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Concept Paper

Conceptualizing the Design of ERP Project Model for Postgraduate Study in Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

Purpose – This concept paper proposes a novel approach for a single Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for postgraduate studies. This research aims to develop an extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that considers the key aspects of ERP adoption in postgraduate universities through a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature. The 21st century has brought forth the most effective and efficient simplification of practically every element of life, where ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems come into play.

Method – The study will synthesize the current initial system review approach, which was deployed with the use of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) design project model for postgraduate studies in tertiary institutions.

Result and Conclusion - It is evidenced that the TAM Model is a model that is needed within the new generational operation of postgraduate studies. It will enhance all processes in a unified form without silos of functions from different departments across the postgraduate studies.

Recommendations - Institutions should use a modular and adaptable design strategy to improve the efficacy of ERP systems designed for postgraduate study. This makes it possible to modify the system to meet each institution's unique administrative, academic, and research needs.

Research Implications - This study on ERP implementation is less commonly used in most postgraduate studies in education, and the search in this field is still in its early stages. Although many postgraduate studies Institutions have deployed ERP solutions or are mandating ERP systems, the failure rate of ERPs within postgraduate studies institutions is significantly higher than that of other industries.

Practical Implications- It became evident that computer-related variables, computer self-efficacy, and computer-related factors within the company, such as top management, are the primary categories of characteristics that have been widely examined and found to be crucial to understanding ERP adoption and acceptance.

Keywords – Enterprise Resource Planning, SAP Integration, Postgraduate Studies, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Enterprise resource planning systems are referred to as ERP. Due to the rapidly shifting business environments, ERP systems have gained popularity among companies worldwide (Aroba, Chnsamy, and Makwakwa 2023b). ERP systems are typically used to describe collections of information systems created to streamline the sharing of corporate data resources. Utilizing ERP systems helps firms' internal data flow (Aroba et al. 2023a; Aroba et al., 2023c). Information fragmentation is prevented in this way. By 2025, the global ERP software market is predicted to generate 48.21 billion USD in sales. This is a 7.88% CAGR growth rate from 2020. ERP adoption became one of the top practices globally in 2019 for automating all corporate activities into a single, straightforward solution.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is renowned for increasing business productivity, lowering costs, and integrating business processes. All of these factors influence the use of ERP by businesses of all sizes (Aroba 2023, Aroba 2024). With a focus on the Southern African environment, this study tries to pinpoint the conditions for a productive ERP deployment in small and medium-sized businesses (Aroba and Abayomi 2023). This study employed an analytical methodology to find common themes among the various ERP implementation issues faced by SMEs. This gave the authors the opportunity to look into the problems more deeply and try to come up with answers. The report provides recommendations that can assist African SMEs in making wise decisions while installing ERP based on the problems that have been identified. Due to the near saturation of ERP adoptions in Large Enterprises (LE), ERP firms focus more on SMEs (Aroba 2023; Aroba 2022).

Postgraduate studies institutions are in the unusual situation of managing many students, applications, classrooms, professors, accounts, etc. It has been predicted that managing, forecasting, synchronizing, and streamlining these activities and processes with all their moving pieces takes a lot of work (Boateng et al., 2024). This is why the various Universities in South Africa use postgraduate studies enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. ERP SAP future trends, including web-based ERP systems and outsourcing of ERP applications for SMEs, have been predicted by the developing organizational value systems. The engagement abilities of ERP systems across three different enterprise management patterns. ERPIII is renowned in this context for increasing fast and dynamic network connections through the networks, a trait suited for agile businesses. ERP SAP systems are included in a category of business applications appropriate for a cloud environment in another research on operating a global organization using cloud technology (Aggrey et. al. 2021; Aroba & Rudolph 2025a; Aroba & Rudolph 2025b).

The widespread implementation of ERP systems has generated much research interest in postgraduate studies curricula (García-Peñalvorcid 2021). The ERP curriculum needs to be changed proportionately to match the evolving institutional demands. Due to eLearning initiatives, the need for digital tools is rising at universities, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Sternad Zabukovšek et al., 2022; Aroba & Govender, 2023). With the use of ERP-GIS systems to track the behavioral intentions of their students, lecturers can enhance their lesson planning and instructional techniques. Innovative teaching methods to assist the competency development of their pupils, students may receive better marks as a consequence, and graduates may be more prepared for the workforce (Azouri et al., 2022). In recent years, there have been a lot more postgraduate courses on installing SAP enterprise resource planning (ERP) in SMEs. Some universities handle their daily job using knowledge.

