Conceptualisation and practice of research support: a proposed model for effective research support in Zimbabwean university libraries

Notice Pasipamire[1] and Ruth Hoskins[2]
npasi@protonmail.com ORCID: 0000-0001-5148-9975
hoskinsr@ukzn.ac.za ORCID: 0000-0002-9099-5544

This paper reports the findings of a study that was carried out to establish the relationship between conceptions held by librarians in Zimbabwean university libraries and practice of research support. Librarians in Zimbabwean universities were seemingly invisible within the orbit of research practices of their institutions. Such ineffective research support in practice is in sharp contrast to conceptions of research support which position librarians as integral to research. To understand the relationship, the study used a conceptual framework developed from the Theory of Action. Eight university libraries were examined and a meta-analysis of findings using the constant comparison method was conducted. Meta-claims were contrived from the eight group studies and this facilitated the juxtaposition of espoused conceptions with actual practices. Although major congruence was found from the constant comparison of meta-claims, the expectations of what the libraries should be doing exceeded what appears in their mission statements. It was concluded that inadequate espoused theories and incongruence in areas such as services, staff deployment, collaboration and training contributed to the ineffectiveness of librarians in support of researchers. The authors present a model for effective research support for academic libraries.

1 Background

The role and philosophical traditions of librarianship are being challenged by a "scholarly and communication landscape which has changed profoundly and irrevocably" (Richardson et al. 2012). Traditionally, research support has been understood and practised around collection development and information discovery without librarians getting involved in the research process itself. However, the changes in the research landscape due to "the new modes of knowledge production and e-science" (Hessels & Lente 2007: 4), "emergence of new modes of publishing and scholarship" (Ellis et al. 2014) and development of globally networked research communities have redefined this role. There was a "shift in the role of the librarian from a supporter of the research process to a contributor to the process" (Raju & Schoombee 2013: 29). Librarians were expected to move into the research space, providing services and support to researchers throughout the research lifecycle (Raju & Schoombee 2013). According to Parker (2012), research support is a set of services and facilities which assists in increasing research productivity and scholarship.

Although the academic library's services to researchers are needed more than ever today, university libraries in Zimbabwe seemingly struggle to make a positive impact on the scholarly work of researchers. It was observed that researchers benefit little from research support services of librarians beyond the traditional services of collection development, information literacy (IL) training, provision of acquisitions lists, and reference services. Further, new services introduced in these libraries have little impact on researchers. Studies that were conducted by Machimbidza (2014) and Mazhude (2015) in Zimbabwean state university libraries revealed that institutional repositories and research commons as a new suite of services for researchers were characterised by slow growth and low usage.

The lack of effectiveness in support of researchers was thought to be intrinsic to the understanding of research support as a concept, how it must be practiced, and the relationship between conceptions and actual practice. The view of Stafsudd and Collin (1999 :6) – that "people have trouble learning new behaviour due to the inherent difficulty of blending new ideas

---

1. Notice Pasipamire holds a PhD from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and is Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Science, National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe
2. Ruth Hoskins is full professor in Library and Information Studies and currently the Dean of Teaching and Learning in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

with the existing ones presently used in practice" – strengthens the point. As such, conceptualisation of research support became important in trying to understand the actions of librarians in practice. As theory accompanies practice at every moment, the understanding that must come from espoused theories provided by the institutional leadership shape the actions of librarians in practice. To this end, the behaviour of librarians in practising research support was attributable to the understanding attached to the concept. Establishing the relationship between theories-in-use and espoused theories was thought to be a powerful means to explain the actions of librarians and infer whether their ineffective support for researchers can be ascribed to the congruence or incongruence between the two.

2 Conceptual framework

To explain and understand the mental conceptions which guide the actions of librarians in practice, this study examined mission statements, strategic plans and interview scripts as espoused theories. Argyris and Schön (1978: 15) stated that formal corporate documents such as organisational charts, policy statements and job descriptions often reflect espoused theory. Therefore, conceptualisation in this paper is regarded as the specification of indicators that show the presence or absence of concepts showing support for research in mission documents and interview scripts. The study also examined services in support of research as theories-in-use to establish practice of research support. A practice is a sequence of actions undertaken by a person to serve others, who are considered clients (Argyris & Schön 1974). Argyris and Schön (1978: 16) asserted that, in order to discover an organisation's theory-in-use, we must examine its practice. The Theory of Action demands that, for academic libraries to be effective, there must be congruence between espoused theories and theories-in-use. As such, this study went further and determined the relationship between the espoused theories and theories-in-use. Argyris (1980) made the case that effectiveness results from developing congruence between theory-in-use and espoused theory. Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework which was developed for this study from the Theory of Action.
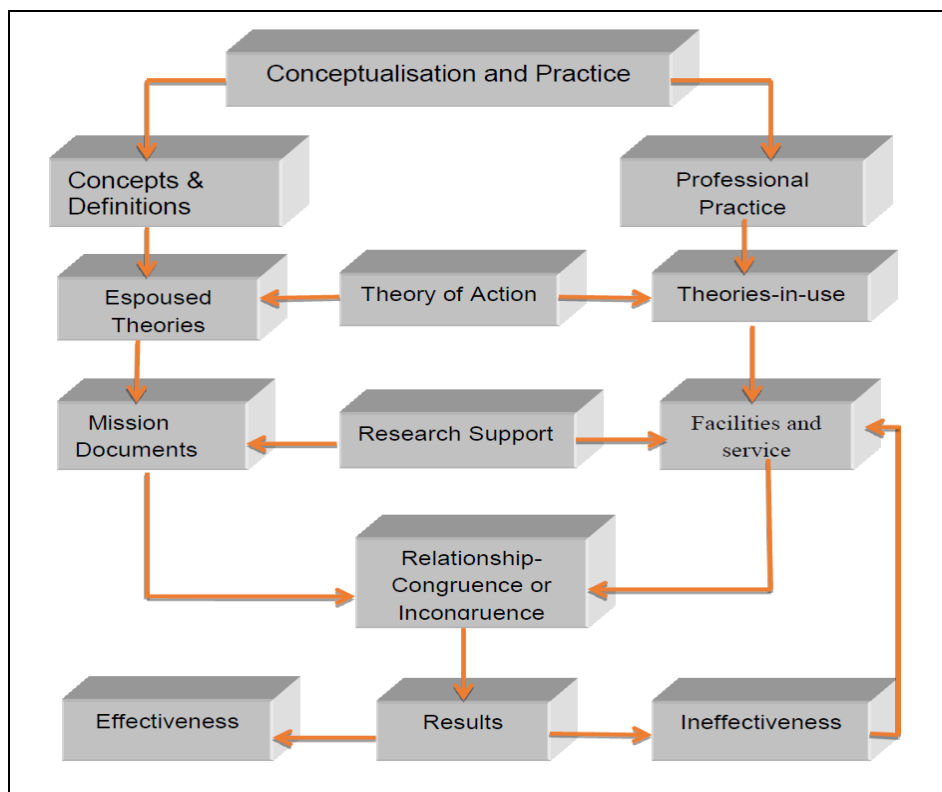

