



## Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching and Managing Learners with Deaf Blindness at Paka School for Learners with Special Needs in Lusaka, Zambia

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### ABSTRACT

Published Online: February 14, 2025

The study explored the challenges faced by teachers in teaching and managing learners with deaf blindness (DB) at Paka (Pseudonym) School for Learners with special needs in Lusaka, Zambia. Constructivism paradigm and explanatory qualitative case study were employed to address the experiences of educators of learners with deaf blindness. The sample size comprised 10 teachers and homogeneous sampling was used to select them and was determined by the completeness of the data and the achievement of theoretical saturation. Data were collected by means of interview guide and document analysis. The study revealed that teachers were committed to providing quality education for learners with deaf blindness, they faced significant obstacles, including inadequate training, insufficient resources, emotional strain, and limited support systems. These challenges often hindered the ability of teachers to fully meet the diverse and complex needs of their students. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the school should increase teacher support and counselling services and provide capacity building programmes on DB in order to have wider understanding of DB to enhance communication and interpersonal interaction between teachers and learners with DB.

### KEYWORDS:

Assistive technology, Paka School for learners with DB, Deaf-blindness, Special Needs School.

### INTRODUCTION

Deaf blindness, a dual sensory impairment involving varying degrees of hearing and vision loss, presents unique challenges in the field of education. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), individuals with deaf blindness require specialized instructional strategies and support systems to meet their educational, social, and emotional needs. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that deaf blindness is a low-incidence disability, resulting in limited awareness and resources tailored to this group (WHO, 2021). For educators, teaching learners with deaf blindness requires advanced skills, innovative methods, and a comprehensive understanding of individualized education approaches.

Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School in

Lusaka, Zambia, is one of the few institutions in the region that provides specialized education for learners with diverse disabilities, including deaf blindness. The school has made commendable strides in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities; however, it continues to grapple with challenges in meeting the complex needs of deafblind learners. Teachers at Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School often encounter difficulties such as inadequate training, lack of specialized teaching aids, and limited access to resources tailored for deafblind education. For instance, Mbewe (2022) highlights that “the lack of tailored professional development programs severely limits teachers' ability to effectively instruct learners with dual sensory impairments. This is further corroborated by Banda et al. (2023); Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata (2023) who found that the shortage of context-specific teaching resources exacerbates educational disparities for deafblind learners in Zambia.

The Zambian Ministry of Education has made efforts to promote inclusive education and support learners with special needs through policies like Inclusive Education Policy of 2017. However, the implementation of these policies often lags due to systemic barriers, including insufficient funding,

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*\*Cite this Article: Kalisto Kalimaposo, Kenneth Kapalu Muzata, Bester Brango Zulu (2025). Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching and Managing Learners with Deaf Blindness at Paka School for Learners with Special Needs in Lusaka, Zambia. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 5(2), 179-187*

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inadequate teacher preparation, and cultural misconceptions about disabilities (Chanda & Mwale, 2020; Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, 2021). These gaps result in a disconnect between policy and practice, leaving teachers with limited support. For example, research by Phiri (2023) reveals that “despite policy frameworks promoting inclusion, the lack of infrastructural and human resource investment undermines their effectiveness. Moreover, existing literature tends to focus more on the learners' experiences while neglecting the perspectives of educators, creating a significant gap in understanding the systemic challenges faced by teachers in this field.

This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by teachers in teaching learners with deaf-blindness at Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School. By examining the experiences of educators, this research seeks to uncover the underlying factors contributing to these challenges and identify practical solutions to improve the teaching and learning environment. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive education in Zambia and provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders involved in the education of learners with deafblindness. Addressing the gaps in teacher training and resource allocation is essential for ensuring equitable educational opportunities for this vulnerable population.

Deaf blindness is a condition where a person has both visual and hearing impairment. National Centre on Deaf-Blindness (2020) indicated that Deaf-blindness is a combination of sight and hearing loss that affects a person's ability to communicate, access information and get around. However, in combination, these impairments of the distant senses cause serious developmental delays in the child, affecting cognitive development, social development, acquisition of communication and language skills, orientation and mobility (Wolthuis, 2021). Zambia has recognized deaf blindness as a distinct disability, but there is still no statistics or information available about deaf blindness in national census or surveys (Muzata, 2021).