ERP system adoption by SMEs typically goes smoothly. When adopting an ERP system, the majority of SMEs weigh the expenses and are hesitant to invest until the business is up and running. Similar to this, several SMEs, particularly those looking to expand and flourish in the future, consider the improvements that ERP systems can bring to their businesses. Business intelligence (BI) has found that roughly 70% of firms use information warehousing and BI, according to audit organizations. Despite the industry's rapid development, there are warning indicators that the ERP systems do not meet the functional needs of HEIs (Katuu 2021). Postgraduate studies institutions were made to cooperate with public and private businesses to use SAP to combine theoretical knowledge with real-world experience (Cebekhulu et al. 2020; Aroba & Mnguni, 2023).

SAP enables businesses of any size to immediately communicate information with their personnel, vendors, and distributors. Streamlining directly improves profitability, client happiness, output, and general quality. Applications are used to manage manufacturing processes, materials, people, plants, historical documentation, and financial, asset, and cost accounting (Colvin & Carmona, 2020). Due to the expansion of business transaction types, enterprise systems like SAP are widely used by companies of all kinds. Business schools seek to include enterprise systems in their courses in response to demands from the business sector (Cadersaib et al. 2022). According to surveys, many business schools struggle with maintaining integrated curricula and including enterprise systems in the curriculum. The SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which offers a single source of truth and streamlines operations across the enterprise, organizes the movement of data between a company's business activities. During the early phases of designing an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, entities recognize the benefit of scoping and budgeting for taxes. Therefore, many businesses are always looking for ways to update obsolete or overly complex systems to increase profitability by promptly responding to market pressures, consumer trends, and problems with e-filing disintegration. Additionally, SAP ERP can help a business maintain all of its data, financial information, and other important information with the finest security measures. (Kajbaje and Kamatchi 2022; Aroba 2023, Aroba et al. 2023a,b).

The enterprise resource planning system is one of the most critical systems that companies of all hues, whether commercial or public, implement (Mithi and Govender 2021). In addition to the traditional ERP system, the most significant ERP types include Web-based ERP and Cloud ERP. As a result, manufacturers of ERP systems like Oracle and SAP are focusing on designing ERP systems based on cloud technology and providing the ERP system as a service for monthly and annual subscriptions, where the system is external to the organizations and does not need to exist within the organization (Sharma and Chauhan 2021).

Organizations have benefited significantly from using enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs), but there have also been drawbacks, such as inappropriate utilization, system dissatisfaction, and real-time issues. Huge corporate financial functions have undergone a fundamental change in the ERP system, and specific financial duties are no longer maintained. To reduce the rising failure percentage in developing nations adopting ERP systems, this research identifies essential characteristics supporting financial functions in postgraduate studies institutions' deployment of ERP economic systems. The specialists were chosen based on their technical and system understanding of the ERP system. As a realistic answer throughout time, ERP systems have been implemented in numerous enterprises across the globe with significant financial investment. The first ERP systems were implemented in HEIs in the USA to respond to similar concerns that drive the business sector to adopt these systems. ERP is a system that combines different software programs in order to coordinate business processes between various departments, including finance, procurement, distribution, supply chain management, and other departments. By integrating financial information, ERP also increases an organization's effectiveness and efficiency. A SAP ERP system is necessary for streamlining corporate operations and processes so that organizations can operate more effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, ERP solutions across numerous industries automate and support the majority of administrative and business processes, including the line of business, customer-facing, and asset management departments of an organization. (Aroba 2022; Aroba and Abayomi 2023).

These systems are currently widely available on the international market. However, ERP system employment in HEIs might be difficult due to insufficient and specific expertise. The regrettable assumption is that there are no barriers to emerging countries using existing knowledge (Jaradat et al. 2022). Literature that is widely read emphasizes the knowledge gap that is there. Some writers contend that the difficulties in implementing ERP systems in developing nations must be thoroughly examined rather than assuming that success in one setting would automatically translate into success in another. This is because insufficient research has been done to identify CSFs for implementing ERP systems supporting institutional functions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The atmosphere at universities is dynamic and undergoing fast change (Garcia Penalvo 2021). Enterprise resource planning (ERP) is necessary for achieving excellence and a competitive edge (Roxana 2021). The ERP education program is a software solution created to streamline the educational process and combine several organizational divisions (Nzama 2021). ERP use in businesses is increasing quickly. Currently, 40% of institutions are using ERP software (Randy et. al. 2019). Depending on the vendor supplying entirely specific hosting services, the implementation method for ERP changed. SAP, Oracle, and Microsoft are notable vendors (Kirmizi and Kocaghu 2021). It is unlikely that ERP structures will be the last software investment made by superior training institutions, even though they currently represent their largest (Azouri et al. 2022). Universities are planning to restart and establish new enterprise-extensive organizations in the future. Thus, it was decided to focus more research efforts on this area (Madi et al. 2021). According to studies on ERP implementation, institutions confront several obstacles (Bamufleh et al. 2020).

