



Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing Course in Modern Higher Education, an Emerging Issue in Sustainable Development in the Modern World

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Abstract

Research and innovation, if properly conducted, are supposedly the spurs/catalysts and/or the basis for initiating and conducting sustainable development in modern society. They have, as well as they do provide and carry the potential for transforming the society. In other words, Research and Innovation (R&I) are the basis of conducting the desired development especially sustainable development in modern society. These two components of education, research and innovation, usually develop and promote the main ingredients needed for the development and sustenance of the desired model of development to embrace for modern society. However, for these two processes of education to play their rightful role in development, they must be properly designed and conducted. This is the basis on which the design and administration of the course on Research Proposal/Thesis Writing in Higher Education was derived from. Therefore, the purpose of designing and presenting this paper is to examine and discuss the nature of this course on Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing (RPTDW) in the management of modern research and innovation in Higher education; the importance of the course in the administration of research and innovation for conducting sustainable development in modern world; the main considerations in the design and administration of this course in the management of modern research and innovation and, the challenges of adopting and embracing this course in the administration of research and innovation for sustainable development in modern world. The discussion of each of these aspects of the paper will inform the premise in which King (1961) and Ssentenza – Kajjubi (1969) considered education and, by extension research and innovation, as critical components of the development of modern society.

Keywords: Emerging issues; Modern World; Research Proposal; Research and Innovation; Thesis/Dissertation Writing; Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Education, by nature, is a dynamic process. That is, it is continuously changing its nature, form roles and/or functions in the society according to changing circumstances or environment. This is because education as is research and innovation, is usually sensitive and responsive to emerging issues in modern society (Kafu, 2018). Therefore, the design and development of the course in RPTDW in the management of Research and Innovation is an expected development in modern Higher education. It is both a timely response to the emerging issues in modern research and innovation and an expected development in modern society. Hence, the consideration of this course as an innovation in the management of Higher education today. The course has never been a component of managing R&I Higher education in work in modern world. Generally, this is a special and unique course in character that was designed and

administered for the first time in Moi University in 2007 as a remedial course for managing the emerging issues in administration of Research and Innovation for sustainable development in the modern world (Kafu, 2007).

The design and administration of the course in RPTDW was a response to the emerging concerns about the quality of administering modern Research and Innovation and preparation of graduate students for research work. In recent times, scholars in education have raised concerns about the rampant plagiarism in R&I work, increased dishonesty among students pursuing Higher education in developing and preparing their research and innovation materials and the incompetence of these students to conduct research and innovation work to the required standards (Kangethe et al., 2006; Mugenda and Mugenda, 2021). From the reports of the presentations of Research Proposals for vetting/approval and the Oral Defences of Thesis/Dissertations, there is established evidence that there exists a serious malpractice in the administration of Research and Innovation work by the present crop of graduate students (Moi University, 2008). These students are found to be involved in widespread plagiarism when developing and administering R&I work; they often engage the services of well-established Research Bureaus and the cartels of gullible individuals engaged by these students to design, develop and administer this work for them. Besides, there is emerging sad practice of the graduate students blackmailing staff members assigned to them to assist them in the development and administration of R&I work. The consequence of this development is to create unnecessary tension and conflicts between these students and staff and especially the institutional appointed supervisors. These developments point to one important fact with regard to management of modern R&I in Higher education. These students are usually not well prepared for the R&I work, (Murunga, 2013). Therefore, the course on RPTDW is designed and administered in R&I work to fill the gap/make up for this deficit (Kibuga, 1992; Glasgow, 2005; Greswell and Plano Clark, 2017; Moi University, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of administering this course in the management of modern R&I is to develop and promote the quality of conducting this component of management of modern Higher education by equipping graduate students with the required competencies.

In this paper, the focus is on the nature, importance, considerations and the challenges of designing and administering the course on RPTDW in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. Each of these aspects of the paper is briefly and separately discussed herein below.