In Zambia, the provision of equal educational opportunities for all learners, and especially those with special educational needs, was operationalized through the drive for inclusive education (MOGE, 2016). Further, with the domestication of the CRPD (2006) into Persons with Disability Act (2012) part 5 division one upholds the right to inclusive education based on equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Findings showed that there is a huge gap in knowledge about children with deaf blindness, and how inclusive education can be provided for children with deaf blindness in Zambia and Malawi (Vernard, 2019). Kapapula and Simalalo (2020) found that teachers exhibit a negative attitude towards deafblind education because of lack of skills including those needed to collaborate with families and other stakeholders.

Schools catering for children with deafblind lack essential scholastic materials, inadequate curriculum and absence of trained teachers. Muzata (2021); Mtonga, Kalimaposo & Mandyata, (2023) noted that the quality of teachers who should be able to teach learners with disabilities is important because teaching learners with disability may be frustrating if such teachers are not trained to teach such learners.

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However, placement of learners with Deaf blindness into schools needs to be examined carefully in order to understand the progress of education accessibility to deaf blindness children in schools. In particular, there is a paucity of research focusing on provision of education to children who are deaf-blindness.

Based on this, a study has been carried out to understand the experiences of teachers in teaching and managing deafblind learners at Paka School for learners with Special needs in Lusaka, Zambia.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that deaf- blindness is one of the disabilities that is least researched in Zambia and this disability has been viewed as a new area in teaching (Kapapula & Simalalo ,2020, Chikondi & Banda, 2023, Muzata, 2021). Consequently, most teachers appear incompetent in deaf blindness education due to lack of requisite skills in handling learners with deaf blindness. Since deaf blindness appears new in Zambia, it is imperative to conduct empirical studies the could inform policy and practices so as to improve the learning condition for learner with deaf blindness. Prior studies on deaf blindness in Zambia by Kapapula and Simalalo (2020) focused on the challenges of family involvement in the education of learners with DB in selected schools of Southern Province, Zambia. Since learners with DB have very specific and unique needs, it is important to take a critical look at their education. It is against this back ground that this study sought to explore the experiences of teachers in teaching and managing learners with DB at one of the pilot schools for learners with DB in Lusaka, Zambia.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the experience of teachers in teaching and managing learners with deaf blindness at Paka School for learners with DB.

### **Study Objective**

The following objectives guided the study:

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1. To explore how deaf blindness education is being offered at Paka school for learners with DB.
2. To establish challenges faced by teachers in teaching DB at Paka school.
3. To establish the copying mechanism that teachers employ in teaching and managing learners with DB.

### METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study operated within the interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes understanding the meaning that individuals (in this case, teachers) give to their experiences. The interpretive paradigm values the subjective experiences and insights of participants, making it appropriate for exploring the complexities of teaching learners with dual sensory impairments like deaf-blindness. A phenomenological study design was used for this study because it helps to understand complex social processes to capture essential aspects of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants. With the use of the phenomenological research design, the researcher was able to conduct face to face interviews with participants on how deafblind education was being offered at Paka School for Learners with DB. Data were collected using an in-depth interview guide and was manually analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher organised collected data into themes by transcribing from audio into text. The transcribed data were synthesized into common headings which were leading the data set, which were now called themes. The next stage was to organise the text under the created themes which emerged from the data so as to make sense out of them. Through this procedure, data from all participants were organised under the themes the data represented, and this enabled the researcher to present data in the findings using the identified themes at analysis. In order to also show data authenticity, common responses were synthesized into verbatims to bring out the actual voices of the participants in the study. Through thematic analysis, data was presented to represent the actual findings of the study as collected from the different participants who took part in the study.

#### Study Findings

The study looked at challenges faced by teachers in teaching and managing learners with deaf blindness at Paka School for Learners with DB special needs school in Lusaka. The analysis revealed the challenges faced by teachers in teaching deaf blindness and the following themes emerged: lack of specialised training, lack of assistive technology, lack of communication skills, inadequate teaching resources and lack of parental support. The data were collected through the use of an in-depth interview guide.

