



The state of information literacy and user education programmes in public libraries in Tanzania: a case of National Central Library (NCL) and Kibaha Public Library

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine the state of Information Literacy (IL) and user education programmes in public libraries in Tanzania. Specifically, the study aimed at examining methods used to deliver IL and user education skills in public libraries, assessing librarians' competence in the delivery of IL and user education trainings, and identifying challenges facing IL and user education programmes in public libraries. The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Coast region; involving the National Central Library (NCL) and Kibaha Public Library respectively. The study used questionnaire, face to face interviews conducted with librarians, and observation methods to collect data. Quantitative data were analysed by using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) while qualitative data were content analysed. The findings of this study have revealed that the major method of delivering information literacy and user education skills to library users was library tour. Due to lack of computers including internet connectivity, user training provided at Kibaha public library was confined to the delivery of traditional user education training. The findings have also revealed that although trainers possessed IL and user education knowledge, they lacked modern IL knowledge. The study also reveals that the major challenges facing IL and user education programmes in the public libraries include inadequate and outdated IL knowledge among trainers, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, inadequate management support, as well as limited awareness among library users on the importance of IL and user education training. Based on its findings, this study concludes that information literacy and user education trainings provision in public libraries is inadequate and therefore recommends computerising the public libraries, increasing financial support for IL and user education, as well as equipping trainers and librarians with updated knowledge on IL and user education.

Keywords: Information Literacy, User Education, Training, Public libraries, Tanzania

Introduction

Information is a major factor behind the development of any country in the world (Chisita, 2011), and so, in order for a certain society to develop; be it economic, social, or political; it must invest enough in information. Investment in information, to a great extent, requires recognising library services as an integral part of national socio-economic development and the general improvement of the quality of life (Iwhiwhu, 2008). Libraries of all types have been charged with the responsibility of taking an active role in creating an information

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literate society with public libraries being considered equipped enough to impart information literacy (IL) skills on the wider community (Harding, 2008). The mission of public libraries is to provide timely, accurate, current, and reliable information to meet their users' needs (Olowu, 2004). The users are usually made of people of different ages, educational qualifications, and sex. These libraries provide access to knowledge, information, and works of imagination through a range of resources and services.

In the developed world, public libraries are communities' cornerstone for enhancing access to information and technology, developing digital literacy skills, and providing support services to students, families, and communities (Viricus, 2003). However, as argued by Lai (2011), without implementing instructional programmes for developing IL skills among users, public libraries cannot effectively disseminate the information in their custody. The need for providing IL instructions to users has been emphasized by the American Library Association (2000) which noted that as public libraries become more complex due to information explosion, the need for instructions and training on how to use their resources and services has become very important. Information literacy and user education programmes can benefit users by equipping them with skills needed to search for information in the digital era while also giving them the ability to recognize when information is needed and; locate, evaluate, and effectively use information (American Library Association, 1998). With these skills, people can therefore advance their knowledge so as to optimally contribute to the development of their societies.

In Tanzania, public libraries are under the Tanzania Library Services Board (TLSB), a board responsible for establishing, developing, equipping, and promoting libraries, information centres, and documentation centres. Like elsewhere, public libraries in the country have responsibility of providing information literacy and user education training to all groups of people including the challenged and marginalised.

Due to the rapid development of ICTs and information explosion, access to and retrieval of information from libraries has become complex (Okoye, 2013). It is therefore the duty of librarians to educate their users on how to locate the resources they need; bearing in mind their different cultural backgrounds and levels of library skills. Although instruction programmes have been implemented in various public libraries, studies show that information literacy and user education training are being poorly delivered to public library users (Maina, 2014). This has been reported to lead to poor utilisation of library materials and resources. The major challenges that have been reported to affect IL programmes in public libraries are lack of pedagogical skills among librarians, shortage of staff to implement IL programmes, and lack of funds to run the programmes (Lai, 2017). This study, therefore, sought to examine the state of information literacy and user education programmes in public libraries in Tanzania; focusing on the National Central Library and Kibaha public library with a view of coming up with ways of improving the programmes. The main objective of this study was to examine the state of Information Literacy (IL) and user education programmes in public libraries in Tanzania. The specific objectives were to:

- Examine methods used to deliver IL and user education skills in public libraries;
- Assess librarians' competences for delivering IL and user education skills; and
- Identify challenges facing IL and user education programmes in public libraries.

