

**Title: Application of the Contingency Approach in Supervision of PhD**

**Students at Makerere University**

**Supervisee: Ahmed Katalemwa**

**Supervisor: Associate Professor Ssempebwa Jude (PhD)**

**Abstract**

Supervision is one of the major avenues for sustaining students' satisfaction with the PhD programme. Since effective supervision relies heavily on the nature of the relationship between the student and the supervisor, supervisory style is also a critical element in the supervisory relationship. In view of this, I explored the fit between the supervisory styles used by supervisors of PhD students and the styles preferred by their supervisees at Makerere University. Reports of slow completion and high attrition of PhD students at Makerere University triggered my interest. I was guided by Gale et. al's Framework Method of data analysis. I adopted a qualitative, multiple case study design fixed in the interpretivist paradigm. I purposively selected 39 doctoral supervisors and 43 doctoral students, from whom I collected data using semi-structured interviews. I triangulated data sources with field notes. I analyzed data using thematic discourse analysis. The findings were that most supervisors at the university apply the contractual style of supervision, whereby they share supervisory functions with the supervisees as the latter have a greater say in decision making. Most supervisees also preferred the contractual style of supervision because it provides conducive interpersonal proximity with the supervisor. Therefore it was concluded that, on the whole, there is a fit between supervision styles applied by supervisors and supervision styles preferred by PhD students at Makerere University. For some students, however, there was a misfit; whereas most supervisors expect students to be the 'drivers' of their research projects many of the latter expected to be 'pushed' by their supervisors. It was also

discovered that inspite of supervisors' preference for a particular supervisory style, they endeavor to adjust supervision to students' needs and stages of the PhD project. Hence the conclusion that the supervision follows a contingency approach. Accordingly delayed completion and attrition is attributable to factors other than supervision styles/ approaches. Research into these factors is recommended.