The Role of School Library Resource Centres in Resource-Based Learning: A Case of Iringa and Njombe Regions of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The school library system is the most valuable facility of the school and an integral part of the educational process and a tool for teaching and learning. This study explored the role of secondary school library resource centres in resource-based learning in Iringa and Njombe regions of Tanzania. The study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The study involved a sample of 148 heads of secondary schools and 36 school librarians. The types of secondary schools studied included public and private owned schools. The data were collected using questionnaires. This study found that the secondary school library resource centres were vital tools for teaching in the resource-based learning. Librarians cooperatively work with teachers to facilitate resource-based learning. They are also critical for provision of professional expertise to enable teachers and learners to effectively use the resources and services to foster critical thinking and lifelong learning, a prerequisite for resource-based learning.

Keywords: Curriculum Support, Information Literacy, Learner-centred Learning, Resource-based Learning, Role of School Libraries, School Library Resource Centres, Tanzania.

INTRODUCTION
Libraries regardless of their types, be it a special library, public library, academic library (school, college and university libraries), or national library, are nerve centres of the learning process. The school library resource centres (SLRCs) in Tanzanian environment is that which is used by students, teachers, staff, and in some instances by communities around the school. The objectives of the SLRCs) are to support all educational programmes of the school; to cultivate reading habits in students; to develop interest to use the library facility for students' overall development; to inculcate the habit of seeking help of additional sources other than text books; and to develop self-learning skills of students. The SLRCs that are well managed, adequately staffed, furnished with facilities and information resources, and well organized are poised and capable of engaging all domains of learning (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) and all types of students and teachers (Bush & Jones, 2010), and thus are critical for educational process. The SLRCs are the heart of the school and play vital role in helping the educational system to achieve its goals. They are central to the fulfilment of the instructional goals and objectives of the school and promote this through a planned programme of acquisition and organization of information and dissemination of materials to expand the learning environment of all students (Hoskins, 2006).

SLRCs are indeed centres of information sources and are the leading laboratory for developing critical thinking and for providing instruction that promotes multiple literacies, including information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy and technological literacy (Morris, 2010). The study focused on the role of SLRCs in Resource-Based Learning (RBL). Resource-based learning is defined as the use and application of available assets to support varied learning needs across contexts (Hill & Hannafin, 2001, p. 38). The concept is used in this study to denote learning in which learners develop knowledge, skills, and understanding by using a wide variety of print, non-print and human resources. This term or concept is central to this study. However, although the professional literature abounds with descriptions of RBL and its potential in the learning process, the Tanzanian curriculum for secondary schools does not directly use the term. Instead, the learner-centred learning (LCL) concept is dominant. In the Tanzanian context, LCL is virtually synonymous with RBL. While the RBL underscores learning that greatly depends on resources, LCL focuses on the learner in resource-based learning. This study is based on this understanding. The role of the SLRCs in the education process in Tanzania has not fully been prioritized and exploited to support resource-based learning and foster the development of deeper understanding, critical thinking and independent learning. Given this, the general objective of this study was to examine the role of SLRCs in resource-based learning. With this general objective, it was assumed that the study would reveal the critical role SLRCs

play in RBL. Specifically, the study examined the role of SLRCs on constructs that are relevant for RBL such as support for curricular work and instructional tool; provision of information literacy/user education to learners and teachers; provision of adequate collection of curricular and extra-curricular learning materials in various formats; facilitating consultation by teachers on the selection of appropriate materials for instruction; and teachers and teacher-librarian collaborative teaching. The understanding of the role of SLRCs in RBL is fundamental when gauging whether school libraries are instrumental in the educational process.

Theoretical and Empirical Review of Related Literature
Theoretical literature review
Primarily, this study deals with the role of SLRCs in RBL. To this end, the study is about learning. In education and psychology, learning theories have been developed to explain what happens when learning takes place and how learners learn. These theories fall under the main philosophical framework but are not limited to behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism. This study is underpinned by the constructivism theory of learning. Constructivism's basic postulation is that people are active learners and must construct knowledge for themselves. To that effect the traditional mode of lecturing to groups of learners is considered inappropriate and the teachers use materials with which learners can become actively involved through manipulation or social interaction (Schunk, 2000). The Tanzanian curriculum for basic education focuses on constructivism spirit. The syllabi emphasize a learner-centred method of teaching and learning (UNESCO-IBE, 2010/2011). According to Donham (2008, p. 29) constructivism supports the engagement of learners in inquiry, and that engagement in inquiry creates the need for information resources and human resources that bring the learners to the library media centre.