Literature review

The role of public libraries in society

Public libraries as organisations are established, supported, and funded by the community. Their funding may come from local, regional, or national government; or through some other form of community organisation (IFLA, 2001). These organisations have a great responsibility of educating their citizens through providing access to relevant information in different formats and other relevant services. Public libraries, therefore, are supplements to formal education because the diverse kinds of materials they have support formal and non-formal education such as continuing self-education.

Information is power and a basic resource for individual and national development. This argument is supported by Ebiwolate (2010) who observes that public libraries play a great role in national socio-economic development and improvement of societies' level of life. However, to achieve this, public libraries need to collect, organise, and disseminate useful and relevant information that meets the diverse needs of users. The libraries must collect local information useful to societies in question and make it available to them.

IFLA/UNESCO (1994) emphasise the cultural aspect by asserting that public libraries have a major role of preserving and developing societies' culture by documenting and preserving information on matters such as tribal songs and dances, taboos, and norms which will help a society to know and inherit the cultural activities and belief relevant to its culture. Public libraries, therefore, can promote the participation, enjoyment, and appreciation of all art forms. Cultural and recreational activities enhance social, physical, and mental development of people (Hayes and Morris, 2005). Regarding this, public libraries can play a part by encouraging the use of materials provided for leisure and as well as relaxation purposes.

According to Adebayo (2012), public libraries have a vital impact on the promotion of socio-cultural and educational services. The social role of public libraries is the provision of materials and services that help people to understand different social conflicts, problems, and the measures for dealing with them. In addition to that, public libraries play an important role of being a public space and meeting place for people to share and exchange ideas. Through this role, the libraries bring people into informal contact with other members of the community hence catalysing positive social experiences.

Chisita (2011) places emphasis on the political role of public libraries by asserting that the libraries have a great political contribution of making citizens politically aware. This is done through providing varieties and a wide coverage of knowledge, ideas, and opinions on political aspects obtained from media sources such as newspapers and other sources such as videos, and books. In all, given the fact that public libraries have been established to serve the needs of various categories of users in the society, Ratna (2008) urges them to capitalise or prioritise IL and user education training so as to enable users to use available library resources effectively.

ICT Development and IL in Public Libraries

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Harding (2008) argues that although public libraries remained static for quite a period of time, recently they have experienced drastic changes due to the technological revolution which led to the advancement of communication technology and changed societies needs and attitude towards information and knowledge. To stay relevant, public libraries had to go with the technological changes by implementing different user trainings to enable users search for resources from various databases and through different search engines. In the same line, IFLA (2001:2) stated that:

Public libraries have an exciting opportunity to help bring everyone into this global conversation and to bridge what is often called 'the digital divide'. They can achieve this by providing information technology for public access, by teaching basic computer skills.

In addition to that, potential new users have been reported to getting attracted to libraries that introduce new services based on new technologies.

Dutch & Muddiman (2001) see this present technological force as the "third wave" following the previous waves of agricultural and industrial civilizations which led to the development of public libraries to make people literate and able to perform different industry and farm activities. Moreover, the need to provide intellectual access to library materials in public libraries was a fundamental reason for developing IL programmes in the libraries. This was necessitated by increased library users' awareness of the importance of information to their lives and advancements in science and technology that resulted in changes in ways of acquiring, processing, storing, and disseminating information.

Public libraries introduced IL so as to help their users to easily and independently access the information they house and provide accessed to through databases (Kuhlthau, 2004). Even before the advent of ICT, libraries provided various instruction programmes for enabling users to make more effective, efficient, and independent use of information sources and services the libraries provided (Ramani, 2000). However, with developments in ICT, libraries had to embrace IL so as to ensure that information seekers have the ability to know: the kind of information they need, the system storing the information, where the information is found, how to retrieve the information, how to assess sources effectively, how to use information ethically (Jacobsin, 2010).

