Chapter 3
Supervisor Perspective

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the responsibilities, role and need for engagement during the research process. The research process model, depicted in Figure 1 in Chapter 2, is followed in discussing these aspects of supervision. The role of the dissertation committee is also summarized.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty responsibility in the role of supervisor of a number of research students is part of the workload at doctoral granting institutions. Given the context of multi-disciplinary research, described in the previous chapter, the supervisor faces several challenges, such as the need to bridge the academic and practice orientation taken in the investigation, to foster what we will call "boundary permeability" of the knowledge base of academic discipline "tribes"; the integration of diverse research methods in the research design; the processing and analysis of various inputs; and ultimately the integration of findings. The supervisor is in fact called upon to serve as boundary broker in many research projects, a trend that has become evident in recent years. The role of supervisor is prominent from the point when a prospective student is accepted as research student within a particular research agenda. Steenkamp, Petkov, Petkova and Nepal (2009) affirmed that the supervisor provides strong support for the candidate by proposing potential research problems aligned with the candidate's research interest, along with guidelines of literature references, and helps to scope the investigation. They found that strong support in guiding the

research approach, design and methodology is invaluable to the candidate's investigation, including considering the matter of ethical data collection where interviews and/or surveys are to be conducted. Most doctoral candidates need guidance from the supervisor and/or the designated member of the department responsible for independent authorization of data collection protocols, such as the IRB, to prepare their IRB applications (refer to Section 1.3). Other findings are that it is also important that the supervisor review the literature that the candidate includes in progress reports, and give feedback about the merit of arguments advanced for including specific sources. Lastly that a key responsibility of the supervisor is to evaluate findings, provide timely feedback, and consider the contributions made by the candidate's research.

Some cautionary notes are appropriate, before discussing the role of the supervisor. Situations may arise during the investigation where there may be divergence of opinion between supervisor and candidate about aspects of the research that will need careful handling. These aspects may be fundamental and conceptual, operational or procedural, each posing challenges. Also of note is a situation where a candidate's progress may not be smooth, due to a number of factors including work and family related circumstances. It is a challenge for a busy supervisor to remain committed to a research project if it drags on beyond the allowable time. If the research project is part of an active research agenda, lack of progress may impact other projects, funding, and more. Where there are medical reasons for lapses in progress the required medical certificates should be filed and program management informed for special consideration.

3.1 RESPONSIBILITIES, ROLE, AND ENGAGEMENT

A supervisor's involvement in the research starts once a research candidate has been accepted. This section describes the responsibilities, role and engagement of the supervisor in each of the phases of the research process.

Phase 1: Research Planning - Problem Analysis, Preliminary Literature Review, and Proposal Development

- **Role in Phase 1 Research Planning - Problem Analysis:** The specific research topic to be investigated is generally not clear at the inception of a doctoral research project, and it is incumbent on the supervisor

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