

# The supervisor factor and undergraduates' confidence in completing their final year project

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In institutions of higher learning, students are often required to embark on a small-scale research project in a selected area of interest to provide them with the learning experience of planning, conducting and reporting academic research. In the process, students learn to apply their knowledge and skills to a selected research problem under the close guidance of their supervisors. The nature of the learning includes pre-requisite enrolment in research methodology classes before they embark on their research. In addition, scaffolding is an important feature embedded in the learning process as it provides opportunities for the students to gradually become more autonomous. General observations showed that students often attribute their progress in the research project to how good their supervisors are. This study explored the role of the supervisors in the progress of the research project by examining the relationship between research self-efficacy, student-supervisor relationship and the progress of the final year research project of 42 undergraduates in a TESL degree programme. The questionnaire results showed that the undergraduates generally reported a low level of research self-efficacy in their research knowledge and skills, and slow progress despite a positive relationship with their supervisors, contradicting previous findings on the significant role of supervisors. The paper concludes with a discussion of the nature of the research mentoring and the aspect of research training in bringing about a productive learning experience for students involved in research projects at college and university level.

Keywords: research self-efficacy, novice researchers, higher education