

**ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS PURSUING
DIPLOMA AT THE INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION: A CASE OF IAE
TABORA CENTRE**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN
OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF
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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby certifies that she has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania, a dissertation entitled: **“Analysis of Challenges Perceived by Students Pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education: A Case of IAE Tabora Centre”** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Open and Distance Learning of the Open University of Tanzania.

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.....
Date

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DECLARATION

I, **Justine Goodhope Mbwambo**, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and it has not been submitted for a similar degree in any other University.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents Mr. and Mrs. Goodhope Elidhabihu Paul, my dear wife Happy Malunde, my sons; Colline, Goodhope and Hopeangeli for their unquantifiable moral and material support they always provide to me. Also, this dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late sister and brother; Haika G. Mbwambo and Elieza G. Mbwambo who were always struggling to climb to the apex of education ladder, but their desire could not materialize.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze challenges perceived by students pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education (IAE). Specifically, the study examined the ways employed students in open and distance learning manage socio-economic challenges facing them; assessed ways diploma students relate workplaces with learning environment; and the ways they integrated their knowledge into work. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches through questionnaires, interviews and Focus Group Discussion were used to understand these perceived challenges from 43 respondents at Tabora Regional Centre. The findings show that ODL diploma students managed challenges facing them by using evening and night time for their studies. They also took loans from financial institutions to support themselves financially. They also studied during weekends and sought part time teachers to help clarify issues that were not familiar to them. The study further found that majority of the respondents thought their workplaces were not favourable environments for supporting their learning. Moreover, the findings revealed that most distance students use their knowledge to improve their job performances, solved work-related challenges and provided guidance and counseling support services at their workplaces. The study recommends that; employers of distance students should find a better way to provide flexible school timetables to enable distance learners to study. Other recommendations include looking for various avenues to get financial support for their studies. For further studies, the study recommends studying of other levels such as degrees, masters and PhD level so as to generalize the current findings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

Working and learning has for a long time being perceived as inseparable human activity. Long time ago, educational philosopher, John Dewey in his *Experience and Education* (1915) proposed that learning and work are inseparable. From this stance, learning is considered as not centred on theories learnt within educational setting only, but also as centred on real life problems in workplace. This implies that, when learning is integrated in real life such as work, it becomes more useful.

These ideas were developed further by Nyerere (1967) and Kolb (1984) whose philosophies were centred on theory and practice of education. Kolb for example, developed a theory of “Experiential learning” which defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” To him, for one to develop knowledge, a different experience gained from everyday life must be combined. In this framework, learning is a process of making sense of the experiences one gains in everyday social and cultural environment (Kolb1984).

According to the Kolb, learning is cyclical, involving from four stages, which are experience, reflect, generalize, and test. Experience, according to Kolb, is first grasped and then transformed into valid information as one reflects on it. This valid information is then tested to guide actions. The transformation of experience may take place as a learner try to make sense of the theories learnt in the classroom and relating them to the problems faced in a working environment.

Nyerere (1967) once advocated the integration of theory with practice, when he urged Tanzanians not to separate learning and work. According to him, the assessment of student performance would take into account both academic abilities and the work done. In terms of societal attitudes and values, students would learn the meaning of living together and working together for the good of all. In this way, their commitment to the development of their own society would be strengthened.

Open and Distance Learning is a mode of education where learners have a daily contact with their work environment. Mostly, distance learners take distance education for professional growth and they want to get something out of a distance education programme to transform their social and economic environment. Unlike in conventional education where learners spend all their time learning in preparation for the future, distance learners want to learn something practical and apply it at work today. Like conventional learners, distance learners also want to receive diplomas or at least course credits to validate their formal learning experience to their employers (industry and government).

The difference is that, while conventional learners are in contact with their instructors on the daily basis, in a hope that they will transfer the knowledge gained to the future employment, distance learners are in contact with their work environment on daily basis, in a hope that they will transfer the experience gained to the learning environment. This mode of learning is in line with the ideas of the above scholars for it allows one to transform experience in a greater autonomy, independence and flexible manner (Dodo, 2013).

The majority of distance learners are adults beyond the age of their counterpart in a traditional setting. They are returning to education usually for an identifiable reason: to qualify for promotion, to prepare for a new job, or even because it is something they now want to be (Granger et al., 1998).

According to Wood (1996), over seventy percent of students who study by the distance mode are in full-time employment. This suggests that a significant proportion of graduates are employed while they are also involved in the learning process. Over time, the relation between learning and work has been investigated in numerous ways and the focus point has often been how to overcome the challenges and problems, which seem to appear in the tension field between the two (<http://www2.hull.ac.uk/hubs/pdf/ID%20247%20Thomassen%20A.pdf>).

The study conducted by Mbwette and Mnyanyi (2009) which focused on investigating students and staff views on removing barriers in higher open and distance learning institutions revealed that open and distance learners face challenges that may impede their studies when integrating learning and work. In their study, they quoted one student saying:

In my case I am employee thus concentration to studies sometimes is minimal as I do not get enough time to study...

Such notions separate work and learning and perceive working as an impediment to learning. While Kolb's and Nyerere's ideas have been acknowledged as valid, there is still little agreement on whether work affects educational performance or expectations for further education. The differences in understanding have become an

interesting area of research and the general answer has been that working more than 15 to 20 hours per week can affect academic performance and educational aspirations (Carnevale, 2015).

Literature is replete with a variety of problems that distance students face. Some problems have been linked with the system of open and distance learning environment. This institutional factor has very much been associated with geographical isolation, constantly been identified as one of the major challenge for distance students (Meacham and Evans 1989). This challenge is associated with a practical problem of contacting academic and administrative staff for advice or to obtaining study materials and borrowing library books. In such a discourse, distance learners have been constructed as suffering from the disadvantage position where they are unable to interact with their instructors and with other students. This, scholars opine, may lead to feelings of inadequacy and a sense of insecurity, and may lead to developing low confidence in their own abilities (Wood, 1996).

