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Challenges of School Libraries and Quality Education in Tanzania: A Review

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Challenges of School Libraries and Quality Education in Tanzania: A Review

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Abstract

Quality education is fundamental for pupils' advancement in any country. School libraries are said to be the second class for pupils because of the important role they play in enhancing the quality of education. School libraries are the avenues for cultivating pupils' morals, the important facade for improving pupils' education quality and for effective facilities for developing special technical education, serving as a friendly place for increasing pupils' total education quality. The general idea for school libraries is to intensify the quality of education in schools through provision of adequate facilities such as chairs, tables, textbooks and qualified library staff to guide pupils in appropriate usage of libraries for better performance and hence lead to quality education in the country. Despite of the tremendous contribution of school libraries in increasing the students' performance it has been discovered that this role is not recognized by most of the government officials. The challenges such as staffing, funding, lack of standard library building and frequent change in curriculum that affects collection development need to be addressed by the government if at all the country has to provide quality education to her citizens.

Key words: Libraries, School libraries, Quality education, Role of school libraries

1.0 Introduction

There has been a worldwide need for the quality education and the use of the libraries in schools and higher learning institutions such as colleges, polytechnic colleges and universities. This may be a result of the increasing poor performance of the students in their examinations from primary schools, secondary schools and universities. One of the fundamental roles of libraries is the acquisition, organization, preservation and dissemination of information for easy access. Libraries are seen as the repository of knowledge and cultural heritage; they hold information

such as books, paints, pictures, audio visual materials both in print and electronic form. In order for the libraries to meet the growing need of quality education, concerted efforts should be made towards the diffusion of information to library clients on the effective utilization of libraries for the better academic performance.

Furthermore, there are many education campaigns accomplished in Tanzania as an effort to improve the quality of education in primary and secondary schools. The campaigns are those supported by government directly and those supported by private sectors. These campaigns include those of building more classes, adding more desks, chairs, tables and construction of more toilets and ensuring availability of clean water in schools. Despite of all those initiatives taken in improving the education quality in Tanzania no serious campaigns have been taken by the government or private sector to address the problem of extreme shortage of text books and absence of buildings designed specifically for school libraries in primary and secondary schools. UNICEF (2017) reported that while concerns are being raised about students' literacy skills, resulting in the introduction of specialized literacy programs, there has been little commitment to preserving one potential literacy asset i.e. school libraries, their library staff and appropriate information resources. This implies that the key players in the education sector do not see the contribution of libraries towards improving the quality of education in the country. Rapid increase in number of pupils in both secondary and primary schools in Tanzania since 2011 came with challenges such as extreme shortage in text books, desks, chairs, tables and water supply (Maghimbi, 2012).Thus, these challenges need to be addressed simultaneously in order to improve the quality of education in the Country. Although, the government has started to tackle some of these challenges no projects have been directed towards the establishment of well designed school libraries that could accommodate students of all categories such as the blind, deaf and the physically disabled students.

Over the years libraries in developed countries of the world have been engaged in collection development and information dissemination (e.g. Smithsonian Institution's Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; New York Public Library's Schomburg Centre for research in Black Culture), however, the situation has been different with African libraries where there is scarce information resources, poor use of libraries by both pupils, students, school teachers and lecturers (Greyling, 2010). The current revolutionary change and demand for use of libraries for

better student performance on African communities and Tanzania in particular has placed a demand on building school libraries to improve academic performance. Library resources in both school and university libraries is quite indispensable in the present information age for sustainable development. It is therefore, very important for school libraries in Africa to be at a centre stage in quality education attainment in African countries. In order to achieve this, there is a need for a coordinated approach of school libraries management at the national and local levels among government authorities, non-governmental organizations and librarians to pull their resources together and formulate a working policy towards empowering schools to be equipped with libraries for better students' performance and hence, quality education in the nation.

2.0 Research problem

Quality education and use of school libraries directly relate to each other. Libraries are greatly valued repositories that offer people with reliable information, study skills and reading space, yet not much of them have been valued and they face several challenges in charging services. Efforts to improve the education quality have concentrated on construction of more classes, school teachers' offices, addition of chairs and desks to cope with the large number of enrolled students due to free education in Tanzania (Caroline, 2010).