The Nature of the Course on Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing in Management Research and Innovation in Modern World

This section of the paper examines the characteristics/features, the role and functions of this course in the management of R & I for sustainable development in modern Higher education in the world. Generally, the course on RPTDW may be characterized as ethical since it deals with ethics of administering R & I for sustainable development in modern society. It is also an innovative course since it is a new development in administration of R & I that is not offered anywhere in the world and it has been specifically designed and administered as a response to the noted falling quality of conducting R&I modern society. Further, this is a functional course that is designed and administered in the management of R & I to develop and equip graduate students with the necessary competencies of administering efficiently R&I in modern world for promoting sustainable development. Lastly, this is a research-based course since its design and administration is based on/focuses and deals with research work (Reason, 2003; Kothari; 2004; Research Advisors, 2006; Simon, 2011).

Apart from the above stated characteristics features of this course on RPTDW, this course plays a special role and has special functions in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. These two features, the roles and functions of the course, are components of the nature of the course on RPTDW. The main role of the course is to develop, promote and sustain the quality of development and administration of R & I in Higher of learning by maintaining the traditional stature of R&I as the critical component of managing modern Higher education; ensuring that the established structures, ethics and principles and practice are properly taught and adhered to when conducting quality R&I for sustainable development in modern world. That is, the course is designed, conducted and intended to “walk” the graduate students through the process of development and administration of R & I for sustainable development today. Through this professional and academic course, the graduate students are adequately prepared in the intricacies involved in the design, development and administration of modern R & I. Consequently, through this course, there is a possibility of preparing and producing the desired, competent researchers to spur sustainable development in modern world. It is also noteworthy that this course is characterized as skill-intensive and hence the need for establishing appropriate and adequate investment in its administration of modern Higher education (Kibuga, 1992).

From the above discussion, it is clear that RPTDW course is a critical requirement and an important component of management of modern R&I for sustainable development in modern world. It is on this basis that the focus of this paper shifts to the importance of the course on RPTDW in the administration of modern R&I for sustainable development today.

The Importance of Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing Course in Administration of Research and Innovation for Sustainable Development in Modern World

This section of the paper examines the importance of the course on RPTDW in the process of administering R&I for sustainable development in modern world. Specifically, this section examines and focuses on its need, its role and its main functions in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development. Generally, the main purpose of conducting R&I in the society is to spur, facilitate and promote the desired development. Consequently, the importance of the innovative course on RPTDW lies in the following facts. Generally, this course is designed and conducted in the management of modern R&I to;

1. Facilitate the development and sustenance of the cherished stature, practices, ethics and traditions that have been the identity/recognition of R&I as an essential component of modern Higher education sector from time immemorial.
2. Promote the quality of conducting R&I as a critical component of administering education for sustainable development in modern world.
3. Provide opportunity for developing and administering creativity and innovations in modern Higher education in general and management of education for sustainable development in particular in modern world. That is, this course is designed and intended to facilitate the transformation /modernization of management of modern Higher education in general and administration of R&I work in particular today.
4. Provide the basis for preparation and production competent researchers to promote the sustainable development in modern world as well as developing and equipping graduate students with essential competencies of conducting modern R&I. Hence guaranteeing the development and sustenance of adequate pool of expertise for promoting the desired sustainable development in modern world.

5. R&I is normally an expectation in the management of modern Higher education globally to promote its quality. Therefore, the main function of the course in RPTDW is to globalize the administration of R&I in modern world. This is because this course has all the hallmarks of introducing and conducting globalization process in the administration of R&I work. Hence, enriching the content of conducting R&I exercise.
6. Generally, the role of the course on RPTDW in administration of research and innovation is to prepare graduate students in the competencies of conducting efficient R&I work today. Besides, the course focuses on development and introduction of new perspectives in the management of R&I as espoused by Neils (2019) and Kafu (2019).

However, to be able to justify the discussion on the nature and importance of the course of and especially its RPTDW content, it is necessary to examine the main considerations in the design and administration of the course in the management of modern R&I. Considerations usually are the indicators of the nature, importance and the intended structures of the designed and conducted course including the one under the discussion. Hence the discussion that follows focuses on these facts.