In some cases, distance learners are said to face another challenge from the institution - rigid bureaucratic structures. Here a distance learner is seen as suffering from a failure to secure the needed resources within a day she or he visited the institution and may be required to spend more time before he or she can get what she or he wants. Such a literature sees conventional learners as being in a better position because of their proximity to their learning institutions and may not need to incur a lot of expenses such as renting a room to wait for his or her requirement fulfilled like the distance learners (Latchem and Lockwood, 1998).

Other challenges that scholars constantly see as challenges to a distance learner who is also a worker are disruption of family life, perceived irrelevance of their studies by their family members and peers and lack of support from employers. These pressures, it is observed, often result in higher dropout rates than among traditional students (Sweet, 1986).

From the above, which I consider as not valid especially in the current global economy and an urge to catch up with all the changes around us, there are also ideas that have been voiced about challenges that learners in distance learning perceive. These include lack of support from their employer, families and friends. The problem is that while these challenges also face students in a conventional mode, the discourse consistently focuses on distance learners. In the current capitalist and competitive economy, it is very hard for an employer to support the employees to leave their work for further studies in conventional institutions; thus, it is valid to suggest that ODL learning is a better mode.

Other challenges that distance learners consistently lament of, is failure to balance between work and learning. However, they forget that even if they were in conventional mode, if they do not have a strong commitment to their schedule, they will always fail to meet the deadlines. This implies that balancing work and learning is not only for a distance learner, but to all, both the distance learner and the learners in conventional mode.

Another popular perceived challenge is economic constraint. Marmot and Michael, (2004) for example suggested that distance learners may encounter challenges related

to family's position relative to others, based on income and occupation. He was quick to point out that effective learning is directly related to, and dependent on the social and emotional wellbeing of the learner. When socio-economic position is not conducive to any learner regardless of the mode of education, it can impact the learner negatively.

In his study, '*Shoe-horned and side-lined'? Challenges for part-time learners in the new HE landscapes*', Butcher (2015), found that many distance students faced financial constraints which forced them to borrow from family and friends to fund their studies. Issues of poverty in relation to the affordability of higher education were also reported in the Welsh study, and this was echoed in some responses by Ohene and Essuman (2014). However, these scholars forget that there is no human being that can say is free from economic constraint.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

While most open and distance learning is here to stay, scholars continue to associate it with challenges that distance students face, as if there is one human activity that has no challenges. While Nyerere (1967) and Kolb (1984) have shown the importance of distance learning – using the idea of theory and practice in education, many scholars have not focused on this aspect, but instead, they have looked into the negative aspects: geographical isolation (Meacham and Evans 1989); which leads to failure to interact with his or her instructors and with other students (Wood, 1996); disruption of family life (Sweet, 1986) and financial constraints (Dodo, 2013). While these may be valid challenges that may impede distance learners from completing their studies, what the scholars have not cared to dwell on is the positive side of the

distance education beyond the learner to how it can contribute to better workers and more production. The challenges that the distance learner face, I will argue, are not different from those that the conventional learner face, the difference is that the conventional learner is always on campus and thus, the challenges they face may seem natural given the fact that they are surrounded by other students with the same challenges. Unlike conventional learners, distance learners are alone, in their workplace and the challenges they face are more conspicuous to the people that surround them, and who are not learning. This, despite or perhaps in addition to the fact that the distance learners are more productive and stronger when it comes to ability to learn and work because they do most of the things single handed while also balancing learning and working.

This study intends to turn the dominant logic on its head in some ways, and argue that the literature about distance learner in ODL institutions is more a response to eviscerate this intuition that conventional mode of learning is better than ODL.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the challenges perceived by distance students pursuing diploma at the Institute of Adult Education.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to;

- (i) Examine the Ways Employed Students in Open and Distance Learning Manage Socio-Economic Challenges Facing Them;

- (ii) Assess Ways Diploma Students Relate Workplaces with Learning Environment;
- (iii) Assess Ways Diploma Students Integrate Their Knowledge into Work.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- (i) In what ways do the employed students in open and distance learning manage socio-economic challenges facing them?
- (ii) How do diploma students relate workplaces with learning environment?
- (iii) In what ways diploma students integrate their knowledge into work?

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was limited to the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) at Tabora regional study centre where the intended audiences for the study were accessed.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study will assist policy makers in formulating working documents that will guide employers on how best their employees engaging in learning should sustainably integrate it with work. Also, administrators and educators can use this research' findings in their evaluation process. Identifying the socio-economic challenges facing open and distance learning students will help to find the best solutions to personal and challenges resulting from employers hence improving learning environments.

The study will further help to identify the role of employers in supporting their employees engaged in open and distance learning process while working. In addition, the findings from this study will serve as a basis for open and distance learning curriculum developers to design programmes that are relevant to students who integrate work and learning at the same time.

Moreover, this research will make a significant contribution to the distance learning literature. Very few researches have been published on whether integrating work and learning affects open and distance learning students' academic performance. This research will fill a void in the literature and provide a foundation for future research on this area.

1.9 Limitations

In research, limitations are shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on the methodology and conclusions. During data collection for this study, the researcher encountered some challenges related to the nature of the study itself.

The researcher did not manage to access the respondents who are distance diploma students at the study centre since it was not time for them to be at the centre; therefore, he followed them in their working stations. This was a challenge because the researcher had to travel to three different districts where majority of students could be accessed. Despite this challenge the researcher managed to communicate with respondents who mobilized themselves and were met in agreed stations.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Operational definitions have been provided below for the sake of their common understanding in this research:

Integration: Refers to the act of performing employer's stipulated duties using the leaned experience from distance learning at the same time.

Work: Refers to employer's duties which need to be accomplished by the worker within stipulated time as per contract.

Learning: Learning is defined here as an increase or change in knowledge or skill that occurs because of studying.

Distant student: Refers to a student who is doing studies through open and distance learning because of being engaged in full-time work responsibilities.

This chapter has introduced the background to the problem under study. It has stated the statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study and research questions. Also, the scope of this study, its significance and limitations has been identified. The chapter has been concluded by providing definitions of various terms in relation to how they will be used in this study.

