

The Digital Era Trials and Tribulations of Professional Librarians in Selected Tanzania Accredited Technical and Vocational Institutions

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Abstract

This study explores the predicament professional librarians' face in the academia in the digital era. The National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET) influences the removal of academic librarians' cadre in institutions it accredits catapulting UTUMISHI towards removing it from scheme of services leading to the demotion of librarians or re-categorisation as administrative or faculty staff, respectively, losing their professional recognition. The study used a qualitative method research design to obtain data in eight selected Tanzania's institutions. Data were collected using interviews with eight librarians comprising senior/managerial positions in these studied libraries; two UTUMISHI officials and two library professional association leaders. Data were analysed thematically and discussed based on the research objectives and emerging issues. The results show that some librarians had academic status whereas there was no such a cadre in other institutions. As such, most of the librarians were re-categorised as faculty members whereas some were demoted to administrative positions due to changes in the UTUMISHI system. Other institutions were unaffected as they did not have the academic cadre. Most librarians were dissatisfied with the job and experienced low morale after being re-categorised, which forced some to seek transfers to universities. Besides, the other librarians had to pivot career wise to fit in with faculty requirements whereas others were left in dilemma promised special salaries. All the hopes are on professional associations to see what can be done to restore the academic cadre as individual efforts are futile. Librarianship still supports low status in Tanzania and librarians cannot continue with the assumption that stakeholders know their importance; they must demonstrate it through marketing of the profession. This might involve restoration of the academic status cadre in NACTVET institutions through collective bargaining using professional associations. This will be of great help in ensuring professional sustainability, research output and status of librarianship in higher learning institutions and continual survival.

Keywords: Professional librarians, digital age, status of librarians, LIS professional associations, Tanzania

Introduction

In the digital era, the library, as a knowledge hub, has been exposed to tremendous developments that have necessitated transformations from traditional libraries as originally constructed with movable and tangible materials to hybrid libraries in many African countries and Tanzania in particular. As a result, most modern libraries accommodate a virtual space with electronic resources. Towards this end, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments have resulted in unprecedented levels of creation, distribution and accessibility of information, which has made information explosion inevitable. Consequently, both libraries and librarians face daunting challenges in managing both information management and the stress associated with overwhelming information scenarios. These hurdles and effects that ICT and the digital technology have engendered for libraries notwithstanding, librarians have continued to adapt. The libraries have done so for the benefit of humanity and embracing new technologies and changing how information is accessed in their respective libraries to remain relevant and serve their users.

This phenomenon, however, has raised questions pertaining to the status of academic librarians regarding their relevance in the digital era. On the other hand, the question has arisen on whether users survive and get information without the assistance of professional librarians. These concerns are even much more acute for the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET) in Tanzania which precludes the engagement of academic librarian cadres in the libraries of all tertiary institutions they have accredited.

In a larger context, NACTVET is a corporate body established by the National Council for Technical Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 9 of 1997). The Act provides a legal framework for the Council to co-ordinate the provision of technical education and training in addition to establishing an efficient national qualifications system aimed at ensuring high quality products from technical institutions who are responsive to changing needs as well as unfolding technological innovations. In all, 453 tertiary education and training institutions fall under the umbrella of NACTVET. The institutions deliver courses at the technician, semi-professional and professional levels for the awards of certificates, diplomas, degrees and other related awards.

Apart from exploring how librarians provide services in the digital era and demonstrating their relevance, this paper also seeks to address the status of librarians in NACTVET accredited institutions by exploring their increasingly problematic status as information professionals as well as their trials and tribulations in the resource-poor context of Tanzania. Moreover, it explores the need for collective bargaining to ensure the survival of the profession amidst ongoing and even unstoppable changes in eight selected academic libraries in a bid to achieve the set objectives and make recommendations pertaining to the need to revise the scheme of service and status of librarians in NACTVET institutions in Tanzania.