Despite the overwhelming potentials of school libraries in quality education they are yet, to be recognized by most of the government officials, policy makers and other decision makers and very few schools especially the private owned have school libraries while the majority of government owned schools have no school libraries at all. The few old schools that have libraries face several challenges including lack of professional librarians, lack of current books, lack of computers, poor internet connectivity and unreliable power supply. Hence, based on the literature review, observation and researcher's experience with libraries in Tanzania, this study sought to examine the challenges of school libraries in Tanzania and how such challenges can be overcome so as to improve the quality of education in Tanzania.

2.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the challenges of school libraries and how to overcome them for enhanced quality education in Tanzania. Specifically the study sought to:

i.   Establish the role of school libraries in enhancing quality education in Tanzania

ii.   Assess the status of school libraries in Tanzania

iii. Find out the challenges facing school libraries in Tanzania

3.0 Design/methodology/approach

This paper is primarily a literature and scoping review of the current challenges of secondary school libraries and quality education in Tanzania. It uses embedding examples from ongoing research projects and recent writings on secondary school libraries and quality of education using Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework for literature and scoping review.

Scoping review also alternatively called scoping study, scoping project, scoping exercise, scoping report, scoping method, scoping exercise method, as well as literature mapping, mapping of research, evidence mapping, systematic mapping, literature review, and rapid review, aims to map *rapidly* the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available. It can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before (Colquhoun *et al*., 2014; Pham *et al*., 2014).

The following databases were searched: Google scholar, Ebscohost, fullfreepdf, Eric and Research 4life databases. Carefully literature search was specifically based on the three thematic areas taken from the study specific objectives. An unstructured interview was carried out among the primary school teachers upgrading   their education level at the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy under the department of education.   The teachers were interviewed in order to provide the real state of libraries in their schools.

4.0 Scope and limitations of the Study

This study was limited to secondary school libraries in Tanzania. The study therefore seeks to caution that the outcome from this research should not be generalized because there was no adequate data collection which was subject to rigorous analysis.

5.0 Significance of the study

This paper seeks to add to academic knowledge by examining the challenges of school libraries and how such challenges can be minimized to enhance education quality in Tanzania.

6.0 Literature review

6.1 The role of school libraries in improving the quality of education

School libraries provide students and teachers with access to a variety of information resources such as printed materials, audio and visual resources that help them to have equal utilization opportunities. Some pupils may be at risk of failing because of such factors as low family income, single parent status, and recent immigration (Briana Hovendick Francis, Keith Curry Lance, and Zeth Lietzau, 2010). Therefore, a school librarian in school library provides information services to all customers equally regardless of their socio-economic status.

School libraries are important for every long-term strategy to improve the quality of education in terms of literacy education, information provision, economic, social and cultural advancement. This means the government through local, regional and national authorities must initiate various campaigns of building school libraries and equip them with well-trained library staff, materials [both printed and non-printed materials] and technologies in order to improve the quality of education in the country. Furthermore, Fayose (1983) in Moruf Hawwau (2015) emphasized that the library is rendered essential for every intellectual institution, it is really essential and necessary for the primary and secondary schools, since it constitutes a big and rare wealth of knowledge.

According to Yang (2011) quality of education is closely related with the libraries as they hold a more serious position and importance in every school. Libraries are the place where human cultural information resources, accumulated knowledge and experiences, scientific and technological innovations are properly organized for use. Furthermore Yang (2011) noted that school libraries, teachers and teaching facilities as well as equipments are the three backbones for quality education in any country.

School libraries are the extension of class teaching and they are the second class for pupils and they help them to improve and expand their knowledge by the rich information resources, and by creating a quiet and harmonious study fields with well-designed and nice environment, and civilized reading atmosphere (*Ibid*). School libraries offer reasonable physical and intellectual

access to the resources and tools required for learning in a warm, motivating, and safe setting. School librarians collaborate with others to provide instruction, learning strategies, and practice in using the essential learning skills needed in the 21st century (American Association of School Libraries, 2013).