Figure 1 Conceptual framework for the study

3 Research questions

To understand the relationship between conceptualisation and practice of research support, the following research questions were instructive:

1. What resemblance can be observed between conceptualisation and practice of research support?
2. What incongruence can be observed between conceptualisation and practice of research support?
3. What gaps are seen between the way research support is conceptualised and practiced?
4. What reasons are given for the incongruences between conceptualisation and practice of research support?

4 Literature review

Kerr (2010: 54) observed that, while several research studies and discussion papers confirm that mission statements are primary conveyers of espoused values and beliefs, there is little consensus among the studies on the relationships between mission statements and organisational practice and performance. Nevertheless, there is a belief that there should be a positive relationship between espoused values in missions and the implementation of these values in practice. However, Du Mont and Du Mont (1981: 12) earlier contended that "there is not necessarily a correspondence [congruence] between the library's stated goals (intentions) and its actual outcomes (services)". The authors argued that:

> "there may be a strong consensus that a primary library goal is the enrichment of people's lives through alternative media use [espoused theory]. However, an examination of major ways the library staff spends its time may show an emphasis on book processing and the reading of traditional books and magazines [theory-in-use]" (Du Mont and Du Mont 1981: 12).

4.1 Past studies

Several studies have been conducted in order to establish the relationship between espoused theories and theories-in-use (Willis 1993, Meacham & Gaff 2006, Kerr 2010, Dermol 2012, Ganu 2013). No study found a positive relationship between espoused theories and theories-in-use. In a study by Kerr (2010), which investigated the relationships between conceptions and practice of IL in academic libraries using a constant comparison approach, "major contradictions and incongruence in the relationships" were found between the espoused theories and theories-in-use "as indicated by significant gaps in addressing goals and missions". Unambiguous and explicit espoused theories, including knowledge creation goals for IL practice, did not materialise in instruction initiatives.

Outside the field of information studies, a study was conducted by Dermol (2012: 321) to provide an answer to the question of "whether the existence of a mission statement is associated with company performance or not". The study "recognised value added per employee as the only performance measure associated with existence or non-existence of mission statements" (Dermol 2012: 321). Glaring incongruence was identified between stated espoused theories and theories-in-use in academic institutions by Meacham and Gaff (2006). Their findings suggested a total disconnect between what was expected of these institutions and the goals articulated in mission statements. The research of Smith et al. (2001) provides a comprehensive review of published empirical studies on mission statements to explore the relationship between mission statement content and organisational longevity. The evidence was generally inconclusive, and the authors could not confirm any positive link between espoused values in mission statements and theories-in-use as seen in organisational performance levels.

5 Methods

The following research methods were adopted for this study.

5.1 Meta-analysis of group studies

Schreiber, Crooks and Stern (1997: 314) characterise qualitative meta-analysis as ''the aggregating of a group of studies for the purposes of discovering the essential elements and translating the results into a product that transforms the original results into a new conceptualisation''. The following universities formed the group of studies that hosted the mission documents and librarians who participated in the study:

i.   National University of Science and Technology
ii. Bindura University of Science Education
iii. Solusi University
iv. Midlands State University
v.   Women's University in Africa
vi. Chinhoyi University of Technology
vii. Lupane State University
viii. Africa University

5.2 Procedure

Initially, statements of claims were developed using a questioning approach (see 5.3) on themes that emerged from the analyses of mission documents (mission statements, strategic documents, library procedures, and other library-related policies) and interview data derived from library practitioners. These claims were supported by evidence from the data in accordance with dictates of qualitative research to remain grounded in the data. Statements of claims generated for the

purposes of understanding conceptualisation and practice formed the foundation for the juxtaposition and comparative analysis to establish congruence or incongruence that existed between conceptualisation and practice. The focus was on comparisons among primary cases and abstract understandings of concepts and principles present in each primary study. These claims provided data for meta-analysis of the eight group studies. This allowed for the subsequent development of meta-claims presented in the results section. During data presentation and analysis, codes were used to avoid using names of the universities. Universities were coded UL1 to UL8.

