

## Reflections on the Doctor of Philosophy Journey: Candidate-Supervisor Relationship

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**Abstract:** The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) journey is a journey from a candidate to a full blown researcher and academic. This journey can take a minimum of three to maximum of eight years in the case of Zimbabwe Open University. For most of the journey the research supervisor will 'represent' the university to the candidate. He/she is the most frequent contact and will be responsible for ensuring that the candidate does the things that his/her institution expects of him/her. The purpose of this paper is to expose, through reflective self-study the relationship between my PhD supervisor and I as well as the role he played in the three years of my study. In this qualitative self-study data was generated from my journal entries on meetings held with my supervisors, the emails through which we communicated; feedback given on different submissions at different stages of my study and the candidate-supervisor relationship which emanated from the communications. The findings reveal that the strong relationship which was between me and my supervisor played a critical role in enabling me to complete my study in the shortest possible time.

**Keywords:** Doctor of philosophy, PhD candidate, PhD supervisor, reflective thinking, relationship.

### INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe Open University is one of the biggest universities in Zimbabwe. It offers a number of Post graduate Diplomas, Masters and PhD degrees. Post graduate students are required to produce a dissertation or a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of their studies. In the case of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, there is no coursework hence the thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the degree. Every candidate is assigned a supervisor and in some cases supervisors to guide them in the process of learning. Experiences across the world problems such as poor completion rates are associated with students and supervisors' failing to accomplish their roles (Bushesha, *et al.*, 2019). My reflection is a testimony of a good candidate- supervisor relationship, which I believe would assist aspiring and current PhD candidates and supervisors to accomplish their goals without major challenges. The paper will be divided into five main sections: (1) the role of the candidate in the PhD journey, (2) the role of the supervisor in the PhD journey, (3) how my journey started, (4) relationship between my supervisor and I then lastly (5) recommendations.

#### The Role of the Candidate in the PhD Journey

The Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) handbook on higher degrees which I was given at the faculty the day I registered had the basic guidelines for candidates. This section will discuss five major roles of the PhD candidate as specified by the ZOU handbook and related literature.

Firstly, it indicated that the degree required candidates to work hard towards intellectual independence within a supportive supervisory

environment. As indicated by Dietz, *et al.*, (2006) the supervisor is an expert in the candidate's field of study. They will have recognized experience researching it, with a publication record to support it. They may even have supervised other candidates working related subjects. It is important for the candidate to note that the supervisor is not an expert in their topic. The reason being: if they were then the candidate could not study the topic as an original at PhD level. In practice this would mean that any candidate would expect the supervisor to offer competent advice, particularly in the early stages of their journey together. This includes alerting him/her if the topic had been undertaken before. He can also assist with suggestions on related literature.

In connection with the above point, as the research progresses the candidate's expertise should outstrip that of the supervisor. The candidate needs to demonstrate a high degree of integrity, commitment and personal initiative. There is need for the candidate to take the lead in matters pertaining to the project taking into consideration that their attitude determines the progress of the research. They should avoid relying on the supervisor to understand the project for them. It is the role of the candidate to constantly communicate with the supervisor and keep him/her appraised on the research progress. The candidate is also expected to attend all supervisory meetings; physical, by telephone or via video conferencing (<https://www.findphd.com/afvice/doing/phd-supervisor-expectations.aspx>)

Thirdly, the candidate should be acquainted with the regulations and procedures governing the PhD

programme, to which end they are strongly encouraged to attend orientation provided by the University. In case of part time candidates where orientation might not be available, it is the role of the candidate to contact the supervisor and seek advice before getting lost. It is always important to remember that in as much as the candidate is the expert in his/her topic he/she has never completed a PhD before. The supervisor has. That problem that seems surmountable to the candidate is not to the supervisor, he/she will be able to help them see why.

Fourthly, the candidate should participate in pertinent workshops and conferences. They must be able to listen and work on advice and criticism provided by supervisors (<http://www.otago001975.htmlsupervision.htm> accessed on 21/10/22). It is important for the candidate to note that unlike other degrees, a PhD does not involve any ongoing formal assessment. The degree will be awarded on the strength of a single piece: the thesis one submits for examination at the end. The feedback that the supervisor gives to chapter drafts at different stages is formative rather than summative. It is incredibly important to pay attention to the feedback as it has an impact on the final thesis submitted for examination.