Chapter two will be about literature review where theoretical framework, empirical literature and conceptual framework for this study will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents theoretical, empirical and conceptual literature reviewed in relation to this study. The first part is confined to theoretical literature, while the second part is confined to empirical literature. The third section presents conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This part presents the theories that frame this study. These are human resource development theories and organizational learning theories. The purpose of human resource development is to enhance learning, human potential and high performance in work-related systems and contribute to sustainable human development. Founders of human resource development theories includes Frederick Taylor, who is regarded as the father of American management thought and was the first to put forth a theory to management and the need to share it with managers and leaders in organizations. Taylor believed that, everyone can be "first class" at some job and that it is management's role to train employees until they are first class (Swanson and Holton: 2001).

Human resource development theories emphasize on knowledge and skills of employees to be constantly developed to be in line with changes, information flow, and new technologies. A changing environment means that all employees must embrace the philosophy of learning. The goal of learning is for employees to master

the knowledge, skills, and behaviours emphasized in human resource development programmes and to apply them to their day-to-day activities.

The nature of a learning organization is defined by Pedler et al., (1989, 1991) as an organization that facilitates the learning of all its employees and as one, which: has a climate in which individual members are encouraged to learn and to develop their full potential and make human resource development strategy central to business policy so that the process of individual and organizational learning becomes a major business activity.

Valencia (2005) used human resource development theory to frame her study titled “*Motivation and Productivity in the Workplace*” which emphasized the need for employers to know their employees very well and use different tactics to motivate each of them based on their personal wants and needs. Valencia is quoting Taylor’s ideas about motivation which based on the assumption that workers act to maximize their economic self-interest and that success was possible when employers and employees cooperated and worked jointly toward a common goal of profits.

In relation to this study, human resource theories will help in understanding the primary task of the organization in creating a working environment that fosters employee creativity to maximize production by conducting periodic trainings in technical skills as well as soft skills to familiarize them with the latest technologies (Miles and Ritchie, 1971).

This study also is guided by organizational learning theories.

Founders of the theories of organizational learning include behaviorists such as March, Simon, and Cyert in the nineteen fifties when notions of organizational learning gained prominence because of the then ongoing debate between behaviorists and economists (Schulz; 2001).

Theories of organizational learning, attempt to understand the processes which lead to (or prevent) changes in organizational knowledge, as well as the effects of learning and knowledge on behaviors and organizational outcomes. Organizational learning draws much of its appeal from the presumption that learning is a tool for intelligence. Organizational learning theories have been used by various scholars in different fields to frame their studies. For example, Krishna and Casey (2008) used organizational learning theory to frame his study titled

“Employee Perceptions of Organizational Learning as Determinants of Affective Commitment in Knowledge Intensive Firms”

In this study, the organizational learning theory will help to understand the processes which lead to (or prevent) changes in organizational knowledge, as well as the effects of learning and knowledge on behaviors and organizational outcomes. The theory will further help in setting guidelines describing how organizational learning should occur, how to establish and maintain a learning organization, and how to overcome the barriers to learning.

2.3 Empirical Literature

The empirical literature part intends to provide an overview of existing evidence, pertinent to this study. This part will identify and critically appraise and analyze data from relevant studies.

2.3.1 Ways Employed Students in Open and Distance Learning Manage

Socio-Economic Challenges Facing Them

Although distance learning gives adults the greatest possible control over the time, place and pace of education; however, it is not without challenges. Loss of student motivation due to the lack of face-to-face contact with teachers and peers, Lack of adequate fund to cover the cost of the programme, lack of immediate feedback from tutors and lack of support by the employers are some of hurdles to successful distance learning. However, various literatures provide various ways which may be used by these students to manage social-economic challenges facing them.

Mensah and Amoah (2015) investigated sources of stress and its management amongst the distance education students of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. They employed questionnaire to 105 students to collect data on factors contributing to stress of Distance Education students in Accra who are enrolled at the University of Education, Winneba and stress management skills used by these students. They found that majority of the respondents relied on support of family and friends in negotiating various socio-economic challenges facing them. Further, the study found that sometimes distance students managed socio-economic challenges facing them by taking things easy and enjoying their work, employing effective time management, exercising on regular basis, listening to music, reading of favourite books, singing aloud and making themselves happy. Mensah and Amoah suggest that before the start of the programme, a comprehensive seminar, workshop or training should be organised preferably at the start of every semester to sensitize students on effective ways of managing socio-economic challenges which may face them.

Nguyen and Halliday (2014) did the study “*Does financial stress impact on young people in tertiary study*”? They used interview and an online survey to 51 participants to explore the role that financial stress plays in a student’s study outcomes. They found variety of ways by which students cut back to save money to manage this economic challenge. These ways included; contributing to dinner and watching DVDs at home instead of going out which saved them money, taking student loans, skipping meals, using the library resources, borrowing textbooks and photocopying relevant sections of the book instead of buying them. Further, Nguyen and Halliday found that students depended on their family and friends for financial assistance which included paying for transport (bus/train passes, petrol or car registration), while other support included contributions to bills and rent. On the other hand, findings reveal that students depended on their partners for domestic activities for example cooking and doing housework around exam time to allow them to study. Nguyen and Halliday suggest that tertiary students should be provided with financial support to make them overcome this challenge which may hamper their learning.

Cefai and Borg (2014), *Stress, Health and Coping among International Students at the University of Malta* used 76 online questionnaires to examine the personal and academic concerns and challenges of international students, their perceived stress, health and coping strategies. They found that students managed social challenges facing them through talking with friends, positive thinking, better planning and organization and going out to social events.

On the other hand, the study found that counseling, avoidance, praying and studying harder were also used as coping strategies. Also, Cefai and Borg found that a substantial number of students made use of unhealthy coping strategies such as eating, drinking and smoking as a means of solving challenges facing them. Cefai and Borg recommended provision of counseling services, stress management workshops and seminars to students as a means of removing the sources of stress amongst them.

Niwagila (2014) explored rural undergraduate students' experiences of teaching and learning at the Open University of Tanzania. She used observation, interview and documentation to forty participants to gather data on students' perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning at the Open University of Tanzania, mapping the challenges that the students faced, and the coping strategies they adopted in order to pursue distance higher education within the social contexts of rural Tanzania.