Despite the roles that librarians play in academic institutions, advancements in ICT have resulted in changes and a paradigm shift affecting individuals, groups and organisations without forgetting academic libraries and the birth of ‘dotcom’ users (Mwilongo & Kotoroi, 2021). Nevertheless, librarians have continued to find innovative ways of providing services to users through the adoption of embedded librarianship, incorporation of social media to engage users and installation of modern ICT equipment in libraries for them to remain relevant in the digital era (Muneja, 2013; Mushi, Mwantimwa, & Wema, 2020; Kyumana, 2022). Paradoxically, the country’s Civil Service Establishment, popularly known as UTUMISHI in Kiswahili, in 2021 rendered the academic librarian cadre in all NACTVET accredited higher learning institutions ‘obsolete’ and removed the cadre completely from the scheme of services applicable to these institutions that previously employed these librarians. This seemingly draconian move resulted in frustration, confusion and job dissatisfaction amongst librarians. Yet, there has been no end in sight to this dilemma in NACTVET phenomenon, hence a need for research to explore the problem in-depth. This paper, therefore, explores this gap by seeking to achieve the following research objectives:

- i. To determine alternative status for librarians in NACTVET accredited institutions in the selected academic libraries in Tanzania.
- ii. To examine challenges that librarians face in service provision in their new contestable positions in NACTVET accredited institutions in the selected academic libraries in Tanzania.
- iii. To establish the roles that Librarians’ Professional Associations can play through collective bargaining to ensure the sustainability of the profession in NACTVET accredited institutions.

Literature Review

In the twenty-first century, most of the libraries are morphing into digital libraries. They now focus on the delivery of diverse services through a digitised form. In fact, the library in the digital era comprises collections, services and infrastructure aimed at supporting lifelong learning, research, scholarly communication and preservation (Digital Libraries, 2022; Hussain, Mahmood & Shafique, 2008). In higher learning institutions, academic libraries centripetal to their operations as they serve as a gateway to knowledge for scholars and students. With massive development in ICT and the growth of digital content coupled with social media, both libraries and librarians have had to adapt to the changes and transform the way they operate and the services they provide (The Library of the Future, 2022).

Jennings (2013) contends that these changing technologies would force libraries and librarians to wither away and die unless they did something about it and accommodated the change. The question of how is answered by Foo *et al.* (2002), Muneja (2013) and Mwilongo and Kotoroi (2021) who insist on libraries and librarians to keep pace with the unfolding changes in technology. Specifically, academic libraries have to adopt digital reference services using email, online reservations and renewal of library materials is becoming an integral part of the automation systems, electronic service provision to multiple resources with the overall hybrid library with reference, reserve and circulation facilities (Mushi, Mwantimwa, & Wema, 2020; Kyumana, 2022). In the midst of technological advancements and changing user needs and information seeking behaviour, the biggest challenges for librarians in such academic libraries in the twenty-first century is staying relevant to their information users considering that the internet and Google have irreversibly changed librarianship (Jennings, 2013). In addition, Oakleaf (2010) noted that the university librarians can no longer rely on their stakeholders' beliefs in their importance; rather they must demonstrate their value.

Schalak, Corral, & Bracke (2021) argued for a significant mind-shift among academic libraries and librarians for them to regain their place at the heart of the academic enterprise. Muneja's (2013) reflection on the role of Tanzanian librarians in the digital era noted that librarians have increasingly embraced new technology and ICT by updating their skills, incorporating ICT infrastructures for effective service provision despite financial challenges and sustainability issues coupled with the lack of management support to embrace changes and keep pace with the digital era.

Furthermore, Corral's (2012) analysis of the role of librarians observed that the digital era required managing data alongside other information and knowledge resources that libraries traditionally manage or provide for their communities. Besides, at a university level, librarians were increasingly developing services or getting involved in projects and providing support to researchers aimed at meeting their research needs and access requisite data. Chukwu *et al.* (2018) further contend that librarians have become information experts in the digital age as opposed to their traditional role of book custodians in addition to promoting and providing access, guidance and training for both physical and electronic materials housed outside and in an online environment. Implicitly, librarians are still relevant and are, in fact, redefining their relevance in the face of changes in technology and information explosion. Allen (1984), who critically analysed the image and reality of academic librarianship, noted that the explosion of knowledge and ICT developments have prompted many individuals in the academia increasingly to become specialised in comprehending subjects, hence the idea of a "narrow specialist librarian" is becoming almost derogatory.

