

# Exploring the Use of Research in Enriching Teacher's Knowledge and Services to Children with Deafblindness in Tanzania

## Case Study of Patandi Teachers' College of Special Needs Education

*Rajabu Ally Mtunge, MSc*  
[rajabumtunge@yahoo.com](mailto:rajabumtunge@yahoo.com)

*Zainabu Bakari Amiri, BSc*  
[zainabamir1984@yahoo.com](mailto:zainabamir1984@yahoo.com)

**Deafblind Assistance Services (DBAS)**  
**P.O.Box 21,**  
**Duluti, Arusha,**  
**Tanzania**

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of research in enriching teacher's knowledge and services for children with Deafblindness in Tanzania. The study applied a survey design, which covered the sample of 53 respondents including the employees of Patandi Teacher's College of Special Needs Education and the student teachers taking courses of Visual Impairment and Deafblindness, Hearing Impairment and Intellectual Impairments. The study employed a simple random sampling technique to ensure an equal chance of an individual being involved in this study as inferential statistics considered. Data was collected from a sample of 53 employees and student teachers using a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistical tools used included frequencies, mean and standard deviation while the inferential statistical tool used was a correlation. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for analyzing the data collected. The study achieved a response of 53 out of a sample of 53, representing a response rate of 100%. The finding on the presence of research papers published by Tanzania researchers on Deafblindness showed in the achieved response of 53 out of 53 respondents which take 100% of all responses, most of them (60.4% cumulative of 39.6% who strongly disagreed and 20.8% only disagreed). Only 11 respondents equal to 20.8% percent agreed on the presence of concern of the variable. Regarding the relation between the presence of papers and the increased knowledge about Deafblindness;

spearman's rank correlation revealed a very strong positive correlation (0.226) which suggests that the presence of papers about Deafblindness published by Tanzanian make a sense in the growth of a body of knowledge to teachers hence improved services to children with Deafblindness in Tanzania. In the ability of teachers to teach children with Deafblindness, it was discovered that 52% of all respondents can teach children with Deafblindness. On the other hand, the study showed there was a limitation in the knowledge of teachers who agreed they can teach. Thus, there is an urgent need for the teacher's performance to be seriously assessed to justify activities with substantiated evidence rather than with tale or rhetoric. Further investigations need to be conducted to explore the teachers' competencies in facilitating the learning of children with Deafblindness especially in primary schools in Tanzania.

**Key Terms:** Learners with Deafblindness, Teaching Pedagogy, Teachers' competence.

### **Introduction**

Tanzania started implementing inclusive education in 1997 (Mnyanyi 2014; Kapinga 2012) with a focus to provide learning opportunities to all children including those with Deafblindness. Deafblindness refers to children with dual hearing and vision sensory impairment (Miles and Riggio 1999) that affects both learning and other socio-economic aspects. With inclusive education, teachers are at the center of the learning process (Rubio 2010, Araghieh 2011). It is important therefore teachers to have competencies in facilitating the learning process to the learners with Deafblindness. By competence in this study, refers to knowledge, skills, and disposition that one possesses about a certain career. Deafblindness is believed to be acquired by an individual or someone who may be born with it (Stuart, 2002).

One of the important agents in the provision of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers may use is research papers, particularly those conducted in Tanzania by Tanzanian scholars. This study intended to explore the use of research in enriching teachers' knowledge and services to children with Deafblindness in Tanzania. Teaching learners with Deafblindness require a specialist teacher to possess enough skills knowledge and pedagogy of special needs for facilitating learners with Deafblindness (Riggio and McLetchie 2008). Application of special teaching and learning methods should be done under the guidance of adaptations from teachers who have specialized in the field of Deafblindness. The degrees of Deafblindness may determine the uses of a certain teaching and learning strategy which may not be suitable for every student with the same disability. Although, the country target at reaching the highest level of service provision especially in the field of disabilities including the area of Deafblindness, to date the only one teacher college is operating in preparing teachers of children with disabilities with an enrollment of approximately 200 students per year, with that number very few approximately (<90) student teachers opt to train in Deafblindness which is only a subject in a course. Thus, there is no clear mention of the kind of training offered to teachers in this area. The curriculum is silent on the necessary adaptations that needed to cater such learners' needs throughout the country (MoES, 2005). The impression here is that there are effects on the education of such learners which are not well developed in line with the various educational policies put in place. Only two tutors (Mr. Mtunge and Mr. Kabora) offering training on Deafblindness at the college (Patandi Teachers College of Special Needs Education). This

suggests there is a great need for the government to train more tutors in the field of Deafblindness to reach the needs of the children with Deafblindness in the country.