Niwagila found that distance students managed social-economic challenges facing them by adopting strategies, which were mostly related to the use of cultural, economic and social capital. She found that students used social capital in the form of networking, friendship and interaction to exchange knowledge, and in the sharing of social and learning resources. This interaction took place amongst students, tutors and available graduates in their surroundings and relieved students' feelings of isolation, frustration and distance from their tutors and institutions. Further, students shared costs equally to access physical and human support systems like paying the private tutor.

Moreover, Niwagila found that students applied objectified capital in the form of laptops, computers, library resources, personal books, printed study materials and modems to search for knowledge. The researcher suggested that it is necessary to properly integrate support services such as academic and non-academic provision within the teaching and learning practices to help improve the learning experiences of distance students.

Nyatsanza and Mtezo (2013) described coping mechanisms used by students in open and distance learning (ODL) in response to stressful events at Zimbabwe Open University. They used open ended questionnaires and focus group discussion to seventy (70) students on how do students deal with stressful events, which coping mechanism is mostly used in managing stressful events, relationship in the use of any coping mechanism and the demographic variables, and support provided by the institution to students in managing stressful situations. They found that students used coping mechanisms, which were used in response to stressful events in their education. The coping mechanisms were confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem solving and positive re-appraisal.

The findings reveal that Planful problem solving mechanism was the most popular coping mechanism used. It describes aggressive efforts to change the stressful situation and suggests some degree of hostility and risk taking. The study provides the suggestion that students should be taught how to recognise, analyse, and cope with stressful events by introducing courses with elements of psycho-social support.

Beccaria (2013) examined the relationship between distance students' health risk and health-promoting behaviours, stress, strain, coping and academic outcomes at the University of Southern Queensland. She used online survey to 766 students to examine distance students' health risk and health-promoting behaviours, stressors, strains and coping mechanisms in relation to on-campus students. Beccaria found that distance students used proactive approaches such as time management to best meet the demands of family, work, and study to cope with social challenges facing them.

For example, they maximized their time to study, such as using moments within their day (e.g., lunch breaks) to spend time studying. Other students chose to do "heavier" types of study at home when children were absent or were in bed. Beccaria also found that distance students used health-promoting behaviours to manage social challenges facing them. For example, students spent quality time with family members and friends, participating in recreational activities such as watching television and reading books and engaging in physical exercise like going to the gym or walking. The study suggests that advice or strategies for students should be tailored to how students might best manage their time to achieve a positive life/study/work balance and students should be encouraged to reflect on the dimensions of their life and engage in strategies that create a more satisfactory life balance.

2.3.2 Ways Diploma Students Relate Workplaces with Learning Environment

Learning does not stop when an individual leaves formal education, but may be embedded within other activities such as work. Workplaces may be related with

learning environments where the individuals are able to manage their learning in the context of their work.

The study by Caruso (2017) “*A Foundation for Understanding Knowledge Sharing: Organizational Culture, Informal Workplace Learning, Performance Support, and Knowledge Management*” explored ways in which organizations can promote, capture, share, and manage the valuable knowledge of their employees. Caruso used documentary review to make a correlation between the informal workplace learning experiences that exist in the workplace and the need to promote, capture, and support them so they can be shared throughout the organization. The results revealed that students related workplaces with learning environment in such a way that they could share their knowledge as the exchange of information, skills, or expertise amongst employees of an organization. The results also show that an organisation culture formed a valuable intangible asset, which allowed students to relate workplace with learning environment where they shared their knowledge and skills, especially the sharing of the knowledge and skills valuable to their learning. Caruso recommends that, rather than controlling knowledge sharing, an organization should attempt to facilitate its growth by creating knowledge sharing events, such as employee trade shows and open forums to encourage employees to share knowledge with each other.

Fleming (2015) explored stakeholders’ perspectives of the influences on student learning in cooperative education. He employed an interpretive case study to investigate the influences on student learning in a sport cooperative education context. Fleming found that students related workplaces with learning environment in that the workplace allowed them to develop relationships and social interactions

with workplace colleagues hence they were able to learn, and this contributed towards deepening their understanding of what they were studying. Fleming suggests that all stakeholders need to be aware of how the quality of learning can be enhanced through increasing opportunities for students to have meaningful interactions with workplace colleagues.

Kaarby and Lindboe (2016) did the study “*The workplace as learning environment in early childhood teacher education: an investigation of work-based education*”. Kaarby and Lindboe used text-analysis, group interviews, and questionnaires to explore an understanding of the workplace as a learning environment. They found that students related workplace as a site of learning but with very different experiences as some of them get much support, while others experience resistance. For example, it was found that some students experience resistance and are perceived as a threat by other employees because they seem to have new knowledge which other workers lack. Therefore, to these students a workplace is not a conducive place for them to learn.

Further, Kaarby and Lindboe found that workplaces are places where employees make use of their new knowledge. Therefore, in this case, a workplace is related with learning environment where employees can learn and at the same time practice their new knowledge. They suggested that in order to develop work-based education further, specific recognition of the importance of the workplace as a learning environment is needed.

The study by Milligan and Littlejohn (n.d), “Supporting *Professional Learning in a Massive Open Online Course*” used thirty-five semi-structured interviews to explore how the design of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) supported professional learning to occur. The study found that students related workplaces with learning environment where they routinely related the course content to their job role or work tasks. Milligan and Littlejohn suggest that workplaces should create learning environment which encourage learners to build on existing knowledge and share their experience to enrich their learning.

Gert et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between workplace climate, motivation and learning approaches for knowledge workers. They used questionnaires to 202 respondents to measure learning approaches, motivation and workplace climate. Results showed that there is relationship between workplace climate factors and learning. The findings revealed that motivation at workplaces directly influenced employees’ approaches to learning. The study further found that there was direct and indirect links between workplace climate, motivation to learn and approaches to learning in the workplace by employees. They related workplaces with learning environment if the workplace climate was friendly for them to learn. Workplace environment should support employees to learn so as to have the so-called knowledge workers.

