadline.” This indicates that the thesis writing and supervision processes at community campuses are not aligned with the guidelines normally practised elsewhere. In western universities, the supervisors should be well-known about the area of research (Manathunga, 2005). Manathunga suggests that the supervisors need to engage the researchers in both research and writing step by step. However, in Nepal, thesis writing is taken as a ritual rather than following sociocultural approach (Khatri, 2021). Sociocultural approach describes research supervision as a social process in which research students learn knowledge and by participating in various activities (O'BYRNE & Rosenberg, 1998). It is visible from the interview data that research supervision process lacks the pedagogic practices. The reasons can be anticipated that the supervisors are unable to engage the research students in thesis writing process with their colleagues.

The supervisors expressed that community campuses have their compulsions of not being able to supervise the students as a pedagogical practice such as students' irregularity, fear of students' dropout and lack of sufficient research knowledge. For example, Kalyan said, “Even if we fixed the criteria for thesis writing that could not be followed as expected.” He continued, “If I am strict to the criteria in supervising the students as per the standards, they fail to complete the research”. Kalyan's expression shows that the community campuses seem to have shortage of students at Masters Degree programmes. The community campuses have admitted working teachers in their masters of education program and run their regular classes in the evening or morning shift. They are running their master's degree programs targeting to the in-service teachers who have limited time to take their regular classes in the campus. Since thesis writing is the requirement for completing their master's degree, they appear for the exams and decline while writing the thesis. This could be one of the reasons of low quality of students' thesis. However, another reason might be the supervision process adopted by the supervisors. The thesis writing process does not seem to be guided by the socio-cultural approach to scaffold the research skills in the students (Khatri, 2021). Khatri reported that thesis writing is guided by a product oriented perspective of the students and the supervisors. As he indicated the pitfalls of thesis writing practices at Tribhuvan University as ritual, the thesis writing practices in community campuses seem alike. The students come to the department and get acceptance of their title and go back to their workplaces. The students are also unable to connect what they have already studied in their research methodology course. For example:

What we do is orientation as soon as their second year written examination is over. We want to engage as many students as possible, all students, 100 percent students if possible. We give them orientation on topic selection then proposal writing, writing body of the thesis, and all. Once their topic is selected, they go home and work on a proposal. They need to finish their thesis within 6 months but they get lost. When they contact after long time interval, we need to teach all because they forget everything that they learnt in the course. We want teach them step by step but many students fail to follow this process (Naranath at Suryadev Campus).

His experience shows that the supervisors are unable to follow step by step supervision process at community campuses. Whether supervisors attempted to engage their students or not, but they blamed the students' irregularity and carelessness. In the next interview, another supervisor who had already supervised more than 70 Master's degree theses stated, "We sometimes telephone the students individually to submit theses. They come with a thesis at the final stage and submit it for evaluation." He further complained that students remain contactless for a long time. This indicates that the process of thesis writing and supervision is guided mostly to achieve academic degrees rather than connecting to the scholarships and research skills as stated by Ylijoki (2001). As pointed out by Hornby and Cowie (1995), thesis writing process in community campuses is product oriented rather than making it process based for learning fundamental research and writing skills. Moreover, the process of supervision seems contrastive to Maxwell and Smyth's (2011) findings who theorized the complex nature of postgraduate research supervision as teaching pedagogy. Supervision as teaching pedagogy adopts the sociocultural approach and scaffolds research knowledge and skills in the students through a socially mediated process (Vygotsky, 1978). However, the supervisors and the research students in this study have rare engagement as suggested by the theory of the zone of proximal distance (Vygotsky, 1978). The active engagement of the supervisor in Nepal's community campuses in supporting the students to identify the line of inquiry, delineating the area of a project and supplying the guidance for successful completion of it along with the dissemination of the finding seems inadequate as highlighted in literature (Lategan, 2008). Though the sociocultural approach to thesis supervision is found abundantly in the western contexts, end product based approach has been found in the community campuses of Nepal.

Moreover, the previous studies show that the thesis supervision in other contexts is practiced as pedagogy (Emilsson & Johnsson, 2007), process oriented activity or problem oriented approach. Unlike in the literature, the Master's thesis supervision process in community campuses is product oriented. The researchers want to submit as soon as possible without being engaged in all the steps of research and research writing. As Karn (2009) reported, the process of thesis supervision in community campuses is still guided by the traditional product oriented approach. The data in this study also reveals that the supervisory process is not guided for imparting research skills in the students rather it is done to achieve the final degree.