**Methods**

The case study research design was adopted by this study because it was expected to enable exploration of a phenomenon in its roots by using various data sources including questionnaires, interviews, and observation. In reducing expenses and time used in conducting this study this particular design was very convenient. It allowed an in-depth examination of the problems because it contains a single unit with a variety of characteristics or variables. The study covered a sample of 53 respondents drawn from a total population of 219 employees and in-service student teachers of Patandi Teachers’ College of Special Needs Education. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires and interviews was applied to key respondents in the collection of data; also researcher took advantage of observation to collect behavioral and attitudinal data that helped in qualifying this study. Analysis of the data collected in this study involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistical tools namely frequencies, percentages, mean, and correlation to determine and explain the relationship among the study variables.

**Results**

The study achieved a response of 53 out of a sample of 53, representing a response rate of 100% as shown in Table: 1.0 below. This shows that the findings are of good quality and legitimate as suggested by Dillman et. al. (2009). There was a great relationship among the variables. The study determined to explore the use of research in enriching teachers’ knowledge and services to children with Deafblindness in Tanzania. The assessment on the particular variable revealed that a large number of respondents (85%) agreed and strongly agreed and there were very few (7.6%) disagreed and strongly disagreed as shown in table 1.0 below.

**Table: 1.0 Illustrate that Research could enrich knowledge and services to children with Deafblindness**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid STRONGLY AGREE	34	64.2	64.2	64.2
AGREE	11	20.8	20.8	84.9
NOT SURE	4	7.5	7.5	92.5
DISAGREE	2	3.8	3.8	96.2
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

The study also intended to view if there are articles published by Tanzanians on the issue of education to children with Deafblindness. To build the knowledge about the variable, the researcher established the question that measures the availability of research papers emanated from Tanzanians that could build up enough knowledge and skills of teaching children with Deafblindness in schools. The finding showed that, in the achieved response of 53 out of 53

respondents which take 100% of all responses, most of them (60.4% cumulative of 39.6% who strongly disagreed and 20.8% only disagreed). Only 11 respondents equal to 20.8% percent agreed on the presence of concern of the variable as shown in table 2.0 below.

**Table: 2.0 Illustrating the presence of research papers published by Tanzania researchers on Deafblindness**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid STRONGLY AGREE	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
AGREE	9	17.0	17.0	20.8
NOT SURE	10	18.9	18.9	39.6
DISAGREE	11	20.8	20.8	60.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	21	39.6	39.6	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

The study discovered that there is a direct relationship between the presence of papers and the increased knowledge about Deafblindness. Table 3.0 below shows the correlation of 0.226 which suggests that the presence of papers about Deafblindness published by Tanzanians make a sense in the growth of a body of knowledge to teachers hence improving services to children with Deafblindness in Tanzania.

**Table: 3.0 Relationship between the presence of papers and increased knowledge about deafblindness**

		ARE THERE ARTICLES WRITTEN BY RESEARCHERS FROM TANZANIA	KNOWING ABOUT DEAFBLINDNESS
ARE THERE ARTICLES WRITTEN BY RESEARCHERS FROM TANZANIA	Pearson Correlation	1	.226
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.107
	N	53	52
KNOWING ABOUT DEAFBLINDNESS	Pearson Correlation	.226	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.107	
	N	52	52

Taking the above description the study revealed that, it is very important for the teachers to have enough knowledge about Deafblindness to help children with Deafblindness to acquire knowledge and skills that they can use in their entire life. It was evident that these research

papers published by Tanzanians do not exist as many respondents (60.4%) claimed not to come across the papers while the remaining number (39.6%) hesitated in their response.

On the other hand, it was discovered that researches are vitally important for any nation to step forward in the development economically and socially. Under the scientific world, we live failure to conduct research and publish papers could easily lead the nation into a compromise situation (Ramanayake 2019). He also pointed out that for the economy to spring up there must be research. Research becomes a cornerstone of the services delivery and the growth of the nation's economy.

The study crosschecked also the ability of teachers to teach children with Deafblindness. In this variable, it was discovered that there was almost cumulatively equal balance as the respondents who assured they can teach. Only 11 respondents which takes 20.8% of the sample were strongly agreed and 32.1% they agreed. Thus, cumulatively the number reached 28 respondents equal to 52% of all respondents agreed at different levels. The study hence shows that, there is a limitation in the knowledge of teachers who agreed they can teach. Therefore the study suggests the compromise existing ability among the teachers where they agreed they can teach (Table.4.0 below) under a minimal level of knowledge.