5.3 Steps taken in data analysis
The researchers used ATLAS.ti software to assist in coding, reducing data and making inferences. The software helped in the narration aspect by providing visual representations and readily available quotes which were incorporated into the reporting. The results from each single case were regarded as primary documents for the meta-analysis. The following steps were crucial in the analysis phase:

1. Transcribing audio-recorded interviews and selecting the unit of analysis, that is, relevant mission documents
2. Uploading of relevant mission documents and interview transcripts into ATLAS.ti 8.0
3. Grouping of primary documents as espoused and theories-in-use
4. Making sense of the data by reading the mission documents and interview scripts several times
5. Creation of free quotations of relevant segments
6. Creation of a list of research support indicators from the literature to help in identification of relevant concepts and phrases in documents
7. Identification of concepts and phrases that relate to research support from the relevant quotations
8. Labelling the relevant text using open coding and coding based on the terms used in the documents
9. Examining the code list generated during the coding exercise
10. Iterative process of comparing concepts (codes) to ascertain common categories of concepts
11. Merging and splitting of codes as needed to reduce redundancy of codes and to improve exhaustivity of concepts
12. Categorisation of concepts, for example, 'research support approaches' was a category under theories-in-use
13. Development of a data network which synthesised various codes, quotations and their link to their original documents
14. Querying the data network to develop statement of claims for conceptualisation and practice in order to make inferences about what the data mean or cause, for example, what do libraries offer to their universities as conveyed in mission statements? What are the goals of the libraries as expressed in strategic documents and other related policies? How is research support defined by librarians?
15. Making narratives for the statement of claims
16. Constant comparison of espoused claims and theories in used claims to establish the nature of the relationship.

6 Findings of the meta-analysis
When meta-claims developed for the espoused theories and theories-in-use for research support were juxtaposed, several points of congruence and incongruence were discovered. Table 1 shows the juxtaposed meta-claims.

Table 1 Juxtaposition of meta-claims

Espoused meta-claims	Theories-in-use meta-claims
1. Mission statements of academic libraries convey an integral role in support of higher education's core mission of research	1. Services for research coalesce around gathering and sharing stages of the research lifecycle
2. Collections are presented as essential to achieve the research role of libraries	2. Services offered by libraries skewed in favour of teaching and learning
3. Libraries conceive traditional services and facilities for researchers	3. Librarians use traditional approaches in support of researchers
4. Research support conceived within collaborative environment	4. Research support practised within collaborative environment
5. Technology is essential in the discharge of research support	5. Specialisation is essential for effective research support
6. Libraries champion faculty/subject librarians for research support	6. Librarians expressed mixed feelings about technological advancements
7. Research support is understood by libraries as training researchers and facilitating access to information	

It is important to recognise that, during analysis of mission documents, a gap was found between what is currently understood by professional practice of library research support (as understood within the literature as 'best practice') and what is currently articulated as research support within library mission documents. There was also a gap between vision at the library management level and needs on the ground. However, comparative analysis of the meta-claims above revealed

that conceptualisation of research support was affecting its practice. The congruence and incongruences found between the comparative analyses are discussed below.

6.1 Congruence
The points of congruence found are discussed below.

6.1.1 Congruence – collections
All the eight libraries investigated were found to espouse a mission of supporting research through provision of information resources and this mission was realised in practice through the resources, liaison and shared service models. Libraries were putting greater emphasis on making available resources such as books, electronic resources, and other associated materials. As part of realising this mission, librarians were also facilitating access to resources by training researchers and doing reference work.

6.1.2 Congruence – services
Congruence exists between espoused traditional services and facilities for researchers and traditional models employed in practice. The following services were found to be popular in practice as espoused in documents:

- Provision of resources
- IL training realised in practice
- Institutional repositories
- Reference services
- Tutorials for researchers

6.1.3 Congruence – definitions of research support
Research support definitions from all the libraries reinforce the information-centric approach seen in all the libraries. The definitions provided in all the libraries expressed collections of e-resources, books and e-journals as a form of research support. This was in tandem with building of both physical and electronic resources in libraries. IL training, e-resources training and research tutorials were also frequently articulated in the definitions. This evidence is in sync with practice where the libraries, through the efforts of subject librarians, hold training sessions and workshops for researchers on IL, e-resources, the research process, plagiarism and intellectual property rights.

6.1.4 Congruence – collaboration
Collaboration as a conduit to enhance and meet the needs of researchers was espoused as a strategic goal in satisfying the needs of researchers. Collaboration was actualised in practice by all libraries through the shared service model. All libraries were part of the Zimbabwe University Libraries Consortium initiative for the purposes of realising economies of scale in subscribing to expensive e-resources. It was also found that the majority of the libraries were collaborating with parallel departments within their institutions in the delivery of IL skills training to researchers. Notable departments mentioned by librarians as amenable to collaboration in IL training initiatives included Computer Science, Information Technology, and Communication Skills. It was discovered that libraries collaborate with research offices on capturing the end products of scholarship, such as conference papers, projects and research articles, for preservation and dissemination.

6.1.5 Congruence – technology
The goal of providing technologically driven services to researchers was partly realised in practice as librarians practising research support appreciated the role played by technologies in supporting researchers in communicating with other researchers and in the selective dissemination of information (SDI) via social media. Services are also available 24/7 due to the capabilities of technological advancements in acquisition, access and delivery. Services such as IL skills training were also delivered online in some cases.