However, it is paradoxical to observe that universities are, to a great extent, offering low deployment of information and communication technologies (ICT) solutions to assist them in handling boom difficulties, even though the challenges are occurring in the technology (De La Pena et al., 2021).

Similarly, a case study was conducted in which the essential success criteria of an ERP system were assessed, which revealed that an ERP failure might happen when the system is not created to include all the institution's departments (Mushayi and Mayayise 2021). For instance, the system is generic enough to contain the essentials, the finance and admin department, but not the testing and examination department (Ntakirutimana 2021; Katuu 2023). The performance of the installed ERP system might be significantly impacted by leaving out other factors necessary for student/institutional life (Hayes, 2025). On the other hand, ERP systems in postgraduate studies are created to simplify practically every element of how schools and colleges run (Bogopa 2022). ERP adoption and research are still in their infancy at postgraduate studies institutions (Takac et. al. 2021; Aroba et al. 2023). Moreover, research has been done on how to include all university activities between students and the university itself, such as the involvement of support groups on the same platform of the ITS web interface; however, with the gaps discovered through all the previous research of various scholars on the implementation of ERP as a centralized system where all operations are to be carried out for seamlessly flat operational processes.

METHODOLOGY

The initial system review approach was employed to discover important information regarding the weaknesses of the existing system's enterprise resource planning (ERP) design aimed at South African postgraduate studies. Existing research provides compelling evidence for the value of existing systems to determine how to

propose research in this sort of study (Gandhi 2020; Aroba et. al.2023). The institutions recognize that implementing such an ERP system will take substantial time and resources. ERP SAP systems in teaching and learning programs must be innovative and successful. During our investigation, we found several publications addressing the issues. How is the ERP project model built in South African higher education? These publications were using a desktop research approach, a computer search of many of the databases of journals. Furthermore, as predicted, the investigations only included scientific or peer-reviewed papers.

One thing that stood out among all the journals we went through was that there are still some discrepancies that the higher institutions are still facing (Pumplun 2022). Most institutions have already incorporated an ERP system into their database, but some aspects are still missing on the ITS (Gebashe et al., 2025).

The Walter Sisulu University (WSU) ITS web interface platform is the case study, which is one of the systems at the university that higher institutions use as a way of integrating all the departments in the university into one system that is accessible to students, lecturers, faculty staff, and the admin. However, some discrepancies were faced by students when they were trying to contribute to online learning. Some lecturers used to conduct online classes; however, students had to download another application to access those classes.

In one of the literature (Khan et al. 2022) mentioned that it is critical to include all relevant departments and that failing to do so can result in ERP failure if the system is not built to include all institution departments. A prototype (Figure 1 below) to address this disparity at the institution and prevent the ITS from failing. This prototype included the ITS's existing components, the student administration and finance department, and then added the critical features, the examination section, an online class where online classes can be conducted, and a suggestion box. Students will no longer need to access another site to write their tests/submit assignments in the examination part or download another app to attend online classes; they may now do so on the newly developed ITS platform. They can write, submit tests/assignments, and track their academic progress and grades. Generally, not every system is entirely adequate, so we incorporated a comment box where students may voice their opinions on the design and suggest what can be done to the ITS to make it more efficient for users. The graphic below depicts the new additions to the ITS and how they are integrated into the system.

SUGGESTED PROTOTYPE

THE ERP SAP design below is the proposed improved version of the ITS web interface that is currently used in postgraduate Universities, which will enhance the operational processes within the higher institutions.