**Table:4.0 ABILITY OF TEACHERS IN TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid STRONGLY AGREE	11	20.8	20.8	20.8
AGREE	17	32.1	32.1	52.8
NOT SURE	5	9.4	9.4	62.3
DISAGREE	8	15.1	15.1	77.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	12	22.6	22.6	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

**Conclusions**

In general, Deafblindness is found to be one of the complex topics to deal with especially in the African context and Tanzania in particular. Many countries signed the international conventions considering the rights of people with Deafblindness as Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (2017). Not only that but the disability act of 2010 stipulated several rights to people with disability including people with Deafblindness and the national policy on disability (2004) also put Tanzania in a position of considering the rights of the people with disabilities in various aspects. All these transformed the situation of people with disabilities in the country.

To align with those efforts services to people with disabilities improved adequately in various aspects including health and education. This study created an image that apart from all efforts, the group of children with Deafblindness thought to be highly marginalized as all services

provided by the government either they are inaccessible or with very minimal access especially in education, this is due to Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST 2019) and one of the reasons to the existence of situation can be explained using results established in this study.

Patandi Teachers' College of Special Needs Education is believed to be the only Teacher College in the country that engages in the preparation of specialist teachers who can teach children with disabilities. In recent years (2018), Patandi started providing training to teachers for children with Deafblindness. The interviewed tutors appreciated the government for the tremendous success which can increase the knowledge of teachers in teaching children with Deafblindness. With all that, the study discovered that tutors and students teachers are aware of Deafblindness but they all agreed that the level of knowledge they possess is very low which this study was conducted to explore that.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the study exhibited the need for the Tanzanians to conduct research on services for children and young adults so that those research could stand as the major tool for mitigating the challenge of the knowledge to all teachers.

The government through various organs needs to establish a purposive intervention for both tutors and teachers working with children with Deafblindness in the country at different levels. Later training should be conducted to other college tutors in the other colleges to allow inclusive possible to children with Deafblindness.

In connection to research and papers, the government should rethink the means of conducting a summative evaluation to children with Deafblindness since the research revealed that, due to poor knowledge possessed by teachers in teaching this group of children even they fail to evaluate them thoroughly.

Further, the government should invest more in aligning the available government policies and regulations, with the actual services (practice) directed to the group of children with Deafblindness. To assure continued growth and sustainability on service promotion in Tanzania, the government should support tutors, teachers, and other stakeholders in conducting as much research as possible to raise the body of knowledge which may improve services to children with Deafblindness in the country.

### **References**

Dillman et al (2009), International Handbook of Survey Methodology,  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46706288>

Kapinga.O.(2012). Professional Development among Educator Pursuing a B.E.d Program in Special Education in Tanzania: A Study of Motives and Perceived Outcomes. Abo Academi University Press. Abo, Finland.

Marianne, R., & Barbara, M. (1998): Research – Practice – Focus Competences for Teachers of Children who are Deaf-Blind: Deaf-Blind perspectives Volume 6(1): Monmouth Avenue: USA

Marianne, R. (2008): DeafBlindness: Educational Service Guide. Perkins School for the Blind: USA

Miles B and Riggio M (1999). Remarkable Conversations: A guide to developing meaningful communication with children and young adults who are deafblind. Perkins School for the Blind. Watertown, MA, USA.

Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2019), National Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania, Dodoma, Tanzania.

Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports(2004), National Policy On Disability, Dar es salaam, Tanzania.

Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2005). *A Guide for Teaching inclusive Education.*

Mnyanyi (2014). Changing Teachers' Practices in Regular Schools Enrolling Children with Visual Impairment: An Action Research Project in Tanzania. Abo Academi University Press. Abo, Finland.

MoEVT, (2009). National strategy on inclusive education 2009-2017. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

National Consortium on DeafBlindness (2008): *National Count of children and Youth Who are Deafblind*: Monmouth Teaching Research Division: USA

Ramanayake K. D (2019), Research and Development(R&D) For Technological Policy, Volume 3 (7): 5 International-Journal-of-Internet-Science-1662-5544.

Stuart, A. (2002) Teaching Children who are Deaf-blind Contact Communication and Learning: David Fulton Publishers Limited: The Chiswick Centre, 414 Chiswick High Road, London W45 TF

UN, (2006). Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, Geneva, Switzerland.

UNESCO (2004). The rights to education for persons with disabilities. Paris.

URT, (2004). Policy on Disability. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

URT, (2008). Tanzania Disability Survey, National Bureau of Statistics, Disability Survey Report. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

IJSER