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# Influence of Information Literacy Skills Policies on Kiswahili Language Instruction in Kenya: A Case of Fourth-Year Kiswahili Students at Lukenya University

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#### **Abstract**

Information literacy skills (ILS) have emerged as a critical competence in the knowledge economy, essential for academic success and lifelong learning. In the context of language training, especially in Kiswahili—a national and official language in Kenya—information literacy skills play a pivotal role in enhancing students' engagement with linguistic, literary, and cultural resources. This paper examines the influence of information literacy skills policies on Kiswahili language instruction at Lukenya University, a case of fourth-year Kiswahili students as a case study. The ability to identify information needs and formulate them as researchable questions in Kiswahili, search for information from a variety of sources, such as databases, digital repositories, and Kiswahili texts, and interpret and synthesize information using suitable Kiswahili grammar and vocabulary are all made possible by information literacy skills. This improves their critical thinking skills and linguistic ability, particularly in academic writing and communication. The research investigates the extent to which ILS policies have been implemented, their impact on pedagogical practices, and how they influence students' academic performance and research capabilities. A mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis was employed. The findings reveal that while IL skills policies exist, their implementation is inconsistent, affecting students' ability to effectively engage with Kiswahili academic content. The study recommends institutionalizing comprehensive ILS programs integrated into the Kiswahili curriculum and fostering collaboration between academic departments and libraries to support language learning.

**Keywords:** Information Literacy Skills; Language Training; Kiswahili; Policy Implementation; Higher Education; Kenya, Academic Libraries



## 1. Introduction

Information literacy has become an essential component of higher education, impacting how information is acquired, assessed, and implemented. In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) and the Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) have underlined the need of incorporating information literacy skills (ILS) into university curriculum (Bundi & Kabugu, 2020). Despite this, its application in subject-specific instruction, such as Kiswahili language studies, is yet underexplored. Kiswahili, as one of Kenya's national and official languages, plays a vital role in the educational system. Proficiency in the language is essential not just for academic pursuits, but also for national identification and regional communication within the East African Community. Kiswahili, being one of Kenya's national and official languages, occupies a central place in the education system. Proficiency in the language is crucial not only for academic purposes but also for national identity and regional communication within the East African Community (EAC). This study investigates how information literacy skills policies affect the delivery of Kiswahili language training, focusing on fourth-year students at Lukenya University. The fourth-year level represents a crucial phase in academic development, marked by intensive research and specialization.

Merrium-Webster (2019) contends that information is critical for decision-making and effective operation at all levels of any enterprise. Furthermore, in order to properly utilize information, an individual must possess ILS abilities. ILS is regarded as a tool for community and individual development in the twenty-first century. In addition, Hall (2010) and Diehm & Lupton (2014) defined ILS as the ability to detect when information is needed. Knowing when information is necessary allows you to identify, retrieve, assess, and use it efficiently to either conduct additional research or handle the issue for which it was meant. The core of lifelong learning is ILS, which pervades all academic levels. Furthermore, ILS aids students in developing greater self-direction, greater control over their education, topic comprehension, and study breadth (Hall, 2010). The success of information literacy in an individual is determined by the individual's agility and how well they utilize learned ILS (Motari, 2024).

#### 1.1 Kiswahili Language Training in Kenya

Kiswahili evolved as a lingua franca along the East African coast, influenced by Bantu languages and Arabic due to trade interactions. The British colonial administration recognized Kiswahili as a medium of communication in certain regions. Kiswahili was used in basic education and lower administrative communication (Timammy & Oduor 2016). The Kenyan government adopted Kiswahili as a national language in 1964 (Mbaabu, 1996). In 2010, the Constitution of Kenya elevated Kiswahili to official language status alongside English. This development increased demand for formal Kiswahili training in schools and universities (Odhiambo, Losenje & Indede, 2022). It is not only a medium of instruction but also a subject of study, with a focus on grammar, literature, and communication skills.

#### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kiswahili studies in Kenyan universities include linguistics, literature, translation, and



language education. Access to a wide range of high-quality information sources is required for effective training. Hence, the need for prudent information literacy skills (ILS). ILS are critical for promoting lifelong learning, personal and economic growth (Tewell, 2015). Similarly, ILS are vital in higher education institutions because they help students learn more effectively, stimulate creative thinking, and produce high-quality academic materials for their courses (Derakhshan & Singh, 2011). Mugambi (2017) allude that a successful ILS initiative allows a learner to elucidate the problem, develop a plan for gathering information, locate and use resources, apply and combine information, and complete specific information assessment tasks for lifelong learning.