The discussion on the relevance of librarians in university libraries enjoys unique status and recognition, which also determine their relevance (Salaam & Onifade, 2009; Adio & Popooa, 2010; Ibegbulam & Jacintha, 2016; Ajiduhan, 2021). Allen (1984) contends that the issue of the status of librarians and other occupational groups in the workforce had been a source of a grave concern for librarians for a long time to push for equal or comparable status with those of other institutions/universities engaging in teaching and research. In Africa, Ajiduhan (2021) noted that many libraries on the continent and particularly in Nigeria where the study was conducted categorise librarians as academic/faculty specifically in the service category within academia as opposed to faculty members who belong to teaching.

Bell (2016) further contends that in the digital age, academic researchers increasingly refer to online resources to kickstart their research journey and not turn to a librarian or library as in the olden days. Consequently, they place demands on the librarians evolving their roles to keep pace with a shift in the information users and research behaviour. Regardless of the changing roles for librarians and the continual dedication to keep pace with the digital era advancements, Chukwu *et al.* (2018) argue that the public perceptions of librarians are still tied to the outdated understanding of librarians as keepers of books.

In Tanzania, studies on the status of academic librarians in higher learning institutions are few and sparse. Many of them tend to focus on service provision in the digital era with little effort going to exploring status and sustainability of librarians in the digital era. Nawa (1989), who had examined the status of university librarians in Tanzania, affirmed that there was, indeed, a struggle for recognising librarians in the university communities in Africa generally and Tanzania particularly. Previously, Darch (1975) had noted that little value was placed on librarians in African universities. This resulted into comparatively tenuous and contestable status for librarians and faculty members. Moreover, Nawe's (1995) exploration of human resource issues and problems for library and information services in Sub-Saharan Africa established that in Botswana and Tanzania, the library profession had low status due to the lack of awareness amongst many information users regarding what constitutes librarianship. In a similar vein, Kyumana's (2018) exploration of the librarians' job satisfaction in four of Tanzania's academic libraries found that most of the librarians were dissatisfied with their job status in the libraries under review. The reason for their dissatisfaction was that the library profession was denigrated and accorded a low status cadre in many higher learning institutions, with their roles reduced to simply organising books on the shelf.

Theoretical Framework

The study explored the theory of professions and occupational identities. The theory focuses on the relationship between occupational groups, theoretical knowledge and the possibilities for practitioners to apply exclusively that knowledge within their occupational practice. In general, the theory distinguishes traits that entail the starting point in the systematic theory, recognition of the occupational group within its domain, practitioners' work in accordance with ethical codes and the professional body controls its own training programme (Sundin & Hedman, 2005). In the context of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession, the theory has placed significant interest and efforts towards studying the strategies different groups use to achieve a certain social status as a 'profession'. The theory in relation to LIS explores changes in librarianship over time, advancement in its body of knowledge and the profession relations with other groups (Sunden & Hedman, 2005; Broady-Preston, 2010).

On the other hand, Broady-Preston (2010) applied the professions and occupational theory to explore futuristically the information profession and concluded that the LIS profession was undergoing profound changes in relation

to the qualifications base; yet competition from the ICT profession, low recognition, poor image and qualifications levels coupled with barriers to career development were 'blurring' the lines and making the profession much more elusive. Specifically, they noted:

The key question is not 'what is a profession', but rather how do professions position themselves and respond within the context of: the changing nature of professions; relationships between professions at the macro level and at the micro level; and relationships between professionals and society, including issues of individual social identity and self-esteem (Broady-Preston, 2010: 67).

Issues that this paper seeks to explore and explain focus on examining the problematic status of academic librarians in Tanzania's NACTVET accredited institutions.

Methodology

The study used the qualitative method research design. Gray (2009) insists that this method suits small samples of respondents, cases, or phenomena nested in particularised contexts. To select respondents, the study used purposive non-probability sampling. In this regard, semi-structured interviews were held with librarians from eight (8) selected NACTVET accredited institutions with senior/managerial positions in their libraries in a bid to explore the problem through phone or face-to-face interviews, two (2) officials from UTUMISHI and two (2) from the librarians' professional associations to gain deeper insights into their stance on the status of academic librarians and associated challenges following their unceremonious removal as the academic librarians cadre from the operational structure of their respective institutions.