6.1.6 Congruence – subject librarians
Most libraries used faculty librarians as research support staff in practice, as espoused in mission goals. Six of the eight libraries had faculty librarians on the ground helping researchers, as mentioned in policy documents. The library deployed faculty librarians to provide service such as IL training, SDI, marketing and literature searches.

6.2 Incongruence

Even though the study discovered that the primary problem is the inadequate interpretation of research support within the guiding documents themselves, it was found from the comparative analysis that there are considerable contradictions and inconsistencies between espoused theories and theories-in-use in the practice of research support. The following list shows the major incongruences and gaps that were discovered from the comparative analysis:

1. A major gap was seen in the way that research support was being practised by all libraries and what their mission statements encapsulated. Implicit in mission statements was that libraries would provide balanced support to the three core functions of universities, namely research, social responsibility, and teaching and learning. However, comparative analysis revealed that espoused support for research was not fully realised in practice as services offered were skewed towards teaching and learning. Most of the libraries had no structural mechanism to deal with unique needs of researchers. However, the distinction made between research and teaching and learning in mission documents demonstrates the importance and the exclusivity of these constituencies within the academic setup.

2. The limited services provided to researchers reflected the traditional aspects of librarianship which do not match nor satisfy the new research landscape. In the new research landscape, libraries were expected to offer services such as bibliometrics, research commons, research data management, project collaboration and digital collections.

3. Comparative analysis of the meta-claims revealed that there was a gap in both policy documents and practice in the recognition of researchers as a distinct constituency served by the library. Mission documents were not explicit about researchers as a distinctive group. It was also discovered that, in practice, librarians offer services to all constituencies as one package. They made no distinction between the services for teaching and learning and those for research. This arrangement has resulted in services being skewed in favour of teaching and learning through acts of omission and commission.

4. Competence in the delivery of service is one of the values espoused by most of the libraries, but this was not properly addressed in practice as librarians lack the skills and knowledge needed to work with researchers. Reference is made in policy documents of the need for practitioners who hold "professional qualifications and skills that are relevant to the execution of their duties" (UL04) and who "will display a high level of those qualities that are characteristic of trained and skilled people in the execution of their duties" (UL03). Management in various libraries regard their staff as competent enough to deal with researchers simply because the librarians hold library and information science degrees. However, this contradicts what practising librarians experienced and noted. They claimed that they did not have the requisite skills needed to support researchers. Many of the faculty librarians lacked subject knowledge required to be in partnership with researchers. They also lacked knowledge of research methods, research data management and bibliometrics.

5. Inconsistencies among the actions in the delivery of IL were reported by librarians. Although IL training skills courses were promoted in mission documents as an important service to researchers to develop them into independent learners, its teaching in practice varied, with reports of uncoordinated or abbreviated courses which, at times, were conflated with library instruction. Some faculty librarians in different university libraries offered it on a one-on-one basis, some as a for-credit course, and some in groups with no examination at the end.

6. Collaboration is heralded in espoused documents as an important cog of research support in an environment characterised by budget cuts and shortage of staff. It was discovered that all the libraries were in collaboration of some kind, however, a major gap was noticed in practice as collaboration was limited to partnering with organisations and departments within the institution. Teaching and training researchers was espoused as part of subject or faculty librarians' responsibilities by UL04 however, this training should be done "in conjunction with the institute of lifelong learning – [the] Communication Skills department." A similar arrangement was discovered in UL01 which runs the IL programme in collaboration with the department of Computer Science and Information Systems. Such efforts have ceased to be sufficient in meeting the needs of the researchers given the modern research environment. No librarians were found to be collaborating with researchers as required in the new conceptualisation of research support where librarians are expected to be embedded within research projects playing a partnering role in knowledge production. According to Monroe-Gulick, O'Brien and White (2013: 384), "the concept of being a partner can be interpreted as not only helping researchers succeed in completing and disseminating their research, but it is also contributing to the actual knowledge creation using the specialised knowledge and skills librarians possess".

7. A disjunction was observed between the espoused importance of technology as a major influence in meeting the needs of researches and the use of technology in the practice of research support. In as much as the librarians

praised the technology for making their work easier, paradoxically, they complained about researchers being adult learners who struggle to use technology. In the end, technological use is limited by lack of uptake by researchers.

8. A disconnect was realised in some libraries where subject librarians are heralded in strategic documents as the most competent to offer research support, yet, in practice, systems librarians were responsible for research support.

6.2.1 Reasons for the incongruence

From the examination of eight group studies, it was established that librarians faced barriers that contributed to incongruence between espoused theories and theories-in-use of research support. These barriers were found to be both at institutional and individual levels. Both levels of barriers are explained below.

Funding

Librarians used various terms to express funding as a major hindrance to effective research support initiatives. Statements like "budget constraints" (UL02), "economic recession" (UL05), "downturn in economic progression" (UL05), "low budget" (UL01), "money is not enough" (UL04) and "financial challenges" (UL03, UL04, UL07 and UL08) were recorded. Librarians felt that, without money, it was impossible to plan for research support. For example, a librarian from UL08 stated, "there is not much when it comes to research … because without money you can't talk of research, you can't plan, and you can't implement." This discovery supports the findings of Namuleme and Kanzira (2015: 35) who discovered that "library budgetary cuts, coupled with the inflationary cost of e-resources, have hindered research support services in academic libraries".