Additionally, according to Momanyi and Achimwayi (2017) Education approaches in the 21st century requires the integration of ILS in the delivery and access to information content, especially in Language studies. ILS enable learners to navigate through the plethora of information available in many forms and formats. However, according to Ogechi & Bosire-Ogechi (2002) language teaching and learning, especially Kiswahili, has not embraced ILS. As a result, Kiswahili students with low ILS may therefore, find it difficult to locate pertinent scholarly sources, assess the reliability and authenticity of materials, and appropriately incorporate knowledge in their research and academic writing. As a result, their assignments, projects, and theses have weak academic reasoning, inadequate reference, and a shallow comprehension.

A successful ILS endeavor among students is contingent on the adoption and implementation of an ILS policy (Kamau and Kanyengo, 2020). In 2014, the Commission for University Education (CUE) issued criteria and recommendations for academic libraries, stating that ILS should be incorporated into the curriculum and taught by a librarian. However, a study conducted by Kamau and Kanyengo (2020) on ILS policies and practices in higher institutions of learning, found out that a number of institutions of higher learning have not fully integrated ILS into their curricula, and they have yet to develop a comprehensive ILS policy to guide the development of an ILS curriculum and structure for implementation.

#### 1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aimed to evaluate the implementation of information literacy skills policies on the delivery of Kiswahili Language training in Kenya: A case Lukenya University Fourth Year Kiswahili Students.

#### 1.3.1 Objective of the study

To examine the information literacy skills policies supporting the adequacy of Kiswahili training and learning among fourth year Bachelor of Education - Kiswahili option students in Lukenya University, Kenya.

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The study's findings provide a more practical approach to adopting and applying ILS in Kiswahili training curricula, as well as aiding in the development of effective pedagogical



methods for teaching ILS to undergraduate Kiswahili students at Kenyan higher education institutions.

Furthermore, it is expected that the study's recommendations will help institutions reengineer ILS training in terms of course design, content development, pedagogical delivery strategies, and evaluation procedures.

#### 2. Literature Review

# 2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Background

The six frames of the information literacy education model served as a framework for this study. Christine Bruce developed this idea in 1997 as a learning-based approach to ILS (Bruce, Edwards, & Lupton, 2015). The six frames for the information literacy education model were developed as a theoretical tool to help participants in the ILS education field reflect on and analyze the many implicit and explicit theoretical influences on their settings. The six-frame theory aided the study's understanding of the ILS policy, which guides the development, implementation, and delivery of the ILS curriculum to improve Kiswahili instruction and learning.

#### 2.2 ILS Policy Facilitating ILS Initiatives in Universities

According to Sharma and Upadhyay (2021), higher education in the twenty-first century must have significant ILS components in its curricula in order to generate ILS-competent graduates, they further go on to say that the level of ILS competency in a student is largely determined by the ILS policy in place, which guides the development of the Kiswahili ILS curriculum, content delivery to Kiswahili students, and collaboration mechanisms between librarians and Kiswahili lecturers (ACRL, 2010).

Universities throughout the world have implemented a number of ILS standards and guidelines, which indicate the various ILS that students must possess and exhibit (Mokhtar and Majid, 2008). In Kenya, the Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 and the Universities Standards and Guidelines (2014) emphasize the importance of undergraduates having the appropriate ILS to organize and use information efficiently. In 2007, the Commission for University Education (CUE) published norms and guidelines for Kenya's university libraries. According to the fourth component of the rules, universities should "motivate lifelong learning through the integration of the best conventional resources with innovative methods and technologies, and also facilitate academic success."

Nonetheless, Kanguha 's (2016) research on information literacy learning experiences of fourth year psychology students in Kenyan universities found that a further reason for Kenyan undergraduate students' undeveloped ILS was the lack of an institutional or national ILS policy framework. This is in consistent with the results of a study conducted by Katundu (2004) on information literacy skills in two Tanzanian public universities. She discovered that there was a lack of a policy framework for ILS training. And that attempts to integrate library instruction and user education failed to produce a workable policy, that would have allowed



for the development of an all-around individual user who could locate, assess, use, create, organize, or share information. Furthermore, researchers like Kavulya (2003), Gitonga (2015), Mathangani, (2019) and Kingori (2015), point out that a major obstacle to ILS training and education in Kenya is the absence of ILS policies. As a consequence, Gitonga (2015) study on information literacy education: perceptions, proficiencies and experiences which adopted a mixed method approach assert that the majority of African libraries and educational institutions employ standards created in Western countries that do not represent African requirements and are thus never appropriate for the region.