4.2. Challenges faced by the supervisors

The challenges of Master's degree research supervision in community campuses were identified mainly as lack of understanding, lack of frequent supervisory meetings, workload of the supervisors, inability of the students to carry out research, lack of resources, time management, student-supervisor relationship, feedback, lack of originality and low administrative motivation. Most of the supervisors shared similar supervisory challenges. Having more than 15 years of experience in teaching and supervision, they are facing multiple challenges.

The first challenge is a gap between the supervisors' perceptions and students' expectations because students want to complete their study as soon as possible with less expenditure and effort. However, supervisors think that research is a systematic and time consuming task which they have to do rigorously and systematically. Because of these two types of perspectives, supervisors and research students frequently had conflict. For example, Shankar expressed:

I have such a bitter experience. It has been a long. Some students were doing their job. During the thesis writing process, one of my students got angry with me because I asked them to rewrite their draft with proper citation. They denied. I said you must do this. He said I drop and I won't come back to this campus again. He became contactless. I thought he would never come back but he came after one year and politely requested to continue and finally completed.

The supervisors have varied understanding and perspectives. Their perceptions also depend on their own experiences of doing research in the university. How the supervisors had been supervised during their study can be reflected in their supervisory work as well. For example, Guru expressed, "Thesis writing is a part of students' degree completion so they must be responsible for it. In fact it is the extra work for the teachers." Likewise, Tirtha, said, "My primary job is to teach the course, not the supervision. I am not responsible for the quality of the students' thesis." Benjana expressed, "The research students do their research independently in western countries but students expect even topic selection by the supervisors in Nepal." These expressions could indicate that supervisors perceived their supervising role as extra work at the campuses. Their perceptions supervision has affected the time and effort they provide for instilling the research skills in the research students. Moreover, their irresponsibility might invite conflicting supervisory relationship with the research students.

The student-supervisor meeting and relationship has been identified as another challenge in community campuses. Most of the supervisors stated that the supervisory meetings with students ended with feedback on research and writing. For example, Naranath said, "At the beginning, students frequently meet me for topics and methodology but later when I assign them some reading and writing tasks they disappear from the contact. After a year, he telephones and says sorry for not completing the tasks." The other supervisors also expressed that students did not address the feedback in the draft so they ignored providing further feedback on the draft. It is visible from the observation that the supervisors seemed to be overloaded with multiple tasks including teaching at the campuses. Consequently, they could not provide sufficient time to the research students. When supervisors fail to have frequent supervisory meetings and provide feedback, the supervisory relationship cannot be strengthened as reported by Jonck and Swanepoel's (2016). The supervisors in this study also accepted that they were unable to manage time for frequent meetings and timely feedback.

Supervisors lack adequate supervision guidelines and administrative support. Those teachers who work with limited resources in the community campuses might require the timely updates in research methodology as well as supervisory guidelines. However, the community campuses lack such guidelines. For example, one of the senior supervisors, Guru claimed, "We have thesis writing guidelines developed by the Tribhuvan University but still not the supervisory guidelines". The supervisors give feedback on the basis of their own experience of doing research and ideas gained from the articles which are not up-to-date. In some campuses, most of the supervisors have done their master's degree and have been teaching to the master's degree students. They do not have higher degrees. Naranath, who had recently completed his Master's of Philosophy degreed complained, "There are some thesis supervisors who have not done research and even not written thesis reports in our campuses. Who will be eligible for research supervision and what criteria should be fulfilled are not specified yet". Shanker expressed, "I learnt to supervise research by supervising. There was no one for guiding research students at the beginning. I learnt many things during viva-voice from the external supervisors." Similarly, Kalyan, supervisor at Janahit campus, "There was an orientation by the department of education, Kirtipur a few years ago where many teachers from other campuses were also present and I learnt some ideas to supervise there." These

experiences indicate that the supervisors need the specific supervisory guidelines and support from the university and administration.

The analysis of the data revealed that the community campuses often face the shortage of resources. The research students depend on the previous theses which are hardly available in the campus library. In few campuses, previous theses were collected in the library whereas in other campuses that facility was not available. In this regard, the head of department in English education at Suryadev Campus said, "We have collected around 400 theses from Kirtipur and elsewhere. Now students can read these theses in Campus. Earlier we had nothing to recommend for students. And still our students do not have access to reading online." Shankar expressed, "After being QAA certified, we have managed our library better than previous but it lacks books on research and research supervision. Due to the overload, we have no reading time and culture." Kalyan from Janahit Campus said, "The students cannot read all the latest theses in our library. We have very limited resources in the library." These data reveal that the community campuses have a huge shortage of resources for reading and reviewing. The students and teachers do not find the sufficient materials in their libraries.

