

**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS RESOURCE CENTRES IN MARA REGION:
A SUPPORTIVE TOOL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION LEARNERS**

BY

PASCAL NTWARA RWELAMIRA

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ABSTRACT

Six Teachers Resource Centres (TRCs) in Mara region were purposively selected and studied. The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent TRCs in Mara region supported teachers in distance education programs. Specifically the study identified types of educational support provided by the TRCs to teachers in distance education programmes in Mara region, assessed the adequacy of available resources in TRCs in relation to the quality of services provided to teachers in distance learning programmes; and analyzed the effectiveness of supportive tools from TRCs provided to teachers in distance education programmes.

One hundred and five respondents out of 345 participated into the study into which qualitative and quantitative research designs were adopted. Research techniques such as interviews, observations and documentary analysis were employed during data collection and were effected through the use of research instruments such as interview questions, observation and documentary review schedule. Content analysis was employed during data analysis.

Findings of the study revealed that TRCs in Mara region provided education support to teachers in distance education programs which include library services, lectures in tapes and audio cassettes. Findings also revealed that TRCs possessed different resources for supporting teachers which included physical and fiscal resources although were not enough to support fully learning of teachers in education programme and other TRCs users. It was also revealed from the study that available supportive tools were effectively utilized through arrangements designed by TRCs officers. Recommendations put forward include effective funding of TRCs by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and District

Councils. TRCs to be semi autonomous to be able to solicit funds from different sources and enough skilled and competent officers to be available at all TRCs. Recommendations for further study include: A similar study to be done in TRCs in other Tanzania regions, effectiveness of TRCs in supporting other types of learners to be investigated and the problems of teachers' accessing funds in Distance Learning to be investigated.