In the same breath, Kavulya (2003) research study on challenges facing information literacy efforts in Kenyan educational institutions asserts that attempts to incorporate orientation, user instruction, or library training in universities have not been effective in producing an all-around individual patron who can locate, assess, utilize, produce, arrange, or exchange information. As such, Katundu (2004) study that adopted mixed method approach on mainstreaming information literacy across university curricula in Tanzania found out that before developing an ILS policy and curriculum for ILS delivery, training, and learning in universities it is essential to carry out a user ILS needs survey. Similarly, Momanyi, Ng'eno, & Kiplang'at, (2024) asserts that ILS instructions are delivered in a theoretical way since the insight gained cannot be applied right away and that library teachings are library-centered rather than information-centered. Therefore, before beginning ILS instruction, it is vital to ascertain the student's degree of competency.

In addition, the Bruce Six frames theory supports these sentiments by stating that the ILS curriculum should be developed and experienced variously in line with the prevailing conditions of the learning environment. Therefore, Bruce's Six frames model through the relational variable states that developers of an ILS curriculum ought to consider ILS as a set of several information-interacting methods which are objective, subjective, or transformational.

In addition, researchers such as Weber (2000) and Washer (2007) have proposed the Key Skills Agenda Initiative as a policy that needs to be adopted in ILS training and learning in institutions for higher learning. Weber (2000) observes that the "key skills" agenda is a recurrent theme in initiatives for UK higher education. According to Washer (2007), the "proponents of the skills agenda in industry and government argue that changes are needed in the focus of university learning and teaching to prepare graduates for employment and lifelong learning in the face of fast-moving changes in knowledge." This agenda aims to make graduates more employable or equip them with the skills that employers want. The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Washer, 2007), listed the following as "essential skills in ILS which ought to be incorporated into the ILS policy" that is information technology, communication, numeracy, and learning how to study. Additionally, the report advocated for the promotion of ICT innovation in curriculum design and instruction and essential skills to improve content learning. These are the key tenets in the Sauce Model as advanced in 2011.

# 3. Methodology

This study used the pragmatist paradigm because it provided a framework for selecting inquiry approaches that best answered the study's research concerns. As a result, the study adopted a mixed method strategy. This strategy allowed the study to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The integration of quantitative and qualitative results increases the possibility of obtaining a comprehensive scenario about the research issue (Truong, 2020). Data collection for both quantitative and qualitative purposes was done concurrently, ensuring that the shortcomings of qualitative data were appropriately counterbalanced by the benefits of quantitative data. This study used a single case design methodology. The target demographic consisted of 685 students with a sample size of 397 undergraduate students in fourth-year Kiswahili, through simple random sampling. Further, purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select the key informants that is the University Librarian, and departmental head. Data was gathered through interviews and questionnaires. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using frequency distribution tables and bar charts, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the objectives and research questions and presented as a narrative.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 ILS Policy Supporting Kiswahili Language Training Delivery in Kenya

To adequately address this objective, the study started off by interrogating the availability, tenets and viability of ILS policies and then delved into the ILS curricula in place to support Kiswahili language instruction.

The study sought to find out whether the Lukenya University had a documented and communicated ILS policy supporting the leaning and teaching of Languages. The findings revealed that the University had an ILS policy. This is according to 198(77.64%) of the students. Similarly, the two respondents interviewed unanimously agreed that information literacy skills policy and procedures were available. However, the study revealed that the ILS policy was not being fully implemented in the sense there was unavailability of an examinable information literacy skills unit or units that fully covered all the ILS content instead the universities offered some ILS skills through the communication and writing skills unit. This is inadequate for imparting meaningful ILS skills to students. As results efforts of integrating some form of library instruction, orientation or user education to communication skills & writing unit have not been able to develop an all-round student who can find, evaluate, use, create, organize or share information.

#### 4.2 Information Literacy Skills Covered in the ILS Policy

The respondents were asked to state the areas covered by ILS policies that specifically guide them in learning Kiswahili. The responses are presented in Table 1.