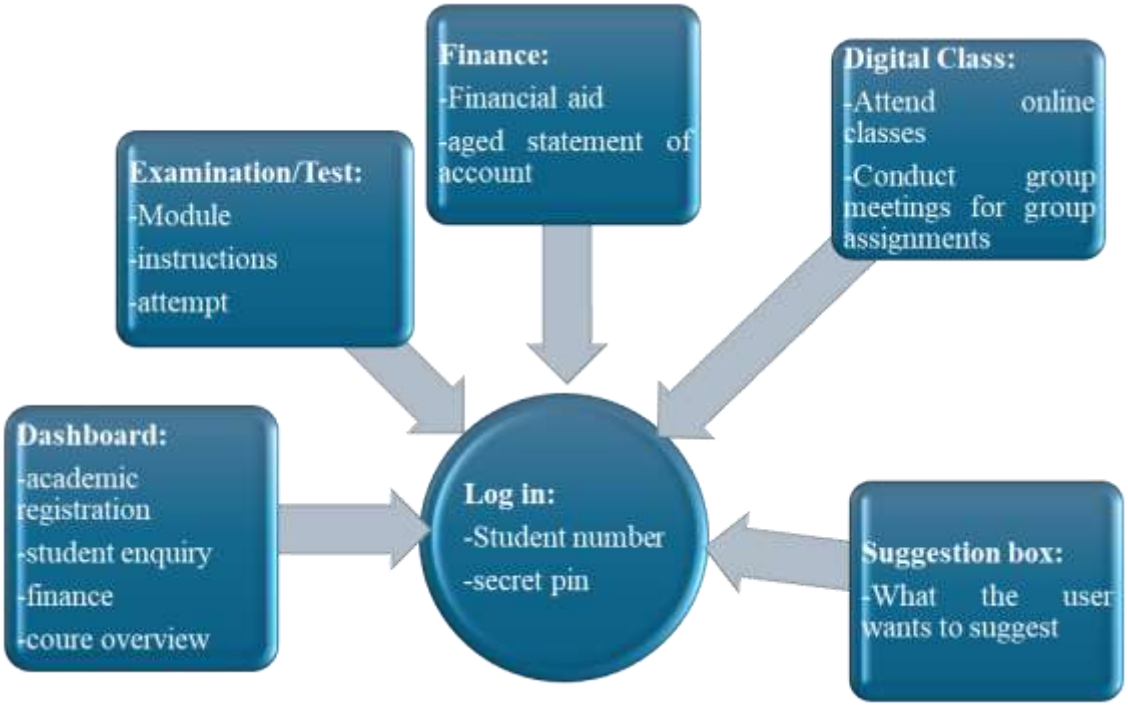
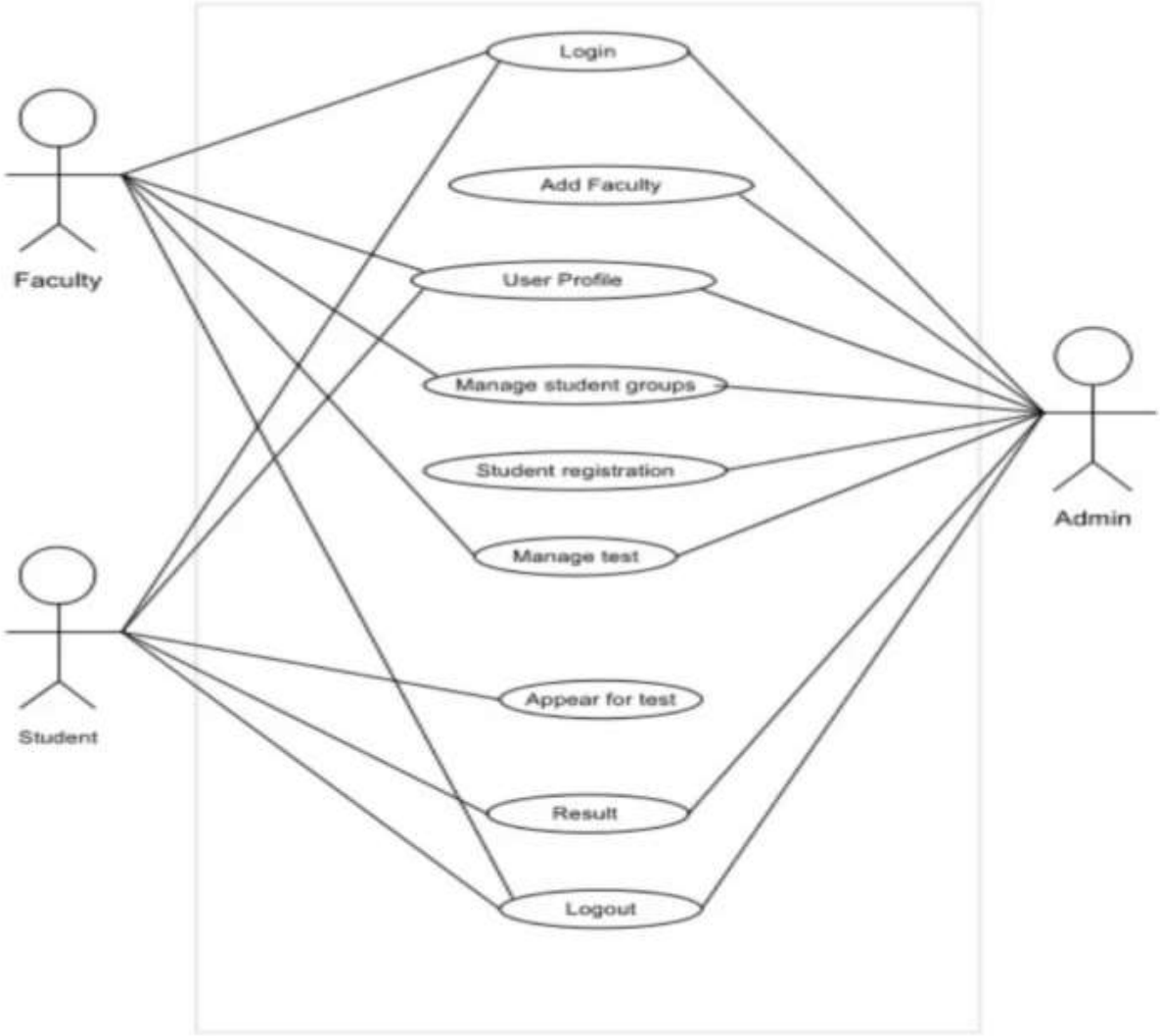