#### Lack of Specialized Training in DB

Another challenge that was highlighted was the lack of formal training in teaching methods specific to deafblind learners. Many teachers rely on general special education knowledge

or self-taught techniques. In support of this participant <A'5> indicated: *We are not trained for this. Most of us learn through trial and error or short workshops, which are not enough. Sometimes, I feel inadequate because I don't fully understand how to meet their needs.*

Contributing to the same subject; participant <A'8> during interview had this to say: *When I was trained as a teacher, we didn't have any specific training on deaf blindness. The general training, we received did not address the needs of students with combined sensory impairments. It feels like we are just thrown into the deep end.*

Contributing to the same subject; during the interviews participant <A'2> lamented that

*There are no specialized courses on teaching deafblind students. It would really help if we had more focused training on how to meet their needs. It's difficult to know where to start when you don't have proper training. You end up guessing and trying what you think might work.*

On the same, participant <A'1> had this to say:

*We don't have access to experts in deafblind education who can guide us. If there was someone we could consult, it would make a huge difference. Having a specialist come in to provide guidance and strategies would help us feel more confident and capable in our work.*

In support of the findings above, participant <A'10> had this to say: *There is no continuous professional development for deafblind education. We rarely have workshops or seminars to improve our skills. I wish we had more opportunities to learn new techniques or technologies that can help in teaching deafblind students.*

Also, eight (8) out of ten (10) teacher participants in this study noticed that in service training or workshop were not done hence a deafblind teacher depends on the little knowledge he/she has. More specifically, teacher participant <A'5> reported:

*"The time when I first got here – it was a very, very difficult time for me because I didn't have any idea or any experience in teaching learners who are deaf-blind. I didn't have any idea about sign language and things like that ..."*

For instance, participant <A'1> reported that:

*"Teaching tactile to learners with DB needs modifying course handouts. This means as a teacher we need to be trained so that we have knowledge and skills in teaching tactile method, which is more expensive for us to do on our own. If workshops can be arranged to us, we can improve in handling of DB learners."*

#### Lack of Assistive technology

With regard to use of PAC Mate and braille display that six (6) out of ten (10) teacher participants tended to give teacher preparedness and experiences in the teaching of learners with

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deaf blindness. This being achieved by accommodating the needs of DB assistive technology which DB learner can use the Braille display to review the text he or she enters and the text others send in reply. The lack of training on DB findings in teachers believing that they are not adequately prepared to instruct learners with DB which is often frustrating for them. Teachers find themselves in situations where they have to take on the task of teaching, caring and supporting these children, regardless of the lack of preparedness; consequently, they resort to educating themselves on DB. From observation it was found that the school lacked access to essential assistive devices such as wheelchairs and tactile communication aids, all of which were crucial for supporting the education of deafblind learners. In support, participant <A'3> had this to say:

*"We don't have enough assistive devices for all the learners. We have to share, and this limits how much each student can work on. Tactile communication skills are essential, but we just don't have any knowledge."*

Contributing to the same subject; participant <A'5> during interview had this to say: *We don't have the tools to give each learner what they need. Some students need sensitive devices technology, while others need tactile feedback systems, but we can't provide these.*

On the same, participant <A'10> had this to say:

*The school experience lack of assistive technology is a significant barrier to effective teaching and learning for deafblind learners at Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School. Teachers face increased workloads, limited ability to personalize instruction, and slower learner progress due to the absence of necessary technological tools.*

### Lack of Communication skills

In order to establish whether or not teachers for DB learner had communication problems, teacher participants were asked what strategies they employed to assist their learners with DP in communication. Communication with individuals who are DB is a unique experience. Research findings show that seven (7) out of ten (10) participants attested that they particularly struggled with skills and knowledge for facilitating tactile as a means of communication. These communication challenges were attributed to lack of skills necessary for teachers to facilitate communication between themselves and the learners. Furthermore, they reported having difficulties in interpreting information communicated to them by the learners. Participants recounted using their previous experiences of what worked, with other DB learners, to improve current communication skills.

The findings from teacher participants showed that quality communication was vital for DB learners to get mental health, physical health and safety. The findings from this study

revealed that learners with DB had communication problems if not taught extensively. Teacher participants <A'3> submitted that:

*'The problem is that DB learners can't say I need water or I am hungry or I need to go to bathroom. I have to just think that he/she needs something and that I should give her/him water, then maybe she/he doesn't want water, then take her/him to the toilet, then she/he doesn't want to go toilet ... it's a challenge because I don't know what is going on ... I wish to know what is going on but I can't know and I just have to assume.'*

In buttressing the submission above, teacher participant <A'9> asserted that:

*DB learners do not talk and see but me, as a teacher, sometimes I don't know what is going on, so sometimes they will cry really ... like the whole day and I don't know what to do or what's going on with them.'*

Still on the same experiences, other teachers narrated the strategies they used to communicate with DB learners. Five (5) out of ten (10) teacher participants suggested touch cues which is different in that they are used by the communication partner to help a child forestall what is going to happen. This was evidenced by teacher participant <A'5> who explained that:

*'It is a barrier because even though they can't see, they can't talk, they can't hear, you still have to teach them sign language... But they won't understand like ... it will take time for them to understand.'*

Teachers who teach learners with DB reported that they use different mode of communicating with DB learners such as various body movements to communicate feelings, ideas, responses, and desires. They may be intentional or unintentional. Participants particularly struggled with skills and knowledge for facilitating tactile as a means of communication. Furthermore, they reported difficulty in interpreting information communicated to them by the learners. Participants recounted using their previous experiences of what worked, with other deaf-blind learners, to improve current communication skills. As a result of the communication challenges, learners who are deaf-blind expressed their frustration through the display of challenging behaviors such as tantrums. In support of this, teacher participant <A'5> had this to say:

*'My interpretation of what they want can be wrong. So, when I do something maybe the child will throw tantrums because I am not responding to what he or she wants from me.'*

Frustration as a result of communication barriers was also experienced by some teachers, as evident in the following quotes:

*'At first I thought I was in another world when I first came here, and even now I sometimes still feel this was because ultimately you are speculating and searching and*



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*you have to do the searching until you find what the problem you must guess what he/she wants is, it does become frustrating.'*

There was a strong strategy used by DB teachers which involves the person who is communicating a message "writing" block letters on the palm of the receiver using the index finger as if it is a pen. For instance, teacher participant <A'3> explained that:

*'It is a barrier because even though they can't see, they can't talk, they can't hear, you still have to teach them sign language... But they won't understand like ... it will take time for them to understand. So, when communicating to a DB learner I write on the palm of the DB learner to communicate a sign though it is not possible.*

On the contrary, three (3) out of ten (10) teacher participants alluded that even though learners had DB, the learners were able to try to communicate. Clearly, it can be deduced that lack of communication was commonly expressed by most of the teacher participants. All of the above methods of communication can be used by both a child with DB and their communication partner as they interact with each other.

Teachers experienced challenges of limited vocabulary of tactile signing and difficulty in interpreting learners' responses. Contributing on the same, Participant <A'9> said:

*"It can be hard to understand their responses, sometimes they push your hand away, and you have to figure out if it's a 'no' or frustration. Tactile signing doesn't cover all the concepts we want to teach. Sometimes we have to be very creative to get the message across."*

These deaf-blind learners have underdeveloped communication skills, making it difficult to engage them effectively in lessons. In support of the findings above, participant <A'7> had this to say: *"Many of the learners don't come to us with a foundation in communication, it's like starting from scratch. Sometimes they don't understand what I'm trying to teach because they haven't yet developed the basic skills to interact"*.

Contributing to the same subject; the participant <A'1> had this to say: *"communicating with them is the hardest part. I feel like I am not fully understood, and it can be frustrating. We try to use hand-under-hand techniques, but it's not always easy to get it right without proper guidance"*.

Teachers expressed difficulties in using tactile communication techniques due to insufficient training and resources. Also, participant <A'8> commented that: *"We weren't trained extensively on tactile sign language it's something we're learning as we go. It's challenging to communicate effectively when you don't feel fully equipped with the right skills"*.

Teachers reported inconsistency in the communication methods used by different stakeholders, such as parents, caregivers, and school staff, leading to

confusion for the learners. In contribution the participant <A'3> had this to say:

*"At school, we use tactile signing, but at home, some parents rely on using gestures or objects, which confuses the learner. Consistency is key, but it's hard to achieve when everyone is using a different approach. Sometimes the learner's response is a slight movement or a facial expression, it's not always clear what they mean. You have to guess what they are trying to tell you, and sometimes you get it wrong, which frustrates both of you"*.

### Inadequate Teaching Resources

The findings highlighted lack of resources in providing quality education for deafblind learners. Data from observations and interviews revealed that the school struggles with limited resources such as braille machines, tactile learning materials, and assistive devices. In support of the findings above, participant <A'2> had this to say:

*"There are times when we want to teach something, but we lack the appropriate tools. We have to find ways to make do with what we have"*.