A qualified school library provides a more comprehensive knowledge and information for teachers and pupils, stimulate the development of readers' innovative personalities, and drive the development of different thinking which eventually leads to quality education attained by the pupils. Franscotti *et al.,* (2007) in Opeola Lawal-Solarin, (2016) revealed that when children have access to good school libraries with abundance of good books and with well trained staff, they read faster and therefore, do better on reading tests and for children from poor families libraries are typically the only potential source of reading materials. Furthermore, Opeola Lawal-Solarin, (2016) noted that poor performances by both teachers and pupils in most schools in developing countries were the result of lack of access to and irregular use of school libraries and hence have no inspiration of imagination, learning and creativity.

Libraries being one of the instructive tools in education sector have to be recognized and sustained in schools with good quality of library staff and information resources, in order to achieve the sustainable development goals of providing quality educational services in any country. Education cannot do best without libraries, it is understood that educational services are to make easy the accomplishment of educational planning, objectives and promote the efficiency of education in any country (*Ibid*).

Despite of the great roles played by school libraries, there is a gross neglect of it in most developing countries, due to some factors such as lack of funding, inadequate number of skilled librarians, lack of up-to-date facilities, poor accommodation and non ICT integrated libraries (Opeola Lawal-Solarin, 2016).

6.2 The situation of school libraries in Tanzania

In Tanzania most of the primary and secondary schools have no school libraries instead the office of the head teacher are also used to store some few text books for teachers references. Also secondary schools have been operating without libraries except very few secondary schools especially the old secondary schools owned by the government such as Mzumbe, Tosamaganga, Kibaha, Tabora boys and Minaki secondary schools but all these face various changes because

no special librarians are employed to save the students. A study conducted by TAMASHA, (2018) revealed that in Tanzania there are secondary schools that have been operating with libraries without information materials such as text books hence these libraries have become the reading room where pupils can sit and study their exercise books.

6.3 Challenges facing secondary school libraries in Tanzania

Inadequate funding

Most of the libraries regardless of their type are facing financial problems due to inadequate funds allocated to run them. This is in line with Opeola Lawal-Solarin (2016) who noted that in spite of the role played by school libraries in promoting the quality of education, there is gross neglect of it in various developing countries, due to some vivid challenges that school libraries experience such as inadequate finance allocated for the library to run properly. According to Opeola Lawal-Solarin other factors include inadequate number of skilled librarians, poor accommodation and non ICT integrated libraries.

Lack of well-designed school library buildings

Most of the schools in Tanzania do not have proper library buildings that are designed as libraries instead one hall or room within the school campus can be selected as a library. This implies that library buildings available were not designed as libraries for information services provision to students and teachers. Various scholars and information specialists agree that for education to be meaningful and achievable there should be resources of various types; and well-designed libraries to provide educational resources for all categories of users such as teachers, students, businessmen, civil servants and researchers. A study conducted by an Education Law Center (2012) revealed that eliminating or diminishing school library resources and access to a fulltime, certified library has extreme consequences for public school students and specifically to most vulnerable clients.

Lack of libraries recognition by the head of schools

School libraries in most cases are not recognized by the schools' management and they usually do not see its contribution towards quality education. But the reality is that in order to have quality education in the country we need current and relevant information resources in both

formats i.e. print and electronic resources which must be available for use by both pupils and teachers since reading in the library helps the user to concentrate for longer period of time. Since library is a growing organism always acquire current and relevant textbooks needed to assist library users in producing quality assignments and other academic works authorities need to recognize its role (OELMA., 2004). Moreover, school teachers need current text books from school libraries for preparing themselves for teaching and research writing. Hence failure to recognize school libraries denies these benefits to readers.

Change of curriculum affects collection development

Frequent changes of curriculum especially in primary schools have resulted into frequent change of text books for students and teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the collection of text books that are available in some of the schools are of no use because students normally use those text books recommended in their new curriculum.