The academic institutions were selected purposively to include Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA), the Tanzania Institute of Accountancy (TIA), College of Business Education (CBE), the Institute of Finance Management (IFM), the Centre for Foreign Relations (CFR), Bandari College, the Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA) and the Institute of Rural Development Planning (IRDP). The data obtained were analysed thematically and organised based on the research objectives of the study as well as emerging issues in accordance with the same objectives.

Findings and Discussion

Respondents' profile, status accorded to librarians in researched institutions

In all, 12 participants participated in the study. These comprised of eight (8) librarians with managerial/senior positions from the eight higher learning institutions under review; two (2) officers from UTUMISHI; and two (2) key leaders from Librarians' professional associations i.e. Tanzania Library Association (TLA) and the Consortium of Tanzania University and Research Libraries (COTUL).

When librarians were asked about their status prior to the changes in the scheme of service, some noted that their respective institutions had the academic librarians' cadre. Thus, all the librarians employed were categorised accordingly and for those who went for further studies, promotion criteria adhered to grade point unit (GPA) achievement of either 3.8 in their undergraduate degree programmes and 4.0 in their master's degree. This served as the benchmark or publication points obtained in senior positions. If one failed to meet these requirements i.e. GPA acceptable points, then they could automatically be re-categorised to administrative posts. These institutions included the IFM, the MNMA, the CFR and the IAA.

In other institutions, it emerged that their respective schemes of services had no academic librarians' cadre at all. As a result, they had titles based on those available in their respective institutions. At some point, many urged their respective management to consider adding such cadres to their job portfolio but they were reluctant to do so. As a result, many were categorised as administrative whereas others assumed faculty titles even though their work remained in the library, for example, at the CBE. The CBE has established programmes in librarianship that allow such cadre to teach and continue conducting research.

Additionally, many institutions under NACTVET did not have an academic cadre in their schemes of service and neither did they consider accordingly faculty status because of the smallness of their institutions. Instead, their librarians ended up falling under the label of administrative staff with good salaries and fringe benefits irrespective of their GPA attained during either the undergraduate or postgraduate training. These institutions include Bandari College, the TIA and the IRDP as summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: Status Accorded to Librarians in their Academic Institutions

Institution	Status		
	Academic	Administrative	faculty
Tanzania Institute of Accountancy (TIA)		✓	
Bandari College		✓	
College of Business Education (CBE)			✓
Institute of Rural Development (IRD)		✓	
Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA)	✓		
Institute of Finance Management (IFM)	✓		
Centre for Foreign Relations (CFR)	✓		
Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA)	✓		
TOTAL	4 (50%)	3 (38%)	1 (12%)

Source: Field Data (2022)

Although some had tried to broach the subject of academic librarians' cadre up, they also noted that management support was so minimal. Worse enough, human resource officers did not give them any indication that they would consider let alone work on it. Finally, most of them chose to stay mum and forfeited their dream of progression. The issue of the status for librarians in academic institutions remains debatable and sometimes contestable without any sustainable consensus. In turn, many of these institutions opted to either offer librarians the faculty status they craved whereas others did not. In cases where NACTVET—the regulator intervened and decided for them, most of the institutions abandoned the librarians affected to fight the status battle individually with their own management. Allen (1984) notes that librarians in many cases are defined by 'industry' rather than 'activity':

Public Service librarians are equated with Public Service architects, chemists, engineers etc., municipal librarians with municipal administrative grades; school librarians with school teachers. In private industry librarians are still not formally covered by special awards, no doubt because this is a relatively unorganised and scattered segment of library workers. Also, in academic institutions librarians have been further divided industrially, both between different institutional or within the one institution (Allen, 1984 p.7).

This is also evident in a statement of an UTUMISHI official explaining the confusion that arose on why the cadre were being removed from the structure of the NACTVET:

Academic librarians are only to be [found] in universities and institutions accredited by Tanzania Commission for Universities [TCU] but in institutions under NACTVET this cadre is no longer there and is not supposed to be there. Those were directives that we received.