Considerations in the Design and Administration of Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing Course in the Management of Modern Research and Innovation in Modern World

Considerations normally define the designed and administered course in education. These considerations imply and even carry the structural design of the intended course including the nature, importance, structure and guidelines of conducting the course. It is in the context of this fact that the considerations in the design and administration of the course on RPTDW are herein below discussed. The main considerations of interest include the following

1. The nature of the course on RPTDW of a dynamic, ethical, professional, technical and research-based in character. This is normally the first consideration since it underlies other consideration.
2. The second consideration is related to facilitation needed for the design and administration of the course in the management of modern R&I. Among the most important aspects of this facilitation are fiscal, policy frame-work good will, expertise, technical and logistical support from stake-holders in education that must be available for the purpose.
3. The third consideration should focus on the existing status of managing R&I in modern world in general and the Higher education sector in particular. Today the administration of this component of education can be viewed as poor in quality, unprofessional in character and unconventional in out-look.
4. Fourthly, there is need to consider the structural design of the course that should reflect the content of the course. Being an innovative course, the structural design should reflect pragmatic in nature. The design of the course is a departure from the established structures of the conventional courses in the management of R&I today. The structure of this course focuses on guiding, mentoring the graduate students in the design, development and administration of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. In other words consideration should be given to the structure that emphasize the development and equipment graduate students with the required competencies of conducting modern R&I independently.
5. The other consideration when designing and administering the course on RPTDW is the importance of the course in the management of modern R&I in modern society. In other words it is necessary to consider the need for this

course, its role in the management of modern R&I as well as its function in this process (PIER, 2004).

6. The last but not least consideration in the design and administration of the course are the emerging issues in education and modern society which may be helpful or not helpful in the administration of the course in the management of modern research and innovation in modern world. These emerging issues are of large varieties and exert differing impacts in the process of administering the course on RPTDW in the management of R&I in modern world. Some of these emerging issues include increased sophistication in modern society, technological advancements in modern world, changing models of managing education today, changing character of learners and teachers in modern education, increasing influence of globalization process on management of education and modern society and the changing dynamics in modern society. Since these developments are totally new, there is need to identify them properly and manage them appropriately.

Since the design and administration of this course on RPTDW is not a walk in the park, considerations of conducting the course contain and point to potential challenges posed by administering the course in the process of managing modern R&I for sustainable development. Some of the potential challenges are presented herein below. It is important to note that with concerted effort most of these challenges are manageable.

Challenges of the Design and Administration of the Course on Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing in the Management of Modern Research and Innovation

The term challenges in modern education refers to emerging issues and the associated or related problems (Kafu, 2019). In the case of the design and administration of the course on RPTDW in the management of R&I in modern Higher education, this term refers to all those factors that influence the administration of this process. These challenges are related to the nature of the course, the required expertise for managing the course in modern R&I work, the required governing structures for managing this course in modern R&I, the needed facilitation for administering the course in the management of modern R&I, the established cultural practices in the management of modern education in general and research and R&I specifically as well as the emerging issues in education and modern society. These factors are unique in nature and pose equally unique challenges with regard to administration of the course on RPTDW in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development in modern world. Each of these challenges is briefly discussed herein below.

1. The Nature of the course on Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Writing: This course is a new development, an innovation in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. In other words, the course is totally new and/or recent in character. It has no history to go by when administering it in the process of managing modern R&I. Therefore, the course is currently, ambiguous, misconstrued by stake-holders in education in general and R&I circles in particular. Therefore, the present generation of educationists/educators do not have the ability and capacity to manage the course itself in general and the challenges generated by this course in particular at the moment.
2. Being a new development and an innovation in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development, the course requires specialized expertise to manage it efficiently in the administration of modern R&I for sustainable development. There is limited expertise in this course available at the moment and little effort is currently being made to develop the required expertise by relevant education authorities to fill this gap (Kafu, 2020).

3. Given the nature of the course on RPTDW that typifies it as an innovation/new development, ethical, technical, logistical and professional in character, the facilitation for managing the course is broad, complex and highly integrated. The needed facilitation include good will from the stakeholders in education in general and especially R&I, fiscal, technical and logistical support for capacity building in the management of the course and promoting efficiency in the administration of the course as well as the development of structures including policy formulation to facilitate the administration of the course in the management R&I for sustainable development in modern society. Additionally, there is need to professionalize the design and administration of course in the process of managing modern R&I. However, because of the nature of the course it is difficult to determine and establish the appropriate facilitation needed for the management of the course efficiently in modern research and innovation.
4. The influence of the established cultural practices in the management of modern Higher education and especially R&I which can ably be characterized as conservative/traditional and/or conventional. But the management systems and practices that are demanded by the modern, pragmatic approach to managing Higher education in general and R&I in particular are out of reach for most institution of Higher Learning. This contradictory situation tends to complicate the process of administering this course in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world and especially africa.
5. As an innovation/new development in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development today, the course on RPTDW does not have well established structures (policies, procedures, ethics codes) to govern its operations. This situation is currently obliterating its effectiveness in promoting the quality of managing modern R&I for sustainable development. Given that there is limited expertise available at present can, who design and administer the relevant structures for governing this course in the process of managing modern R & I for sustainable development makes its role in modern development ineffective.
6. The emerging issues in the management of education and modern society are a reality and do exist today. They are here and they have come to stay. These emerging issues/developments are many, varied in nature and have varied impact on the management of education including R&I in education and modern society. Given the widely differing nature of these emerging issues/developments, the urgent professional question to pose is “what strategies should be designed and harnessed to manage these varied challenges in the administration of the course on RPTDW in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development?”