The importance of resource centres as providers of information and human resources to enable learners to actively engage in inquiry is the focus of this study and informs the conceptual model. The constructivism theory of leaning is specified by the Resource-Based Learning (RBL) model. The model as the conceptual framework informing the study was developed by Manitoba Department of Education and Training, an education department of the province of Manitoba, Canada, to facilitate the implementation of the RBL implicit in the schools' curriculum, and as a response to the changing information needs of learners in an information-rich society (MDET 1994). Resource-based learning is a Learner Centred Learning (LCL) in which learners are actively involved and more accountable for their own learning (Arko-Cobbah, 2004). The model has been adapted by various educational systems. This model fits well in the Tanzanian education system. The Tanzanian curriculum for primary and secondary schools was reviewed in the

spirit of constructivism. The focus of the curriculum is competence based. The syllabi emphasize learner-centred methods of teaching and learning. This approach to teaching and learning is assumed to enhance a participatory approach which aims at benefiting learners with different abilities so as to capture their learning needs. In this way, teaching becomes a more reflective practice by increasing awareness of different learning styles, backgrounds, experiences and learning needs (UNESCO-IBE 2010/2011). The RBL is a model in which learners, teachers and teacher-librarians are actively involved in the effective use of a wide range of print, non-print and human resources (MDET 1994).
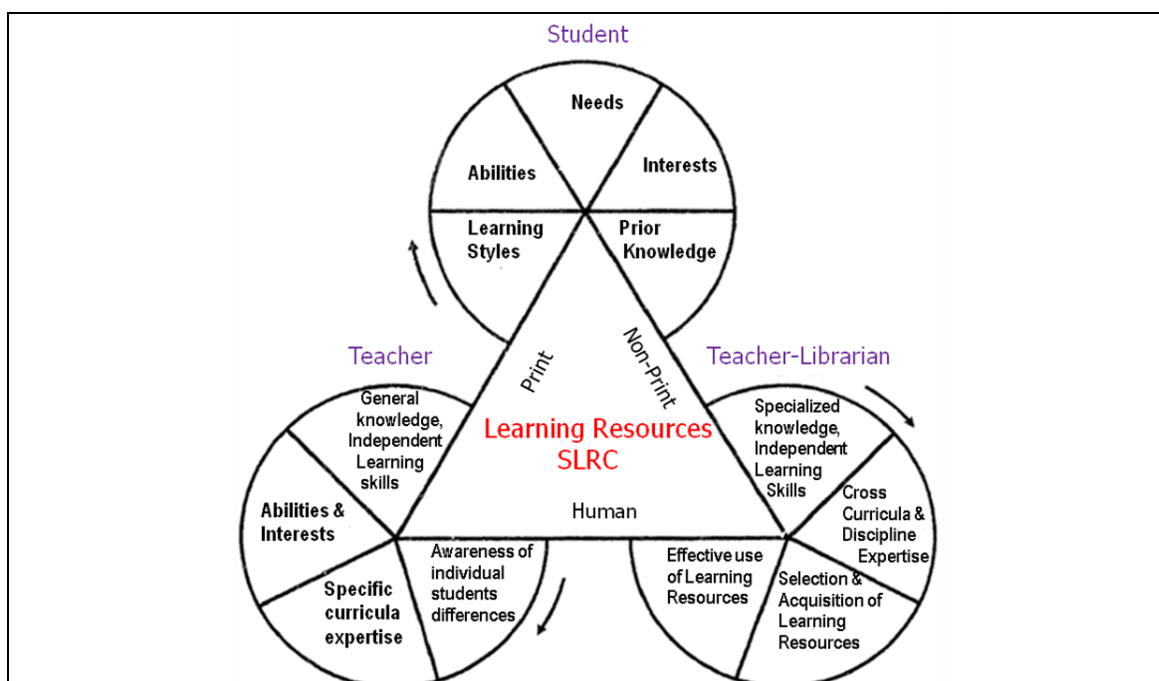

Figure 1: Resource-based Learning Model
Source: MDET, (1994)

Resource-based learning is an educational instructional strategy that use and apply of available assets to support varied learning needs across context. The assets can broadly incorporate teaching and learning resources such as traditional print resources, non-print resources such as digital resources, human resources and other tools that facilitate teaching and learning. Thus the RBL as educational model is designed to actively engage teachers, learners and teacher-librarians in meaningful exploitation of a wide array of appropriate print, non-print and human resources (Hannafin & Hill, 2007; MEDT, 1994). The resource-based learning as an instructional strategy empowers learners with the needed skills to inquire, discover and construct meaning. This is possible through teachers and school librarians' facilitation of the learning process and learners' interaction with varied and appropriate resources. The outcome of this

process is the development in learners of independent learning abilities, critical thinking skills, and tendencies towards lifelong learning.