2.3.3 Integrating Knowledge Gained by Distance Learners into Work

The literature on ways to integrate knowledge in the workplace discusses global issues where many organizations are facing many challenges that need learned

people to use science to solve them. Common challenges emanate from global competitiveness where many organizations are forced to exploit market opportunities offered by trade liberalization and economic integration.

In such a condition, many organizations are housing employees of different cultures and backgrounds working together. Many are also using new and modern technologies and are doing things differently from how they were being done before. Some organizations are also international, where the language of communication is different from that of the host country. This is an environment that a distance learner is employed, and which he or she must integrate the knowledge learned in order to solve these diverse challenges.

A study by Singh (2016), *Managing Cross-cultural Diversity: Issues and Challenges in Global Organizations* found three ways employees and managers can integrate the knowledge in cross-cultural contexts, including: to acquire factual and interpretive knowledge about the other cultures, and try to speak their language; to avoid cultural biasness; and to develop cross-cultural skills. All these can only be done by an employee who is learning. This is because it is easier for one learning to stretch to learn about other cultures than an employee who is not formally learning.

Moreover, in learning, especially in higher learning institutions, all the subjects are taught in international languages, different from the language of workplace, which is normally the local language. In such a context, a distance learner working in a multicultural organization will be more conversant with the people of other languages than those who are not formally learning.

Learning by an employee takes on socio-cultural significance regarding the learner's ability to identify a problem and to find the solution during his or her study. In addition, distance learner is in a better position to manage challenges when conflicts occur in an organization.

A study by Prause and Mujtaba (2015), *Conflict Management Practices for Diverse Workplaces*, cited Wysocki, and Kepner, (2002) on ways to manage socio-economic challenges in workplace include that “acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status” (Green, López, Wysocki, and Kepner, 2002, as cited by Prause and Mujtaba, 2015, p. 16). This can better be done by an employee who is working and learning because they live in the same multicultural environment in the sense that during learning, learners are more prone to meet other people outside the workplace and in this way, they learn to work together regardless of their differences. This experience can easily be practiced in the workplace.

Waller (2011), *From the classroom to the workplace: Enhancing the transfer of learning* employed questionnaire and telephone interview to 174 participants on whether participants could transfer their learning. Waller found that programmes learned provided participants with the means to do their jobs better and improved the quality of their work. Further, the study found that participants could apply much of the learning in tackling unfamiliar tasks; they have gained confidence and have seen benefits to their ways of working. Waller suggests that programme designers should

make connections between content and participants' roles and organisations should provide time and opportunities for participants to practice their learning at work.

Lee and Doyle (2007), *Learning for Living: Evidence based adult learning: The professional development project*, interviewed 30 distance business degree students on their experience of integrating learning and living. Lee and Doyle found that learning was beneficial for work and it was an opportunity to earn more respect at work as students demonstrated the relevance of their learning to their employers. For example, they found that some students linked their employer's problems related to employment contracts, tenancy laws, investments, and environmental law and their own learning. They refined and confirmed the problems through clarifying questions, then later at home used course materials and textbooks to research the problems and the options. They suggested that a future research project ideally would explore the design features and conditions that facilitate the integration of learning and living and that how students integrate learning and living has implications for instructional design.

Doyle (2002) explored the question of transfer of learning from the perspective of distance students enrolled in a business degree at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. She used postal survey to 245 students who had completed all course requirements for the courses selected on the factors which facilitated transfer of learning amongst students to workplace settings and barriers to transfer of learning from the students to workplace settings. Doyle found that their studies made a significant difference to the learners' knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a result

they were more self-confident and open-minded and held broader views of the world by linking obtained knowledge to real workplace problems and situations.

In addition, the study found that after completion of the course students discovered hidden knowledge they categorized as the “Aha!” factor: “Aha! That’s why that happened.” They were therefore able to solve various challenges they were not able to tackle prior to their studies. Doyle suggested the need to recognise the importance of transfer of learning as a core outcome to be explicitly addressed in the development, delivery, and evaluation of all educational courses and programmes.

Leberman (1999), *The transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace*, used a phenomenological method to 47 graduate students from the Victoria University of Wellington Diploma in Rehabilitation Studies to identify factors which facilitated the transfer of learning from an adult learning environment to the workplace. She found that upon completion of their studies, graduates gained confidence which enabled them to adopt case management practices learned in the class hence improved service delivery to their clients at workplaces.

Moreover, Leberman found that the use of supervised work-based practicum by the students following the university-based modules facilitated the integration of the newly gained knowledge and skills into their work. Leberman suggests that there is the need to combine personal and professional development opportunities in training programmes so that students integrate what they learn into their work. Integration of work and learning in distance learning.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for a research study influences the choice of an appropriate method. It is a set of broad ideas and a principle taken from relevant field of enquiry and is used to structure a subsequent presentation (Smyth, 2004:167). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework is a visual or written product, one that “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied, factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them” (p. 18).

This study is conceptualized based on the systems approach which holds that, an organization is a systematically managed system that processes and transforms inputs (such as raw materials), people and other resources into outputs which are the goods and services that comprises its products (Bateman and Snell, 2004). The conceptual framework for this study will be derived from analysis of independent, intervening and dependent variables and the interrelationship amongst them basing on the specific objectives of this study.