Fifth and very important is that the candidate are required to make seminar presentations and participate in the respective department. In connection to this, the candidates must present papers at conferences and publish sections of their work where appropriate under the guidance of their supervisor. In the case of ZOU, the candidate is expected to present/defend his/her research at proposal and methodology stage. In as much as the supervisor cover areas of academic writing and presentation of work, the candidate must be able to express himself/herself clearly in an academic manner. The candidate is also expected to publish at least two papers one of which has to be co-authored with the supervisor. The first paper which is co-authored with the supervisor is meant to set the standard for the candidate and as she/he moves on to publish on her/his own it proves mastery of the concept of academic writing.

### **The Role of the Supervisor in the PhD Journey**

Marshall and Green, (2010) consider the supervisor as the most important resource provided by the university to support the student during the research degree candidature. The role of the supervisor differs with the level of study the

student is pursuing and the stage at which the candidate is in the course of the journey.

In the case of doctoral candidates, close supervision is required at proposal stage. It is at this stage that the supervisor confirms the candidate's mastery of the fundamentals of research and principles of scientific enquiry. It is believed that the student should have mastered these fundamentals during his/her studies towards Masters' degree. It is at proposal stage that the supervisor must also ensure that the candidate has the ability to express his/her work in a scholarly manner. It is also crucial to note if the work makes a distinct contribution to new knowledge of fact and/ or theory; produce considerably much more original work than required for Master's programme; goes much deeper and more extensively in her/ his review of the literature than is the case for the master's candidate (Open University of Tanzania, 2010).

Further the supervisor has the role to ensure that the candidate is 'critical in his/her analysis of the data he/she has generated; also that the candidate 'exercises more initiative in his/her research than for the masters' degree research candidate.' It is important to note that PhD candidates are guided not directed (Delamont, *et al.*, 2006). To this end, it is important for the supervisor to provide constructive criticism on the candidate's working a consistent manner. A good supervisor also guides the candidate to journey towards the best outcomes in his/her PhD research when they reach crossroads.

Kiley, (2009) argues that a good supervisor should also share the same mindset as the candidate about finishing the PhD within a reasonable time frame; at ZOU and many other universities this would be within three to four years. The supervisor's encouragement should reflect this and (gently) push to set and reach mini-targets throughout the project to ensure that the candidate stays on track with progress. This role calls for a supportive personality and a positive attitude. These two qualities are essential in maintaining a good professional relationship throughout the PhD journey. The best supervisor will bring the best in the candidate without becoming prescriptive in their guidance, allowing the candidate the freedom to develop his/her own working style.

Gurr, (2001) proposes the supervisor/candidate alignment model which focuses on the notion that the aim of any supervisory relationship should be

the development of competent autonomy of the candidate. Gurr further argues that the process of achieving autonomy differs for each student. These differences may reflect past experiences of study and/or the progress, or otherwise of the current project. Gurr reiterates the significance of regular discussions between the supervisor and the candidate about the student’s progress towards competent autonomy. Jarvis, (2006) proposes a theory of human learning as part of life-long learning where individuals become more experienced as a result of engaging in social situations throughout life and this is integrated into their biographies. The concept of life-long learning is so important and Jarvis, (2006) defines it as ‘the outcomes of a lifetime.’ Jarvis, (2009) further explains that

We are constructing our own biographies when we learn; whilst we live our biographies are unfinished products constantly undergoing change and development- either through experiences that we self-initiate or those initiated by others (p. 25)

One’s biography affects the way they perceive an experience and what they learn from the experience. The process of starting and engaging in a PhD journey is certainly a process of change and constantly writing our biographies. For the supervisor to guide the candidate appropriately, he/she needs to understand the candidate’s social and academic experiences.

From the ongoing discussion on the roles of the supervisor one can summarise the duties of the supervisor as reflected in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Roles of a supervisor