Methodology

This study used mixed methods design employing quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Coast region at National Central Library and Kibaha public library respectively. NCL was selected because it is the major public library in Tanzania while Kibaha public Library was selected to represent regional public libraries. The study respondents comprised 40 general library staff and 2 librarians, as well as 170 library users. Of the 40 library staff, 32 were from NCL and 8 from Kibaha Public Library while 100 library users were from NCL and 70 from Kibaha Public Library.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select librarians at both the libraries while convenience sampling technique was used to select library staff and library users from both the libraries. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to library users and library staff and face-to-face interviews with two librarians. Of the 170 questionnaires distributed to library users, 159 were filled and returned, giving a response rate of 94%.

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Similarly, 39 out of 40 questionnaires distributed to library staff were returned, giving a response rate of 97%, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Response rate

Respondents	Distributed questionnaires	Returned questionnaires	Response rate (%)
Library users	170	159	93.5
Library staff	40	39	97.5
Total	210	198	94.3

The study also used observation method to collect data. Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) was used to analyse quantitative data, while qualitative data were content-analysed.

Findings and discussion

Socio-demographic information of the respondents

Information related to gender, age range, educational level, and type of user is presented in the following subsections.

Gender

Responses on gender distribution of respondents show that 14 (35.9%) library staff were males while 25 (64.1%) were females. On the part of library users, 127 (79.9%) were males and 32(20.1%) were females, as presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Gender distribution of the respondents

Sex	Library Users n=159		Library staff n=39	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	127	79.9	14	35.9
Female	32	20.1	25	64.1
Total	159	100	39	100

As shown in Table 2, majority of library staff were females while majority of library users were males. The finding on male predominance in the usage of the public libraries concurs with Silva and Olinto's (2016) study on gender differences in ICT use and IL in Rio de Janeiro public library which found that more males used the library than females. Moreover, the predominance of female library staff is historically explained by Bergman (2005) who pointed out that throughout the past century of library history, librarianship has been a female dominated occupation. Considering the fact that women have traditionally been underrepresented in formal employment, their dominance in librarianship is a welcome state with regards to efforts to ensure equal access to employment as required by various national and international enactments.

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Age range of library users

Responses on age ranges as obtained from library users indicated that 80 (50.3%) were less than 20 years of age, 61 (38.4%) were aged between 20 and 29 years, 10 (6.3%) were aged between 30 and 39 years, and 8 (5.0%) between 40 and 49 years as presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Age range of library users

Response (n= 159)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 20	80	50.3
20-29	61	38.4
30-39	10	6.3
40-49	8	5.0
Total	159	100

Responses in Table 3 show that most library users were less than 30 years of age while a few were aged between 30 and 49 years. This category could include universities and colleges students as well as researchers who go to public libraries with special information needs such as seeking research papers with historical information not available in their institutional libraries. Some could also be ordinary citizens who go to public libraries for special cases like finding a certain newspaper. In general, although public libraries are established to cater for the needs of all users regardless of their age, most users are young.

Highest academic qualifications of library staff

It was considered important to know the academic qualification of library staff. Responses revealed that 2 (5.1%) staff members had Certificates, 19 (48.7%) had Diplomas, 15 (38.5%) had Bachelor's Degrees, while 3 (7.7%) had Masters Degrees. Table 4 presents the responses.

Table 4: Highest academic qualification of library staff

Category (n = 39)	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	2	5.1
Diploma	19	48.7
Bachelors degree	15	38.5
Masters degree	3	7.7
Total	39	100

Table 4 shows that majority of library staff had Diplomas and Bachelor's degrees, with a few possessing Masters degrees. When respondents were further asked to indicate if their highest academic qualifications were related to their profession, majority (37 or 94.9%) indicated that they were. Possession of skills and formal knowledge in librarianship puts them in a better position to conduct IL and user education training. Similarly, Das and Lal (2006) found that some skills required for information literacy had already been achieved by public librarians through their formal degree or diploma courses, inductive orientation, and on-job training



programmes. The small number of respondents holding masters degrees could probably be due to the limited number of institutions that provide such degrees in librarianship in Tanzania, inadequacy of funds to support staff development, as well as inadequacy of staff in public libraries.