Shortage of staff

"Heavy workloads" resulting from "shortage of manpower" emerged to be a key challenge across the libraries with respect to research support. Librarians mentioned that their work is "overwhelming" due to "staff shortage" (UL07) and others noted that they "require more staff" (UL05), are "not adequately staffed" (UL06) and have "limited human capital" (UL02). This data confirms what Pasipamire (2015: 61) noted: that practising librarians face many challenges regarding the "large size of the student bodies, lack of support from parent institutions and financial constraints". In this regard, one librarian from UL06 noted, "we are not adequately staffed to deal with researchers, first we have a shortage of manpower and then another issue is that of skills."

Time

It was also discovered that librarians practising research support faced the challenge of time allocation which was aggravated by the absence of an institutional policy that makes it mandatory for librarians to have specific schedules for meeting and delivering services to researchers. The language of respondents was telling: "not on the timetable" (UL01); "don't have enough time allocated" (UL06) and failed to "get adequate time" (UL03); "the time is very minimum" (UL02). This challenge was presented as requiring top level management's attention, as one librarian noted:

> It is a challenge that needs to be dealt with at a higher level. You may not get the adequate time that you need, for example, when we want to do IL training. The curricula here are such that we are not on the timetable. We rely on the beneficence of the Communication Skills lecturers who provide us with time in their lectures.

In the same vein, librarians felt like they were "serving two offices" (UL07) due to work overload which meant that "we don't have enough time" (UL07) to focus on researchers. This was attributed to lack of a governing policy: "I think it is because we don't have a policy to say librarians should be involved in this or that". In this setup, "balancing faculty and other duties becomes challenging" (UL08).

Infrastructure

Lack of facilities needed to support researchers was also another common challenge acknowledged by practising librarians. For effective service delivery, librarians needed space and related infrastructure to hold IL training sessions and conduct workshops. In addition, librarians also needed technological tools like reference management software and computers to meet the international best practices in research support. From the interviews, statements like "we don't have training rooms" (UL03), "we don't have training facilities" (UL04), "we have two intakes, but the space is not increasing" (UL01), "lack of appropriate technology and resources" and "lack of adequate space" (UL08) emerged from almost all the libraries. These statements dovetail with Namuleme and Kanzira (2015) who observed that inadequate infrastructure as well as

inadequate information and communications technology (ICTs) are a major challenge to providing research support services.

Lack of management support
Librarians also felt that they were not receiving a fair share of attention from management and administration. Statements like "they don't support" (UL04), "the library survives as an island" (UL07), "lack of support from university management" (UL08, UL02) and "administrators don't accept change" (UL06) pointed to the fact that practising librarians were worried about and affected by this lack of support and cooperation from management. One librarian exclaimed:

> The university seems to prioritise academics when it comes to assisting members to go for [staff] development. You apply for money to go and do a PhD [but] you are told priority is given to academics. That alone shows that the university is not serious about the library.

Absence of enabling policy
The absence of a supportive policy that defines the way research support is supposed to be presented in a fast-changing research environment puts librarians in a quandary. The challenges emerging from lack of policies ranged from "unclear roles and responsibilities" and "job specifications [where] you can't change anything" (UL05) to where one librarian bemoaned: "we don't have a policy to say librarians should be involved in this or that" (UL07). It was mentioned that "policy wise or strategy wise the library itself doesn't seem to be positioning itself well because it's not even talked about" (UL04). This absence of policy that speaks directly to research support is challenging; as one librarian expressed: "absence of a research support policy… everything becomes very unclear" (UL08). Explaining the depth of the challenge, one librarian said:

> Some of the things that we do are a result of our own initiatives and not that they are written somewhere, so even if we don't do them, nobody is going to make a follow up to say you did not do ABCD (UL08).

At an individual level, it was established that librarians lack the skills needed to support researchers. Librarians indicated the "need to upgrade" (UL05) themselves and the "need to enhance some other skills" (UL03) to be able to offer fully-fledged support for researchers. In this regard, one Library Head noted, "…here at the library I can say that I am the only person with a master's degree" (UL06). It emerged that due to lack of skilled personnel in the library, the systems librarian had taken the lead in offering research support at UL06 with other librarians focusing on other traditional responsibilities like cataloguing and classification of library materials. Faculty librarians also bemoaned a lack of knowledge and expertise in the areas they support. In the same manner, Namuleme and Kanzira (2015) concluded that lack of skills was one of the serious issues encumbering upstream research support in academic libraries in Uganda.

7 Analysis
Even though several congruencies were recorded which promote effectiveness in professional practice, it was observed that library research support was ineffective primarily because librarians still conceptualised and practised research support from a traditional viewpoint and faced barriers at institutional and individual levels. The libraries emphasised the provision of resources and materials, IL skills training, book acquisitions and reference services to support researchers in the new research environment. These efforts were inadequate, falling short in matching the modern research landscape where research support was conceptualised as librarians partnering and collaborating, undertaking research, working outside the library and spending time in departments.

Argyris and Schön, as noted by Kerr (2010), cautioned that there is little virtue in congruence alone since congruence between an inadequate espoused theory and a theory-in-use is useless. Therefore, the primary major gap was seen between what is currently understood by professional practice of library research support (as understood within the literature as 'best practice') and what is currently articulated as research support within library mission documents. There is also a gap between vision at the library management level and needs on the ground. To this end, the study developed a model (Figure 2) that attempts to show elements necessary to achieve effectiveness in practice. The model further shows how academic libraries can overcome incongruence present in their institutions and how different elements form a synergy to achieve effectiveness.

