



## **Sixty Years of Special Needs Education in Tanzania: Celebrating Audacity, Commitment and Resilience**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study traces the development of special needs education in Tanzania from 1950, and discusses the achievements and the persistent challenges that Tanzania is facing as we celebrate 60 years since the first special education school was started. Both documentation and interview methods were used to collect information. The participants included fifteen special education teachers. The results show that some efforts have been made to educate children with disabilities. More learners with different disabilities are now in schools, albeit very few; and the number of trained teachers has increased to some extent. However, tough challenges also persist. These include accessibility barriers, lack of and/or inadequate equipment and materials, and negative attitudes. The paper concludes that, although the journey travelled since 1950 has given some hopes and encouragements, the destination is still far away. A lot needs to be done to make sure that persons with disabilities are protected, valued and given their rights as human beings, including such rights as, the right to be respected, and the right to live and to get education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Geographical location and historical background of Tanzania**

Geographically, The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) is situated in East Africa. It is located between longitude 29 degrees and 41 East and latitude 1 degree and 12 South, with a total area of 947,300 square kilometres (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). Tanzania shares borders with Kenya

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and Uganda to the North and on the West it is bordered by Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. Malawi and Mozambique border Tanzania on the South. At present Tanzania is divided into twenty-nine administrative regions. The last census in 2002, Tanzania had a population of 34.5 million people, and it is estimated that the population will grow to 45.6 million by 2012 when the next census will be carried out.

During pre-colonial period, Tanzania practised traditional education which 'emphasized principles of good citizenship, acquisition of life skills and the perpetuation of valued customs and tradition' (The United Republic of Tanzania, 1995 p. i). In other words, as Mushi (2009) puts it, 'the philosophy of indigenous African education was founded on the need to maintain and preserve the cultural heritage of the tribe and transmission of codes of good behaviour, inherited knowledge, skills and values of the tribe, from one generation to another (p.3). In addition to the activities of indigenous African education, the two main religions, Islam and Christianity, have also played significant roles in promoting education in Tanzania. 'Muslim and European Christian Missionaries tried hard to promote education to enable their converts to read religious literature' ((Mushi, 2009 p.3).

During the colonial period, (1890 – 1961), Tanganyika, as it was then known, was first under the German rule and then the British took over its administration after the Second World War, on behalf of the then League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations. During both colonial periods, the education was promoted just to meet colonial needs and interests, and because of this, only very few individuals, who were earmarked to serve colonial interests, were provided with education.

Tanganyika got its independence from the British on December 9th, 1961, and on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1964 it united with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania. Tanzania inherited the British system of Education and the government had to work hard to make changes that would meet the needs of Tanzanians, because the country was very poor, economically, and the majority of the people were illiterate. It was reported that at independence, 85 percent of Tanzanians did not know how to read and write (Nationalist Newspaper, 24 August 1967 cited by Mushi, 2009 p. 4).

The structure of the formal education and training in Tanzania, as of now, is 2-7-4-2-3+, which means that there are 2 years of pre-primary education, seven years of primary education, 4 years of ordinary level secondary education, 2 years of advanced level secondary education, and 3 years or more of university education. Students with disabilities go through the same system of education, and, at present, they follow the same curricula, with few modifications, as deemed necessary. They have to go through all the examinations, at every level, so as to qualify and be selected to a higher level.

It is important to note that, one of the top priorities of Tanzania is the provision of primary education for all children (Tungaraza, 2009). The late president Julius K. Nyerere caused the enactment of the Universal Primary

Education Act (UPE) in 1974. The Act sought to ensure that every child in Tanzania completed at least primary education. This was indeed a very well meant policy, yet, in practice, up to this moment, not all school age children are receiving education in Tanzania, particularly so, those with disabilities.

### **Brief history of special education globally**

Although it is well known around the world that education is a human right, many children have not been given the chance to go to school. Article 26 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "everyone has the right to education" and "education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stage" (Verma, Bagley & Mohan Jha, 2007). This right is also enshrined in the constitutions of all independent nations, Tanzania included.

Globally, the history of special education shows that persons with disabilities have always been there, but they have not always been given education that addresses their special needs. In olden days, persons with disabilities were rejected and isolated from other members of their communities. The concept and call to educate every child to achieve his or her greatest potential is a very novel one.

Time was when persons with disabilities were put in institutions. Institutionalization took place in Europe. By the middle of the nineteenth century several institutions commonly referred as **asylums** were established to benefit citizens with disabilities (Gargiulo 2003). Humanitarians found it vital that persons with disabilities should be given custodial care. Persons with disabilities were placed in **asylums** where they were fed and clothed. However, asylums were not meant to be educational institutions (Bender, 1970).

Educational historians usually trace the beginning of special education to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Gargiulo, (2003). History reveals that before special schools were started, there were individual and isolated attempts to educate children with disabilities in Spain, France, The United Kingdom, Germany, Holland and Switzerland (Institute of Education, 1984). One of the earliest documented attempts at providing special education were the efforts of a French physician Jean Marc-Gaspard Itard (1775-1838) in educating 12-year-old Victor, the so called 'wild boy of Aveyron' (Gargiulo, 2003). Itard was a French physician who was an authority on diseases of the ear and on the education of students who were deaf. He is the person to whom most historians trace the beginning of special education as we know it today (Hallahan & Kauffman 1994). Some people refer to him as 'Father' of Special Education.