Contributing to the same subject; the participant <A'5> had this to say:

*"We don't have enough tactile books or braille materials. The learners miss out on so much because there's nothing for them to touch or feel. It's challenging to teach when the materials you need don't exist or aren't available in the right format for deafblind learners"*.

### Lack of Parental Support

Some parents were not actively involved in their children's education, either due to lack of knowledge or other socio-economic challenges. Also, participant <A'9> commented that:

*"Our parents for these children are minimally involved in their children's education, often delegating the responsibility entirely to the school. Some parents think it's solely the teacher's job to educate their children, but education starts at home"*.

Another participant <A'2> had this to say:

*"I rarely see parents coming to check on their child's progress or asking how they can help at home"*.

Some parents lack the financial resources to provide basic learning materials or assistive devices, which are essential for the education of deafblind learners. In response, participant <A'4> had this to say:

*"Some parents can't afford things like tactile books or braille machines, which are critical for the child's learning. Some parents I have talked to they*

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*say it is hard for them to prioritize their child's education they are focused on survival".*

Contributing on the same, participant <A'3> said:

*"Parents often don't know how to support their children at home, which makes our work even harder. We try to engage parents, but the response is not always positive. Some parents are struggling just to make ends meet".*

Contributing to the same subject; the head teacher participant <A'10> had this to say:

*"Some parents are in denial about their child's disability and don't want to acknowledge the need for special support. Stigma plays a big role parents feel ashamed and don't want to be seen engaging with the school".*

Also, the participant <A'4> had this to say:

*"The parents for children with disabilities are difficult to bring together, whenever you call them for school activities very few turn up. Otherwise as a school we need parental participation if the school has to improve in terms of having quality education".*

### Emotional Strain and Stress

The other theme that emerged from the findings on the challenges faced by teachers in teaching deaf blindness at Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School in Lusaka included issues of emotional strain and stress. In support of the finding, participant <A'7> had this to say:

*"Teaching deafblind learners can be emotionally taxing, with teachers reporting feelings of frustration, helplessness, and isolation. There are days I go home feeling like I've failed because I couldn't get through to a child. It's emotionally draining, especially when progress is so slow".*

In response to the above, participant <A'6> had this to say:

*"There is immense pressure to meet the unique and complex needs of deafblind learners. Balancing academic goals with the learners' physical, emotional, and communication needs contributed to emotional exhaustion. You feel like you carry the weight of their entire future on your shoulders. It's overwhelming at times. The expectations are high, but the resources and support are limited. It's emotionally draining".*

In addition, the participant <A'1> had this to say:

*"The slow pace of learning among deafblind learners is a significant source of stress for teachers. They expressed frustration over the prolonged time it took to see tangible progress, despite their efforts. Sometimes it takes months to teach a single concept, and that can be*

*frustrating. You put in so much effort, and the results come very slowly, it tests your patience and resilience. I have no one to talk to about what we go through. It feels like we are left to manage our stress alone. There should be counselling for teachers too just as we care for the learners, someone needs to care for us".*

From the observation witnessed, behavioural issues among deafblind learners, such as tantrums or difficulty adjusting to routines, often led to frustration and emotional fatigue. Participant <A'1> said:

*"When a learner has a meltdown, it can disrupt the whole day. You try everything, but it's hard not to feel helpless. Their behaviors are not their fault, but managing them daily takes a toll on you emotionally".*

### DISCUSSION

The study looked at the challenges experienced by teachers in teaching and managing learners with deaf blindness at Paka School for Learners with DB Lusaka. The challenges observed included lack of communication, lack of equipment, lack of training by teacher of DB, and lack of appropriate teaching and learning infrastructure. The lack of assistive technology presents a significant barrier for teachers working with deaf-blind learners, limiting their ability to deliver quality education. Assistive technologies, such as braille displays, screen readers, and tactile communication devices, are essential tools for bridging the communication and learning gaps faced by deaf-blind learners. However, findings indicate that most teachers lack access to these tools due to limited funding, insufficient government support, and inadequate training on their usage. This aligns with Chikere & Okafor (2021) who reported that the absence of adequate assistive technology infrastructure exacerbates educational inequities among learners with sensory disabilities. Without these resources, teachers are often left to improvise, which compromises the quality and consistency of instruction. Moreover, the lack of assistive technology also impacts the ability of teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual needs of deaf-blind learners. Research by Shinohara and Wobbrock (2016) highlights that the integration of assistive technology empowers educators to customize learning experiences, fostering greater inclusion and accessibility. The absence of these technologies' findings in a reliance on traditional, less effective teaching methods that do not adequately cater to the multisensory needs of deaf-blind learners. As a result, many students struggle to grasp concepts, engage meaningfully in classroom activities, or develop essential life skills. The findings suggest a need for targeted policies and investments in assistive technology to promote inclusive education practices. Additionally, the lack of training for teachers in using assistive technology compounds the issue, as even when devices are available,