Empirical Literature Review

Provision of teaching and learning materials

A broad range of studies has been conducted on the role of school libraries in the educational process. Generally, the role and importance of SLRCs as an essential component and centre in the educational process has been widely recognized (Usoro & Usanga 2007; Woolls, 2010; Ajegbomogun & Salaam, 2011). School library resource centres are the right course of action to ensure that learners in primary and secondary schools have access to the right materials at the right time. School libraries are central to education for they provide teaching and learning materials, resources and opportunity for literacy skills which are essential for lifelong learning and learners' achievement (Magara & Nyumba, 2004; Anderson & Matthew, 2010; Equal Education Policy, Communication and Research, 2010). In recognition of the importance of the library to education, Bukhari (2006) asserts that, education and the library are two inseparable and indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. This implies that the provision of quality education, to the great extent, is enhanced and strengthened by the availability of functional SLRCs which are equipped with treasures of knowledge inherent in the resources (learning and teaching materials) which they collect, organize, manage and disseminate (South Africa Department of Basic Education, 2008).

Curriculum Support

The curriculum refers to the substance of the experiences teachers intend for learners to have in school – the content and the experiences of interacting with the content (Donham, 2008). The curriculum in this case denotes the description of the contents of teaching of which teachers should deliver through teaching. Another aspect that needs to be addressed here is the experience of interaction with the content. This aspect of experience entails the process in which a teacher interacts with learners and the knowledge to fulfil the goals of learning (Smith, 2000). The education systems in most African countries focus on inquiry and knowledge which calls for a resource-based curriculum which prepares learners for lifelong learning. The resource-based curriculum takes seriously the availability of resources that makes it possible for teachers and learners to interact with the content for stated outcomes for learners. Such a curriculum demands that teachers and learners have access to resources and to programmes that emphasize the skills necessary to effectively and efficiently use resources. As the South African Department of Basic Education (2008) notes, the South African curriculum – in its ethos and its pedagogies – cannot be delivered without access to a well-managed collection of learning resources. In

this scenario effective school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians are indispensable to deliver an effective resource-based curriculum. The curriculum, as prescribed content or courses to be taught, requires a wide range of information resources that are inherent in that content. To this end the SLRC is central in resourcing, enriching and supporting delivery of the curriculum (South Africa Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education, 2010). The study by Rahme, Saade, and Khayrallah (2020) revealed that despite the critical role school libraries play in educational process, the promotion of research skills and supporting the curriculum are underplayed by Lebanese public school libraries. This is so due to lack of national laws and government policies, insignificant budgets, absence of appropriate resources and facilities, and absence of qualified teacher-librarians.

Enhancing Teaching and Learning
School library resource centres as Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) assert, have a powerful influence on stimulating interest in reading and strengthening research and critical-thinking skills of learners. School library resource centres are therefore essential institutions to engage, support and stimulate learning and development and the promotion of a culture of reading for lifelong learning. Functional school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians are essential to deliver an effective resource-based curriculum. In the context of the school library as an integral part of the curriculum, the library's role is to facilitate the implementation and support of the school curriculum by providing materials that supplement and support classroom learning and teaching (Magara & Nyumba, 2004; Dent, 2006). The school library's role according to Mgina and Lwehabura (2011) is to provide teachers with access to materials relevant to the curriculum to enable them to teach and promote professional development. The school library's role is not only to provide a wide variety of information resources to facilitate teaching and learning in schools, but also an important tool for teaching and learning (Ajegbomogun & Salaam, 2011). The school library resource centres are not only instruments for enhancing teaching and learning, they are also effective tools for building a successful reading culture among students. The factors for building reading cultures, according to Loh, Ellis, Pacular and Wan (2017) include: curating the book selection for readers; making the books visible; creating programmes to excite readers; designing space for reading; and building ecology for reading.