The other challenge of the master's degree thesis writing is the quality maintenance. The supervisors are not confident in the quality of their students' theses. Tirtha admitted, "My student copied from another thesis slightly changing the titles and location. When I changed one of the objectives, he could not submit the next draft." The supervisors complained the students for plagiarizing in their master's thesis. While answering a question 'How do you check plagiarism in students' thesis?', Kalyan said, "I will find it easily. Sometimes they forget to change the lines and name of the places. I know the level of our students well." In the same connection, Shankar said, "We know that there are institutes to sell the thesis but we can do nothing. We are compelled to invite the students to the final evaluation." The supervisors' experiences and expression reveal that students' researches are not original. This also indicates that students at the community campuses need to think over the quality enhancement at students work. Aligned with the findings of Karn, (2009), the supervisors reported unusual students' expectations such as selecting a topic, developing the body of literature and even deciding the methodology of the research.

The supervisors in this study have also experienced other challenges such as motivating the students throughout their research project, providing feedback on the draft and also managing time for supervisory meetings. Similar to the findings of Wadesango and Machingambi, (2011) in South Africa, lack of supervisors' expertise in the related area of study, their adequate supervisory support were identified as challenges in the supervision in community campuses.

4.3. Roles and responsibilities of the supervisors

The roles of the supervisors in successful completion of students' research projects are determinant. The success of the research depends on the active engagement and facilitation of the supervisors (Searle, 2015). According to the students' progress in research and writing, supervisors' roles also vary. As Milne (2007) reported the mentoring role of supervisor as experienced one in sociocultural practice, the first responsibility of the supervisor should be to support in scaffolding research and writing skills in the students. The responsibility is not only limited to support the novice researchers but also act differently in different situations. Master's degree supervisors in community campuses are also loaded with multiple roles and responsibilities. They have the responsibilities of teaching the course, guiding them for research. For example, one of the supervisors, Guru said, "We should do everything for the students from topic selection to checking language and even arranging administrative things."

This shows that supervisors also collect the resources and provide them. Another supervisor, Naranath said, “I often search articles, books and journals on the internet, download them and provide them to the student for reading.” The supervisors accepted their multiple roles as guide, material provider, counselor, evaluator and decision maker. As argued by Alam et al. (2013) in Australian context, the supervisors do not seem to be supervising to satisfy, retain, complete and even publish the students’ research. However, the supervisors in the community campuses claimed that they frequently inquired the research students whether they were doing their research and writing project timely. Since the students’ theses need to be submitted within a certain time frame, they should be reminded time and again. In this regard, Shankar, who was also the head of the English education department in a campus expressed, “Once a student disappeared from the contact after we fixed the final viva voce, I telephoned many times, His phone was not received. Then we went to his house to inform about the final viva”. Supervisors followed up the students’ project and handheld them for research completion. This study suggest that supervisors’ roles should be supporting, challenging, consulting, evaluating, and mentoring (Hodza, 2007). The data reveal that the supervisors have diverse roles in community campuses too. However, their efforts need to be concentrated on developing research and writing skills in the students rather than taking them as a part of getting degrees.

5. Conclusion

In the course of teaching research skills through supervision, master’s degree research supervisors follow their own modality. Some supervisors follow traditional one-to-one product oriented supervision whereas others use a process oriented supervision approach. The process of research supervision at the community campuses does not seem to be aligned with the sociocultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978) in which students can develop their research skills by being involved in workshops, peer research groups. They have various challenges in bringing students back to the supervisory meeting and keep them motivating throughout the research process. The supervisors also require to handhold the students from beginning to the end giving corrective feedback where students do not follow them. The research students need to be assigned to the supervisors on the basis of their area of expertise so that they can go in depth to give feedback. Supervisors equally need to develop their supervisory knowledge and skills. For this reason, supervisors require supervisory development and frequent training to enhance the research and research supervision quality in higher education. The university and the government need to develop separate guidelines for research supervision to uplift the quality of higher education. Moreover, the findings reported here can be the impetus for the prospective supervisors, policy makers and the stakes holders for formulating supervisors’ development program and supervision guidelines to insure the quality education.

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