Figure 1. The ITS web interface is redesigned to consider the crucial factors of ERP implementation (Researcher's Own Concept)

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Universities and colleges manage many students, applications, classes, lecturers, accounts, and other items daily. They have resorted to ERP to replace their senior management and administration computer systems. Because all these procedures and operations are complicated, postgraduate studies institutions have been pushed to employ postgraduate studies enterprise resource planning software solutions. With ERP management software, these solutions improve operational efficiency in postgraduate institutions. Faster service delivery to students, increased productivity, and inventory management are all made possible by an ERP SAP system. When client retention is crucial, it might encourage improved customer communication. Going back is nonetheless a concern despite the fact that the ERP SAP system undertaking is currently more prominent than in previous years. With the assistance of their more respectable choice bank, many SMEs are pardoned. However, this shouldn't be a crucial choice (Aroba 2023).



An SAP ERP Business Model

Figure 2. An SAP ERP Business model (Amit Gandhi, 2020).

Explanation of a postgraduate studies ERP system

ERP systems for postgraduate studies are somewhat modified to fit the requirements of that school with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Lee et al., 2003). By accessing data on institutional operations, departments, and functions, these software tools help manage business workflows. ERP software has significantly impacted the planning, creation, and management of all academic materials. Automating many components of the student life cycle also assists lecturers in managing their schedules for classes and exams, room reservations, and administrative work when it is linked to ERP systems.

The ITS web interface, used by most postgraduate studies institutions in South Africa, will play a vital role if it is accepted. ERP is an example of a software system. Students can enroll, register, pay for classes, obtain information about coursework, and much more. Through the ERP software, institutions can handle all administrative processes from a single integrated platform, with a consolidated database and all necessary data at their fingertips. The system will aid in communication between all parties involved in the institution, which comprises students, instructors, parents, and staff. All interested institutions will need to acquire the ERP Software.

ERP systems must be flexible enough to change with the times and adapt to students' most recent technological demands, like remote access to libraries and self-service portals, among other things. This is what ERP software enables and offers in terms of faster coordination and reliable reporting.

There are essential elements to consider when choosing the ERP SAP system. ERP systems are necessary to operate postgraduate studies institutions efficiently. To have complete insight into the activities of all departments, you must ensure that the ERP software modules selected support all integrations. Scalable solutions provide both immediate fixes and potential future expansion. Additionally, the service provider must offer you first-rate customer assistance to ensure you and your team know how to use every feature of the software solution.

ERP solutions help institutions to enhance efficiency and profitability. The ERP software solution allows schools to manage the registration process, financial administration, and student data more efficiently(Amron et al. 2022).

There is a big chance of failure and significant costs associated with adopting an ERP system. Due to the system's limited capacity, the system may crash during online tests or registration, according to Roxana. (2021), the ERP system's use in postgraduate studies has moved beyond purely administrative tasks like financial order management, asset management, general administration, and human resource management to include marketing, student systems, scholarship management, and e-commerce (Jaradat et al. 2022).

Numerous cutting-edge technologies, such as ERP/SIS, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and others, are raising the level of instruction delivered by institutions. As a result, now is the moment for institutions to invest in technology that will help them manage their general academic and administrative operations and their classroom and institutional operations.

The graphics below depict the commercial operations and procedures at postgraduate studies institutions. Figure 3 illustrates the many commercial operations accessible, which

include education activities (library system) and research equipment. Figure 3 shows many university operations, including examination and graduation procedures.