Table 1: ILS Skills Covered by the ILS Policy (n=255)

Statement	SD		D		N		Α		SA		Total		mean	sd
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Knowledge and information skills	13	5.09	24	9.42	18	7.05	132	51.76	68	26.67	255	100	3.9	3.5
Problem-solving and critical thinking skills	15	5.88	29	11.37	13	5.1	148	58.04	50	19.61	255	100	3.7	3.4
Communication skills	8	3.14	12	4.7	10	3.92	124	48.62	101	39.61	255	100	4.2	3.8
Information technology skills	11	4.31	13	5.09	16	6.27	166	65.49	49	19.21	255	100	3.9	3.5
Social Responsibility skills	14	5.49	23	9.01	19	7.45	169	66.27	30	11.76	255	100	3.7	3.3
Referencing and legal issues skills	9	3.52	17	6.67	32	12.55	142	55.68	55	21.56	255	100	3.9	3.4

Source: Researcher, 2025

The findings revealed that the majority of the students' respondents stated that knowledge and information skills; problem-solving and critical thinking; communication skills, information technology skills; social responsibility skills; and referencing and legal issues were the areas covered by the ILS policies in 200(78.43%), 198(77.65%), 225(88.23%), 215(84.31%), 199(78.04%) and 197(77.25%) in that order.

The responses from interviews were that ILS policies covered areas of knowledge and information skills, communication skills, research skills, problem-solving skills, information technology skills, and anti-plagiarism skills. The findings suggest that the Kiswahili undergraduate students are appropriately trained with ILS skills and hence equipped with research skills, good communication techniques, and critical skills which will help them to become independent lifelong learners in Kiswahili.

The findings are in line with Kanguha (2016) study on information literacy learning experiences of fourth-year psychology students in Kenyan universities, which revealed that ILS policies are meant to promote information literacy skills as a key competency for lifelong learning among students and that they are fundamental to ILS teaching, learning and research focus of the African Universities community. Furthermore, the study found that ILS policies enable and empower students to be critical and independent users of information by embedding information literacy skills into their university experience.

## 4.3 Formulation and Implementation of the ILS Policies

The respondents who were interviewed were asked to state their contributions to the formulation of ILS policies.

The results indicate that, ideally, university librarian is the initiators of ILS policy and procedure development in universities through interpreting the patterns of information access and use within the university. The respondents, further, stated that once university librarian identify the need to initiate ILS policies or gaps in ILS policies, they notify the heads of departments who are the quality assurances officers and custodians of curricula in their departments through a memorandum or submissions to the deans' committee. Once the deans' committee approves, university librarian and head of Languages Department embark on generating the content of the ILS policies or reviewing the existing ILS policies to fill in the identified gaps. The findings suggest that librarians are the key stakeholders and main



Table 2: Contributions of Various Stakeholders to ILS Policy

Response from questionnaire	Respondents				
Action/function	Tasked				
Interpretation and Advice	University Librarian	HOD			
Development and/or Review	University Librarian and Heads of Departments	UL			
Monitoring and Evaluation	University Librarian	HOD			
Compliance and	University Librarian	HOD			
Implementation	Lecturers Heads of Departments Head Kiswahili Librarians				
Decision Making and Guidance	Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic and Students Affairs), Registrar (Academic and Students Affairs) Teaching and Learning	UL			

Key: UL-University librarian; HOD-Head of departmnte

Source: Field Data (2025)

However, the interview results indicated that there is little collaboration between the lecturers and the librarians in the delivery of ILS content in the Kiswahili Language. Because, according to the findings, lecturers always feel that they are the experts hence well placed to deliver the content. This attitude has significantly affected the smooth and proper implementation of the ILS policies.

#### 4.4 Adequacy of the ILS Policies

The findings revealed that the respondents who were interviewed 2(100%) noted that the ILS policies in place were inadequate in addressing ILS training and learning among the Kiswahili undergraduate students. The findings suggest that policy reviews have never been conducted, updates have never been affected, the policy did not advocate for the allocation of adequate time for ILS training and learning, the ILS training is conducted at the convenience of the librarians and lecturers because it is not timetabled. This is an indication that ILS policy has not been implemented as envisioned and it does not address the changes taking place in the Kiswahili field. As a consequence, students have not been adequately trained. Bazrafkan et al (2018) emphasize that Kiswahili faculty and students need extensive and varied sources of information to perform their job roles and also cope with the complexities of different Kiswahili specializations. To satisfy this need Kiswahili undergraduate students need information literacy skills to help utilize the information resources available by enhancing their information search, retrieval, and evaluation skills.

Similarly, the findings concur with Kavulya (2003) study which demonstrated that the limited time allocated to the lecture, demonstration, and library tour is inadequate to impart useful skills to new university students. consequently, the timing of library orientation programs in



the first and second week of students' life in the university is poor since at this time students have little motivation to participate, and may not be in a position to appreciate the centrality of the library in academic life.

