MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Strengthening Capacity for ICT Usage and Policy Reforms for Relevant and Quality Masters Research Process Management in Uganda's HEIs (ICT-4MRPQ)

RAPPORTEUR REPORT

Theme: Training on the Usage of the E-Supervision research platform for research supervisors

April 11, 2023

Overall Project Coordinator: Prof. David Katamba,

Moderator: Prof. Vincent Bagire

Trainer: Ms. Shakilah Nagujja

Report written by: Ms. Sheila Kesiime

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Abstract

1.0 Presentations by the facilitators

That training session focused on the role of the supervisor on the Masters E-Supervision Platform and their interface with the system. With the growing number of students and the need for quality research at Masters level, the E-supervision platform will play a critical role in ensuring quality research and fast completion of the Master's degree by students.

1.1 Prof. David Katamba, Overall Project Coordinator

Prof. Katamba presented key benefits of the E- supervision platform including the following:

1) That the platform would keep stock of the student- supervisor interactions
2) Minimize inconsistencies, redundancy of students leading to timely graduation.
3) Provide real time update of the students' progress on their research journey
4) He presented the plat form has a provision to chat hence providing real time interaction.
5) That the plat form would hep to deal away with cases of sexual harassment, guard the integrity of supervisors and Administrators
6) Fight plagiarism because it has plagiarism software embedded within
7) Research themes that are part of the national development goals would be embedded in the system. Therefore, students would be able to carry out research that is relevant to the National development goals of the country.

1.2 Ms. Shakilah Nagujja, Trainer

Ms. Nagujja presented that

1) the system was hosted by National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U). This was to ensure authenticity and legality of the system.
2) That the platform houses three users, i) Administrators, ii) students, iii) supervisors, internal and external examiners. That the users are dependent of each other and must work together to ensure a smooth research supervision journey.
3) That the Academic staff will be required to upload their profile including research areas of interest, publications etc. for ease of allocation of students.
4) That once a supervisor had been allocated a student, they would receive notification by mail and they can either accept or reject the student with reason.
5) That the student would not be able to proceed until they completed different sections of the research proposal. Supervisors were urged to be committed to their students to ensure a fast research journey.
6) That there would be plagiarism checks at every stage of the research proposal
7) That the Dean, Faculty of Graduate studies and research would be able to monitor the Student – supervisor interaction on the platform.

2.0 Questions and comments

Dr. Betty Bukenya Nambusi, Project Coordinator, National Council for Higher Education (NHCE)

She noted that many students drop out at research level and there had been no formal way of ironing out students queries in regards to research since there was no platform for NCHE to intervene.

Prof. Vincent Bagire, Moderator, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, MUBS

Commented that the implementation of the E-supervision plat form required behavioral change by all the stakeholders through adapting to the use of Technology. The Academic staff were urged to be up to date with technology.

He reminded attendees that there shouldn't be a blame game on the developers. that the development of the platform was still an ongoing process therefore the attendees were called upon to give views on how to improve the platform so that its able to cater for the various needs of the different stakeholders.

He reported that FGSR intend to starting using the platform in the coming Academic year 2023/2023 which was to commence in August 2023. The attendees were urged to get conversant with the platform to ease the implementation process.

He noted that some students abscond from supervision and the supervisors are seen to have supervision load yet the students absconded. Supervisors were requested to send such students back to the Faculty if they did not appear for supervision in 3 months.

Dr. Dennis Nuwagaba, Senior Lecturer, MUBS

He inquired how the end tail of the research process would be monitored, i.e. Submission of the dissertations and assessment of student's research reports.

Dr. Bernard Onyinyi, Senior Lecturer, MUBS

He inquired whether two supervisors would have real time interaction on the platform so that they are able to supervise student at the same time.

Dr. Joshua Mugambwa, Senior Lecturer, MUBS

Recommended a voice interface on the system so that supervisors can have real time conference with the students to quicken the research supervision process.

Dr. David Nyamuyonjo, Lecturer, MUBS

He commended the platform and stated that it you would serve as a good management tool in terms of monitoring performance. He Noted that overtime many systems had been adopted and dropped due to various challenges. In this regard he inquired about the sustainability of the E-Supervision platform.

Mr. Gerald Kaliisa, Lecturer, MUBS

He noted that since the student would only be able to progress with their research after completing a particular section of the proposal, there are sections that support one other and require back and forth changes. He recommended that the plat form should be flexible to allow students and supervisors make changes where necessary.

Dr. Sylvia Aarakit, Lecturer, Makerere University

She noted that the system did not have an option where the supervisor can see the student physically, that this would cause ethical issues where the supervisor could be supervising an impostor.

A number of participants argued that the implementation of the system would necessitate facilitation to the supervisors inform of Internet, gadgets etc.

The overall Project Coordinator remarked that;

1. He was glad members from National Council for Higher Education which is a regulatory body were part of the training and hence monitoring the proceedings
2. Several interventions had been made in ensuring that the E- supervision platform is sustainable. 1) a 5-year license had been purchased, 2) scaling out, deep and wide was another way of ensuring sustainability.
3. That an assessment form would be embedded in the system to ensure that the viva voce was part of the assessment.
4. That there would be not additional facilitation to staff because the University provides internet.
5. That training session to curb plagiarism were being organised and he would contribute UGX.20,000,000 (twenty million shillings) to this cause.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

The overall Project Coordinator acknowledged the immense contributions of all participants towards the success of the training session and the development of the E-supervision platform.

Prof. Vincent Bagire, the moderator, summarized the session in three conclusions: a widespread call for academic staff to embrace the platform and make use of it, recognition that the present research supervision process was not without challenges, and concern that much as the platform may pose new challenges, research supervision was taking on a new dimension.