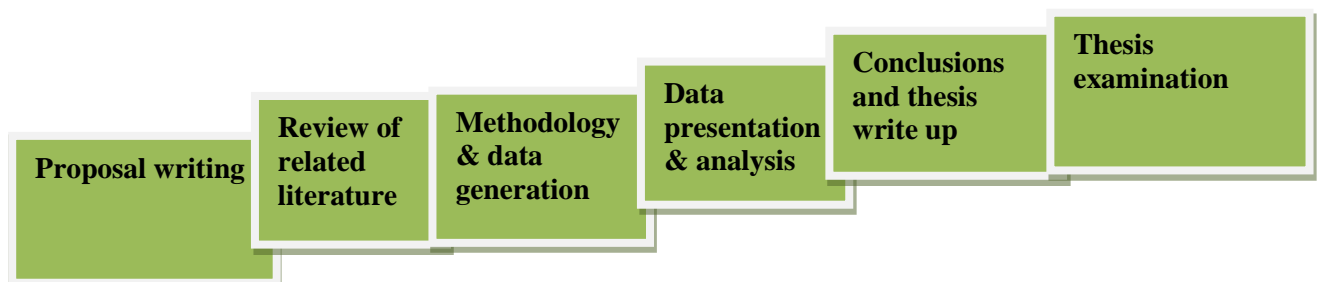
Director	Determining topic and, method, providing ideas
Facilitator	Providing access to resources or expertise, arranging field-work
Advisor	Helping to resolve technical problems, suggesting alternatives
Teacher	Of research techniques
Guide	Suggesting timetable for writing up, giving feedback on progress, identifying critical path for data collection
Critic	Of design of enquiry, of draft chapters, of interpretation of data
Freedom giver	Authorizes candidate to make decisions, supports student decisions
Supporter	Gives encouragement, shows interest, discusses student’s ideas
Friend	Extends interest and concern to non-academic aspects of student’s life
Manager	Checks progress regularly, monitors study, gives systematic feedback, plans work
Examiner	Internal examiner, mocks vivas, interim progress reports, supervisory board member

What is very comforting and assuring for the candidates to know is that all supervisors strive in earnest to see their candidates succeed (Marshall & Green, 2010). At any rate they would rather they did not fail, because that tarnishes their image.

**The Phases of the PhD journey**

From the first time I had a meeting with my supervisor he advised me to keep a record of what we discussed and keep it safe. I religiously

followed that and now that I have completed my studies and awaiting graduation, I feel that I can share these experiences with other students and probably guide them in supervisor-candidate relationship. The reflections are put into six sections; these are derived from what I consider the six major phases in my journey. The stages are summarised in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1:** Phases in my PhD journey

### Reflections as I Started my PhD

After some basic coaching from a colleague I came up with an eight paged proposal which I attached to my PhD application. After four months of waiting I got the favourable response; Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) had accepted me as a PhD candidate. I visited the faculty; I was told to register then I would be allocated a supervisor. I was given a DPhil study guide which I was to study and follow. After three weeks I was allocated a supervisor.

The supervisor was, by then, an Associate Professor in Education. He is a seasoned educator with experience in teaching at secondary school level and teachers' colleges as well as universities. He has been in the educations sector for 48 years. He has 30 years consulting experience acquired in Botswana, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Mufu holds PhD in Education from Monash University, Australia. His other qualifications include: Masters in Educational Administration; a Certificate in Teacher Education; a Certificate of Education (Secondary School Teaching); and a Certificate of Competence in Organizational Development. His research interests include: Adult Learning, Teaching and Learning Effectiveness, Communication in Organizations, Personal Effectiveness, Leadership and Management, Performance Management, and Monitoring and Evaluation. The vast difference between our academic experiences quickly showed me that he was an expert in the field of research. Though scary, the vast experience was somehow reassuring; I was in good hands and failure was not an option. I told myself that I would tap as much knowledge as I could from this deep oasis of knowledge.

The day I entered his office, my journey began.

### PROPOSAL WRITING

The first phase of my journey stretched from the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 to the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, which is exactly five months twenty days. Soon after being directed to my supervisor's office on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2018, I went there and introduced myself. He was expecting me. He asked me to give a brief biography which I did orally. This supported Jarvis, (2009)'s claim that our experiences shapes the way we learn and perceive life. He later requested for the proposal that had won me the chance to study towards a PhD; I had a hardcopy and was told to send a soft copy. My supervisor told me verbally that he would not

entertain hard copies on his desk, he gesticulated at his neat desk which confirmed the utterance; it had two computers; desk top and a laptop. He also emphasised that since I was a part time student, much of the work had to be done online.

Using email was not the only challenge emanating from the first meeting; there were the issues research skills. My supervisor promised to send me material to read on what a PhD is all about. It did not make sense at that time. I knew that this was the degree that I wanted to acquire at the end of the journey, and his emphasis on whether I knew what I really wanted to do somehow scared me off. I was also caught off guard by the question on which referencing style I preferred to use. I just responded American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style, I knew very little about it. This marked the beginning of yet another battle with APA, which took me almost the whole journey to fully master. He emphasised that PhD is an in-depth study it is deep in content and methodology.