7.1 The proposed model for effective research support
The Research Support Model is based on the literature, research findings and Theory of Action: espoused theories and theories-in-use. The model is first presented and the explanation to the constructs of the model follows.
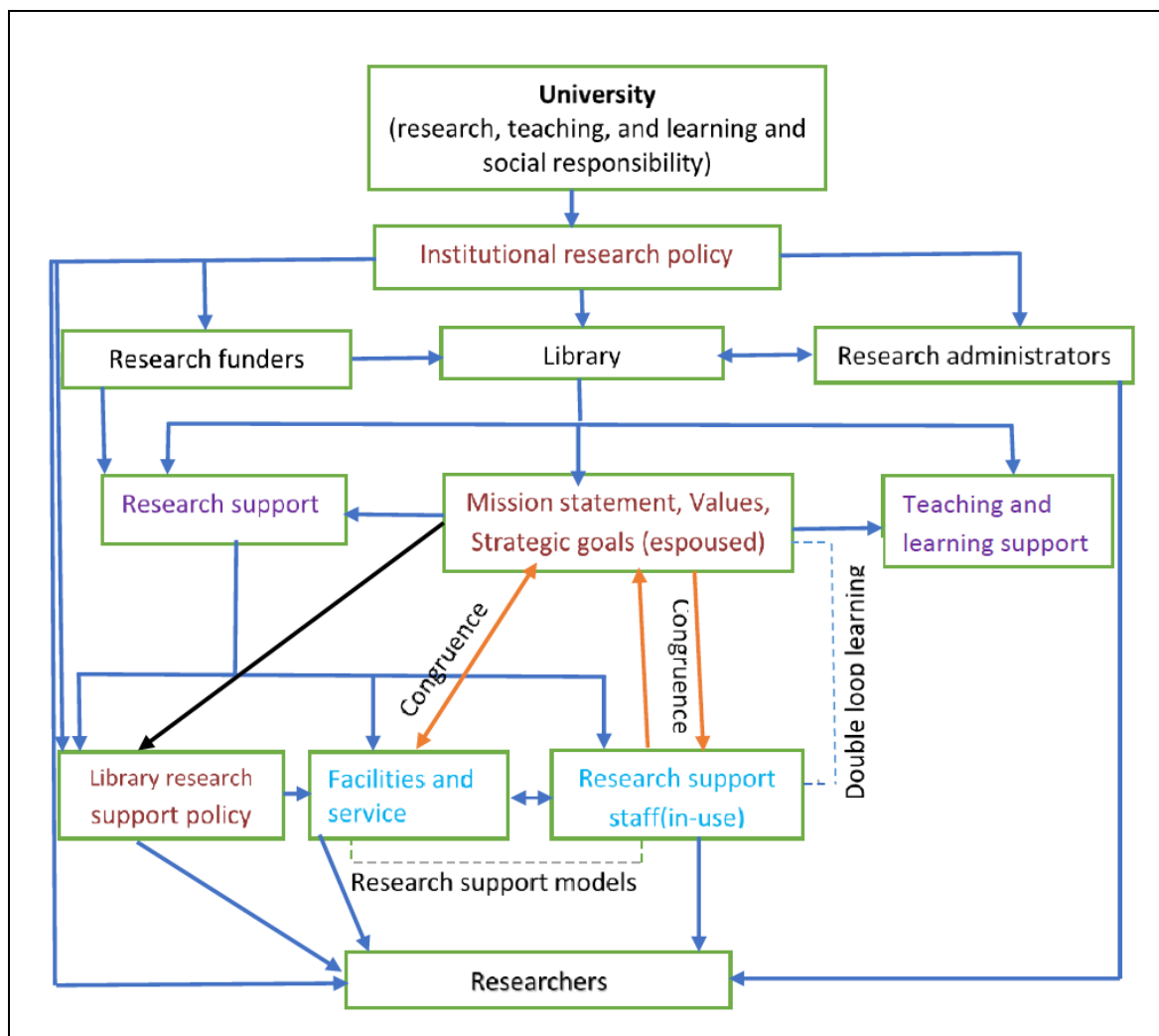
Figure 2 Proposed model for effective research support in Zimbabwean universities

7.1.1 The university and institutional research policy

Generally, universities have three core functions, namely that of research, social responsibility, and teaching and learning. To support these three pillars, university departments such as the library rely on university policy to shape and execute their mandates. With respect to research as one of the pillars, many of the librarians in this study were not aware of their institution's research policy. The model stresses the availability of an institutional research policy, which clearly spells out the specific roles played by each of the research support departments. This is particularly important as this study found that different players within the universities who support researchers lacked a coordinated effort and were developing their own agendas for research support resulting in conflict and overlapping of responsibilities. This contributed to ineffectiveness in two ways. Firstly, resources from research funders could easily be misdirected and, secondly, researchers may fail to receive a service simply because roleplayers would assume the others are providing it. This problem was illustrated by the issue of Open Access initiatives at UL04 which both the library and the research office were claiming to champion. Consequently, both parties failed to hold the Open Access Week in 2016, the lack of clarity regarding responsibilities coming at a disservice to researchers. Effectiveness in support of researchers depends on the clarity and understanding of roles. It is therefore imperative that all the roles and strategies of the support environments are clearly stated and synchronised through the institutional research policy to unlock synergies among departments.

Further, librarians lamented that researchers dismissed services offered by the library. One of the many reasons offered was the fact that there were no policies in place that make it mandatory for researchers to attend and receive research support services. A policy would ensure programmes such as IL skills training are made mandatory because they provide lifelong skills fundamental to the success of researchers. An institutional research policy is the starting point for effective support for researchers and enables widespread understanding of each division's responsibilities.