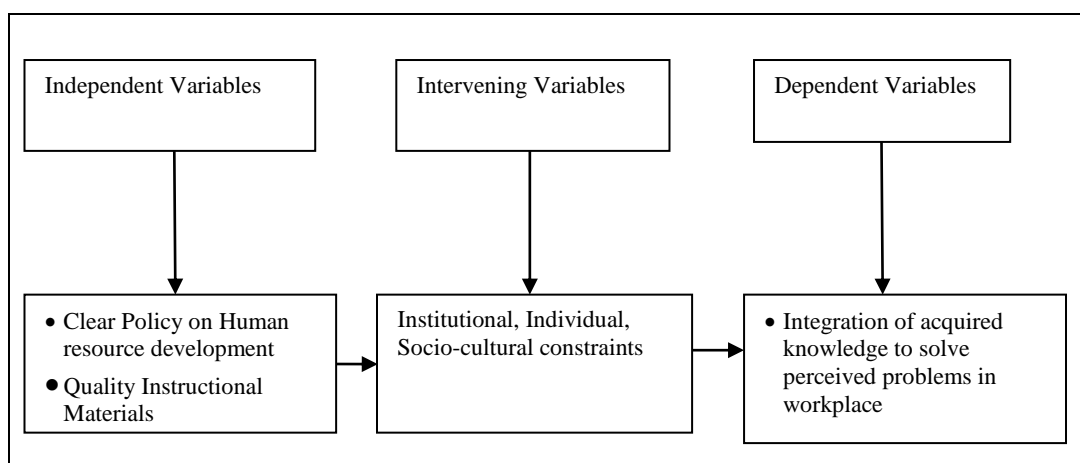


Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the Researcher

2.4.1 Independent Variables

Independent variables for this study include Clear policy on Human resource development and Quality Instructional Materials that will both lead to Integration of acquired knowledge to solve perceived problems in workplace as described below;

Most employees use the convenience of distance learning to pursue study in alternative modes as part-time students; yet, most of them face various challenges.

These students are often the neediest as they seek to balance work, family responsibilities and education. Structures, policies, procedures, and practice have become real barriers to getting aid to the fastest growing populations of students in higher education. Some of these challenges would have been solved by availability of clear policies on human resource development which would have clearly set demarcations on the role of a worker and that of an employer on issues related to professional development at workplace.

A conducive learning environment is the one supported by availability of good policies on human resource development that allow employee's skill development. A policy on employee development must show that the organisation values learning. For example, the policy must state; how often employees are expected to take formal training, e.g. once a year, once every two years, etc, the types of development programmes that are acceptable, when and how employees will be reimbursed for off-the-job programmes, provide time for learning at the workplace without the interruptions of every-day activity, and allow for practice of new skills on-the-job to retain what they have learned.

Clear policies on human resource development will create good learning environment which is crucial for a distance student's academic performance that will allow a student to integrate work and learning without affecting either of the two. On the other hand, Quality Instructional Materials is essential for distance students. Instructional material designers for distance students should prepare quality materials that will suit distance learning students' context. Since most of the time distance students learn on their own, the study materials must be self-explanatory to enable students to learn without difficulties.

The content of the materials should be up to date and relevant to what is intended to be attained by learners. Since many distance learners are workers who upgrade their carrier to improve work performance, it is crucial that instructional materials be of high quality that will provide learners with knowledge that will be integrated at their workplaces.

2.4.2 Intervening Variables

Intervening variables is the second component of the conceptual framework which constitutes institutional, individual and socio-cultural factors that may act as the barriers towards achieving the desired outcome.

Even though employed distance students strive to attain the best out of learning, it is not without challenges. These challenges act as a hindrance block between the independent and dependent variables and these challenges may be institutional, individual or socio-cultural.

Distance students who work and learn at the same time normally find time is not enough for them to concentrate fully on studies. This challenge may be explained in two perspectives; one, time may not be enough because of many commitments which a student should perform at work, but, on the other hand, one may find time is not enough, not because he or she has many commitments at work, but, because of poor time management. It is therefore important for ODL offering institutions to provide these students with skills on time management. On the other hand, employers should provide a flexible work-schedule, which will allow working students to perform both responsibilities together. Students may also manage time on their own. For example, use calendars for scheduled tasks or automatic emails that notify them that they have not worked on a course for a specified period.

Financial constraint is another major challenge facing distance students who are workers. Taking a case of Tanzania for example, most employed distance students who are civil servants earn salaries that may not be enough to fulfill diversified needs which a student has. The outcome is that, a worker may be willing to study but fail because of lack of fund for tuition fee, study materials, research etc. It is for this reason there is a need for employers to provide financial support for their employees who need to learn while working.

However, where the employer fails to provide support, these students may seek assistance from family members and friends because it is the responsibility of the whole community to strive in creating a knowledgeable community. Another individual challenge that may impede learning amongst employed distance students is unfavourable home learning environment. Home environment is where an

employed distance student would expect to compensate time for study which could not be enough at work place. It is very unfortunate that most homes may not be convenient places for learning because of their nature. Only a few students may have calm study rooms in their houses where one may really seat and study and in some cases, especially with women, going back home would just mean change of a working area from her employer to her 'self-employed job'. The best way to address this problem would be for employers to advocate enough time to their employees who work and learn at the same time.

Lack of experience or training on using instructional technologies is a challenge facing distance students towards attaining their goals and as such those who fail to cope with technological changes find themselves in hard situations. Although e-learning may be the best option for distance students, yet, not all of them have access to it, either because they are not familiar with technology, or because of lack of infrastructure that support e-learning. Distance students should be encouraged to learn how to use instructional technologies. Indeed, this will enable these students partly to solve the challenge of time that has not been enough for study because of integrating work and learning. For example, using a mobile phone a student would be able to read whenever and wherever he or she is.

On the other hand, there are institutional related challenges that may act as stumbling blocks preventing students from reaching their education goals. They include the following challenges;

Lack of support from employers has always been reported as a challenge facing employed distance students. These students would expect to get assistance from their

employers, such as financial and counseling services; yet, they seem not to get it the way it was expected. In some cases, during their study, these students face difficult times resulting from integration between work and study in which unless guidance and counseling services is given to them, they may even drop from studies.

Since a big challenge facing employed distance students is scarcity of time, employers may re-schedule working time for employees who study and work at the same time so as to enable them to get ample time for study. In fact, time management must be addressed by both the employer and the employee, but the employer must support the employee by allocating adequate time away from job responsibilities to engage in study. The student also must look for personal mechanisms to effectively manage time. For example, setting aside certain time within employer's working time and use reminders to remind you whenever the specified time is reached.

On the other hand, there has been a tendency for some employers not to recognize quality of education obtained through ODL and as such employees who upgrade their knowledge through ODL may be considered inferior to traditional students. The quality of ODL should not be considered by any means inferior to conventional on-campus education. Employees who study through ODL should be given equal treatment to those from traditional mode and they must be given a room to practice their newly acquired skills at workplaces.