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many educators lack the skills to implement them effectively. According to McLinden et al. (2018), professional development programs focusing on assistive technology can significantly enhance teachers' capacity to support learners with complex disabilities.

Further, the findings revealed that lack of specialized training among teachers significantly impacts their ability to effectively teach deaf-blind learners, as this population requires tailored educational approaches that address their unique sensory and communication needs. Many teachers lack the requisite skills and knowledge to manage the complexities associated with dual sensory impairments. As Chikondi & Banda (2023) observed that teaching learners with deaf-blindness demands a multifaceted understanding of their unique needs, yet such expertise is rarely included in standard teacher preparation programs. This gap leaves educators underprepared and often overwhelmed by the demands of providing individualized support, leading to suboptimal educational outcomes for these learners. Additionally, a lack of specialized training exacerbates the challenges teachers face in fostering inclusive classroom environments. Inclusive education relies on the ability of teachers to accommodate diverse learning needs, which is particularly crucial for deaf-blind learners. As Hartmann and Weis (2020) assert, teachers who receive specialized training in inclusive practices are better equipped to create an environment that supports the holistic development of all students, including those with dual sensory impairments. However, many teachers feel ill-prepared to address these needs, resulting in less inclusive and more segregated educational settings. This calls for the integration of modules on deaf-blindness into both pre-service and in-service training programs to promote a more inclusive teaching workforce. This finding resonates with Salvia et al. (2018), who argue that inadequate teacher training negatively impacts the quality of education for learners with disabilities. Participants advocated for specialized training programs to equip them with the skills needed to address the unique needs of their students.

Further, the study revealed that teachers face significant communication barriers when teaching learners with deafblindness. Participants highlighted the challenge of establishing effective communication methods that cater to both visual and auditory impairments. One teacher remarked that it was difficult to know whether or not the learner had understood a concept since they cannot see or hear instructions clearly. This finding aligns with McInnes and Treffry (2019), who stated that communication challenges were among the most prominent barriers for educators working with deafblind learners. Teachers often resorted to tactile communication methods, which require specialized training that many had not received, further exacerbating the challenge. Teachers often struggle with specialized communication methods such as tactile signing, braille, and

adapted gestural systems, which are crucial for teaching students with combined sensory impairments. As Greg (2017) noted, teachers' limited proficiency in communication methods tailored for deaf-blind learners can lead to misinterpretation and disengagement in the classroom. This gap underscores the need for professional training programs that equip teachers with the skills required to bridge communication barriers effectively. Without these competencies, teachers may rely on inappropriate methods, further marginalizing learners with dual sensory impairments. Another notable challenge was the lack of adequate teaching resources tailored to the needs of deafblind learners. Teachers mentioned that specialized equipment, such as Braille devices and tactile learning aids, was either unavailable or insufficient. One participant stated, they improvise most of the time because the materials we needed were either too expensive or not provided by the school. This aligns with findings by Deuce and Swingler (2017), who highlighted the critical role of adaptive resources in facilitating learning for deafblind students. The unavailability of these resources hindered the effective implementation of individualized teaching strategies. The lack of adequate teaching resources is a major obstacle faced by teachers of deaf-blind learners, severely limiting their ability to deliver effective instruction. Teaching deaf-blind students requires specialized resources, such as braille materials, tactile learning aids, assistive technology, and customized communication devices. However, many schools lack access to these tools due to budgetary constraints and limited prioritization of special education needs. As Ajuwon et al. (2016) assert, the provision of specialized teaching resources is critical for ensuring equal access to education for students with sensory disabilities. Hartmann and Weis (2020) note that the lack of ready-to-use teaching resources for deaf-blind learners creates additional stress for teachers, who are already navigating the complexities of inclusive education. Ensuring the availability of high-quality, standardized resources can alleviate these challenges and allow teachers to focus more on their primary role as educators.