Thus, most of the universities still confer the academic status upon their librarians, a privilege that has since been removed from NACTVET institutions. A librarian at MNMA noted:

We were told by our human resource officer that our job titles no longer appear in the system, hence we will need to be re-categorised as administrative staff; however, since we have a library programme that the library manages in the Institute, it was easier to convince management to re-categorise (librarians) under academic/faculty staff cadre. After all, we were employed with similar qualifications of meeting GPA requirements. Thus, we received titles of tutorial assistants for those who were librarian trainees, assistant lecturers for those who were assistant librarians and lecturers for those who were librarians.

Librarians at the IFM, IAA and CFR pursued similar options. At the IFM, librarians met resistance from management, noting that an academician must not only teach but also conduct research and consultancy besides having a favourable GPA. Even though many librarians at the IFM were already engaged in these activities associated with scholarship yet resistance was apparent. One official from UTUMISHI said:

Professional librarians are categorised as faculty/academic staff, yet many are neither doing research nor conducting consultancies. And yet they want to be academicians. It's absurd. I don't know why they were given academic status in the first place and I don't see why they should have academic status at all.

However, subsequently the IFM, IAA and MNMA retained such a status for their librarians. The CFR librarians, on the other hand, were not as fortunate as the head of the library revealed during an interview:

At our Institute the news was received with almost joy and relief as many including the management, human resource officers and others never understood why librarians had similar status and salaries as faculty staff. So, no wisdom was used despite recommendations from Human resources personnel from UTUMISHI asking them to categorise us (librarians) as faculty staff. Instead, the library has lost its departmental status and has now been reduced to a unit.

We have not been given letters officially as to which cadres we belong. However, the management has requested for special salaries for all of us who qualified to be re-categorised as faculty but were left in limbo. This development has destroyed our morale for work, love for the profession and even dreams for career progression for many of us.

In a study on librarianship and the chronic struggle for professional status Garcia and Barbour (2018) noted that professionalising the occupation should strive to convince the public and policymakers of their distinctiveness and legitimacy. Moreover, librarianship as a profession shall sustain this continual struggle as the professional relevance remains complicated, debatable and questioned because of technological advancements, political and economic threats without forgetting its struggle to protect and improve its image and status that has been researched upon for years (Garcia, 2011; Hicks, 2016; Kyumana, 2018; Fraser-Arnott, 2019).

Challenges librarians face in NACTVET accredited institutions

After the removal of the librarians' academic cadre, library staff in these NACTVET institutions have faced several challenges at both the personal and professional level. In the long run, the decision for the removal of the cadre would not only affect librarians in these institutions but also universities, professional associations and long-term sustainability of the library profession would be in jeopardy. To begin with, most of the librarians experienced job dissatisfaction and low morale on the job because they were qualified but without faculty status. Meanwhile, those who had certificates and diplomas in librarianship were drained of all hope of ever rising to the rank of academic librarians in their respective institutions, which appears to be the fate of library staff in NACTVET institutions as the cadre will no longer be included in the official scheme of work.

Moreover, the low status that the profession still endures in Tanzania results in decisions regarding the future and sustainability of the profession being made based on the emotions and not merits. Management in many of these institutions had misconceptions that the librarians were ill-equipped to be academicians despite the provision of evidence by many who had published the research and scholarly work in reputable international and local journals whereas others provide consultancies and training in information literacy and electronic resource management. Others have even established LIS courses and teach in their respective institutions. Yet, doubts persisted rendering librarians at the scrutiny of their value and professional relevance.

Furthermore, the lack of professional sustainability and growth in the long-run were evidenced by two avenues both in professional training and research output. To begin with, even with professional training the promotion of one categorised as an administrative staff depends mostly on experience and not publication or research findings in reputable peer-reviewed scholarly journals. Subsequently, such lack of the required mobility would lower the librarians' thirst for further education, hence likely reducing enrolments and matriculations in universities offering librarianship programmes at the masters and doctoral levels. Furthermore, the research output that such cadre can generate could suffer as they would advance in their respective institutions without recourse to academic publications.