Moreover, despite challenges facing both men and female distance students, there may be cases where women tend to face more challenges related to their gender. In some cultures, women have been oriented to perform several activities than men, and

as such women will have less time for study than men. For example, while a man might be studying in the study room, a woman would be in the kitchen cooking whilst probably they are both from work and therefore no one would have to deserve favour than the other. It is therefore important that communities give equal treatment to both genders in attaining educational opportunities.

2.4.3 Dependent Variables

Amongst expected outcomes resulting from availability of clear policies on human resource development and availability of quality instructional materials include integration of acquired knowledge by students to solve perceived problems in the organization.

The main purpose for employees' development is improvement in work efficiency. It is expected that students who study through ODL will result to competent human resource developed through DE. This human resource is expected to bring positive changes in the organisation by transforming knowledge gained in class to the actual practice at workplace.

It is worth noting that; clear policies on human resource development, quality instructional materials and effective ways of solving challenges facing distance learners will lead to competent graduate who will be able to integrate acquired knowledge into workplace. Employers should give opportunity for employees who have upgraded their carrier to demonstrate their skills. The conceptual framework for this study shows the symbiotic relationship amongst independent, intervening and dependent variables as depicted in the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research methodology and procedures that were used to collect information for the study. The chapter includes research approaches, area of study, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis plan.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014), research approaches refer to plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. This study adopted a mixed methods research approach. Cameron (2015) defined mixed research methods as a research method that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study that investigates the same underlying phenomenon. The use of mixed methods research methodology in this study enabled the researcher to present findings in diverse ways than it would be when using a single method alone.

3.3 Area of the Study

This study was conducted at the Institute of Adult Education Tabora regional centre where relevant respondents for the study were accessed. This centre was amongst IAE's regional centres with many Ordinary Diploma students learning through Open and Distance Learning and with the composition, which was of interest to the researcher.

3.4 Population

Population may be defined as a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Some scholars further argue that a population under study must have at least one thing in common. The target population for this study was 70 respondents. It included; the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) Deputy Director (ARC), Tabora region Resident Tutor, District Adult Education Officer for Tabora Municipality, Distance students' tutors at IAE, ODL programme coordinator at IAE, Head of DE Department at IAE and all first year and continuing diploma students through ODL at Tabora regional centre.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

3.5.1 Sample

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) and Kothari (2004) a sample refers to a group of respondents or elements drawn from a population with individuals who have one thing in common that provide representative characteristics of the entire population from which a researcher is interested to gather information and draw conclusions.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a small size sample characterizes qualitative studies in which the researcher selects the sample that is sufficient to provide maximum insights and understanding of the population under study. Stepping on Miles and Hybermans' (1994) propositions, the sample for this study included the IAE management, tutors and the students. From the management, the Deputy Director (Academics, Research and Consultancy) was purposefully selected

to participate in the study. This is because he was in a position directly involved with the IAE's academic affairs. Others who were also purposively sampled included Tabora region Resident Tutor, District Adult Education Officer for Tabora Municipality, two distance students' tutors at IAE headquarters, ODL programme coordinator and Head of Distance Education Department at IAE headquarters. Questionnaires were used to collect information from 11 first year and 24 continuing diploma students through ODL at Tabora regional study centre. Thus, the sample size employed in this study was forty-three (43) as explained in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1: Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Target group	Sampling technique	Sample size	Data collection tools
Administrators	Purposive	6	Interview Guide
Tutors	Purposive	2	Interview Guide
Students	Random sampling	35	Questionnaire
Total		43	

Source: Field data, 2017

3.5.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is a process of selecting some members or elements (sample) of a population in such a way that the sample represents the actual features of the total population (Bryman, 2001). The rationale for sampling is to measure the sample and draw conclusions concerning the entire population. The study employed the following sampling techniques;

3.5.2.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling technique is a technique used in selecting categories with special attributes. The technique was used in the study to gather information from specific

individuals by virtue of their responsibilities. Those who were selected purposively included the Deputy Director (Academic Research and Consultancy), Tabora Resident Tutor, District Adult Education Officer, Head of Distance Education Department, Distance students' tutors and the ODL programme coordinator.

3.5.2.2 Simple Random Sampling Technique

A simple random sample is a random sample selected by a method which ensures that all possible samples, of a given size, are equally likely to be chosen (Finch; 2013). To get the sample for ODL diploma students, the researcher wrote on pieces of papers two numbers; 1 and 2. The papers were folded and shaken to allow each respondent pick one of the folded paper. Then, the researcher took all respondents who picked the number identified for selection of the sample. This technique provided all respondents with equal chance of being selected.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data collection is a process whereby a researcher collects data from various sources of information in accordance with the research plan. For example, personal interviews, telephone calls, mails and internet search. These methods may be used separately or combined depending on the survey design.

According to Cohen et al. (2000), exclusive reliance on one method may distort the authenticity of the picture the researcher is investigating. The use of multiplicity data-gathering techniques serves as a means of cross-checking the authenticity of data from single source, hence enhancing their validity and reliability. Another advantage of using multiple data gathering methods is to enable a researcher to

exhaust or tape all in-depth information from different reliable sources related to the study. This study employed interviews, questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion as main data collection methods.

3.6.1 Interview

According to Kothari (2004), Interview is a method of collecting information through oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. This is a two-way personal conversation initiated by the interviewer with a clear list of items to be addressed and questions to be answered (Bryman, 2001). In this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect qualitative information on the topic under study from various administrators and tutors. The items in the schedule were arranged to allow in-depth views, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and feelings about the study. Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to project their own way of defining the world, permit flexibility of sequence of discussions, enable participants to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in the pre-set schedule (Cohen et al., 2000).

3.6.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are written or printed forms consisting of a set of questions to be submitted to one or more persons for the sake of collecting data. Using questionnaires, the responses are gathered in a standardized way, so questionnaires are more objective, certainly more so than interviews. However, they have the following disadvantages; questionnaires need financial resources for preparation and administration. Sometimes questionnaires may get lost on transit due to poor transport facilities and negligence of transport firms. Also, they may not be returned

to the researcher due to reasons beyond the researcher's control (Kombo and Tromp, 2009).