Special schools began to emerge in the 15th Century. Persons with sensory impairments were the first ones to receive education. Those who were fortunate to be in school were mainly taught **vocational skills** and their curriculum was different from that which was used in public schools. It is important to note that the early special schools were started by charitable

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organizations and the Government involvement came in much later. There is no written record that indicates that there has been any private teaching of children with disabilities in homes in Tanzania (Institute of Education, 1984).

### **Normalization**

Some individuals were not pleased with institutionalization and their dissatisfaction led to the concept of normalization, which was first developed in Scandinavian countries, especially, in Denmark and Sweden. Persons with disabilities who were in institutions began to be transferred from institutions to, and integration into, normal community settings, an exercise which is still going on in some places. The concept of normalization was not applicable to Africa because Africa did not have institutions. However, 'it influenced the move towards integration, which was adopted in all regions of the world' (Kisanji, 1999).

### **Inclusive Education**

At present, many countries have accepted inclusive education. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Education in 1994. The guiding principle behind inclusion according to Woods (2002) is 'to bring the services to the student rather than the student to the services' (p. 17). It must be clear that inclusion is not only an educational approach, but it is also a social movement, with proponents maintaining that anything but inclusion for children with special needs is morally and ethically wrong (Stainback & Stainback, 1996).

### **The purpose of the study**

This paper provides a history and development of special education in Tanzania since 1950 and discusses the achievements and the persistent challenges that Tanzania is facing as we commemorate 60 years since the first seven blind students were admitted at Buigiri School, Dodoma Region.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the historical trend of education for students with disabilities in Tanzania?
2. What achievements and challenges have been noted?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The main method used to collect information was documentation. Different documents were consulted to get the history and the development of special education. In addition, 15 special education teachers were interviewed to get

their views on what they thought were the achievements and the challenges facing special education in Tanzania. One of the teachers interviewed was one of the first seven students who were admitted at Buigiri in 1950.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Background information of the respondents**

Fifteen respondents were interviewed in this study. Of these, 10 were males and five were females. Their ages ranged from 50 to 72. Eight of the respondents were trained teachers for the visually impaired; four were trained for learners with hearing impairment and three were trained teachers for learners with intellectual impairments.

### **The development and history of special education in Tanzania**

This section discusses the history and the development of special education in Tanzania. The history of each category of disability will be presented here; other areas dealing with special education will be discussed as well.

### **Education for children with disabilities during British rule in Tanzania**

The colonial government did not put emphasis on the education of children with disabilities. This may have been due to the fact that they were merely concerned with a few able-bodied, energetic individuals, chosen in order to serve colonial interests. However, in Tanzania, the first school for children with disabilities was started in April 30, 1950 when the British were still ruling Tanganyika. The only school during that time was established by a charitable organisation and not the government. Mr. Wilson Carlile under the management of the Anglican Church established Wilson Carlile School for Blind Boys (now Buigiri School) in Dodoma Region. The school was started for blind boys only. At present, Tanzania provides special education for children who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded, autistic, physically disabled and deaf-blind. It is now almost sixty years since the first school was started.

### **Education for the learners with visual impairments**

The history of special education in Tanzania is short, for we know that the first special school in Tanzania was established in 1950. Despite its short history, there is one thing similar to the European history and that is that the first special school in Tanzania was also for children with sensory impairments (Tungaraza, 2010). However, just like many other African countries, Tanzania had no institutions. The first school, which was known as Wilson Carlile School for the Blind Boys, is now known as Buigiri School.

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The school was started, as its name clearly indicates, for blind boys only. Only seven students were enrolled in 1950. One of the first seven students who was the last to be enrolled on September 23, 1950 had this to say:

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1950, my brother and his newly wed wife escorted me to Buigiri and I was received by Captain and Mrs. Varley. There was no classroom, but we learned in a room which was originally built to serve as a car garage. The environment was not conducive to learning, because we did not even have a dormitory. We lived in a house where when it rained we had to stay awake because rain seeped through the roof. We had shortage of teaching and learning materials, but both teachers and students worked hard, and so, we survived.

The first schools for blind students in Tanzania were started by charitable organizations. Later on the government of Tanzania came in and started some schools. Table 1 and 2 show the first primary schools for blind students which were established by charitable organizations and the government of Tanzania, respectively.

**Table1:** The first primary schools for blind students established by charitable organizations in Tanzania

<b>Year started</b>	<b>School/integrated unit</b>	<b>Managing agency</b>
1950	Wilson Carlile School for Blind Boys, now Buigiri School for the Blind (Dodoma Region)	Anglican Church
1962	Swedish Free Mission Blind School (now Furaha) (Tabora Region).	The Catholic Church
1961	Irente School for Blind Girls (became co-educational in 1972) (Tanga Region).	The Lutheran Church
1967	Buhangija Integrated Primary school (Shinyanga Region).	The Catholic Church
1967	Mugeza Integrated Primary School (Kagera Region)	The Catholic Church
1968	Kabanga Integrated Primary school (Kigoma Region)	The Catholic Church
1968	Masasi Integrated Primary school (Mtwara Region)	The Catholic Church

**Source:** Institute of Education, 1984.

**Table2:** The first primary schools for blind students established by the government in Tanzania.

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1966	Uhuru Co-educational School (Dar es Salaam Region).	Government of Tanzania
1968	Ikungi Integrated Primary school (Singida Region).	Government of Tanzania
1968	Pongwe Integrated Primary School (Tanga Region)	Government of Tanzania
1970	Hombolo Integrated Primary School (Dodoma Region).	Government of Tanzania
1973	Mwanihala Integrated Primary school (Nzega, Shinyanga Region).	Government of Tanzania
1974	Makalala Integrated Primary School (Iringa Region).	Government of Tanzania
1978	Longido Integrated Primary School (Arusha Region).	Government of Tanzania
1978	Rutengano Integrated Primary School (Mbeya Region).	Government of Tanzania
1978	Misungwi Integrated Primary School (Mwanza Region)	Government of Tanzania
1978	Mwisenge Integrated Primary School (Mara Region).	Government of Tanzania

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**Source:** Institute of Education, 1984.

