

# **Pivotal Roles of the Libraries in Transforming Education Sector in Tanzania: A Critical Look**

By  
Mosha Goodluck<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

**Aim & Background:** This study aims at establishing the role which can be played by libraries in the transformation of the education sector taking the case of the United Republic of Tanzania. The author delineates the roles which libraries need to play in the transforming educational sector in Tanzania. The study is based on the premise that if library resources and facilities will not be improved the transformation of the education sector in the country will not be positively realized.

**Methods:** An extensive literature review was carried out to form data for this study. E-databases subscribed by Mzumbe University were searched to identify scholarly works on the role of the library in transforming the education sector. A total of sixteen papers qualified to be used in this study. Results obtained from the review were synthesized into a narrative text.

**Results:** It was noted that the time between the 1970s to early 1990s education transformation in Tanzania was linked with libraries' myriad roles in education were vividly seen. As of the mid-1990s, a lot of challenges inhibited libraries from playing their role in supporting transformation in the education sector in Tanzania. The study suggested possible solutions to revamp the role of the library in transforming the educational sector in the country.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** Libraries are vital institutions, which cannot be separated from education. The presence of libraries is crucial and indispensable to education in a nation. Teachers' education curriculum in Tanzania should include library education courses so that where a library lacks trained library staff teachers can assist in library management and in equipping students with basic information literacy skills.

Keywords : Libraries, Educational sector, Education transformation , Adults education, Tanzania, Library and education, mobile libraries,

---

<sup>1</sup> Goodluck . E. Mosha- Librarian at Mzumbe University , Morogoro Tanzania, Box 4, Morogoro. Mails: [gmosha@mzumbe.ac.tz](mailto:gmosha@mzumbe.ac.tz) [goodluck.mosha@mu.ac.tz](mailto:goodluck.mosha@mu.ac.tz)

## **Introduction**

The educational sector is the bedrock and the most vibrant sector of the national economy. In modern society, it is indeed a tool for change, empowerment, liberty, and a means of earning a livelihood (Adegoke, Fijabi, & Bamidele, 2014). Education is one of the best legacies that a country can give to its citizens. Igbuzor (2006) sees education as one of the basic human needs and rights.

Education and library are two inseparable and indivisible concepts because both are fundamentally and synchronically related and they co-exist. In Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs), libraries are regarded as the hub of such institutions. Authors like Adegoke, Fijabi, & Bamidele(2014) opined that there is no academic institution that can survive without a well-organized library. From elementary to tertiary institutions, libraries continue to be an important element of educational systems. It can, therefore, be said that the library is one of the basic transformations of the educational system that can be carried out. The library is considered as "the heart" of a university or an institute offering higher education. Thus, with this, it can be noted that good libraries should therefore be seen as an integral part of any educational setup.

A study by Simba (2014) emphasizes that regardless of their types, libraries are nerve centres of the learning process; they have a powerful influence in stimulating reading interest and strengthening the research and critical-thinking skills of learners. On the other hand, Ntulo & Nawe (2008) underscores that libraries are just like laboratories, a student cannot learn science in any environment without using a laboratory, and similarly, a student cannot learn, read, and pass well without using a library. This is in line with Mgina, & Lwehabura, (2011) who noted that there is a significant relationship between students' academic performance and the existence of a library in their learning environment.

The Handbook for Standards and Guidelines for University education in Tanzania (2019) notes the role of the library in university education, in its Section 6.7 has set standards for a university library. Failure to concur with the standards, of a university will not be fully registered by TCU. In other learning institutions in Tanzania such as schools, a library is one of the requirements for registration but many are registered and are operating without a library.

## **Research Question**

**Main Research Question:** The main research question of this article is as follows: What are the main role of libraries in the transformation of education sector in Tanzania.

This main research question was divided into four sub-questions that concern the role of libraries in transformation of educational sector in Tanzania

**Research Question 1:** What were the roles played by libraries during the deployment of Adult Education Programme in Tanzania?

**Research Question 2:** What were the role of libraries in transformation of education sector in general in Tanzania?

**Research Question 3:** Are libraries currently contributing in the processes of transformation of education sector in Tanzania?