As I left the office after a three hour meeting I realised that I had to make a lot of adjustments in my life style if I was to nurture a good relationship with my supervisor and succeed. The first thing I had to work on was computer literacy and making my email active. I had to start reading a lot of literature on research and curriculum development. On the other hand my supervisor (also referred to as Mufu throughout the reflections) seemed to have picked my anxieties and was ready to teach me how to do research. Within a week I had a received more than a dozen documents on proposal writing. This literature covered every aspect of proposal writing. I devoured the literature with insatiable appetite. I had vowed to myself that I would not let Mufu down.

The effort we put on this stage was mutual. Mufu assisted me in coming up with a manageable research topic, carefully guided me in mastering and applying the fundamentals of research and principles of scientific enquiry. Our relationship at this stage was strengthened by communication. We had six meetings in his office. Each meeting helped me to grow academically. Reader, please note that, everything was not as rosy as it might sound. Mufu and I were coming from different worlds; when I arrived at his office and seek audience earlier than the agreed time he would remind me that I had to wait for my time slot, when I came late he would call to ask if I was still coming, I learnt to manage my time and respect appointments bearing in mind that he had a lot of



other assignments to do besides supervising me. Mufu also hated being interrupted when speaking- he taught me to listen and take notes then respond when he finishes. There was compromise from both ends and we developed a mutual understanding which matured into a professional relationship.

Taking advice from Delmont, *et al.*, (2006) I made sure that I maintained communication with Mufu throughout the study tenure. Mufu always communicated through email; every other day I received an email from him: literature on proposal writing, feedback on my drafts or even just checking on my progress. It became a norm for me to check my emails every morning and respond to them as promptly as possible. When I had internet challenges we could even communicate via WhatsApp. Whenever I had a challenge I would appraise him. This kind of communication between the two of us made it easier for Mufu to guide me. At first I felt as if he was putting too much pressure on me. It was only after I shared my experiences with other candidates that I felt so lucky. My colleagues pointed out that there was poor communication between them and their supervisors. In most cases the supervisors were not available for the meetings and they did not pick phone calls. They never responded to the emails, took months without giving feedback on their draft proposals. The same supervisors did not appreciate WhatsApp messages as they deemed them informal. This delayed my colleagues' progress. One of them, as I write, dropped out of the studies and two are still battling with data interpretation and analysis.

As I moved towards proposal defence dates Mufu was a bit too harsh. He was too much of a perfectionist. There were times when I felt less respected when he would send back feedback with more comments and corrections than the original work. Many times I felt disoriented. Now that I have passed the phase I understand what he was doing. I believe the perceived harshness was not meant to harass me but to insist that he was not impressed with the progress that I was making. I am thankful that I never really showed him that I was hurt in a rude manner. Three or four times a requested for a break. Whenever I took a break, Mufu seemed to realise that he would have pushed me to the limits. Whenever I came back I would be rejuvenated to work things out and he would be more patient with me. Because we never exchanged unpleasant words, our relationship remained purely a candidate-supervisor one; this

enabled both of us to observe professionalism and make the necessary progress.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 I presented my proposal to a board of academics. They were impressed and I received a number of encouraging comments and a few recommendations. Mufu was impressed by my performance. He reminded me of the importance of a precise power point presentation; that aspect had won me the board's favour, I was not reading but presenting my proposal guided by the power point presentation. I learnt that what the professors who sit on the board want from a defending candidate is; confidence, knowledge of what one wants to do and the passion to do it. As I travelled back home I felt on top off the world. I was confident that I had made it. Two weeks after the presentation I received my results the proposal had passed with minor alterations to be monitored by the advisor. I cried of joy. My hard work had been rewarded. I owed everything to Mufu. He had managed to prepare me fully for the day and the first phase of journey was a huge success.

As indicated earlier on the proposal writing period was a period of transition. I learnt a lot of lessons which changed my attitude towards research, critical thinking, academic writing and the importance of working closely with my supervisor.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

After completion of the first phase of my journey it was so easy to formulate my introductory chapter and move on to the second major phase of the journey: reviewing related literature. This phase again took me four months. The timeframe was less than that of the first phase not because review of literature was less challenging but it was because Mufu's guidance during proposal writing had yielded some results. I had gained confidence in academic writing, research and time management.

Access to relevant literature is another challenge that candidates encounter while writing theses. At first I did not know where to access the required literature. ZOU online library was difficult to access and most of the textbooks in the library were 'old' and 'archaic' according to Mufu. He emphasised that I should use literature within the five years range and where necessary extend to ten. Mufu came to my assistance here. He recommended a number of websites that could be good sources of literature review.