Working experience among Library Staff

The respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been working in libraries. The findings are presented in Table 5:

Table 5: Working experience among library staff

Category (n=39)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2 years	6	15.4
2-5 years	8	20.5
6-10 years	8	20.5
More than 10 years	17	43.6
Total	39	100

Table 5 shows that out of 39 librarians, 6 (15.4%) have worked for less than two years, 8 (20.5%) have worked for about 2-5 years, 8 (20.5%) have worked for 6-10 years while 17 (43.6%) have worked for more than ten years. Based on the responses given, majority of library staff had working experiences of more than five (5) years. This implies that they are experienced enough at what they do.

Provision of IL and user education training by the surveyed public libraries

The respondents were asked to indicate if IL and user education programmes were available in the public libraries. The aim of this question was to establish if the libraries offered IL and user education training to their users as it is required. The findings show that 37(94.9%) of library staff responded with a Yes” while 2 (5.1%) responded with a No”. The findings show that majority of library staff indicated that IL and user education training were conducted in the public libraries. This was confirmed during an interview session with the librarian at NCL who commented that “we conduct IL and user education training in our library for new users.” Similarly, through observations at the NCL, it was noted that training on how to use OPAC was being conducted in the library. Users were also being given instructions on how to borrow and return books.

It was also revealed that at Kibaha Public Library that user training was not being conducted. Respondents also indicated that lack of facilities such as computers and internet connectivity contributed to this state. This was confirmed by the researcher through observations. Likewise, the librarian confirmed this during interview as follows:

We do not conduct IL in this library because we do not have teaching facilities such as computers. What we are doing in this library is conduct user education. We teach

users how to use the card catalogue and bibliographies, and give them library instructions

Ways used to inform users about IL and user education programmes

The study sought to examine the ways used by the libraries to inform users about IL and user education programmes in public libraries. The aim of this question was to find out if libraries have specific ways of doing so. Library users were also required to indicate ways through which they became aware of IL and user education training offered by the surveyed libraries. Table 6 presents the findings.

Table 6: Ways used to inform users about IL and user education

Response	Library staff (n= 39)		Library Users (n= 159)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Notice board advertisement	30	76.95	55	34.6
Brochures and fliers	32	82.1	26	16.4
E-mail	14	35.9	3	1.9
Website	26	66.7	6	3.7
Verbal communication between library staff and library users	13	33.3	51	32.1
Verbal communication among library users	-	-	18	11.3
Total	39	100	159	100

The findings in Table 6 show that out of 39 library staff, 30(76.9%) indicated that notice board advertisements are used to inform library users about IL and user education training, 32(82.1%) mentioned brochures and fliers, 14(35.9%) mentioned email, 26 (66.7%) mentioned website, while 26(33.3%) mentioned verbal communication with library users. Responses from library users indicate that 55(36.4%) knew about the aspects through notice board announcements, 26(16.4%) mentioned brochures and fliers, 3(1.9%) mentioned e-mail, 6(3.7%) mentioned website, and 51(32.1%) mentioned verbal communication with library staff. The results further show that 18(11.3%) respondents mentioned verbal communication with other library users or colleagues.

From the findings it can be established that the major way used to inform users about IL and user education training is notice boards, followed by brochures/fliers and websites. Moreover, library users got information about IL and user education carried out in public libraries mostly through notice board announcements and verbal communication with library staff. These findings correspond with those from a study by Edewor (2016) on marketing of information services in African libraries which found that the major way used to inform users about library services including IL and user education was provision of printed advertising materials such as brochures and flyers. Through observations at NCL, the researcher



confirmed the presence of notice board advertisements of computer training and information literacy.