**Research Question 4:** How can library be involved fully in the transformation of educational sector in Tanzania?

## **Rural Libraries and Adult Education Programme in Tanzania**

The national literacy campaign in Tanzania in the early 1970s recognized the need for printed materials to eradicate illiteracy, and in response to that, a number of village libraries were established. Tanzania had over 3,000 village libraries with about 400 titles available in each (Olden, 2005). Such rural libraries helped in the Adult Education Programme (AEP) by making sure that the new literates do not lapse into illiteracy due to a lack of reading materials. The AEP, with the assistance of the National Library in the 1970s, made the country's literacy rates hover to around 90%, and these were among the highest in the world. Currently, it is not known how many village libraries are still running in Tanzania. Since the early 1990s, however, Tanzania's literacy rate has fallen greatly. Today's rate of illiteracy is 22.4% which means that 5.5 million residents above 15 years cannot read or write. The Tanzania government has launched the National Adult Literacy and Mass Education Rolling Strategy of 2020/21 to 2024/25. The plan includes reviving more literacy courses across the country. The target of the strategy includes making sure that there is one rural library in each region enriched with relevant adult literacy collections by 2025, and ensuring that one mobile library is established in all semi-nomadic communities by 2025 (URT, 2020).

### **School Library Services in Tanzania**

The school library service was mainly financed by TLS using government funds. This instigated the establishment of the School Library Service (SLS), with its headquarters in the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam and was financed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 5-year Development Plan in 1969-1974. UNESCO also aided the plan, in particular for the first members of the staff. A school mobile library service was started in 1971.

Two or three times a year the books were delivered by a mobile library to schools in the three regions thus allowing the teachers to choose books suitable for their schools (Ilomo, 1985). In that material time, all pupils who completed class seven were able to properly read, write, and perform arithmetic within their level of study.

Up to 1976, SLS was run by one professional and one library assistant. Expansion of the School Library Service stopped in 1976. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> 5-year Development Plan, of 1976-1981, nothing was planned and nothing took place. No more model libraries were opened (the plan had been to start one in each of the 20 regions of Tanzania) and no more regions were served by the mobile service. This might be one of the reasons for the relapse of the literacy rate in Tanzania.

### **Roles of Libraries in Transforming Educational Sector**

Libraries are supposed to position themselves to enable lifelong learning and transmit life skills, work, and sustainable development. Ouane (2009) states that libraries are supposed to be part and parcel of the social fabric and meeting places that forge connections between people and institutions integral to the promotion of lifelong learning. A study by Haggstrom (2004) indicates that, in a society of lifelong learning, public libraries are nodes that connect the local learning settings – be it a formal or informal kind of by offering guidance and training on how to search, use and to rate the quality of information sources.

In the context of a university and other tertiary institutions, libraries play myriad roles in the achievement of their core values, as well as their missions and visions. This is accomplished by ensuring that the learners get the right information which is transformed into knowledge. Magut & Kiplagat (2022) emphasize that without libraries, online and distance learning programmes offered by universities would be impossible. This role is facilitated by the library professionals who help users of all ages to develop digital, media, and information literacy skills, which are critical for the successful use, creation, and sharing of knowledge.

Libraries are the key institutions in the context of achieving global literacy. As outlined in the UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto (1994), key missions relating to information, literacy, education and culture are at the core of public library services.

Today the role of libraries and professional librarians is changing worldwide. They are no longer passive keepers and preservers of books; rather, they have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong learning opportunities with an emphasis on service which includes the identification of user needs and communicating solutions.

A library is essential to every-long term strategy for improving literacy, education, information provision and economic, cultural and social development. It has been demonstrated that once librarians and educators work together, learners would achieve higher levels of literacy, reading, learning, problem-solving, and information and communication technology skills.

