

**Undergraduate students' information literacy skills and capacity for self-directed learning
at the open university of tanzania**

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This study explored the undergraduate students' information literacy skills and capacity for self-directed learning at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). The specific objectives were; firstly, to assess the status of information literacy resources at the OUT and levels of students' information literacy skills, secondly, to examine the variations of information literacy skills among ODL students across gender, age and other variables, thirdly, to find out the extent to which institutional mechanisms facilitate or inhibit the student's self-directed learning skills. The study adopted the use of mixed methods approach and sequential exploratory design. The data were gathered from 114 respondents comprising students ($n=108$), facilitators ($n=2$), librarians ($n=2$) and Information Technology (IT) specialists ($n=2$). These participants were obtained through purposive and convenient sampling procedures. The instruments of data collection were five, namely, interview, observation, focus group discussion, documentary review, and questionnaires. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis and the responses were presented using themes while the quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0. Descriptive statistics and responses were presented using frequencies, percentages as well as clustered bar graphs. The findings of the study suggested that different factors in the information literacy skills could influence the students' development of self-directed learning. The findings indicated that students' levels of using information literacy resources were largely moderate and some students had pre-University information literacy skills. Regarding the status of information literacy resources, some of the OUT library databases were not operating and there were only few resources in the University library. On the aspect of variation of students information literacy skills in learning, only few variation were observed in the skills such as distinguishing gaps in information, ability to evaluate information, and ethical use of information. The findings revealed there were no significant differences in other skills in terms of gender, age, and marital status in information literacy practices among students. Finally, the study revealed relatively fewer support policies and mechanisms existed at the OUT. This was mainly due to lack or shortage of resources and many students seemed to be unaware of the available support

mechanisms. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the information literacy education should be facilitated from the primary education level to enable good information literacy skills foundation to students before they join higher education. Furthermore, it was recommended that policies should be established to support information literacy and address the importance of information literacy skills in learning to all students in different levels of education.