**Primary education:** According to the records kept by the Special Education Unit at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in the year 2010 Tanzania had three primary schools and thirty four special education units that delivered educational services for learners with visual impairments. The number of learners with visual impairments in primary schools was 1615 in the year 2010, which included 931 males and 684 females (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2010). In addition, some students have low vision such as learners with albinism. In 2010 there were 2416 students with albinism in primary schools. The male students were 1567 and the female students were 849.

**Secondary education:** Besides primary education, some students with visual impairments attend secondary schools. The first secondary school that admitted students with visual impairments is Mpwapwa Secondary School. This school was established in 1960 at Mpwapwa, Dodoma where the first primary school, Buigiri was also located. In the year 2010, there were 16 secondary schools that enrolled students with visual impairments. Of these, 12 were ordinary level secondary schools and four schools admitted both ordinary and advanced level students. According to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training statistics, in the 2010 there were 539 students with visual disabilities in secondary schools in Tanzania. Of these, 269 were males and 270 were females. In addition, in 2010 there were 331 students with

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albinism in secondary schools. The male students were 183 and the female students were 148.

***University education:*** The first two male students with visual disabilities were admitted at the University of Dar es Salaam in the academic year 1978/79. This was about 28 years since the first primary school for students with visual disabilities was established in Tanzania. The University of Dar es Salaam records show that from 1978 to 2009, sixty four students with visual disabilities had joined the University as undergraduate students. In addition, eight students had obtained Master's degrees and one had a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Tungaraza, 2010). Some students with visual disabilities have also been admitted at Sebastian Kolowa University College (SEKUCO), one of the colleges of Tumaini University in Tanzania.

### **Education for learners with hearing impairments**

***Primary education:*** The second group which benefited from education was that of learners with hearing impairments. The first school for these learners was Tabora Deaf Mute (now Furaha) established in 1963 by the Roman Catholic Church. In the year 1974, the Tanzania Society for the Deaf started Dar es Salaam School for the Deaf at Buguruni, Dar es Salaam. The Lutheran Church started two special residential primary schools in 1981. The schools are Bukoba School for the Deaf and Mwanga School for the Deaf, in Kagera Region and Kilimanjaro Region, respectively. Records kept by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training show that at present there are ten schools and 36 special education units that cater for students with hearing impairments. The statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training confirmed that in the year 2009 there were 5064 learners with hearing impairments at primary school level. Of these, 2818 were males and 2246 were females (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2009).

***Secondary education:*** Besides the primary schools and units for the learners with hearing impairments, there were eight secondary schools that offered education to a few students who got the chance to go to secondary schools. Six of the schools offered ordinary level education and two offered both ordinary level and advanced level education for learners with hearing impairment. Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training revealed that in 2010 students with hearing disabilities included 300 male students and 220 female students in secondary schools in Tanzania.

***University education:*** In recent years, some students with hearing impairments have been admitted at colleges and Universities. In the year 2009, the University of Dar es Salaam had enrolled eight students with hearing disabilities. One student who was partially deaf joined the University of Dar es Salaam in 1990/1991 academic year. A totally deaf student was admitted at the University in the academic year 2006/2007. Then the



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University of Dar es Salaam, for the first time, had to employ a language interpreter to work with her.

**Education for learners with intellectual impairments**

***Primary education:*** The education for learners with intellectual impairments was established by the government of Tanzania in 1982. The school is Lulindi Primary School in Mtwara Region. In the year 2009 there were five schools and 148 special education units that delivered services for learners with intellectual impairments. In the year 2010 there were 7936 learners in these schools. Four thousand, six hundred and fifty five of these learners were males and 3281 were females.

***Secondary education:*** There are three ordinary level secondary schools in Dar es Salaam Region, which offer secondary education for learners with mild mental retardation, and two secondary schools in Arusha Region. The schools had a total of 170 students, 115 males and 55 females in 2010 (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2010)

**Education for students with physical disabilities**

***Primary education:*** Many students with physical disabilities attended ordinary primary schools and secondary schools in their communities. However, there were those with severe problems who attended schools assigned to them. The first primary school for children with physical disabilities was started by The Salvation Army, a religious organization, in 1967 at Dar es Salaam. In 2009 there were two primary schools and four special education units which provided education for children with physical disabilities. The total number of learners with physical disabilities in primary schools, in 2010, was 13936. The males were 8138 and females were 5798 (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2010).

***Secondary education:*** There are two secondary schools situated in Dar es Salaam that enrolled students with severe physical disabilities. The two secondary schools were Pugu Secondary School which admitted boys only, and Jangwani Secondary School which admitted girls only. Many of the students with physical disabilities attend secondary schools with other normal students. There were 2825 students with physical disabilities in secondary schools in the year 2010; and of these, 1814 were males and 1011 were females (The United Republic of Tanzania 2010).