Furthermore, enrolment in librarianship programmes could take a hit in the long-run particularly for those who have been re-categorised as faculty members in institutions where LIS courses have yet to be established. For instance, the IFM would be required to grow in areas of interest to their institutional needs as opposed to the librarianship background that they possess. Consequently, the professional status of librarianship could continue to diminish as the academic cadre available gave the profession its lofty standing in the academic community. In fact, its removal and non-recognition in these institutions would lower even professional standard and stance in academic institutions as libraries would no longer be the heart of an academic institution. Even professional sustainability would be in danger since the remaining few in the professional would suffer from the sheer weight of non-recognition and non-progression in NACTVET institutions.

Professional associations

The Tanzania Library Association (TLA) has been an active professional association in Tanzania since 1973. Its mandate is to safeguard the interests of all library and information personnel in the country. The association strives to bring together all persons in the library/information profession by convening conferences and meetings for discussing matters affecting libraries and information institutions, their regulations, management, or otherwise. Moreover, it seeks to encourage the promotion, establishment and improvement of library and library services in Tanzania and promote bibliographical study and research (TLA, 2004). Significantly, the role of the TLA enumerated in its objectives is to "improve the standard of librarianship and the status of the library profession in the United Republic of Tanzania" (TLA, 2004; Wema, 2012). The TLA is not the

sole membership body for library and information profession in Tanzania. Arguably, there is the Consortium of Tanzania University and Research Libraries (COTUL), which is a formal association of academic and research institutions aimed at engaging them in joint information provision activities, particularly in the acquisition of electronic information sources, research, training, consultancy and others deemed critical in the attainment of academic excellence in learning, teaching and research in academic institutions. Even though the COTUL does not directly deal with the welfare of librarians, it needs librarians to serve as its liaison between institutions to obtain funds for electronic resource acquisition, participate in training and promoting local content preservation, archival, dissemination and management using Free and Open-source Software (COTUL, 2022).

Most of the librarians who were affected by the removal of the cadre expected these two library associations to make a statement and, eventually, fight for the academic status of librarians in NACTVET institutions. However, that did not materialise since each institution had been left to negotiate the issue of the status of its librarians on its own through their management, something that has proven futile. Many of these management remained sceptical about the librarians and their professional status. In this regard, one librarian reported that when the issue was too heated and frustration engulfed the librarians as they worried about their future, they reached out to the librarians' forums specifically the TLA through their WhatsApp group, urging the association and other members to intervene but encountered resistance:

Where did that information come from? We were asked. We can't be dealing with rumours and feelings as an association. We need a formal communication that was given. This is news that hasn't been heard of in universities and neither has it reached any of us leaders.

Indeed, when the researcher followed up the issue with management members from both the TLA and COTUL, it was established that both associations had heard about the issue from other librarians. However, they had yet to receive formal communication from either UTUMISHI or NACTVET. One librarian also lamented:

This situation has been handled professionally. When we were told that our cadre no longer exists in the UTUMISHI system of employment and, eventually, we were removed from scheme of service, alternative job titles were provided for us by

UTUMISHI. When we demanded official letters from our respective institutions, our pleas went unanswered. In turn, UTUMISHI human resource officers told us they had already issued directives to our officers to either give us the new titles of place us under faculty titles since we had [the required] qualifications. We had no written evidence to fight with. We were left hopeless.

When such grievances as these arise, professional associations should investigate especially when it affects the image, value and status of the profession regardless of how it was handled. Yet, no action had been taken by either the TLA or COTUL. This is contrary to what Ossai-Ugbah's (2013) study had suggested on the role of professional library associations and institutions aimed at providing opportunities for librarians to meet, share experiences, learn from each other and defend the principles of freedom of information. Additionally, the chairman of the TLA said during a phone interview:

We took office in 2022 when this matter was already implemented so we didn't know where to start. But it should be noted that an academic status is not just given...its earned. We fought at the University of Dar es Salaam while I was still at Ardhi University for this status with the university management and we succeeded. But when you look at institutions under NACTVET, some of them are small, hence not deserving of an academic status whereas others have librarians who are not performing core functions of an academician. It's a very hard situation. Perhaps, during either the COTUL or TLA general meeting, this issue should be brought up so that all members can discuss and we can come up with a consensus.