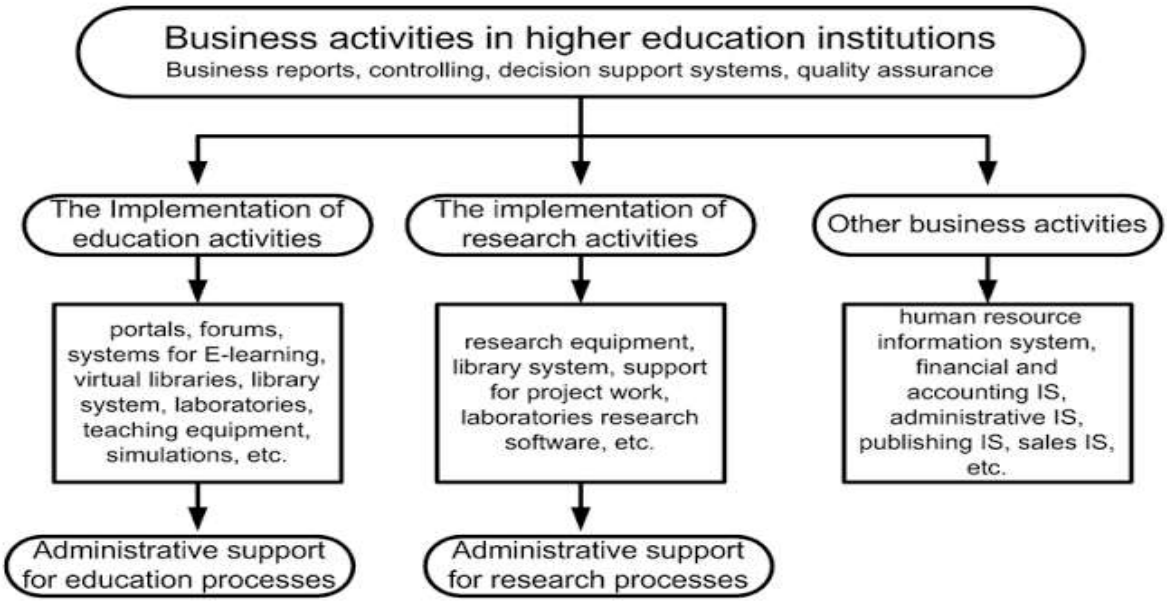


Figure 3. Describes the business activities in postgraduate studies institutions and postgraduate studies ERP systems (Abdellatif,2021a)

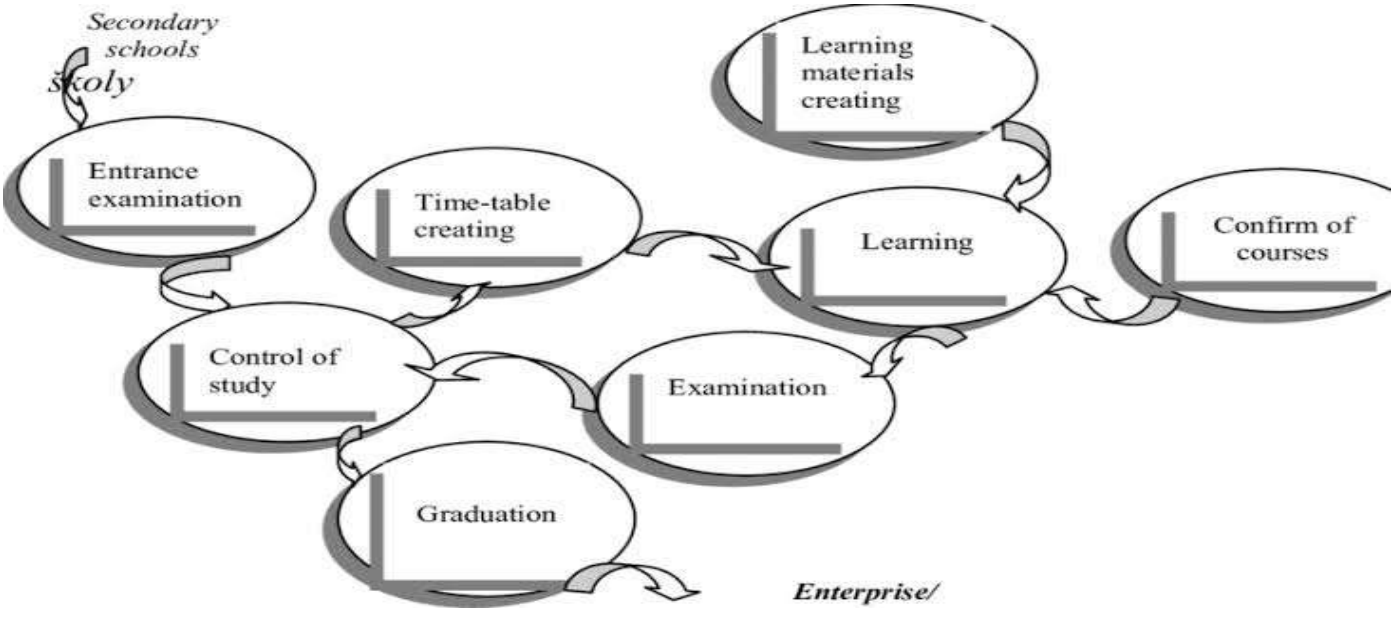


Figure 4. Shows the University education process description (Abdellatif, 2021b).