***University education:*** A good number of students with physical disabilities attended universities for different programs, because many of them do not have to go through special schools. In the year 2009, the records kept by the Special Education Unit at the University of Dar es Salaam indicated that 144

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students with physical disabilities had gone through different programs and had graduated (Tungaraza, 2010).

### **Education for students with other disabilities**

**Primary education:** Recent historical developments show that more learners with other disabilities are being considered for education in Tanzania. In the year 2010 there were eight schools which provided education to students who were deaf-blind and seven primary schools which provided education to autistic children. The number of deaf-blind students enrolled in these schools in 2010 were 1345. The males were 745 and females were 600 (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2010). The total number of children with autism was 557; three hundred and thirty two males and 225 females. It is also possible that ordinary primary schools have enrolled learners with mild disabilities who have not been identified, and therefore, not included in these statistics.

Something has been done, but Tanzania is still lags very far behind in the education of persons with disabilities. Far more needs to be done; for statistics show that only about one percent of children with disabilities attend school in Tanzania. .Karakoski and Strom (2005) attested to this when they wrote:

...but the percentage of those with access to school can be estimated to stand at below 1%. This means that the overwhelming majority of more than 99% of children with disabilities and other problems of learning are excluded from the educational system.

### **Teacher education**

Records show that the first charitable organizations, which established special schools in Tanzania, trained their teachers on the job in their respective schools and in a single disability area (Tungaraza, 1994). As special education services increased, Tanzania found it necessary to establish teacher training programs. In 1976, the Ministry of Education commenced training teachers for learners with visual disabilities and those with hearing disabilities at Tabora Teacher Training College (Tungaraza, 1994). It should be noted here that this college admitted sighted teachers only, and students with visual disabilities who wished to become teachers were enrolled at Mpwapwa Teacher Training College. Tabora Teacher Training College began to prepare teachers for students with intellectual impairments in 1983. An interview carried out with one special education teacher, now working in the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, revealed that in initial years, only five student teachers for special education were given the opportunity to join Tabora Teacher Training College for a certificate program. In the year 1996, the special education teacher training program was moved from Tabora to Patandi Teacher Training College. Teachers at Patandi are

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trained to cater for blind, deaf and learners with intellectual disabilities. Some teachers are admitted for certificate courses while others enroll for diploma programs. Tables 3 and 4 show the number of teachers who have been trained at Patandi from 2004/2005 to 2009/2010 at certificate and diploma levels, respectively.

**Table 3:** Certificate teachers at Patandi from 2005 to 2010.

Year	Blind		Deaf		Intellectual disability		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2004/2005	25	14	20	20	21	14	114
2005/2006	43	21	42	35	39	27	207
2006/2007	27	15	20	21	21	14	118
2007/2008	38	41	35	41	50	40	245
2008/2009	34	34	29	44	36	33	210
2009/2010	31	35	39	35	37	33	210
Total	198	160	185	196	204	161	<b>1104</b>

Source: Special Education Unit, MoEVT.

**Table 4:** Diploma teachers at Patandi from 2005 to 2010

Year	Blind		Deaf		Intellectual disability		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2004/2005	10	05	10	08	03	11	47
2005/2006	14	12	23	12	09	17	87
2006/2007	16	13	21	05	12	09	76
2007/2008	28	15	21	09	21	07	101
2008/2009	18	15	26	12	15	09	95
2009/2010	25	12	29	11	11	04	92
Total	111	72	130	57	71	57	<b>498</b>

Source: Special Education Unit, MoEVT.

### **Inclusive Education in Tanzania**

Tanzania government ratified the Salamanca Statement in 1994. The Dakar Framework for Action goal is to ensure that by the year 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNESCO, 2000). Tanzania is one of the world countries that have committed themselves to the achievement of education for all (EFA) goals and targets. Basic education for all requires assuring access, permanence, quality learning and full participation and integration of all children and adolescents including those with disabilities (UNESCO, 2000).

Inclusive education was started in Tanzania in 1998 when an expert was sent by UNESCO to conduct inclusive education training seminars. Thirteen National Resource Team that included teachers and parents were trained for three weeks on inclusive education. Four pilot primary schools in Temeke

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District were involved. The schools were, Mgulani, Kibasila, Wailes and Salvation Army Primary schools.

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has conducted similar inclusive education seminars in other regions of Tanzania. According to the records kept by the Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the number of inclusive schools has increased from four schools started in 1998 to 196 schools in 2010. At least four inclusive schools have been started in 14 regions in Mainland Tanzania. Plans for reaching other regions continue, though it is not known when all the regions will be reached.

### **SUCCESSSES MADE DURING THE PAST 60 YEARS**

Despite the fact that very few learners with disabilities attend school, there are noteworthy successes that can be appreciated when talking about special education in Tanzania. A look at these achievements will help Tanzanians to see what achievements have been attained, and what challenges lie ahead.

#### **The number of schools and learners has increased**

Statistics kept by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training show that the numbers of both schools and learners have increased, and this is one of the achievements. It should be noted also that the number of secondary schools for some disabilities such as visual impairment has also increased, thus allowing more learners to join secondary schools, and later universities. During the interview, one staff from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training had this to say:

There is an increase in the number of secondary schools and some learners with different disabilities are now getting secondary education. For example, this year (2010/2011) we have 13 students with mental retardation who are in secondary schools. There are now five secondary schools, three in Dar es Salaam, and two in Arusha, which enrol students with intellectual impairments. This is no mean achievement!