Notably, the Tanzania Library Service Board (TLSB) is another entity in the librarianship profession in Tanzania which is a public institution under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This institution was established by Parliament Act No. 39 of 1963 known as the Tanganyika Library Services Board. In 1975, the Act was amended where a new Act of Parliament No. 6 of 1975 was created and led to the name of the Institute changing from Tanganyika Library Services Board to the Tanzania Library Services Board. The main goal of the creation of the TLSB was to provide opportunities to all citizens without discrimination of any kind, to use public libraries to get education, knowledge and various information that will help in getting rid of poverty and ignorance and also to get entertainment and maintain culture. The director of the TLSB noted that:

The TLSB has heard challenges that librarians faced especially in Institutions accredited under the NACTVET yet they did not have any proof since no official letter was provided prior to implementation of the removal of the academic cadre in these institutions. However, the board noted that its working on it and the issue will be presented to the ministry. Additionally, amendments of the 1975 law are underway and a bill will be presented in parliament soonest, hence librarians shouldn't worry as things will be looking up for the profession, opportunities will increase and the status restored.

Research shows that most librarians, in particular, when asked about why they joined their respective professional associations, they cited having professional identity since professional associations have wider latitude and influence that could uphold the interest of librarianship and contribute to its improvement in addition to fostering retention, tenure and promotion (Broady-Preston, 2006). As individual efforts to fight for the librarians' status in the NACTVET institutions have proven difficulty, professional associations should try and come up with ways to fight for the academic cadre removed from the official structure of these institutions to be restored and in other institutions to have this cadre so that librarians can fill these positions on merit. Doing so could raise the status and profile of the profession something that the TLSB swore it will do and uphold in the near future in collaboration with professional associations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Librarians in most of the NACTVET accredited institutions are accorded the administrative staff status in their respective institutions due to their size as some are small colleges whereas others were accorded academic and faculty status. Yet, the decision by UTUMISHI to remove the academic cadre from scheme of services in these institutions resulted in dissatisfaction and the death of a dream that most institutions were fighting for to include librarians with acceptable GPA qualifications into academic status in higher learning institutions to support effectively and efficiently the teaching, research and consultancy functions of most of higher learning institutions in Tanzania. With the changes brought about by the removal of the academic librarians' cadre in the NACTVET institutions, most of the librarians contented with challenges, which include being re-categorised as administrative staff, hence losing the academic benefits that some had hitherto enjoyed, which had included teaching and conducting research. The other effects included the loss of morale for the job as most were dissatisfied with the decision yet there was nothing else they could do. At the same time, those

who had been accorded faculty status lost their professional identity and standing as in some institutions had no librarianship programmes on offer to warrant such designation. Hence, many were required to teach non-specialised subjects that cut across all the courses, for instance, development studies and research methodology. Finally, other institutions were reluctant to support academic librarians to pursue further education in librarianship since such cadre in those institutions had been officially 'outlawed'. Hence, this resulted in either changing career course to suit faculty needs or request for transfer into universities where the cadre still exists that they can progress career-wise.

In the light of these challenges and status dilemma, most of the librarians recommended a unified voice in fighting for the restoration of academic status cadre in the NACTVET accredited institutions. Moreover, they called for the professional association to expand their coverage to the provision of professional certification for librarians which in turn could raise the profile and status of the profession, marketing and educating the public about librarianship. At the moment, ICT professionals seem to be more attractive to employers with the hopes of being assisted to access digital contents better than librarians ever could. Finally, the COTUL and TLA should revert to collective bargaining to renegotiate with UTUMISHI and the NACTVET for the academic librarians' cadre to be restored for those with requisite qualifications to be rewarded accordingly. This course of action is imperative for the sustainability of the librarianship profession in the academic contexts of the NACTVET. At the same time, the TLSB should speed up the amendments of the law (i.e. Act No. 6 of 1975 which established the TLSB) process to give it more mandate. This will enable the TLSB to create its own accreditation board which in turn will raise the profile of the profession in Tanzania and give it a lofty standing in the academic community and the country at large.

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