Promoting Information Literacy
Information literacy is the ability of an information user to locate, evaluate, understand, and use the information efficiently (Lwehabura, 2007). Taylor (2006) adds more aspects of information literacy to include: the ability to recognize the need for information, access, find, evaluate, use and communicate the information. A careful examination of the definitions one notes a

combination of basic library skills (locating the information and access) with the learning process (evaluating, using, synthesizing and communicating the information). As such, to achieve proficiency in information literacy or library skills (user education) instruction in the access and use of information is required. Zervas, Stavrou, and Kounoudes (2015) observe that school library resource centres play an important role in the development of students' information literacy skills. Information literacy and user education focus on learning as a bottom line. As instruments of learning, information literacy and user education are important because learners cannot be taught in class everything, they need in order to survive and reach their desired goals. Teaching children that they can seek out information they need, and they can learn on their own whenever they want will empower learners and help them to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers (Taylor, 2006). Numerous studies consider information literacy as crucial in developing the habits of reading among children to encourage lifelong learning (Ajegbomogun & Salaam 2011).

According to Anderson and Matthew (2010) the only place in Sub-Saharan Africa for children to be provided with the first opportunity to acquire literacy skills is a school. It is the school, not a family, that collects a wide range of information resources for learners to read and study; it is the school which has professional teacher-librarians equipped with professional expertise and experience to orient and impart the learners with information literacy skills; it is the school which provides a library with a pleasant and conducive environment for children to read and study. The role of the school library through its teacher-librarian is to instruct the learner with information literacy skills that would empower them in the exploitation of information resources in learner-centred learning contexts (Martin & Zennier, 2009). It is through information literacy skills that learners would be empowered to competently and independently identify, collect, critically analyse and organise information, solve problems and communicate their understandings. Consequently, learners enrich their intellectual, cultural and emotional growth (Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011). It was interesting to note that while most studies recognize the centrality of information literacy in secondary school libraries for optimal exploitation of resources inherent in the SLRCs, a study by Rahme, Saade, and Khayrallah (2020) found that information literacy is an unknown concept in Lebanese public secondary schools. In this case the school libraries in Lebanese are not contributing to improving students' mastery of information literacy skills and use of information.

Methodology

This study used a positivism paradigm with a quantitative approach in soliciting and analysing data to answer the research question. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design with the aim of describing the role of SLRCs in RBL. Since the target population was large, the survey design was considered appropriate for surveying a sample drawn from the population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The strength of survey research is that, if properly done, it allows one to generalize from a smaller group to a larger group from which the subgroup has been selected (Connaway & Powel, 2010); and gathers data from a sample drawn from the predetermined population and data is collected on a once off basis (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The choice of the design was largely based on the fact that descriptive studies portray accurate profile of the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) and thus serve as direct sources of valuable knowledge concerning human behaviour.

Further it was determined by the nature of the study of providing a clear picture of the role of school library resource centres in RBL in Tanzania and that the design was the fact that it has been popularly used by most reviewed studies on school libraries (Adeyemi, 2010; Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011). Since the research sought to throw light on the role of SLRCs in RBL in secondary schools, it was thus conducted among 245 heads of secondary schools and 39 school librarians or teacher-librarians who constituted the population of the study. The rule of thumb is that with the survey design the sample size required for a heterogeneous population is relatively large. A greater sample size ensures a greater level of accuracy, confidence, and certainty of the researcher to make inferences (Rea & Parker, 2005). The tables of recommended sizes of sample by Payne and Payne (2004) and Sarantakos (2005) were used to draw a required sample for the study. A stratified proportional random sample of 148 heads of secondary schools and a purposive sample of 36 school librarians were drawn and surveyed.

Table 1: Population and sample sizes for different respondents' categories

Characteristics of the Population	Population Size	Sample Size	Percentage
Heads of public (government) secondary schools	185	111	60.3
Heads of private secondary schools	60	37	20.1
Secondary school librarians/teacher-librarians	39	36	19.6
Total	**284**	**184**	**100%**

Questionnaire instrument was used to gather data for the study. A descriptive statistics data analysis was used with the aid of SPSS to make meaning out of the data collected. The data were then visually presented using tables. The questionnaire return rates for this current study were 140 or 94.6% for heads of secondary schools. This was a very good response rate, representative of the sample and adequate for data analysis and reporting of the findings. Out of 39 schools with functioning libraries, as reported by Southern Highlands Zonal Inspector of Schools, 36 school librarians to be surveyed were purposively selected from schools having libraries. This number constitutes 92.3% of schools with libraries; an excellent basis for data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Rea & Parker, 2005).