### **The major roles of libraries in the education transformations in Tanzania:**

- a) Libraries provide a crucial role in promoting and transforming the education system. It is not easy for any country or society to flourish without a properly supported education system. The primary requirement in transforming the education system is knowledge which is selected, acquired, processed, and disseminated by libraries.
- b) Libraries provide access to relevant curriculum information and professional development materials. Not only that, but libraries provide opportunities to plan, implement, and evaluate learning programmes which contain integrated information resources.
- c) Librarians as professionals are supposed to advocate for lifelong reading, since they are essential partners to educators. They guide and help learners to find appropriate reading materials. Librarians as agents of transformation are supposed to use technology to help learners use such technologies in accessing reading materials anywhere and in 24/7;
- d) Libraries are supposed to be the heart of the transformation that will be necessary to make education truly universal, effective, and meaningful for all;
- e) Libraries are the major supporters in the transformation from face-to-face learning to online or virtual learning programmes. As more students take online or hybrid courses, libraries are supposed to provide remote access support to reading materials, which would help the education sector to transform digital education;
- f) Libraries and librarians are supposed to prepare outreach programs designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people with limited educational skills;
- g) Libraries and librarians are supposed to be partners in education, especially when curriculums are being developed, and they are supposed to integrate resources into teaching-learning materials;
- h) They are supposed to provide educators with access to relevant curriculum information and professional development materials from within and without the educational system (Usoro, 2007);
- i) Libraries are supposed to keep the learners informed by providing them with unrestricted access to current relevant information in hard copies and electronic formats. Access to relevant information in all areas of economic activities is a catalyst for developing a knowledgeable economy;
- j) Libraries are working together with educational institutions in implementing online, and distance learning programmes, by delivering to the users the information they need via online instructions, websites, videos, tutorials, televisions, social networks, blogs, etc;

- k) The growth of e-learning or online learning and blended learning library has called upon librarians to collaborate with academic staff in developing such programmes and implementing them.

### **Challenges**

Libraries in Tanzania are unable to participate fully in supporting educational transformation because:

- They lack librarians who are experts on online learning, fully knowledgeable and skilled, in learning, teaching, information use, and production in online settings. As such the participation of librarians in online programmes cannot be seen.
- Libraries, both public, schools, and universities are the victims of budget shortfalls and cuts. Considering the current state of the economy, libraries are facing the possibility of reductions in funds that has a deleterious effect on the library roles in the education sector. The question asked is, “How can libraries provide access to the information readers need when the cost of resources is sky-rocketing precipitously?”
- In Tanzania, most of the primary and secondary schools have no school libraries instead the offices of the head teachers are mostly used to store a few textbooks for teachers’ reference.
- Our libraries, particularly public libraries, contain old and irrelevant reading materials which cannot help in bringing out transformation in the education sector.
- Lack of library standards for public and school libraries: Library standards are guidelines on how academic libraries, whether university or college, should be administered, organized and improved. Library standards are the measure sticks of evaluating the performance of libraries or which libraries can be judged as good or poor.
- In schools, there is a lack of understanding by both teachers and pupils of the roles and functions of a school library and thus an increasing inability to use the library properly even if it is well-established.
- Technology and the internet have had a huge impact on the library and the way they deliver services. The rapid digitization of information has impacted operations and systems in libraries within a very short span of time, resulting in gaps in the skills needed to operate a digital library.
- Changes in the scholarly publishing space have re-defined the roles of librarians, extending far beyond content curation. While this is happening, librarians are finding it a challenge to communicate the value of their work to their constituencies.
- Tanzania lacks a national policy on library development and this has affected the purposeful development of all types of libraries, except for university libraries.

### **Conclusion**

The study has brought to the surface the impeccable roles that can be played by libraries in bringing transformation in education sector. The utility of a library in education can at once be felt and generalized particularly when we look into the educational conditions of the poor. Libraries should make available all the relevant books and other materials almost free of cost, and the children of the poor and the rich alike can derive an equal amount of advantages from this free service that helps in pursuing constructive education.

Libraries are vital institutions, which cannot be separated from education. The presence of libraries is crucial and indispensable to education in a nation. Therefore, whatever is done to improve the quality of education, it should be for bring about the national development. The absence of libraries on the other will have negative effects on education. Therefore, individual learners encouraged to use libraries for longlife learning process

The education policy implementers are recommended to put in place the mechanism to reinforce the establishment and development of state-of-the-art school libraries in every secondary school as a critical tool for education provision.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above views the following recommendations are made:

- To improve the quality of education in the country, the school library services which have been neglected should be prioritized. The building of classrooms and opening of new schools should go hand-in-hand with modern school library buildings well-stocked, equipped, and adequately staffed.
- Teachers' education curriculum in Tanzania should include library education courses so that where a library lacks trained library staff teachers can assist in library management and in equipping students with basic information literacy skills.
- The Tanzania government should reaffirm, enforce or implement its regulation that requires every registered school to have a library. In addition, school libraries should have qualified librarians.
- There is a need for setting up a standard for public and school libraries in Tanzania.
- If Tanzania is willing to provide access to current and up-to-date reading materials to the schools and other tertiary level institutions, the Ministry of Education should budget for the subscription of eBooks and eJournals.
- Libraries have to be appropriately funded by the government if they are to be effective and attractive. Libraries have to be an essential part of a long-term policy framework for the whole education sector, embracing literacy, information provision and lifelong learning.
- Libraries must be supported by specific legislation Libraries have to cooperate and network with other education stakeholders such as local publishing industry.
- Libraries should be properly stocked and well-maintained to easily supplement teachers' efforts in the classroom and provide useful theoretical support for laboratory activities.
- Libraries should be properly integrated into the Tanzania educational system for helping to inculcate the spirit of self-discovery in overall academic enterprise and for a healthy development towards the quest for lifelong education.
- Tanzania Library Association should without further delay produce standards for school libraries. The standards should cover such areas as building, furniture, equipment, staffing, stock and services.

### **When looking toward the future of Libraries in Tanzania, one should expect to see...**

- Library becoming a centre of knowledge creation and consumption.
- Library becoming virtual learning commons accessible to everyone, at any place, and on any device.
- Establish regular collaboration between ICT experts and librarians in the application and use of emerging technologies in libraries.
- Use social media as a platform for students to access information and use library learning commons.
- Libraries are involved in all educational transformations planned to be carried out in Tanzania.

- Libraries in academic institutions collaborating with departments and groups involved in online learning (IT, Centers for Teaching and Learning, and others) to truly embed library services into students' learning experiences.
- Libraries and librarians working hard to deeply understand their patrons' needs and their information behaviour to develop targeted services.
- Serving online learners must be seen as the job of every librarian.

## References

- Adegoke, O., Fijabi, N.M., & Bamidele, I.A. (2014). The role of the library in the transformation of the educational system in Nigeria. *Akoka Journal of Education*, 6(2), 53-62.
- Benard, R., & Dulle, F. W. (2014). Assessment of access and use of school library information resources by secondary school students in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania.
- Haggstrom, B. M. (2004). The Role of Libraries in Lifelong Learning. Final Report of the IFLA Project under the Section for Public Libraries. *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (NJI)*.
- Igbuzor, O. (2006). The state of education in Nigeria. *Economic and Policy Review*, 12(3).
- Iloimo, C. S. (1985) *Towards more effective school library programmes in Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Library Services. 6p. (Occasional Papers; no. 23)
- Kaungamno, E. E. (1972). A national plan for the development of library services.
- Kaungamno, E. E. and C. S. Iloimo. (1979) *Books build nations, vol. 2: Library services in Tanzania*. London: Transafrica; Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Library Services: 194-197.
- Krolak, L. (2006). The role of libraries in the creation of literate environments. *International Journal of Adult and Lifelong Education*, 4(1/4), 5.
- Magut, H. J., & Kiplagat, S.(2022) Covid-19 Pandemic and The Role of Kenyan University Libraries in Online Education. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*
- Mgina, S., & Lwehabura, M. J. (2011). Status of Secondary School Libraries under the Secondary Education Development Plan: A Case Study of Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science*, 21(2), 167.
- Mubofu, C., & Malekani, A. (2019). Challenges of school libraries and quality education in Tanzania: A review.
- Ntulo, G., & Nawe, J. (2008). Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) and the provision of library service in Tanzania: a Case Study of Sumbawanga Municipality. *University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal*, 10(1-2).
- Olden, A. (2005). "For poor nations a library service is vital": Establishing a national public library service in Tanzania in the 1960s. *The Library Quarterly*, 75(4), 421-445.
- Ouane, A. (2009). UNESCO's drive for lifelong learning. In *The Routledge international handbook of lifelong learning* (pp. 332-341). Routledge.
- Simba, C. A. (2014). *School library resource centres in Iringa and Njombe regions of Tanzania: their status and role in resource-based learning* (Doctoral dissertation).
- TCU (2022). Handbook for standards and guidelines for university education in Tanzania
- URT (2020) National Adult Literacy and Mass Education Rolling Strategy 2020/2021-2024/25