Without question, COVID-19 has altered both the globe and our everyday lives. Every element of our lives has been affected. Countries all around the world have implemented a variety of strict measures to slow down and control the spread of the coronavirus, such as mandating the use of masks and hand sanitizers, encouraging social seclusion, and implementing partial or total lockdowns. This pandemic afflicted every institution on earth, and due to stringent health and safety regulations, practically every institution had to close and switch to working from home. Each institution has reacted differently; they have established their working conditions and divided their workforce's workload in various ways.

The Effectiveness of Postgraduate Studies ERP Systems

ERP systems provide several benefits when installed adequately within any institution's system. The following are five notable advantages:

- **Administrative Support**

ERPs operate to aid administrative employees in the fulfillment of time-consuming activities while simplifying and integrating corporate operations. ERPs enable unrestricted growth within a team and free up administrative workers to focus on more critical issues. Benefits of ERP in the University Education System:

- **Information Transfer**

Regardless of how big this team is, distributing class schedules, codes of conduct, project outlines, and other administrative materials is a significant duty for an educational institution's administrative personnel. With an ERP system, there will be an improvement in how critical information is distributed and a significant drop in human error regarding the distribution of information accuracy.

- **Process automation and data organization**

ERPs provide a centralized, safe location to store staff and student data in an understandable, well-organized way. What is the most favored advantage of data organization and storage? Direct access to previously inaccessible or unreachable data and insights.

- **Gains in Productivity & Efficiency**

Progress and growth are the keys to success for every organization, business, or enterprise. The most effective approach to gain access to these is by putting in place procedures that increase production and efficiency. ERPs are essential in this. This will increase your institution's efficiency and your team's productivity overall.

- **Promotes Interaction between Faculty and Students**

The administration around educational institutions' operations may be pretty irritating, especially regarding communication and the possibility of misinterpretation. An ERP system not only makes connections and communication between faculty and students more accessible but also increases the efficacy of such interactions.

LIMITATIONS

The ERP project model's inability to adjust to the various academic structures and administrative procedures present at various postsecondary institutions is one of its main drawbacks. Postgraduate programs frequently have special needs that traditional ERP modules might not be able to meet, like intricate thesis supervision workflows, tracking research funding, and adaptable course registration systems. ERP models frequently take a one-size-fits-all approach, which can lead to poor alignment with institutional needs, user resistance, and limited efficacy in increasing operational efficiency.

The design process's inadequate attention to user experience and change management is another drawback. Academic staff, administrative staff, and postgraduate students may have different expectations for system usage and diverse degrees of computer literacy. Low adoption rates and operational bottlenecks could arise if the ERP paradigm places more emphasis on technical integration than user-centric features. Furthermore, the ERP system's full potential might not be realized in the absence of strong training, support systems, and stakeholder participation during the design and implementation stages. However, the return on investment may be used to quantify an ERP failure in education (ROI). Loss of the ERP deployment is possible if there is insufficient ROI. For less successful institutions, the cost of ERP and its customization and design might be prohibitive. Similarly, the majority of ERPs are challenging to learn and apply. Full user engagement is necessary due to the challenging user interface, which necessitates substantial user training. It's time for all academic institutions to choose the wiser course. Restructure the administrative structures at your institutions to reflect the constant evolution of technology.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is a great deal of potential to improve academic and administrative procedures by designing an ERP project model for postgraduate study in tertiary institutions. However, how well it fits in with the particular requirements of postgraduate programs and the institutional setting will determine how successful it is. Its efficiency may be hampered by drawbacks including a lack of adaptability and low user engagement, but these issues can be resolved with careful planning, stakeholder participation, and continuous system enhancement. Institutions can create ERP systems that support postgraduate education and improve academic excellence and institutional

efficiency by emphasizing flexibility, user-centered design, and appropriate deployment tactics.

To make it simpler and more effective for students, a paper prototype concept that integrated the testing system into the already existing ITS web interface was created, along with digital classes to attend online courses. Students can access the ERP within and outside the institution in a digitalized way. The improved system further displays to users the significance and uniqueness of the system as they embrace every aspect of it. This system will allow users to create, monitor, and mark exams all in one location. You may access your grades, academic history, courses, and study resources on this page. For the project's and the institution's overall success, ongoing development and training in the usage of ERP systems are essential.

RECOMMENDATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Institutions should use a modular and adaptable design strategy to improve the efficacy of ERP systems designed for postgraduate study. This makes it possible to modify the system to meet each institution's unique administrative, academic, and research needs. System relevance and user happiness can be greatly increased by incorporating features like flexible course registration, thesis progress tracking, portals for supervisor-student interaction, and research funding administration. Throughout the design and development phases, cooperation with academic stakeholders is crucial to guarantee that the ERP model accurately depicts real-world operations and improves overall institutional efficiency.