The number of learners in primary schools, secondary schools and colleges and universities continues to grow, which is an indication that the parents and the communities in general are becoming aware of the educational needs of the children with disabilities, and this also is achievement.

Despite this achievement, no one can fully celebrate, particularly so, when not all children are reached and provided with education. As was been agreed many years back, every child has the right to education. Thus, insofar as not all children have been given this right, our celebration is devoid of meaning. Furthermore, increasing the number of schools, and student enrolment, is

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equally meaningless if the quality of education is not given priority. For, it should be remembered that children are sent to school to learn, and not just to be registered in schools. Children are not, and cannot be mere statistics!

#### **The number of tutors and special education teachers**

The number of tutors has increased at Patandi Teacher Training College and their academic capacity has also increased. As reported by one respondent, Now we have some tutors who are degree holders and some even have Master's degrees in special needs education. Besides teachers trained at Patandi, some teachers have been trained abroad.

In Tanzania, Sebastian Kolowa University College, an affiliate college of Tumaini University, University of Dodoma and The Open University of Tanzania, train special education teachers at a degree level. The University of Dar es Salaam, albeit the oldest, does not have a degree program in special education. It provides only introductory courses in special education. However, the number of trained teachers for special education at Patandi Teacher Training College has increased as indicated in Table 3 and 4, which means that more students with disabilities are being served.

#### **Tanzania Institute of Education**

The main duty of Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) is to prepare curricula and prepare teaching and learning materials for primary schools, secondary schools and Teacher training colleges. In the year 1981, the Department of Special Education was established at TIE to develop curricula and teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities (Tungaraza, 1994). It was noted during the interview that there were a few topics of special needs education in the teacher training curricula, although 'they do not give teacher trainees enough knowledge and skills to use when they start work in school', as one respondent contended.

It is obvious that our schools do have a lot of learners with special needs, but not yet identified. It might be useful if all teacher training colleges would give a big dose of special needs education so as to equip all teachers with knowledge and skills to be able to identify problems and help all learners. Tanzania has national curricula and all learners including those with special needs follow those curricula. This is not fair for those who have special needs because some of them may not be able to cope with the curricula as is.

#### **Disability Policy and Disability Act developed**

For many years Tanzania had no disability policy or disability act to cater for persons with disabilities. However, in 2004 the National Policy on Disability was promulgated. This policy aimed at 'providing conducive environment for people with disabilities to engage in productive work for their development, and utilization of available resources for improved service delivery' (p.10)

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Another very important development was the signing of The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010. The basic principles of this act are:

- respect for human dignity,
- non discrimination,
- full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life in the society;
- equality of opportunity,
- accessibility;
- equality between men and women with disabilities and recognition of their rights and needs; and
- provision of basic standard of living and social protection.

This is a positive step towards fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities. For the past 60 years no act has been written specifically to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This change, albeit belated, is welcome. The issues concerning inclusive education were also emphasized in this act. For example, Part V11 section 27 (1) states that Persons with disabilities in all ages and gender shall have exact same rights to education, and training, in inclusive settings, and the benefits of research, as other citizens (p. 23).

Besides the *National Policy on Disability* and *The Persons with Disabilities Act*, some issues concerning persons with disabilities are now being discussed openly in the Parliament, which is evidence of political will. In addition, the government has now included issues of disability in Primary Education Development Programme, (PEDP) II and Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) II, issues which were missing in both PEDP I and SEDP I. One of the objectives of PEDP II is 'to enrol all pupils with special needs in pre-primary, and primary schools or in special needs units, as well as to enhance capacity for primary school teachers and education leaders at community level to manage pupils with special needs' (p.18).

It is hoped that what has been stipulated in *The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010* and other policies and regulations will not remain only on paper, but will be implemented effectively. There is need for good implementation strategies so as to make positive changes in the lives of persons with special needs.

### **Research interest**

Some university lecturers, students, and even some other individuals, have developed interest in the field of special education, and, therefore, some research activities are going on in this area. This is important because it helps to create awareness and provide knowledge to more people. However, despite the much research being conducted in this field, the results do not reach most would-be consumers, such as parents and even school teachers.

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Research results in this area will only be useful if they are used for improving the lives of persons with disabilities.

#### **Challenges facing special education in Tanzania**

As we celebrate sixty years since the first special education school was started in Tanzania, what are the challenges that the country is still facing? Now, we have mentioned some of the achievements. Yet the nation is still beleaguered by a plethora of serious challenges. The challenges are many, but suffice it to discuss but a few of the most serious ones herein below:

##### ***Killing of persons with albinism***

If there is anything that has tarnished the image of Tanzania, it is the killing of people with albinism. The number of people killed is not exactly known, but many people have been killed and this behaviour has, sadly, not stopped. It is all the more painful to learn that people have been killed for the shameful excuses of witchcraft. If Tanzania is to implement *The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010* successfully, efforts must be exerted to ensure that basic principles, such as those of respect for human dignity, and provision of basic standard of living and social protection, are given priority. Mwalongo, (2010) reported that besides being killed, people with albinism have continuously being stigmatized, discriminated and denied of their human rights. Every government, Tanzania included, must make sure that humanity is valued and respected, despite the individual differences that humans have. In this regard, one respondent asserted, If our country cares about human rights and human dignity, then the issue of killing the albinos should be stopped immediately and those who have killed should be severely punished so as to send a message to others. It is sad that this behaviour has been going on for years now and no serious steps have been taken to stamp it out!

