E-Theses and Dissertations in Zambia: A Case Study of Two Universities in Kabwe

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Abstract: This study investigates the successes and challenges in the implementation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) at Kwame Nkrumah and Mulungushi universities in Kabwe district, Zambia. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected from four purposively selected key informants using structured interview guides. These informants were personnel from the e-resources departments of the university libraries. The findings reveal that both institutions share common attributes, such as the establishment of institutional repositories and the successful initial implementation of ETDs. However, the study identifies significant challenges including staff resistance to depositing their dissertations into institutional repositories, a lack of expertise in configuring the institutional repository platforms, and intermittent network connectivity. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data. The study concludes that while some progress has been made in the implementation of ETDs, the current state at the two institutions has not yet reached the desired level. To address these issues, the study recommends the following: enhanced training programs for staff on the importance and use of ETDs, improved technical support and infrastructure for repository management, and strategies to foster a culture of compliance and participation among academic staff.

Keywords: Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs), institutional repositories, e-resources, Zambia, implementation challenges, university libraries

Introduction

In the digital age, the management and dissemination of academic research have undergone significant transformations, with Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) playing a pivotal role in this shift. This study, conducted by Jive Lubbungu and Chewe Mumba, focuses on the implementation of ETDs at Kwame Nkrumah University and Mulungushi University in Kabwe

district, Zambia. By exploring the successes and challenges faced by these institutions, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of ETD integration and to offer recommendations for improvement.

Employing a qualitative research approach, the study gathered insights from four key informants within the e-resources departments of the university libraries. Through structured interviews, the researchers identified both the achievements and obstacles encountered in the implementation process. Notably, both universities have established institutional repositories and made initial strides in the adoption of ETDs. Despite these advancements, significant challenges persist, including staff resistance to contributing their work to the repositories, insufficient expertise in managing the repository platforms, and inconsistent network connectivity.

The findings, analyzed through thematic analysis, highlight that while progress has been made, the implementation of ETDs at these institutions has not yet reached its full potential. The study concludes with several recommendations aimed at overcoming these hurdles: enhanced training programs for academic staff, improved technical support and infrastructure, and strategies to foster a culture of compliance and active participation in the use of ETDs. This research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of ETD implementation in Zambia and underscores the need for continuous development to achieve optimal outcomes.

Objectives
1. To evaluate the successes and challenges in the initial implementation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) at Kwame Nkrumah University and Mulungushi University in Kabwe district, Zambia.
2. To identify solutions to the key challenges hindering the full implementation of ETDs at the two universities, with a focus on staff resistance, technical expertise, and network connectivity.

Methods

To investigate the successes and challenges in the implementation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) at Kwame Nkrumah and Mulungushi universities in Kabwe district, Zambia, this study employed a qualitative research approach. Data collection was conducted through structured interviews with four purposively selected key informants. These informants were personnel from the e-resources departments of the university libraries, chosen for their direct involvement and expertise in the management of ETDs. The structured interview guides were designed to elicit detailed information about the establishment of institutional repositories, the implementation process, and the challenges encountered. By focusing on these informants, the study aimed to gain in-depth insights into the operational realities and technical issues faced during the ETD implementation. The collected data were then subjected to thematic analysis to identify common patterns and themes, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the current state and areas needing improvement in the ETD processes at these institutions.

Results

The preliminary results of this study highlight both the achievements and ongoing challenges in the implementation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) at Kwame Nkrumah and Mulungushi universities in Kabwe district, Zambia. Both institutions have successfully established institutional repositories and initiated the integration of ETDs, marking significant progress in the digital management of academic research. However, several critical challenges have been identified that impede the full realization of ETD benefits. These include resistance from staff to deposit their dissertations into the repositories, a notable lack of technical expertise required for configuring and maintaining the repository platforms, and issues with intermittent network connectivity that disrupt access and usage. Despite the initial successes, these obstacles indicate that the current state of ETD implementation has not yet reached its optimal potential. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions such as enhanced training programs for staff, improved technical support and infrastructure, and strategic efforts to cultivate a culture of compliance and active participation among academic staff.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) at Kwame Nkrumah and Mulungushi universities in Kabwe district, Zambia, has seen promising beginnings with the establishment of institutional repositories and initial successes. However, significant challenges remain, including resistance from staff to deposit their work, a lack of technical expertise, and unreliable network connectivity. These obstacles have prevented the full potential of ETDs from being realized. To overcome these hurdles and enhance the implementation process, it is crucial to invest in comprehensive training programs for staff, bolster technical support and infrastructure, and develop strategies to promote a culture of compliance and active participation among academic staff. By addressing these issues, the universities can achieve a more effective and sustainable ETD system, ultimately contributing to the broader dissemination and accessibility of academic research in Zambia.