7.1.2 Library, funders and research administrators

A healthy, complementary and fiduciary relationship among stakeholders is very important for effective support of researchers. This study found that funding was one of the problems that libraries were facing. Libraries were not prioritised

in resource allocation and faced budget cuts at times. This resulted in libraries failing to acquire resources and build infrastructure conducive for research support. The model emphasises funders, to demonstrate the importance of funding to the delivery of research support. Without adequate financial resources, there is no way for libraries to develop and provide services that are required in a modern-day research landscape.

Equally, a heathy working relationship with other players such as research administrators was needed to ensure that expertise is made clear. Findings indicated that research administrators do not see librarians as important academic partners. This impression was exemplified in UL06 by the exclusion of librarians from a research workshop organised by the research office which they were told was for academics only. This example demonstrates that research administrators did not understand the role of the librarians in the scholarly world of researchers. Attendance of such workshops by librarians would make them aware of the nature of research done in the university and give them leverage to anticipate the needs of researchers and support them accordingly.

7.1.3 Library and the mission statement
Analyses revealed that libraries were intricately connected to the missions of their universities as they express their mission statements in terms of the three pillars of research, teaching and learning, and social responsibility. However, most of the mission statements were found to have a medium degree of specificity and failed to identify explicitly aspects of the library's support for research. For example, researchers as a service target were not mentioned by the mission statements. This failure was attributed to a lack of clearly stated institutional research policies that should inform and shape the research mission of the libraries. It was also discovered that library mission statements failed to reflect exigencies for research support in this fast-changing environment. Most faculty librarians blamed the mission statements for ineffective research support. Mission statements and values must consistently be revisited so that they speak to current issues.

7.1.4 Research support and teaching support as equivalent services
Findings of the study showed that services offered by libraries were skewed in favour of teaching and learning and were information-focused. Librarians claimed that they were mainly focusing on provision of information resources suitable for teaching and learning and claimed that there were no researchers to support. This kind of situation made teaching and learning seem superior to research. However, the model treats research support and teaching and learning support as equivalent. This would ensure libraries balance their investments in information resources and services in a manner that reflects the competing needs of both teaching and research. An elevated research support service would also force libraries to see the need to hire staff qualified and dedicated to the research support division.

7.1.5 Library research policy
Findings of the study showed that lack of library research support policy undercuts the effectiveness of library research support. Faculty librarians and other library staff charged with research support duties lamented the lack of clarity in research support roles and responsibilities due to lack of a guiding library policy. The danger with a lack of policy is that nobody takes research support librarians to task in an event that they abdicate their duties to researchers. This scenario has resulted in service being skewed in favour of teaching and learning because, in the absence of policy, librarians do what they think is appropriate even if it is not enough. The new proposed model emphasises library research policy as the starting point in terms of providing a balanced service. A library research support policy is a prelude to effectiveness because it has the potential to spell out how research support will be delivered, who will deliver it and where it will be delivered. The model also demonstrates that the library research support policy must be predicated upon the mission, vision, values and strategic goals of the library in order to achieve congruence between espoused goals and what happens on the ground.

7.1.6 Research services and facilities
Meta-analyses of findings showed that libraries do not separate services for research and for teaching and learning. This arrangement was thought to cause ineffectiveness in support of researchers because it was easy to overlook research services. The proposed model emphasises separate and distinctive services for researchers so that researchers can effortlessly identify with the library. Studies that were carried out elsewhere show that researchers believe that services from the library are geared towards teaching and learning and a majority have stopped using the library. Distinctive services and facilities for research support, such as research commons, bibliometrics, research data management, citation analysis, data curation and collaboration in projects, must be introduced to improve the services for researchers.

7.1.7 Library research support staff
In research support practices, intellectual labour is the greatest asset because most research support services are manufactured as they are being delivered. The proposed model emphasises a competent, dedicated and well-resourced

team of research librarians as a *sine qua non* for effective research support. For example, collaboration in research projects demands that librarians have the knowledge and competence to do research. Over and above this, research librarians should only focus on researchers. The arrangement that was found in libraries was inimical to effective research support because faculty librarians who were carrying out research support duties also had other central organisational duties such as supervision and collection development.

Additionally, the model proposes that librarians practising research support must be practitioners who reflect both in action and on action. Schön (1983) noted that the capacity to reflect on action, to engage in a process of continuous learning, was one of the defining characteristics of professional practice. Kerr (2010: 17) noted that "reflection on practice is done in the interest of learning towards bringing theories-in-use in line with espoused theories" for greater effectiveness in practice. Congruence between theories-in-use of research support librarians and the mission documents and policies of the library should result in effectiveness in practice. Schön (1983: 48) said that "it is the entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the 'art' by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict".

7.1.8 Research support models

Meta-analyses established that librarians use traditional models in support of researchers. Resource and liaison models were found to be the most popular means of supporting researchers. However, these were found to be inadequate in dealing with modern-day needs of researchers. To be effective in practice, the proposed model stresses the need for librarians to put more emphasis on modern approaches of support namely the hybrid model which demands new structures, new posts and highly qualified and competent staff (Auckland 2012: 58) and the engagement model where librarians work outside the library spending time in academic departments, on collaboration in research and on being assertive (Auckland 2012: 51). These models can have a strong impact on the scholarly life of researchers.

8 Conclusion

This paper revealed the relationship between conceptualisation and practice of research support in selected libraries in Zimbabwean universities which helped to account for the ineffectiveness observed in practice. Although several congruencies were found between conceptions and practice, none were adequate for the needs of researchers. During the analyses of mission documents, the conceptual framework applied could not satisfactorily answer research questions focused on "research support" because it was established that this concept was not adequately described and conceptualised in the institutional documents. Librarians were working according to scripts that do not envision what they should be doing in the new research landscape. The expectations of what the libraries should be doing exceed what appears in mission statements. Even though espoused theory and theories-in-use were found to be inadequate, there were the additional structural problems that were outlined by respondents as reasons for incongruence such as funding, available training and institutional influence, among others, which cannot be accounted for by the conceptual framework applied.