Length of IL and user education training provided to the library users

The study sought to find out the length IL and user education programmes offered to library users. The aim of this was to know if the training provided to users were of reasonable length to make them effective. This question was asked to both respondents types (library users and librarians). Table 7 provides the responses:

Table 7: Length of providing IL and user education training

Length of the training	Users (n= 159)		Librarian (n=39)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
One day	66	41.5	17	66.7
Several days a week	53	33.3	10	25.6
A week	26	16.4	3	7.7
Several weeks	14	8.8	0	0
Total	159	100	39	100

The findings in Table 7 show that generally, information literacy and user education training programmes in the surveyed public libraries are organised or conducted on a one day basis. However, it is clear that one day long trainings are unlikely to be enough to allow moderators to cover enough IL and user education contents. During an interview with the Librarian at Kibaha public library it was explained that:

We provide user education for one day for a group of new users who have registered at the same time but also we repeat the training for users who did not understand what they were taught in the initial training. So, the training is done in one day but we do repeat for those who did not understand the contents. The repeated courses are usually two to three hours long because the numbers of users in need of the repeated training are usually small.

At NCL, the following was said by the Librarian during an interview session:

The IL and user education training are being conducted for several days, ranging from one to three. This is so because of the increasing number of users registering daily. Majority of these are secondary school students

Methods used to deliver IL and user education skills

For any training to achieve the intended goal, proper and relevant content delivery methods should be used. As such, this study sought to identify the methods used to deliver IL and user education contents library users. This question was directed to both library users and librarians. Table 8 presents the findings:

Table 8: Methods used in imparting IL and user education to library users

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Methods used	Users (n= 159)		Librarian (n=39)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Library tour	52	37.7	33	84.6
Lecture presentation	23	14.5	16	41
Seminars/workshop	9	5.7	11	28.2
Demonstration	32	20.1	32	82.1
Fliers and brochures	26	16.4	31	79.5

Findings in Table 8 show that the mostly used method of delivering IL and user education contents used by the public libraries under study are library tours, followed by demonstrations, and distribution of fliers and brochures. The findings corroborate those from Nhendo & Musemburi's (2016) study on information literacy which found that the major method used to deliver IL in Zimbabwean public libraries was library tours followed by presentations. However, Gandhe (2011) argued that common or familiar methods of teaching should be avoided in favour of innovative teaching and learning techniques that emphasise self-learning and development of problem solving skills. These are argued to create a balance in teaching and learning. During an interview session with the Librarian of NLC public library on delivery methods the following were said:

We use library tours and demonstrations to teach new users different ways of searching materials in the library. When we register new users, they take a tour in our library to be introduced to different library sections so as to make them familiar with the library. Demonstration method is used to show users how to use catalogues and the OPAC to search materials in the library.

Lecture presentations are another method mentioned by few respondents. However, the effectiveness of this method in delivering IL and user education contents depends on the involvement of some demonstrations and hands-on activities library users take part in to enable them internalise what they learn.

Facilitators' competences in delivering IL and user education programmes

Library users were asked to rate the skills of the library staff members of the two public libraries in relation to the provision of IL and user education. Table 9 presents the findings.

Table 9: Facilitators' competence as rated by library users

Rates (n=159)	Frequency	Percentage
Very skilled	29	18.2
Skilled	67	42.1
Neutral	35	22.0
Unskilled	22	13.8
Very unskilled	6	3.8
Total	159	100

The findings in Table 9 show that facilitators have generally been rated as being skilled in the provision of IL and user education training. These findings concur with Nielsen and Borlund's (2011) study which revealed that library users viewed public librarians as helpfully



competent when they faced obstacles in searching for materials in the library. The study also found that respondents received support with regards to identifying information needs and suggesting relevant information sources. However, some library users found facilitators unskilled. This was explained by the Librarian of Kibaha public library as follows:

...we do not have the opportunity to get training that would improve our IL and user education skills. We are using the knowledge we acquired during our college years when we attended librarianship courses

