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 Administrators at the Faculty of Graduate School and Research (FGSR)

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ABSTRACT

The session focused on the Administrators' role on the E-supervision platform and their interface with the platform. Several dimensions of the current research supervision status and future needs were assessed. First, compliance with the rules and regulations of the Academic Board in regard to who was eligible to commence their research journey. Second, the impact of the implementation of the platform on the students, University Management, Administrators and supervisors was reviewed, and consideration was given to how to ensure a good working relationship with the users of the platform.

1.0 Presentations and discussions

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

He reported that the training was a physical demonstration of the usage of the E-supervision platform to the Administrators at the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

That the different faculty staff have manually been involved in the different processes of research supervision from registering students, allocating supervisors, scheduling vivas. This system would ensure an effective and efficient research process.

That in addition it was meant to bridge the gap between the Administrators and the Academic staff to ensure quality research supervision.

That the training was to provide hands on experience for the Administration in implementation of their roles on the platform.

1.2 Prof. David Katamba, overall Project Coordinator, MUBS

That he was happy to spear head the E-supervision system to ensure quality research at the Masters level. That there was need to improve on the efficiency with which supervisors deal with students.

That the system would ensure that there was a clear record of supervisor – student interaction. This was because there have been numerous claims from students that their supervisors were not available to meet them. The system was being designed to provide accountability of research supervision process to the students, supervisors and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and research.

That there has been a challenge at FGSR with the supervision load of research supervisors, where some supervisors have a big work load and others less load hence causing delay in supervision of students. The system was meant to solve this challenge by providing a record of each supervisors load hence equitable allocation of work load.

That the system would also provide real time updates to the students from when they are assigned a supervisor throughout their research process.

That the platform would ensure that students carry out relevant research because research themes that meet National development goals were embedded onto the platform.

That plagiarism software was embedded on the plat form and this would do away with duplication of students' research projects.

That the Administrators were the champions of the platform since they will be interfacing the plat form before the other users come on board. Therefore the training was of at most importance to them

1.3 Ms. Shakilah Nagujja, Trainer, MUBS

Ms. Nagujja demonstrated the usage of the Administrative interface on the E-supervision platform. She presented the following as the Administrators roles on the platform:

i) Uploading student's data on to the E-supervision platform i.e. names, registration and student numbers and students' programmes
ii) Assign supervisors to the students
iii) Monitoring progress of students
iv) Monitoring the load of the supervisors

That the role of the Administrator could be assigned to the Dean of the faculty, faculty registrar or any administrator in the Faculty.

That while uploading students' data on the platform, the Administrators were charged with ensuring that the students met the criterion that was in place to ensure that the student was eligible to embark on their research journey. This included payment of the necessary fees, completion of set credit units e.t.c.

She demonstrated a step by step process of the Administrators interface with the platform

1) Upload supervisors with their areas of expertise and research interests
2) Upload the names of the students, emails, their registration numbers and academic programmes for which they are registered.
3) The student receives an email indicating that their data has been uploaded on the system and they are now eligible to commence their research journey.
4) The students are then allocated supervisors
5) Then the Administrator monitors the supervision process and provides reports to the necessary stake holders.

2.0 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Peter Ntale, Research fellow

He inquired that in the absence of a centralized database for the previous student's research, how would the plagiarism software help since students were known to reproduce the research of the students who completed their Masters.

He noted that the system seemed to be limiting physical interaction between students and supervisors. That there was a lot to learn during these physical interactions which the students would miss out on once the platform is implemented.

Dr. Geoffrey Nkuutu, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

He inquired whether:

1. students would be restricted from inputting their own data for instance those that did not meet the supervision criteria
2. it was possible to upload the students assessment of research supervision on the system

Prof. Laura Orobia, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

She inquired whether

1. the platform was able to sieve students' topics because it noted that students usually had similar topics and only changed the area of study.
2. the system would be able to restrict the total load that a supervisor can take on in a given period to ensure equal distribution of workload.

She noted that, it had been implied that the role of allocation of research supervisors was to be implemented by faculty Administrators who were not competent for the role.

Dr. Charles Tushabomwe, Makerere University

Inquired whether with the platform top University Management would be able to have a view into the supervision process since they were completely left out under the manual system.

The Lead Project Coordinator remarked that:

1) The system was being developed to ease the research process for all the parties involved and that the comments were being received in good faith.
2) That in the development of the system there were four frontiers; a) the developer, b) the supervisors who are more technical c) the University Management that need a seek pick into the system, d) Administrators who are

less technical but implement the policies and regulations of the Academic board. The platform would serve as the intersection between all these parties.

He emphasized that the system would follow the University regulations in regard to allocation of supervisors and the entire students research journey

He clarified that the Faculty Dean would be responsible for allocation of supervisors, however the task could be allocated to the Administrators in the faculty.

He reported that the system would be able to equitably allocated work load and indicate to the Administrator that a supervisor had been allocated maximum load.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

In their concluding remarks, the facilitators urged the participants to engage with the platform and be conversant with it, that this would give them a better feel of platform and hands on experience.
The lively debate at the end of the session and follow-up talks after the session between participants and facilitators showed the need to improve understanding of the platform.