

Postgraduate supervision

Lategan, Laetus O.K. 2008. An introduction to postgraduate supervision. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media. 139 p.
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This book is a basic introductory guide on the nature and extent of the supervision of postgraduate studies at a tertiary institution in South Africa. Many books on this topic have been published and are presently available. However, the mere fact that the author through his research and years of professional experience and guidance of postgraduate students, has not found the ultimate guiding book on professional and effective postgraduate guidance and still deemed it necessary to publish another, suggests that there is still a real need for a more practice oriented book at all universities.

The first two themes in the book start with the “big picture” regarding the need for more effective and efficient postgraduate supervision before it settles down on the supervisory relationships between capable postgraduate supervisors and promoters and eager but inexperienced students as “academic researchers *par excellence*”.

It is clear that the ten contributors to the book are experienced and knowledgeable about the real dynamics that manifest in the very diverse and usually highly complex academic environment of post-graduate guidance at a university. This they proved by identifying and presenting very useful practical tips on various issues and challenges throughout the book for the guiding supervisors and promoters as well as the studying and researching postgraduate students.

The next section of the book focuses on the compilation of an effective research proposal needed for approval and registration of an attainable research topic and inculcating some more effective writing and research methodological skills in the process. Some very

handy tips are subsequently presented to foster more effective and efficient contact sessions and research initiatives between the postgraduate guides and followers.

The book then highlights the nature and extent of the assessment process of the finally presented dissertation/thesis and again gives very valid, practical and useful tips to be applied when being tasked with the examining of such a final product. Lastly there is a very handy and informative theme regarding project management as an add-on.

Some critique which can be aired is that the different themes and individual contributions could have been presented in a more combined and procedural order to prevent the reader from unexpectedly having to rotate between the position of student to supervisor/promoter at various intervals. Most of the secondary parts of the themes are also not linked to each other with the magic “golden thread” and conclusive and introductory sentences. This unfortunately might lead to difficult reading or even to “loosing the novice reader” along the way.

One can conclude that academics, and postgraduate supervisors, promoters and students of academic writing and research methodology in the social sciences and the humanities, should find this introductory guide to postgraduate supervision very valuable in their quest for more knowledge, skills and the general improvement of the usually very complex postgraduate supervisor versus student relationships at universities.