Consequences of inadequate IL and user education skills among facilitators are emphasised by Ojedokun (2014) who found that librarians faced challenges in differentiating words and the use of Boolean operators; failed to distinguish library catalogues from bibliographic database and know little about web search tools. Moreover, a study conducted by Ayoku & Okafor (2015) in Nigeria revealed that although librarians were highly skilled in old IL delivering methods such as bibliographic instruction, locating information to answer users' queries, identifying various sources of information, and doing Internet information search and retrieval; they lacked skills in creating web pages and using reference managers and Boolean search techniques. Erich & Pepescu (2014) insisted that due to the new information age and communication technology developments, the integration of information and technology skills instructions is inevitable for the development of librarians skilled enough and capable of teaching IL and user education.

Challenges faced in provision of IL and user education to library users

The respondents were asked to provide challenges library faced in providing IL and user education training. The findings from both library staff and library users are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Challenges faced in provision of *IL* and user education programmes

Challenges	Library staff (n=39)		Library user (n=159)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequately skilled trainers	35	89.7	115	72.3
Lack of teaching facilities	34	87.2	139	87.4
Limited time of providing training	33	84.6	90	56.6
Lack of awareness about IL and user education	-	-	97	61
Inadequacy of funds to facilitate user training	25	64.1	-	-
Inadequate management support	31	79.4	-	-

The findings in Table 10 have established that generally, inadequately skilled IL and user education trainers, lack of teaching facilities, and limited time of training provision are the major challenges hindering effective provision of IL and user education training. During interviews with the Librarian of Kibaha Public Library, similar issues were raised as follows:

Time for conducting the training is too short. For example, we use only two hours to train users on how to use library services and how to search for materials through catalogues. Apart from that, we do not have any day set aside for the training, library staff members are not adequately skilled to conduct the training, and there is shortage of ICT facilities like computers

During an interview session with the NCL Librarian the challenges were further confirmed as follows:

Lack of awareness about the importance of IL and user education among library users is still a big challenge to the provision of such training. The users do not show cooperation during training because they do not know how important IL and user education training are to their learning. Apart from that, we also experience shortage of teaching facilities such as computers and internet services

According to these findings, limited time for providing IL and user education training makes it difficult for trainers to adequately cover all necessary aspects. Similar studies on IL and user education, such as Nhendo & Musemburi (2016) found that some of the main challenges facing public libraries in conducting IL and user education training were financial resources constraints, insufficient staffing, space constraints, inadequate ICT equipment, and lack of competent librarians to train users. Similarly, a study by Maina (2014) revealed lack of teaching equipment, inadequacy of trained staff, inadequacy of funding, as well as lack of policy as challenges. Moreover, a study by Mphidi (2016) revealed insufficient funds, shortage of librarians, and insufficiency of librarians skilled in the use of ICT facilities such as computers and internet, and lack of management support as challenges facing efforts to train users in IL and user education.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study has found that IL and user education training were conducted in the surveyed the public libraries where library tour was the major method of instruction. However, due to several factors, such as inadequacy of teaching facilities, limited time for conducting training, inadequacy of skilled trainers, and limited management support; the provision of IL and user education was inadequate. Therefore, in order to improve IL and user education training provision in public libraries, there is a need to ensure that teaching facilities such as computers with internet connectivity are made available in all the libraries. This will the trainings to adequately empower users with ability to seek information not only in traditional print environments but in electronic environments as well; thus keeping pace with current developments in ICT. The trainers, specifically library staff will also have to be conversant with modern IL knowledge and skills so as to pass them to users. However, this requires commitment by the public library management. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- All public libraries should be equipped with computers with internet connectivity. This will facilitate the imparting of modern search skills on a wider community of users.



- IL and user education trainers should regularly update their IL knowledge. This will enable them to go with current trends in IL and user education. Similarly, IL and user education programmes should also be regularly updated.
- The time set aside for conducting IL and user education training in public libraries should be increased. This also means setting side more funds for that purpose.
- IL and user education policies should be developed to facilitate decision-making on matters related to IL and user education in public libraries.

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