The above discussed challenges should be positively viewed as opportunities for exploring new areas of administering the course on RPTDW in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. Further these challenges are guiding principles and strengths in transforming the management of modern R&I for sustainable development. But they should not only be considered as threats of conducting this process and/or weaknesses of doing so. Therefore, the conclusions that follow are the considered purpose, role and function of this course in the management of R&I for sustainable development in modern world. Consequently, on the basis of the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions and recommendations are made.

Conclusions of Recommendations of Adopting and Embracing Research Proposal and Thesis/Dissertation Course in the Management of Research and Innovation in Modern Higher Education

The foregoing discussion concerning the adoption and embracing the RPTDW course in the management of modern R&I has clearly demonstrated the need for this course in this process. Consequently, based on this discussion, the following conclusions and recommendations concerning the place of the course on RPTDW in the management of modern R&I work for sustainable development today.

1. It is quite evident from the discussion in this paper that the course on RPTDW is an essential component of managing R&I in institutions of Higher Learning. This is a course with the potential of developing and promoting the quality of conducting modern R&I for sustainable development in modern world. In other words, the course provides the basis for developing and promoting the quality of conducting modern R&I work in institutions of higher Learning. In view of the importance of this course in the management of R&I, this paper strongly recommends that the course be adopted and embraced as both a core and required course in preparation of graduate students and/or upcoming young researchers in the art of conducting modern R&I.
2. From the work of distinguished scholars (Kangethe et al, 2006; Kerlinger, 1983; Owens 2002; Shamoo and Rensnik, 2003; Glasgow, 2005; Mujis, 2010; Pinto, 2015; Sofotho, 2015; Seltman, 2018; Kafu, 2020) it has been established that the quality of managing R&I work, has deteriorated a great deal. A number of malpractices in administration of R&I work in modern institutions of Higher Learning have been highlighted by these authorities. Among the noted malpractices include plagiarism, indiscipline among graduate students and increased insincerity among the students when preparing their R&I work. This is a clear demonstration that these students and/or upcoming researchers lack requisite competencies of conducting R&I work. Consequently, this paper recommends that this course on RPTDW be made compulsory in all institutions of Higher Learning that offer post-graduate studies.
3. Generally, management of R&I work is heavily ethical in operation and emphasizes integrity. This fact has been emphasized throughout the discussion in this paper. The conclusion drawn from the discussion of the course on R&I is that graduate students and/or young researchers must be familiar with the required ethics, practices, traditions and structures governing the management of R&I work. This is the process of preparing and producing competent, ethical and respected scholars in modern world. Since the course on RPTDW is ethical and policy-based, this paper recommends that this course be taught so as to familiarize the graduate students and/or young researchers with the expectations of modern R&I today.
4. The course on RPTDW is an important facility in the design, development and production of the required research documents like R&I, Theses/Dissertations and Research reports (Kangethe et al, 2006). In other words, the course is a tool/instrument of developing and promoting the quality of managing R&I in modern institutions of Higher Learning. Arising from the presentation of this course, it is recommended that this course be integrated in the curriculum of modern Higher education.
5. The course on RPTDW is not only a guideline in the management of modern R&I for sustainable development but also serves as a tool/instrument for professionalizing and modernizing R&I work today. This is because the course is based on established ethics and structures that facilitate the globalization process of R&I in modern world. Therefore, for this course to play this role effectively, its

scope should be broadened to include all the emerging issues in management of modern R & I.

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