

## What works for you?

The effective transfer of teaching methodologies in Tanzania

Dr Evans Wema, 2010

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*The training-the-trainer approach to workshops can be very effective, providing both a strong understanding of the subject material and developing the skills necessary to pass it on. However, participants often come from varied backgrounds and go on to train groups with specific, or equally varied, needs. This case study examines initiatives in Tanzania that enabled Information Literacy teaching methods to be adapted and applied to a variety of audiences.*

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Knowledge transfer involves more than a simple set of instructions and facts; it involves imparting experience and understanding from one individual (or group) to another. It is as much the knowledge gained from 'doing' as it is an explanation of what needs to be done. This has become a major area of interest for many libraries in Africa – largely due to a limited number of resources available. In the past, libraries have been unable to sustain services because of a variety of factors including: limited budgets; lack of expertise; poor infrastructure; and changing technologies. In an effort to make the most of resources and improve knowledge transfer, there have been a variety of library-driven initiatives to develop modalities for promoting knowledge sharing among institutions.

When training trainers, effective knowledge transfer is essential, as it is important to be able to adapt and change the methods and materials according to the needs of your audience. This case study examines initiatives in Tanzania that enabled Information Literacy teaching methods to be adapted and applied to a variety of audiences.

### Workshop participants

As indicated above, the workshops served a diverse set of users with different information needs. To effectively meet these needs, different methods of teaching and learning were required. For example, the Institute of Marine Sciences' (IMS) library in Zanzibar has a distinctive group of researchers who come from all over the world to make use of the resources. This meant the materials had to address a wide variety of skill levels and interests. While the IMS library had a great deal of diversity, other libraries focused on more specific skill sets and groups. Libraries in institutions such as the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM); the Institute of Financial Management (IFM); and the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) served specialized groups of users (namely students, academics and researchers).

The Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC1) also provided a very specific user group with notably different goals: journalists. Looking at the nature of users, the training needs had to take a mixed approach that

ensured a balanced teaching methodology which could be transferred across groups of users from different backgrounds and information needs.

### Workshop programme for Tanzanian librarians

There were two training sessions at Kibaha, a city in the eastern coastal region of Tanzania, but one in particular demonstrated a remarkable methodology transfer. This workshop aimed to provide participants with information literacy skills and examine what to consider when developing information literacy programmes for their institutions. It was attended by librarians from public, academic and research libraries from mainland Tanzania and the Isles of Zanzibar/Pemba. The workshop focused on three key topics:

1. Reviewing existing activities in each participant's institution
2. Defining an information problem
3. Determining information needs

Other topics covered included: information sources (print and electronic); useful tools for locating and accessing information (such as databases and indexes); and hands-on search techniques. They also learned methods of evaluation, presenting information and developing information literacy programmes for their institutions.

This workshop led to further similar training programmes in the participants' institutions as those who attended were able to train others. Some of the key skills in the follow-on workshops were: ways to identify and utilize sources; developing terms/concepts to assist in information searching; and information search, evaluation and information presentation skills.

### Methodology transfer and programme value

It was evident that methodologies of organising and teaching information literacy could be transferred from one group of participants into the other. For example, librarians from the National Central Library who attended the workshop in Kibaha, taught their colleagues in the Reference Department and the Internet Café to assist clients with limited Internet search skills. In addition, similar skills were used by Lecturers at the Department of

Library and Information Science at the Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCo) to train information literacy skills to academics in sister universities of Iringa, Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College (KCMC) and Makumira University College. In this case, participation in the Kibaha workshop proved unnecessary as the facilitators of these programmes did not personally attend the workshop but were still able to use the resources (training materials, workshop structure, organization, notes and handouts) from those who had. This was one of the remarkable ways by which teaching methods were transferred from the main facilitators to librarians; then from librarians to other librarians. Examples of the above were drawn from comments made by trainees who facilitated workshops in KCMC and Makumira:

“I used some materials that were developed by the facilitator for Kibaha workshop to train IL to academicians at KCMC and they seemed to work just fine” [Lecturer A, TUDARCo](#)

“Information Literacy training can be facilitated in many ways. A facilitator could use training materials developed by others (such as the ones from those who attended a workshop in Kibaha) to transfer skills and knowledge from one group to another without everyone attending a Training of Trainers session” [Lecturer B, TUDARCo](#)

These examples show that, to some extent, the methods of teaching and learning information literacy can be transferred from one group of participants/trainers to others with relative ease as well as the workshop resources themselves.

### Challenges encountered and lessons learned

One of the most significant challenges in conducting these workshops wasn't finance or skills related, but related to internet connectivity. Difficulty in internet connections make practical sessions time consuming at best. Connection difficulties in this case forced some sessions to be shortened. For example, in the Kibaha workshop, one of the activities involved searching through locally available tools (LAN catalogues) for materials, to learn aspects such as simple, advanced and truncated searching. With a slow and intermittent connection, this was both time consuming and difficult. One participant commented on the above problem during the workshop at Kibaha:

“Searching on the local OPACs through Simple and Advanced methods was hard due to slow Internet connectivity. We could not cover much as a result of this”  
[Workshop participant, Institute of Marine Sciences](#)

On top of connection issues, there were occasional power outages that caused certain sessions to stop for a number of hours. This did not prevent the workshop from continuing, but forced the participants to engage in different ways. When this occurred, participants made the most of the downtime by discussing ways to strengthen

cooperation among their libraries.

The courses conducted by Lecturers at the Department of Library and Information Science, TUDARCo, faced a number of challenges as well. One such challenge was lack of cooperation by host institutions. This was mainly due to underestimating the courses' importance, which, in some institutions meant there were fewer participants than recommended.

“The workshop that we facilitated in Makumira, despite its significance to the academicians, was not well attended. This was mainly due to the fact that participants were ignorant about the importance of IL training in academic life” [Lecturer C, TUDARCo](#)

Despite these challenges, two key lessons were learned from these sessions: start the practical sessions in the morning before peak hours; and create bookmarks that can be accessed offline. This would allow for longer hours of accessing these resources in the absence of reliable internet connectivity. In addition, making prior arrangements with organisers is vital to allow preparations and contingencies for any unforeseen eventualities.

### Conclusion

It is obvious that training programmes organised by INASP have been useful and that transferability of methodologies and skills from one group to another has been possible. Aside from the audiences mentioned above, these training methodologies have been adapted to meet the needs of policy makers and influencers at the parliamentary level. From the comments made by participants, the programmes have been extremely useful and have helped to improve the provision of information services in a number of institutions.

In addition sustainability of the cascading approach, advocated by INASP, has proven to be effective in practice with capacity in country to continue sharing skills and methodology.



*Participants at the workshop in Kibaha*

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