Besides recommending the various websites, Mufu promised to send more material for study, I

expressed shock and he confidentially told me that some of the students called him **Professor READ** as he always told candidates to read, since I was directly under his supervision I was supposed to read as much as I could. Some of the material he sent was not directly connected to curriculum studies, I wondered why I was reading all this, instead of focusing on my topic. Today I know the reason why; disciplines in education are interrelated and in order to fully understand one discipline one needs to understand the other. Time with my friends and family was being gradually taken away by this research.

My supervisor was also particular on the issue of citation of literature which goes hand in hand with the issue of plagiarism. He discouraged me from cutting and pasting documents without proper acknowledgements of the respective source of information. At this stage I had to perfect my American Psychological Association referencing style. As my review of literature grew so did my list of references, I did a lot of practice. The emphasis was on avoiding plagiarism; the worst academic crime. After collecting as much literature as I could, the major challenge then came with how to sift the literature and come up with a coherent and well developed chapter. Again Mufu came to my assistance. He had a lot of literature on how to arrange the information I had into sections and making them coherent chapters. I wrote more than six drafts and paid attention to every piece of advice that Mufu gave. At times I would feel demoralized but I continued trying until I managed to fit “the elephant into the cardboard”.

Reader, I would like to take you back to proposal writing phase. This is what had happened; I had worked swiftly with my first supervisor, I was now used to moving backwards and forward in my proposal until we agreed on each section of the proposal. The faculty then allocated me a second supervisor; my principal supervisor forwarded the **sixth** version of my research proposal to him after two long weeks of waiting the response came, he almost dismissed my effort; the background to the study was too long, my research problem not clear, he suggested I changed my objectives, this being the core of the research it almost meant starting afresh. His most disheartening comment was;

Much of what you have here would constitute your review of related literature later. YOU COULD THEREFORE BE BRIEF. There was need to differentiate terms such as curriculum design, development and planning read Ndawi in Peresuh

and Nhundu, (1999). The term participation could also have been cleared. Why is it that I have a feeling you are copying someone else’s completed Thesis. **If you are doing that stop it. Hatidi Chitunha [I do not entertain plagiarism].**

This was the **sixth** version of my research proposal had changed and refined my sections six times and here I was being suspected of plagiarism. I wondered whether it was necessary to have two supervisors. If I was supposed to have two then; Why did the faculty bring them into my journey at different stages? It was difficult to dance with the two Professors. I was bound to miss a step and fall. After discussing with my principal supervisor he advised me that whenever I did not agree with the supervisor I was supposed to say it out professionally. The role of the two supervisors was later clarified when my chief supervisor invited me for a workshop on ‘**PhD candidate dancing with two supervisors.**’ This issue was solved amicably but the second Professor almost disappeared from my study until Mufu, my principal supervisor, forwarded the fifth version of my literature review together with my introductory chapter.

Mufu was satisfied with this version but he wanted a second opinion on it. It took my second supervisor a month to respond. He was never available: if I sent an email he would not respond neither would he return telephone calls and WhatsApp messages. When feedback finally came it had some conflicting ideas from those I got from Mufu. As I later realised the problem emanated from the fact that my supervisors had their own backgrounds and experiences from their former universities. Mufu had diverse experience and merged his vast experience into making my thesis a masterpiece. On the other hand, my second supervisor was rigid and considered the ZOU guidelines as the bible to be followed. This caused some confusion and frustrations as I received feedback from my second supervisor. Again I raised my concerns, professionally and I thought it was solved amicably however, it was the last time I had from my second supervisor (more will be said about this relationship in the following phase of my journey). By end of October my principle supervisor approved of my review of related literature, I moved on to the third phase: methodology.

## METHODOLOGY

With each stage in my journey I learnt to appreciate Mufu’s assistance. I would want to confess that when he emphasized on mastery of

the fundamentals of research and principles of scientific enquiry at proposal stage I did not understand the significance. It is only at methodology stage that I saluted him for having taken his time to provide literature on research methods. At this stage he gave me the independence to work on the methodology of my choice. I was beginning to gain autonomy and I enjoyed the freedom however, I kept my supervisor updated on the progress. After going back and forth with the write up I ended up with a clear methodology chapter, research instruments, and introductory letter from the university as well as permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to carry out my research in Zimbabwean secondary schools. In January 2020 I started my data generation process. This was done concurrently with data analysis since my research was qualitative and I wanted to stop at data saturation. It is important to note that during this time the economy of Zimbabwe began to sink. As a high school teacher my salary could not sustain my studies (it is very difficult to get funding in Zimbabwe so my studies were self-funded). Besides travelling to the schools I had to make my first publication. The paper was ready but I could not afford the needed foreign currency on time. I confided in my supervisor. Mufu came in as a friend he paid the needed fees and told me to pay back when I could afford it. It is the level of communication and mutual understanding which made Mufu go beyond the expected roles and assist me publish my first paper.