# 4.5 Topics Covered by the ILS Curriculum as outlined in the ILS policy

The study sought to find out the various topics that were covered by ILS curriculum based on the approved ILS Policy

Table 3: Students' Responses on the Topics Covered by the ILS Curriculum (n=255)

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	Mean	sd
Problem-solving and critical thinking	12	4.71	23	9.01	16	6.3	129	50.6	75	29	255	100	3.91	3.54
Information search and retrieval	18	7.06	43	16.86	20	7.8	114	44.7	60	24	255	100	3.61	3.30
Legal Issues in information use	22	8.63	32	12.55	15	5.9	123	48.2	63	25	255	100	3.68	3.37
Computer literacy skills in information use	19	7.45	28	10.98	10	3.9	116	45.5	70	27	255	100	3.60	3.38
Socialization and effective communication skills	11	4.31	21	8.23	8	3.1	151	59.2	64	25	255	100	3.93	3.53
Integration of information	34	13.3	46	18.04	6	2.4	114	44.7	55	22	255	100	3.43	3.19
Basic library guidelines on how to access library materials	10	3.92	22	8.62	13	5.1	132	51.8	78	31	255	100	3.96	3.58
Research skills	37	14.5	54	21.17	11	4.3	108	42.4	45	18	255	100	3.27	3.05

## (Source: Field data (2025)

The finding indicated that majority of the students 204(79.99%), 174(68.22%), 186(72.94%), 186(72.94%), 215(84.31%), 153(58.99%), 169(64.26%) and 210(82.34%) agreed that problem-solving and critical thinking skills, information search and retrieval, legal issues in information use-course, computer literacy skills in information use, socialization and effective communication skills and the research skills, integration of information and basic library guidelines on how to access library materials were covered by the ILS curriculum respectively. However, 35 (13.72%), 61(23.92%), 54(21.18%), 47(18.43%), 80(31.37%), 32(12.54%), 32(12.54%) and 91 (35.67%) of the students respondents disagreed that problem-solving and critical thinking skills, information retrieval and search skills, legal issues in the information used, computer literacy skills in information use, integration of information, socialization and effective communication skills, basic library guidelines on how to access library materials topic and research skills are topics that are covered by the ILS curriculum.

Similarly, interviews results revealed that the ILS curriculum covered information search techniques, information use, plagiarism check and avoidance, citation methods, referencing techniques, integration of information, effective communication, writing skills, basic research skills, and computer literacy skills (Ochieng & Otike, 2017).

The findings suggest that common information literacy skills programs offered to Kiswahili language undergraduate students include training on an information database search, communication skills, critical thinking skills, library usage skills, information ethics, information retrieval techniques, research skills, and basic computer studies. These findings clearly



indicates that an ILS curriculum covers all the aspects that make a complete information literate student, that is, if the ILS curriculum is effectively delivered (Ochieng & Otike, 2017). The relational frame from Bruce's six frames for information literacy education approach states that a student and information literacy skills should be viewed and treated as one entity rather than separate entities. The model further alludes that an ILS curriculum should cover more complex information areas so as to enable students develop complex ILS understandings. Thereby, aligning students to learn how to learn, become independent learners and lifelong learners (Bruce et al, 2006). Thus, the relational frame advocates for designing instructing and learning areas that enhance developing complex understanding among students. These findings concur with Breivik, (2018) study which revealed that instructing students to successfully access, critically assess and utilize information, and put into use skills learned to solve current and foreseeable challenges is a crucial goal of an ILS curriculum

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings emphasize the value of IL skills in improving Kiswahili language teaching. However, the inconsistent application of ILS policies at Lukenya University demonstrates structural concerns that must be addressed. The study emphasizes the need of providing comprehensive IL skills training to lecturers. Increased funding for digital infrastructure and resources. Create a standardized IL curriculum for Kiswahili study. Collaboration between universities and lawmakers. Furthermore, the findings showed that there was no long-term collaboration between lecturers and librarians to deliver and align IL policies with educational objectives.

Recommendation One: Partnership between librarians and heads of departments: -Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that university librarians and heads of departments be charged with coordinating ILS collaboration activities, from curriculum design to student delivery, and that ILS be classified into four credit-scoring units, with one unit taught each academic year (Nnadozie, 2016)).

Recommendation Two: Curriculum Integration: Embed ILS competencies in all Kiswahili courses, particularly research-related units. (Kumar & Ochoa 2012).

Recommendation Three: Policy Enhancement: Review and revise IL policies to reflect the needs of language students, ensuring inclusive access to Kiswahili resources.

Recommendation Four: Capacity Building: Organize workshops and seminars for students and staff on advanced IL tools and techniques relevant to language and humanities disciplines.

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