Efforts to make all people aware of the rights of all other people must begin and be maintained. No nation or religious organization supports killing. Killing someone for any reason, including witchcraft, should be forbidden. Governments all over the world, including Tanzania, have the power to stop such stupid and illegal actions and protect all the citizens, regardless of their status. Elimination of this behaviour is possible if equality and respect for human dignity are given priority. Tanzania has the duty to clean its image which has been seriously tarnished, so that all people, regardless of their differences, may enjoy life to the fullest.

##### ***Negative attitudes***

Negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities have been reduced to some extent. Yet, as Tungaraza, (2010) cogently pointed out, 'Negative attitudes persist to date, although there is some positive societal awareness of disabilities and of persons with disabilities' (p. 145). There are, for example, some children with disabilities in Tanzania who are hidden in their homes

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and are not given the opportunity to attend school or enjoy social activities with other children. Such negative attitudes are seen even at institutions of higher learning. For example, one time, a university student with disability had this to say:

One morning I went to my professor's office because I had an academic problem. I knocked at the door and he told me to enter. When he saw me crawling, his face changed, and he said, 'sorry I have nothing to give you today. Can you get out because I am busy, please?' I took some time to let him know that I was one of his students and that I needed some academic help and I was not there to beg. Only after that, did the professor listen to me (Tungaraza, 2010, p.145).

### ***Physical accessibility barriers***

A person with a disability may become handicapped due to physical barriers. For example, many buildings in Tanzania are built without consideration of persons with disabilities. Many buildings and rooms have stairs leading to doorways or rooms. As a result, people in wheelchairs, for example, cannot access the physical environment where there are stairs or steps. In addition, the public transportation systems, such as buses, are not accessible to persons with disabilities and this makes travelling a major hustle for them.

The government should make it imperative for all new buildings to be designed with the needs of persons' with disability in mind, so as to make the environment disability friendly. In addition, there is need for some modifications on the existing infrastructure so as to lessen the burden endured by those with disability. Public transport systems should also consider making their vehicles easily accessible to persons with disabilities, so that movement may be easy for them, too.

### ***Barriers to accessing information***

Accessibility to information is another major challenge facing some people with disabilities. In our libraries, at all levels of education, we have no books written in Braille. As a result, persons with visual impairments have to depend on others for information. In addition, other information posted or sent around in our communities is written in normal print, and is, thus, inaccessible to a person who cannot see. Students in wheelchairs also miss the information posted high on the walls because they cannot reach the information. Persons with hearing impairment also fail to access information due to language barrier. Some of these people use sign language, but the communities where they live or work, do not understand the language, therefore, no communication. Communication barriers do not only affect learning, but they also adversely affect social interaction.

It may be of benefit to us all if sign language is taught in schools, as a language, so as to help people who are deaf to be able to communicate with others. This will be helpful not only academically, but socially, emotionally



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and psychologically. Children with hearing impairments live a lonely life and do not enjoy their childhood, nor even their adult life fully.

***Lack of screening tests for detection of children with disability***

Inextricably associated with educational provision for exceptional learners is the concept of assessment and it is important that screening is done to identify those who may possibly be eligible (Safford, 1989). One weakness of the Tanzanian education system is that Tanzania does not have a well-established system, whereby children are screened to identify their learning capabilities when they start school or during schooling time. Regrettably, many children with special needs are recognized because their problems are both severe and obvious. Tungaraza and Mkumbo (2008) did a study in ten inclusive schools in three districts in Tanzania where 565 students not labeled as disabled were screened for visual problems. It was shockingly discovered that only 37 percent of those children had normal vision. The majority, 44 percent, had hyperopia, four percent had myopia, another four percent had astigmatism, and 11 percent had other problems, including eye diseases.

Screening and identification of all children is, therefore, very crucial, if effective learning is to take place. After conducting screening or assessment, the child's problems will be known and the degree of the problem will also be revealed, and that, upfront. Early identification is also very important for early intervention because 'delayed intervention can result into adverse and persistent consequences for academic skill acquisition' (Lange & Thompson, 2006 p.108). If Tanzania has decided to adopt inclusive education, it is imperative that the needs of all learners be known. Many children fail in school because their problems have not been diagnosed, and thus the teachers are unaware of their problems. Failure may lead to frustration and a feeling of hopelessness. As a result, some students may decide to drop out of school, a decision that could have been forestalled had their problems been known. Dropping out of school for some children will definitely adversely affect Tanzania in her efforts to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals.

***Lack of reliable statistics:***

One of the main problems facing Tanzania is that the exact number of persons with disabilities is not known. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that about 10 percent of every population has a disability. If we take that statistic, in 2002 when the population was 34.5 million, the number of persons with disabilities was approximately 3,450,000. In spite of the good intentions Tanzania has, there are many children with disabilities who have not been given a chance to attend school. The estimates indicate that only one percent of children with disabilities go to school, however, without proper statistics, even this percentage is questionable. Nevertheless, this does not contradict the fact that the overwhelming majority of children with disabilities and other barriers of learning are excluded from the educational system. Karakoski and Strom (2005) attested to this when they wrote:

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Due to the lack of clarity regarding statistics it is not possible to state anything definite about the number of disabled children enrolled in primary education, but the percentage of those with access to school can be estimated to stand at below 1%. This means that the overwhelming majority of more than 99% of children with disabilities and other problems of learning are excluded from the educational system.

