

## Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was:

- 1) to analyze aggregated student assessment data from grade 1 students at a public government primary school in Northern Tanzania to determine the efficacy of a curriculum based screen tool
- 2) to examine current practices of special education and inclusion for Tanzanian children in the early grades.

**This project is a study and a service to the community.**

## Research Questions

- 1) How does the school address the education of children with special needs in the grade 1 classroom?
- 2) How can this assessment tool screen children in need of additional supports?
- 3) Who are the students with disabilities and how does their progress compare to typically developing children?
- 4) With tutoring, what level of progress can students with identified special needs make towards reaching grade level standards?

## Background

- Between **2-40% of children with disabilities** between ages 7-13 attend school (Ruyobya & Schneider, 2009)
- **176 schools with programs** for students with disabilities in Tanzania and most are primary schools (grades 1-7) (Karakoski & Stroem, 2005)
- Children with disabilities are acknowledged as having the **human right to an education** and the right to participate in their communities as active members.
- Since 2008, the Tanzanian government has been working with many local organizations and outside donors to develop more **inclusive practices and strategies for addressing the challenges**
- Primary schools use a standard national curriculum for all students & **currently have no process for identifying or systematically serving children with disabilities.**

Student being assessed by local collaborator with NGO director learning assessment process



Grade 1 teacher instructing the class in literacy lesson.

## Study Design

In cooperation with an NGO, we administered a curriculum-based assessment based on national curricula and community funds of knowledge that are critical for life and vocational skills for children in Tanzania (Stone-MacDonald, 2013).

The assessment was administered to all children in grade 1 to identify those children who were struggling the most in school at the beginning of grade 1 (their first year of school).

This study used a three-pronged approach data collection strategy:

- 1) assessment data from 286 grade 1 students (2013, 2014)
- 2) ethnographic classrooms observation notes
- 3) Teacher and parent interviews using a social-emotional and adaptive skills questionnaire with families of children in the lowest 10% on the assessment and general parent interview.

## Participants

- 286 grade 1 students assessed
- 46 were identified for further assessment through parent & teacher interviews
- 3 of 4 teachers were interviewed
- 20 parents/guardians were interviewed from year 1 and 24 from year 2

All interviews were conducted in Swahili by a local teacher/collaborator with researcher present to ask additional questions.

## For Additional Information on the Study and Project

My blog: <http://blogs.umb.edu/angelastone>

The Toa Nafasi Project Website: <http://toanafasi.org>

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## Findings

- Use of a local teacher/collaborator useful for gaining parent/guardian trust
- Familiar with words that families would understand to describe disability and asked questions that were culturally appropriate
- Used *shida* (problem) instead of *ulemavu* (disability)
- Cultural insider able to gather additional information
- Dissonance between policy language and local terminology for disabilities and learning challenges

Disability as a term not in the vocabulary of parents and community members.

They use:

- Mbovu (bad, defective, worthless)
- Mvivu (lazy)
- Mpole (stupid)
- Mzito (troublesome)
- Shida (problem)

All of the words above with the “M” indicate it is a person who is that way.

Person first language is only used by professionals who work in disability and government on a regular basis.

Parents and teachers are still just beginning to learn about disability and the differences between disability and disease.

One teacher stated that there were no children with disabilities (*ulemavu*) in the school because there were no children with noticeable physical disabilities or other obvious signs such as unique facial features found in some genetic disorders.

- She did not see mild ID or LD as a disability

Parents of children with mild intellectual disabilities saw their children as completely different and unrelated to children with other developmental disabilities (e.g. cerebral palsy, autism).

Parents respond best to local community partners discussing their children and issues of disability. Local collaborators can bridge the gap between the local colloquial terms about disease and disability and people first language.

Classroom teachers do not have knowledge to students with special needs. Teachers thought of students with special needs as students with physical or multiple disabilities, or outward markers of cognitive disabilities.

## Conclusions

On the other hand, if we start talking about the children in terms of disability and differences in disability and disease, are we setting them up for discrimination in a system where they are currently viewed as lazy as opposed to having a disability?

We want all young children starting school to start from a position of strength and build on those capabilities. The capability approach can support the holistic view of the child and support the growth of that child's knowledge, skills, and capabilities.

## Next Steps

- Teacher Training for additional tutors
- Training for classroom teachers to support identified students
- Expanding to a new school in the area
- Follow-up with students entering grade 3



Teacher training on morning meeting activities

## References

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