

Exploring Student-specific Factors Affecting PhD Theses Completion

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ABSTRACT The debate on what really contributes to successful PhD theses completion within minimum prescribed time is perennial and unending. A lot of studies on post-graduate research normally focus on modes of research supervision and student funding as the most important factors in PhD research work. However, there is a need to examine student-specific factors. Students may have the best research supervisors and be exposed to the best supervisory practices as well as have adequate research funding but still fail to complete their theses. One needs to have gone through a doctoral programme to understand and appreciate the student-specific factors and conditions that promote or hinder research progress. In this paper we argue that student-specific and not only institution-specific factors are very crucial in the successful completion of PhD theses. The presentation makes a critical analysis of available literature and also draws from the writers' own experiences as recent doctoral graduates. In the paper we further contend that motivation, commitment, diligence, autonomy, organizational and communication skills, research experience as well as ability to negotiate and foster working relationships with supervisors, among others, are the critical factors that promote research progress and ultimate completion of a PhD thesis.