Institutions should also spend money on thorough training and change management techniques to help the ERP model be implemented successfully. Increased system acceptance and decreased resistance can be achieved by including postgraduate students, teachers, and administrative staff through ongoing feedback loops, user training sessions, and support materials. In order to ensure long-term sustainability and relevance, institutions should also set up a feedback-driven updating mechanism that lets the ERP model change in response to user experience and technology breakthroughs.

The future direction of this research will be the actual evaluation of various postgraduate ERP systems usage.

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DECLARATIONS

The author declares no conflict of interest or financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent

Not applicable

Ethics Approval

The article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Dr. Rosaline Govender is an esteemed academic and practitioner in the field of Academic Development at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). With a career spanning over a decade, she has made significant contributions to student, staff, and curriculum development. Her academic credentials include a Doctorate in Education from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), complemented by a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education for Academic Developers from Rhodes University. At DUT, Dr. Govender serves as an Academic Development Practitioner in the Faculty of Accounting & Informatics. She plays a pivotal role in coordinating the Faculty General Education modules and has been instrumental in the development and implementation of four such modules. Additionally, she convenes the annual Faculty eLearning Symposium and leads Decolonisation and Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoTL) projects within the faculty. Her leadership extends to supervising postgraduate students and serving as a reviewer on the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Dr. Govender's involvement in national and international academic communities is noteworthy. She is the Project Manager for the HELTASA Professional Learning Project, which aims to enhance professional learning for staff in higher education. Internationally, she has facilitated collaborations between DUT and Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts and Science in India, fostering cross-cultural academic exchanges. Her research interests encompass student success, professional learning, teaching and learning, academic development, and gender issues. Dr. Govender's work reflects a commitment to transforming higher education through inclusive and innovative practices.

Dr. Lulu Jali Fortunate is a respected academic at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), serving as a lecturer in the Department of Auditing and Taxation. She has made significant contributions to the field of accounting and auditing, particularly in the context of public sector institutions. Dr. Jali Fortunate's research interests focus on the effectiveness of internal auditing practices and the challenges faced by internal audit departments in the public sector. Her work includes supervising postgraduate students and advising on research projects related to these areas. In addition to her academic roles, Dr. Jali Fortunate is actively involved in promoting physical fitness and well-being within the DUT community. She has participated in various staff wellness initiatives, including the annual Staff Fun Walk organized by the DUT Gender Forum, where she has been recognized for her participation. Dr. Jali Fortunate holds a Master of Education degree from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where she researched the experiences of students with physical impairments studying at DUT. Her thesis aimed to understand how these students navigate the academic environment and how the institution can better accommodate their needs. Her

academic and extracurricular engagements reflect a commitment to both scholarly excellence and the holistic development of students and staff at DUT.

Prof. Michael Rudolph is a distinguished academic and researcher serving as the Director of the Centre for Ecological Intelligence (CEI) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). He holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) from Harvard University and a Master of Science (MSc) from the University of the Witwatersrand. His academic background also includes a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). At UJ, Prof. Rudolph leads CEI's initiatives focused on food systems, public health, food security, sustainable development, agroecology, and agribusiness. Under his leadership, CEI has pioneered innovative approaches to urban agriculture, including the use of aquaponics and sandponics, to address food insecurity and promote food justice in South Africa. Prof. Rudolph is actively involved in national and international dialogues on food security and environmental health. He has contributed to discussions on revitalizing Afrocentric ecosystems and unlocking innovative agroecology value chains to optimize stakeholder relations. His research interests encompass food systems, public health, food security, sustainable development, sustainability, agribusiness, and agroecology. He has co-authored several publications, including studies on sustainable social entrepreneurship models for urban agribusiness initiatives in Johannesburg and the use of urban agriculture in addressing health disparities and promoting ecological health in South Africa.

Prof. Manduth Ramchander is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Operations and Quality Management at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). He holds multiple qualifications, including a Doctor of Commerce (DCom), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Bachelor of Pedagogics (BPaed(Sc)), Diploma in Management Studies (DMS), and a National Diploma in Engineering (NDip). Prof. Ramchander has previously lectured at the University of Zululand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His research interests encompass Teaching and Learning, Entrepreneurship Education, Research Methodology, and Operations and Quality Management. He has published works in these fields and currently teaches courses such as Operations Management, Project Management, Quantitative Methods, and Business Communication. In 2023, he was involved in hosting a four-day lecture series focused on "Exploring global perspectives in Operations and Quality Management," which aimed to enhance delegates' understanding of these fields in a global context. Prof. Ramchander's work reflects a commitment to advancing knowledge and practice in operations and quality management, with a focus on both academic and practical applications.