Another challenge came at the end of March, the time I had just completed data generation. The government declared a total shutdown of the country due to the COVID19 pandemic. My movements were reduced to null and I had to rely on emails and phone calls to communicate with both my supervisor and the research participants. Because Mufu was so flexible it was easy for us to continue working through the use of telephone calls WhatsApp and emails. Phase three ended successfully though without any physical meetings.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This phase began during the COVID19 lockdown period. It was difficult for me since my supervisor had emphasized the need to use a software to analyze my data. I had little knowledge of NVivo version ten. I had to engage a specialist to assist with data analysis. After asking around for assistance the fares which were being charged by

the specialists were far beyond by capability. I communicated with Mufu and as usual he came to my aid. He had a friend who actually ran a consultancy on data analysis methods. For the sake of his friendship with Mufu, he compromised on his charges. He trained me on how to use the software and assisted me all the way with my data. Just like at the review of literature stage I had another elephant which needed to fit into the cardboard.

With the assistance of an independent data analysis expert, it was relatively easy for me to come up with an objective analysis. Throughout the process I kept active communication with Mufu updating him on the progress and challenges that I met on the way. He was also of great help on the arrangement and presentation of my findings. He also emphasized on academic language and the need to quoting exact words said by the participants in response to the different questions asked in the different research instruments. After Mufu was satisfied he reached out to my second supervisor but he indicated that he had an eye sight challenge. I tried to reach out to him through email but he never responded. That was the last time I heard about him. By October 2021 I had completed my data analysis and presentation and I moved to the next stage; research conclusions, recommendations and thesis write up.

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

As I started this phase I thought it was so easy but it came with its own challenges. Mufu emphasized on alignment of research objectives, findings and conclusions. This was not as easy as it sounded hence many drafts were written and discarded until I came up with an acceptable concluding chapter. It was now time to write up my thesis and submit it as a dissertation. Even though each chapter had an approved draft, it was time to take up the pieces and develop a coherent academic write up of high quality. Attention was to be put on tenses, numbering of sections and thorough update of the reference list and an appropriate list of appendices. Mufu helped me put together the final version. He read through the draft and provided constructive feedback and advice. Here he took the role of an examiner, he was the first examiner for my thesis. I took every piece of advice and acted upon it effectively. It was after thorough revision that he recommended that the thesis was ready for examination. Because of his thoroughness and expertise I had confidence that the thesis was likely to pass the viva.

I managed to get a similarity certificate with the acceptable percentage, thumps up to my supervisor who had underscored the need to cite every scholar used in the thesis development. Again with the help of Mufu I managed to have my thesis edited and proofread by professionals from Midlands State University. After exactly three years four months my thesis was submitted for examination.

After a month I received results from internal examiner. Because of the close working relationship with my supervisor the thesis was accepted with minor alterations. Three weeks later results from the external examiner also recommended that the thesis be accepted with minor alterations. After paying attention to the recommendations my supervisor recommended the thesis for final examination by the board of examiners. As I await the results from board I am confident that I am going to graduate and my journey will be over but besides working together as supervisor and candidate, the PhD journey has earned me a life mentor, friend and counsellor.

### MY FINAL WORDS

It is my hope that the reflections given above help aspiring and current researchers to conceptualize their work and also transform into full blown researchers. There is also need to work closely with one's supervisor and reflect on the life lessons. It is very important to note that every supervisor's dream is to have their candidates pass in the shortest possible time so whatever they do or say their aim is to bring the best out of the candidate. On the other hand it is also crucial for the supervisors to realize that the candidates come from different academic backgrounds and have never passed PhD studies, they need to be mentored and guided professionally and sometimes with pushed (gently) to become full blown academics.

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Curriculum Studies and has twenty two years experience in high school teaching. She is also a part time lecturer Zimbabwe Open University and Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University. Besides

teaching she also writes and edits High School textbooks.

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