The findings revealed lack of parental support as a challenge faced by teachers working with deaf-blind learners, as effective education for these students often requires collaboration between home and school. Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing the learning objectives, providing consistency, and creating supportive home environments that complement the instructional efforts of teachers. However, many teachers report that parents of deaf-blind learners are either unaware of their child's educational needs or lack the resources and training to provide effective support. According to Bruce et al. (2016), revealed that parents of children with dual sensory impairments often face challenges in understanding how to best support their child's educational and developmental needs. This lack of parental involvement often leaves teachers with the sole responsibility of

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supporting the student's educational growth, making it harder to achieve meaningful outcomes. The absence of parental support also affects the continuity of instruction and the consistency of learning strategies between home and school settings. In addition to the challenges posed by a lack of awareness or understanding, some parents may be unwilling or unable to engage with the educational process due to socio-economic factors or personal circumstances. This lack of parental engagement can significantly impact the overall effectiveness of the child's educational experience (Kapapula and Simalalo, 2020; Muyabi, Kalimaposo, Mubita, Mulubale, Haambokoma, Milupi & Mundende, 2022).

This finding supports earlier research by Jaiswal et al (2020), who found that the individualized attention required in deafblind education often leads to burnout among educators. The lack of support from teaching assistants further compounded this issue, leaving teachers feeling isolated in their roles. Also, the emotional strain and stress experienced by teachers of deaf-blind learners was significant finding that affects both their personal well-being and professional performance. Teaching students with dual sensory impairments presents unique challenges that can result in feelings of frustration, burnout, and exhaustion. Teachers often have to cope with the emotional demands of not only instructing but also advocating for students with complex needs, sometimes without the necessary resources or support. As Hartmann and Weis (2020) assert, teachers of students with dual sensory impairments often experience emotional stress due to the overwhelming nature of their responsibilities and the isolation they may feel in their roles. This emotional strain can lead to reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and ultimately, higher turnover rates within the special education profession. In addition to the stress caused by the complexities of the classroom environment, teachers often bear the emotional weight of students' struggles, including their social isolation, communication difficulties, and limited mobility. These challenges not only affect the students' academic progress but also their emotional and social well-being. McLinden et al. (2018) note that teachers who work with deaf-blind learners often find themselves emotionally invested in their students' success, leading to feelings of frustration when progress is slow or when students face additional barriers. The emotional toll of seeing students struggle, without the tools to fully address their needs, contributes to stress and can lead to emotional exhaustion, particularly when teachers feel powerless or unsupported by their institutions. Furthermore, the emotional strain of teaching deaf-blind students can be compounded by the lack of professional support systems for teachers in these specialized roles. Many educators working with deaf-blind learners are often isolated from their colleagues due to the specialized nature of their work. By prioritizing the needs of teachers and learners, educational institutions can better support the realization of inclusive education for learners with

deaf blindness. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for enhancing the quality of education and empowering both teachers and learners to achieve their full potential.

### **CONCLUSION**

The challenges faced by teachers in teaching and managing learners with DB were related to inadequate training, insufficient resources, and limited collaboration with specialists. Teachers expressed a strong commitment to their learners, using adapted teaching strategies and tactile materials to facilitate learning, despite the lack of specialized support. Behavioral and emotional difficulties among learners, along with limited family involvement, were also highlighted. The study underscores the need for specialized teacher education in handling learners with DB, increased resource allocation, improved collaboration with support staff, and stronger policy advocacy to enhance the quality of education for deaf-blind learners.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the discussion above, it should be noted that there is need to actualise the necessary skills that learners with DB needs. The following were some of the recommendations:

- i. The school should engage in capacity building for teachers that include regular and specialized training programs for teachers at Paka School for Learners with DB Special Needs School. These programs should focus on skills for effective communication, use of assistive technologies, and individualized teaching strategies tailored to the needs of deaf-blind learners.
- ii. The government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate in the provision of adequate resources and assistive technologies, these include Braille machines, tactile materials, and communication boards to enhance the teaching and learning experience for deaf-blind learners.
- iii. The school should increase teacher support and counselling services; this should include regular counselling sessions, peer support groups, and professional guidance for teachers. This initiative would help teachers cope with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with teaching learners with deaf-blindness, promoting their well-being and job satisfaction.

### **CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the research.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.



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