Results and Discussion
The survey focussed on the role of SLRCs in resource-based learning. The heads of secondary schools with functioning libraries, heads of school that had no functioning libraries, and secondary school librarians/teacher-librarians were involved in this study. Each category of respondents was given a different tool that solicited data to answer the research question. The results of the survey are reported and discussed under each category of respondents.

Heads of Schools without School Libraries
Eighty-seven heads of secondary schools without libraries were surveyed. This category of respondents was asked to give their general opinions regarding the role of SLRCs in education. The result is summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Heads of schools without libraries' opinion on the role of SLRCs
N=87

Statements	Count	Percent
Facilitates the education process (teaching and learning)	20	23.0
Develops learners independent reading, creativity and problem-solving	19	21.8
Source of information, knowledge and skills not provided by teachers	15	17.2
Improves the quality of education	13	15.0
Improves performance of learners	11	12.6
Inculcates the spirit of love for reading	9	10.3

The result shows that despite the fact that their schools had no libraries, they had the knowledge of the role of the school libraries in education. They identified six basic roles of school libraries. These roles include: facilitating the education process (that is teaching and learning); developing learners

independent reading, creativity and problem-solving; source of information, knowledge and skills not provided by teachers; improving the quality of education; improving performance of learners; and inculcating the spirit of love for reading. It was interesting to note that despite the fact that they have the knowledge of the centrality of school libraries to educational provision they were not having libraries. This could presumably be attributed to negative attitudes of heads of school to SLRCs or rather absent of dedicated budget for development of SLRCs in their premises.

Heads of Schools with School Libraries

The heads of schools with libraries were asked to ascertain whether their libraries play any role in the RBL. Eleven statements were given for them to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement using a five Likert scale of 1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly disagree. The findings are given in Table 3 below. The strongly agree and agree and disagree and strongly disagree are combined to agree and disagree respectively.

Table 3: Means, St. Dev. and frequency of the role of SLRCs in RBL N=53

Variable	Mean	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The school library has adequate of resources for students and teachers	2.33	.828	75%	13.9%	11.2%
The librarian involve the teachers in developing the collection of the library	1.86	.867	88.9%	5.6%	5.6%
The school library is open to teachers and students when they need it	1.58	.770	97.2%	0	2.8%
School library is used for effective teaching	1.98	.909	86.8%	0	13.2%
Teachers design learning experiences for learners that encourage and support the effective use of the school library	2.02	.747	90.6%	0	9.4%
The teaching method in this school incorporates the skills necessary for independent and lifelong learning	1.98	.796	90.6%	1.9%	7.6%
Library resources make a necessary contribution to the development of	1.66	.758	94.3%	0	5.7%

learners' self-confidence, independence and self-work

The school library programmes are fully integrated with classroom lessons	2.25	1.054	77.5%	7.5%	17%
The teachers and teacher-librarian/school librarian teach cooperatively	2.06	.691	88.7%	3.8%	7.5%
Teachers use resources in their classroom teaching to encourage students to become active rather than passive learners	1.75	.677	96.2%	1.9%	1.9%
Teacher-librarian provides skills to teachers and students to learn how to use the relevant educational materials and exploitation of library facilities	2.08	.829	86.8%	3.8%	9.4%

Value: Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), Neutral (3), Disagree (4), Strongly disagree (5)

Overall, the findings indicate that an average of 88% of heads of schools with libraries agree to all statements that are essential for RBL. With these findings it can be concluded that the presence of functional library in a secondary school can make a difference to the education of learners.

School Librarians/Teacher - Librarians
In RBL the role of school librarians and teachers cannot be underestimated. These two professionals are essential in facilitating RBL in secondary schools and thus are instrumental for RBL to be viable. With such an understanding, the school librarians were involved in this survey. Questions for school librarians collected data to establish the extent to which they actively participated with teachers to motivate and facilitate the learning process in secondary schools. Eight statements were given for them to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement using a five Likert scale of 1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly disagree. The findings are given in Table 4 below. The strongly agree and agree and disagree and strongly disagree are combined to agree and disagree respectively.