It is obvious that without proper and reliable statistics, planning for education and other services for all children, including this group of learners with disability, will not be effective. If only one percent of children with disabilities are in school, where are the rest of the children with disabilities, it may be asked? If after sixty years only one percent of children with disabilities are in school, one wonders when all children with disabilities will get their right to education. There is need for genuine efforts to be exerted, if Tanzania's well meant intention to meet the EFA goals is to begin showing positive signs.

### *Inadequate trained teachers*

Patandi Teachers' College is the only institution that has the responsibility of training teachers for learners with special needs. There were 15,816 government and non-government primary schools in Tanzania in 2010 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2010). Statistics show that the number of trained teachers at Patandi does not match the needs of the country as shown in Tables 3 and 4. Even though the government of Tanzania has plans to have one special education teacher in every school, this will not be possible in proximate future.

It is unfortunate that only Patandi Teacher Training College train special education teachers at certificate and diploma levels. What is more, the teachers are trained only in one category of disability, and not in inclusive education courses. This means that a teacher for the deaf will only teach deaf students and not other students with other disabilities. Besides inadequate trained teachers, some of the trained teachers do not report to special schools or units after graduation, something which curtails the already minuscule number of those who are supposed to teach learners with disabilities.

In order to solve this problem, all Teacher Training Colleges should prepare teachers to meet the needs of all children. In inclusive schools children of different disabilities will be found and, therefore, teachers should have knowledge of Braille reading and Braille writing, sign language and other skills so as to be able to teach and help all children. At present, Tanzania has 34 Government and 58 Non-Government Teacher Training Colleges, and in 2010 the number of enrolled student teachers was 36,648 in total (The United Republic of Tanzania 2010 p. 87). If all of these had knowledge in special

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education, then the goal of meeting the needs of all children could be realized, to some extent. Inclusive education cannot bear fruits if teachers are not trained. Untrained teachers may not have positive attitudes towards learners with disabilities, which is another draw back to education. It is believed that teachers, will work effectively to support inclusion if they are well trained and have positive attitudes towards inclusion. Hayes & Gunn (1988) cited by Chazan (1994) pointed out that ‘the positive attitude of teachers towards the mainstreaming of children with special needs is a prerequisite for successful integration’ (p.262)

#### ***Curriculum and evaluation procedures***

Except in the institutions of higher learning, Tanzania has a national curriculum, and all learners must learn the same content and pass national examinations before moving from one level of education to another. Evaluation procedures are also similar with some modifications, particularly for those who have visual impairment. Globally, it has been recognized that inclusive education efforts cannot succeed with such rigid and exclusive curricula, which fail to meet the individual needs of all the learners.

Curricular modification and adaptation to meet individual needs is imperative in order to ensure effective provision of inclusive education. Tanzania should try to put more emphasis on effective learning rather than on passing ambush examinations. Since students, especially those with disabilities learn differently, and their learning needs are also different, evaluation procedures should also be different, and should be focused on individual needs. It should be remembered that passing examination alone does not mean that someone has learned.

#### ***Inadequate teaching and learning materials***

Fortunately, the number of schools is increasing. However, teaching and learning materials are missing or inadequate, in almost all schools. The availability of adequate teaching and learning materials is necessary for learning whether one has a disability or not. Kisanji (1995) found that most integrated schools had inadequate learning materials, such as Perkins Braille, typewriters, Braille papers, frames, styles, talking computers and hearing aids. The government of Tanzania has planned to supply adequate teaching and learning materials to ‘ensure effective teaching, hence improve performance of pupils with special needs’ (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2006, p. 16). If this plan is going to be implemented, then there is hope that it will produce positive tangible results in our schools.

It is a fact that students learn well when they have well trained teachers and adequate teaching and learning materials. It is, therefore, important to ensure that schools have adequate teaching and learning materials to allow meaningful learning. It should be remembered that access and quality are linked. Schools have increased in number, but has the quality of education also been ameliorated? In this regard, the World Bank could not have been

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more right, when it said, 'There is little point expanding access unless there is reasonable quality' (World Bank, 2002b cited by Davidson, 2004 p. 112). As a country, Tanzania should not only celebrate access, but should make sure that funds are dispensed wisely and equitably so as to meet the needs of all learners. Quality education can be attained when serious efforts are made to make good choices, implement and monitor what has been planned effectively to reach the goals set.

### *Inadequate budgetary allocation:*

No education is cheap, but education for some persons with disabilities is more expensive due to equipment and materials required. Though some inclusive initiatives have been started, budgetary constraints and lack of political will have also been a threat to inclusive education in most African countries, including Tanzania. Political will is critical if budgetary limitations are to be solved. Tanzania estimates \$10 for each child a year including those with special needs for teaching and learning materials. In this regard, one teacher commented:

Ten dollars a year per child is nothing even for those without disabilities. This amount of money is inadequate especially when equipment and materials are not budgeted for. Blind students, for example, need Braille machines, and tape recorders, which cost a lot of money. Clearly, the money given does not put into consideration the individual needs of each learner.

It is true that each child has individual needs and monetary allocation should differ from one child to another. It is important for the government to make sure that the needs of every child are known and budgeted for, instead of just giving every child the same amount.

### *Employment*

Some students with disabilities have successfully graduated from different universities and colleges. However, many of these students need some guidance, so as to be able to have a successful transition from college to the world of work. In addition, they need support so as to be able to get employment. Many of these graduates do not get employment because many of the employers look at their disabilities instead of their abilities. One university graduate student with visual disability explained what happened to him after graduation:

I stayed for nearly two years with my Master's degree struggling to get a teaching position at the university. I was called for interview several times, but after that there was no communication. One of the employers dared to ask me, 'How can you teach and who will grade your papers?' I explained to him that I was a teacher before I joined the University and did well, but still he had some doubts.