Staffing

Few school libraries available in some of the private owned schools and few old governments owned schools have no qualified librarians to offer the information services to the users. This is evident because when you look at the number of jobs advertised per year in the country you will never see the vacancies of school librarians or teacher librarians at all. This indicates that any employee in a school can be chosen to serve as librarian expecting him or her to provide adequate services to students. So this implies that, the importance of school libraries is still invisible by the government authorities who are responsible to recruit reputable librarians. This is contrary to Opeola Lawal-Solarin, Esther, (2016) who noted that libraries being one of the educational services have to be established and maintained in schools with high quality of human and material resources, in order to achieve the effective goals of providing quality education in any country. This is also evident even in higher learning institution where librarians are not respected and that, they think anyone can do the job of librarianship without any knowledge of librarianship. As a result when an employee's misbehaves in their respective department they are transferred to library department as a way of punishing him or her. This implies that the role of libraries in enhancing the quality of education is still invisible to most of the administrators not only in primary and secondary schools but also in universities.

Reading culture

Poor students performance in primary and secondary schools have been recorded and the ministry of education, science and technology have been mentioning the situation to be caused by unqualified teachers, remoteness of the schools, lack of clean water, unfriendly environment and lack of teachers' houses. But none of those people responsible for education in the country have been mentioning the absence of school libraries and qualified teacher librarians to be one of the contributing factors in poor performance of our students in these schools. This implies that even those people in authority do not have reading culture and so; they do not see the role of libraries towards enhancement of quality education in the country. According to Moruf Hawwau (2015), the main purpose of school libraries among others is encourage and enhance the reading culture of students in the country.

7.0 Conclusions and recommendations

It can be concluded that school libraries in most cases are not recognized by the schools' management and they usually do not see its contribution towards quality education. But the reality is that in order to have quality education in the country we need current and relevant information resources in both formats i.e. print and electronic resources which must be available for use by both pupils and teachers since reading in the library helps the user to concentrate for longer period of time. Since library is a growing organism always acquire current and relevant textbooks needed to assist library users in producing quality assignments and other academic works authorities need to recognize its role. Moreover, school teachers need current text books from school libraries for preparing themselves for teaching and research writing. Hence failure to recognize school libraries denies these benefits to readers.

Based on the afore discussed literature, with regard to secondary schools libraries in response to quality education in the country the researchers recommend the following:

Recognize that school libraries have a great contribution towards student's performance and that special campaign should be organized in the country to ensure that all secondary schools have libraries where students can go for further readings. Since all schools are under the Ministry of education, Science and Technology a policy should be formulated under National Accreditation Council for Technical Education (NACTE) that will enforce these schools not to admit students if there is no school library. American Association of School Libraries, (2013) revealed that

school libraries services help to stimulate children's reading by supporting their literacy and developing their information skills. When comparing schools with and without librarians, their study further indicated that the presence of a qualified school librarian can make a wonderful difference in reading achievement of students in primary and secondary schools.

In Tanzania therefore, it is importance to launch a national campaign for the promotion and advocacy of the use of libraries for developing study and reading culture among our young ones at all the levels. This could involve advocating the importance of using library information resources both print, electronic and those from social media.

The government through the ministry of education, science and technology should bring together educationists and other experts of the field of library science and share how standard school libraries can contribute to quality education in the country. This will also help to assess whether the government officials know the contribution of school libraries towards quality education or not. Since most of the schools in the country have no libraries this implies that education stakeholders should come forward, work shoulder to shoulder by sharing their expertise for addressing this challenge. Also information specialists like librarians in higher learning institutions should continue to make noise on the importance of school libraries since are the only experts who have access to discuss with top managements in various educational issues.

Therefore, for Tanzania to attain the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of quality education there is a need to address all the challenges that hinder student's access to school library and their information resources. That means the government should design and build standard school libraries and employ qualified librarians to provide services to students and teachers. School libraries and school librarians offer teachers with information resources and the improved research skills that can be imparted into their teaching practices. School librarians can work together in the training, delivery, and evaluation of student learning activities. According to (Semali, 2014) school libraries and school librarians promote teacher effectiveness by contributing to student learning through access to resources and tools such as computers and reference books, which assist in the development of information literacy. Also reasonable budgets should be allocated for the library for various purposes such as purchase of new resources and subscription of electronic resources suitable for the school community.

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