Table 4: Means, St. Dev. and frequency of the role of SLRCs in RBL N=36

Variable	Mean	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The school library is essential for effective teaching	1.64	.723	91.6%	5.6%	2.8%
Teachers and the librarian teach subjects cooperatively	1.94	.893	83.4%	11.1%	5.6%
The librarian promote the use of resources as part of the curriculum	1.67	.717	91.6%	5.6%	2.8%
The librarian teach students skills for effective use of library resources	1.58	.554	97.2%	2.8%	0%
The librarian has knowledge and skills to implement resource-based learning programme that integrate with the curriculum	1.97	1.028	86.1%	2.8%	11.1%
Teachers design learning experiences for learners that encourage and support the effective use of the school library	1.75	.692	91.7%	5.6%	2.5%
Teachers regard librarians as equal partner in the implementation of the school curriculum	1.67	.793	91.7%	2.8%	5.6%
Teachers cooperatively work with school librarian to plan resource-based lessons	1.89	887	86.1%	8.3%	5.6%

Value: Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), Neutral (3), Disagree (4), Strongly disagree (5)

Like the heads of schools with libraries, an average of 89.93% librarians or teacher-librarians agree that they are actively engaged in the curricular based library activities and cooperatively work with teachers in implementing resource-based learning. The findings suggest that school librarians are essentially important in education provision in RBL. Teaching and learning modes such as learner-centred, competence-based, inquiry-based, outcome-based and resource-based replacing the traditional teacher-centred instruction have elevated the role and the need of school libraries in the education process (Schunk, 2000; Arko-Cobbah, 2004). The school library system is an intellectual space for the development of a wide range of information handling and user competencies that lead to creating deeper

knowledge and understanding (Hay & Todd 2010). One of the key objectives of this study was to explore the role secondary school libraries play in resource-based learning. To this effect the objective intended to shed light on whether secondary school libraries are instrumental in supporting the curricular work of the school thereby improving the quality of education for learners. The findings revealed that SLRCs are instrumental in supporting the effective teaching. For students to optimal used the library in resource-based learning, the school librarians should promote the use of the facility, provide user education (information literacy) and have knowledge and skills to implement resource-based learning programme that integrate with the curriculum (URT, 2002). The result further indicated that teachers incorporated within their instructional lessons, independent learning skills and strategy. Independent learning is self-directed learning in which a learner is motivated to learn, and manages and reflects on their learning. These are the attributes that enable the learner to be successful (Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2007). Independent learning requires supportive teaching methods that engage learners in class activities such as group work, individual assignments and leading discussions that call for the utilization of resources and facilitation from both teachers and school librarians.

It also presupposes learners' basic research skills, information management and handling skills (information literacy and user education), and study skills. Teaching imparts skills to learners to foster self-directed learning which improves learning, critical thinking and lifelong learning. For this to happen, the role of the librarians and teachers needs to be closely linked as literature suggests (Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011). A large proportion of school librarians had the knowledge and skills to initiate, plan, develop and implement RBL programmes that integrated with the curriculum. The literature (Dubazana & Karlsson, 2006) supports the importance of resources and library programmes that are curriculum driven for the enhancement of RBL. The literature also points to the importance of the school librarians' responsibility to provide the expertise and leadership necessary to ensure that the school library programmes are an integral part of the school instructional programmes (Morris, 2010). In the RBL collaborative teaching between teachers and librarians is essential for it leads to quality education for learners. To be effective, such collaboration requires mutual trust and understanding between teachers and school librarians. Other aspects that need to be considered for collaborative teaching to be effective is the method of teaching that fosters collaboration and the teacher's ability to design lessons that encourage learners to use the library's facilities. In support of the mutual trust between school librarians and teachers, 91.7% of school librarians agreed that teachers regard them as equal partners. The basis for this view could be well understood in schools where a teacher is shortlisted to work in a school library which was the

case for some schools with libraries in Iringa and Njombe regions. However, in situations where the school library is staffed by a secondary school leaver, an ordinary staff member, or a librarian with a certificate qualification, the concept 'equal partners' is undermined as educators do not view such staff as equals. In view of the foregoing discussion, the role of school libraries in the attainment of educational excellence is yet to be fully appreciated in the Tanzanian context, Iringa and Njombe regions in particular. The reason for such conclusive statement is the fact that majority of secondary schools surveyed had no libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The students to optimal exploit the benefits of RBL, teachers and librarians should cooperatively work together in all aspects of teaching and preparing programmes for students to actively engage. In order to contribute significantly to the RBL secondary schools with libraries should invest more on professional librarians and elevate the SLRCs to be a focal point for education provision. For secondary school that do not have libraries in place, no way that they can compete in the RBL to improve the quality of education to leaners. They should dedicate resources for the establishment of library facility and professional librarians to assist in the learning process of students. The education policy implementers are recommended to put in place a mechanism to reinforce the establishment and development of state-of-the-art school libraries in every secondary school as critical tool for education provision.

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