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*The Disabled Persons (employment) Act No. 2* of 1982 requires all employers to employ 2 percent of persons with disability for every 50 employees in an establishment. This provision has not been enforced as expected, and as a result many graduates with disability are being discriminated against in employment.

The greatest irony of the situation here is, although the initiative of educating people with disability in Tanzania was spearheaded by religious *cum* charitable nongovernmental organizations, they have, sadly, not also spearheaded efforts in stamping out discrimination against, and/or negative attitudes towards people with disabilities! One does not, for example, see many people with disabilities preside at church services, i.e. act as lectors or preachers, etc.; or even acting as functionaries in religious business enterprises. The same religious *cum* charitable organizations that bore the torch to initiate and show the way to educating people with disabilities, now need to pick up the mantle, where they left off and retake the helm, as they did at the beginning.

## CONCLUSION

Anyone who has followed the history of persons with disabilities worldwide will agree that persons with disabilities have travelled through a dreadful, uncertain and hurtful journey in this world. In Tanzania, persons with disabilities have suffered in like manner and are still suffering, mainly due to negative attitudes of other people. The journey that Tanzania has made from 1950 to the present has given some hope and encouragements, but the destination is still far away. As we celebrate 60 years since the first special school was started in Tanzania, we have seen some achievements and some predicaments. It is obvious that a lot needs to be done if the rights of persons with disabilities are to be achieved. The government of Tanzania has the ability to make sure that persons with disabilities are protected, valued and given their rights, such as the rights to be respected, to live and to get education. It is believed that with good plans and the will to make positive changes in all people's lives, the journey that the country has embarked on will lead to the destination expected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several recommendations that can help to address the concerns raised in this paper. Some of the issues raised, of course, are not easy to solve immediately, but where there is a will there is a way.

- **Human rights:** Every human being has the right to live, therefore, Tanzania must make sure that each of her citizens is protected, valued, and given all of his/her rights. Human right laws and regulations must be implemented effectively so as to make sure that no one is given the

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opportunity to discriminate or kill others regardless of human differences. Tanzania must make sure that those who commit crimes of any kind are punished so that every citizen may learn a lesson.

- **Public awareness:** Now that we have disability policies and laws in place, every citizen should take this opportunity to fight for the rights of people with disabilities. It is strongly recommended that human right activists, the government, disability organisations, lawyers, persons with disabilities and the community in general are recommended to start educating all community members from the grass root, on the issues concerning disabilities. It is said, knowledge is power. It is thus to be hoped that, given knowledge and awareness, such image tarnishing and, indeed, criminal acts, as the killing of albinos, which has not only brought untold shame on Tanzania, but also continues to haunt her, can be purged.
- **Budgetary allocation:** Children go to school in order to learn, and there is clearly no reason why a child should go to school just to change locations from the comfort of home to a building called school, if they are not going to learn anything, owing to budgetary constraints! The government is thus urged to study the educational needs of all children, including those with disabilities, and to budget accordingly so as to meet their needs, by providing adequate staffing, and teaching and learning materials. Ten dollars per year for a child with visual disability, for example, is nothing more than a bad joke; and such jokes should neither be tolerated nor entertained, because we are fighting for both access and quality education.
- **Make the environment accessible:** The government has the power to make environmental changes, so as to make physical facilities and information accessible for all people, including those with disabilities. It is thus recommended that the government promulgate regulations and laws to ensure that all new buildings are accessible to persons with disabilities. These laws and regulations must be enforced and observed accordingly otherwise the property owners should be brought to book. In addition, owners of old public buildings have to be required to modify their buildings, by installing or adding ramps to them so as to make them accessible to all persons.
- **Establish a Special Needs Department at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training:** At present there is a Special Education Unit at the Ministry of Education and Vocation Training (MoEVT), which is not free to plan and budget for its activities. Establishing a Department of special needs education, itself long overdue, is thus also strongly recommended. As well as that, it should be effective and have power to make decisions and allocate financial resources as deemed necessary.
- **Teacher Training:** It is recommended that the curriculum of all Teacher Training Colleges in Tanzania carry a topic on inclusive education. This will help all teachers to graduate with some knowledge of how to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. Efforts have been made to establish inclusive schools where children with disabilities are being educated with other children without disabilities. Yet teachers' knowledge in

dealing with those with disabilities is a sine qua non for successful, wholistic, inclusive teaching and learning.

- **Employment opportunities:** Some persons with disabilities are educated in different professions, but do not easily get employment. It is recommended that all employers be reminded by the government to implement what the *Disabled Persons (employment) Act No. 2* of 1982 has ordered. If this Act is observed, I dare say no person with a disability need suffer getting a job.
- **Screening tests for detection of children with disability:** It is recommended further that the government of Tanzania establish screening regulations whereby children can be screened soon after birth, before starting school, and while in school so as to discover children with special needs. That may help prevent or eradicate problems early.
- **Lack of reliable statistics:** It is recommended that during the census exercise due care be taken, so as to get the correct number of people with disabilities. Disability experts should be involved, so that relevant questions can be asked during census exercise in order to get reliable information. For, accurate statistics are vital not only for educational planning, but also for economic planning.

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