References

Argyris, C.1980. *Inner contradictions of rigorous research*. New York: Academic Press.

Argyris, C. and Schön, D. 1974. *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, C. and Schön, D.A. 1978. *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective*. Reading: Addison Wesley.

Auckland, M. 2012. *Re-skilling for research: an investigation into the role and skills of subject and liaison librarians required to effectively support the evolving information needs of researchers*. London: Research Libraries UK. [Online]. http://www.rluk.ac.uk/files/RLUK%20Re-skilling.pdf (15 May 2018).

Dermol, V. 2012. Relationship between mission statements and company performance. *Versita*, 59(1): 321–336. DOI:10.2478/v10316-012-0022-9.

Du Mont, R.R. and Du Mont, P.F. 1981. Assessing the effectiveness of library service. *Occasional Papers*, 152: 1–24. [Online]. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/3830/gslisoccasionalpv00000i00152.pdf?sequence=1 (11 June 2015).

Ellis, E.L., Rosenblum, B., Stratton, J. and Ames-Stratton, K. 2014. Positioning academic libraries for the future: a process and strategy for organisational transformation. [Online]. https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/14141/IATUL_Positioning_Academic_Libraries_For_The_Future.pdf?sequence=1 (19 May 2015).

Ganu, J. 2013. Institutional mission statements and attitudinal outcomes of selected faith based tertiary institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 14(2): 20–30. [Online]. http://www.na-businesspress.com/JABE/GanuJ_Web14_2_.pdf (10 January 2016).

Hessels, L.K. and Lente, H. 2007. Re-thinking new knowledge production: a literature review and a research agenda. *Innovation Studies Utrecht (ISU) Working Paper Series*. [Online]. http://www.geo.uu.nl/isu/pdf/isu0803.pdf (05 May 2015).

Kerr, P.A. 2010. Conceptions and practice of information literacy in academic libraries. Master's thesis. The State
    University of New Jersey. [Online]. https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/27317/ (11 May 2015).
Machimbidza, A. 2014. National University of Science and Technology (NUST) academics' attitudes towards NUST
    institutional repositories (NUSPACE). MSc thesis. National University of Science and Technology.
Mazhude, A., 2015. Use of the University of Zimbabwe research commons by undergraduate students. MSc thesis.
    National University of Science and Technology.
Meacham, J. and Gaff, J.G. 2006. Learning goals in mission statements: implications for educational leadership. *Liberal
    Education*, 92(1): 6–13.
Monroe-Gulick, A., O'Brien, M.S. and White, G.W. 2013. Librarians as partners: moving from research supporters to
    research partners. *Association of College and Research Libraries Conference Proceedings*. 10-13 April. Indianapolis,
    Indiana: Association of College and Research Libraries. [Online].
    http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2013/papers/GulickOBrienWhite
    _Librarians.pdf (8 January 2016).
Namuleme, R.K. and Kanzira, A.N. 2015. Research support services in academic libraries in Uganda: challenges and
    opportunities. In *The Quest for Deeper Meaning of Research Support*. R. Raju, A. Adam, G. Johnson, C. Miller and J.
    Pietersen, Eds. 29–40. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Libraries. DOI:10.15641/0-7992-2522-8.
Parker, R. 2012. What the library did next: strengthening our visibility in research support. VALA 2012 16th Biennial
    Conference, Melbourne, Australia. 6-9 February 2012. [Online]. https://www.vala.org.au/vala2012-
    proceedings/vala2012-session-1-parker/ (23 May 2015).
Pasipamire, N. 2015. Research support by subject librarians in selected state university libraries in Zimbabwe:
    accommodating new trends. In *The Quest for Deeper Meaning of Research Support*. R. Raju, A. Adam, G. Johnson,
    C. Miller and J. Pietersen, Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Libraries. 62–80. DOI: 10.15641/0-7992-2522-
    8.
Raju, R. and Schoombee, L. 2013. Research support through the lens of transformation in academic libraries with
    reference to the case of Stellenbosch University Libraries. *South African Journal of Libraries and Information
    Science*, 79(2): 27–38.
Richardson, J., Nolan-Brown, T., Loria, P. and Bradbury, S. J. 2012. Library research support in Queensland: a survey.
    Australian Academic and Research Libraries, 43(4): 258–277. [Online]. http://eprints.qut.edu.au/57384/ (17 July
    2015).
Schön, D.A. 1983. *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
Schreiber, R., Crooks, D. and Stern, P.N. 1997. Qualitative meta-analysis. In *Completing a Qualitative Project: Details
    and Dialogue*. J.M. Morse, Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Smith, M., Heady, R.B., Carson, P.P. and Carson, K.D. 2001. Do missions accomplish their missions? An exploratory
    analysis of mission statement content and organizational longevity. *Journal of Applied Management and
    Entrepreneurship*, 6(1): 75–96.
Stafsudd, A. and Collin, S. 1999. Recruitment policy vs. recruitment process: espoused theory and theory-in-use.
    Presented at the EGOS Conference at Warwick. [Online]. http://www.svencollin.se/anna1999.pdf (11 June 2017).
Willis, D. 1993. Learning and assessment: exposing the inconsistencies of theory and practice. *Oxford Review of
    Education*, 19: 383–402.