This study employed structured questionnaires to collect data from IAE first and second year ODL diploma students at Tabora Regional study centre. Kothari (2004) argued that structured questionnaires permit a wide coverage at minimum cost in terms of time and effort. Questionnaires allow greater uniformity of questions and guarantee greater comparability of responses.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest (Baral et al.; 2016). The main purpose of focus group for this study was to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaires. In this study, FGD was used for students to get more information that supplemented information obtained through questionnaires and one-to-one interview.

3.7 Validation of the Study Instruments

According to Szent-Gyorgyi (2010), methods of data collection can affect the validity of the results and the conclusions drawn from the data. Validation is the way of making sure that the research instruments bring intended outcomes that can apply to other situations. Therefore, to ensure validity of the results, data collection instruments were tested out using few IAE distance students. The information obtained from the try out exercise was used to make modifications on the

instruments. The reason for testing the instruments was to ensure that the instruments were appropriate to tape intended data.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

There are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. Research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions. Ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness.

For example, many ethical norms in research, such as guidelines for authorship, copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies, and confidentiality rules in peer review, are designed to protect intellectual property interests while encouraging collaboration. Also, many of the ethical norms help to ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public on research misconduct (Resnik, 2011).

Interviews of respondents and questionnaires for this study met the general procedures for interviewing and formulating questions. The researcher obtained a permission form and a covering letter from the Institute of Adult Education (IAE), which was targeted for this study.

To eliminate fear amongst respondents, the researcher provided full information about the research including the reasons for selecting participants chosen. Participants' privacy, confidentiality and secrecy were highly guaranteed through hiding their identity.

3.9 Data Analysis Process

The purpose of analyzing data is to obtain usable and useful information. The analysis may describe and summarize the data, identify relationships between variables, compare variables, identify the difference between variables and forecast outcomes.

This study employed questionnaires, interviews and Focus Group Discussion as major data collection methods. Quantitative data were analyzed in tables while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis to get meaning from participants and provided descriptive details related to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides findings and discussions emanating from this study. The main findings have been presented under respondents' characteristics. The study had three objectives: The first objective was to examine the ways employed students in open and distance learning manage socio-economic challenges facing them. This was followed by the second objective, which was to assess ways diploma students relate workplaces with learning environment. The last objective was to assess ways diploma students integrate their knowledge into work.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

This section describes characteristics of respondents who participated in the study. The respondents were characterized by different criteria including gender, educational level, occupation and age group.

4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

Table 4.1 indicates the responses in terms of gender of respondents who participated in this study. The findings show that 58% of respondents were female; the other 42% were males. This implies that majority of respondents for this study were females as opposed to males. Both sexes had enough understanding of the study variables regardless of variation in their number. They participated fully in the interview, Focus Group Discussion and in filling the questionnaires.

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Female	25	58
Male	18	42
Total	43	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

4.2.2 Education Level of Respondents

The respondents were also characterized basing on their education level. The findings revealed that the study comprised respondents with varying education levels. Their education level was enough for them to provide the most reliable and informative responses which could add to the reliability of the research findings. The findings in Table 4.2 indicate that 81% of respondents had certificate, 2% had a diploma, 5% bachelor degree and the rest 12% had postgraduate education.

Table 4.2: Education Level of Respondents

Education level	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
College (Grade IIIA)	35	81
College (Diploma)	1	2
Bachelor degree	2	5
Postgraduate	5	12
Total	43	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

4.2.3 Occupation of Respondents

The study analysis as indicated in Table 4.3 shows that 36 respondents (84%) were primary school teachers, 1 tutorial assistant (2.3%), 4 assistant lecturers (9%), 1 Adult Education Officer (2.3%) and 1 senior lecturer (2.3%). The intention of

studying the occupation of respondents was to explore more insights on the study variables.

Table 4.3: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Primary School Teachers	36	84
Tutorial Assistant	1	2.3
Assistant Lecturers	4	9
Adult Education Officer	1	2.3
Senior Lecturer	1	2.3
Total	43	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

The table above shows that majority of respondents were primary school teachers. Basing on the analysis, it is proved that the respondents' occupation had a great impact on the responses provided as they possessed a total understanding of the challenges perceived by students pursuing diploma at the Institute of Adult Education because of being directly or indirectly involved with IAE distance students.

4.2.4 Age Group of Respondents

The age group of respondents was another variable studied in the study. Age of respondents can have a significant impact on study findings. The findings indicated in Table 4.4 revealed that 35% had age less than 35 years, 49% had age between 36-45 years, and 16% had age between 46-55 years. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents at the study centre had the age between 36-45 years.

Table 4.4: Age Group of Respondents

Age group (years)	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Less than 35 years	15	35
Between 36-45 years	21	49
Between 46-55 years	7	16
Total	43	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

4.3 Ways Employed ODL Diploma Students Manage Socio-Economic Challenges Facing Them

4.3.1 Challenges Facing Employed ODL Diploma Students

The first objective of this study was to examine the challenges that employed students in open and distance learning institutions face and ways they manage them. The question was: What are the challenges facing you? Many responses were related to insufficient time for learning, financial constraints, poor learning infrastructure and social responsibilities. Other challenges mentioned included ICT illiteracy and distance from the study centre. The responses were thematically analyzed as follows:

4.3.1.1 Insufficient Time for Learning

Insufficient time for learning was the foremost challenge addressed by majority of the respondents in the study. They reported that time set for face to face sessions and examination at the study centre is not sufficient. The respondents also indicated that they lack adequate time for studies at workplaces due to job commitments. For example, the following respondents wrote:

Despite being a student, I am also the Head Teacher, therefore, I must prepare reports for submission to the office and on the other hand I must study.

Another response was:

My timetable is so tight that I cannot get time for study at workplace; I am always on the move from one class to another.

Respondents have indicated that time allocated for face to face and examinations sessions at the study centre is not enough hence making them hire part time teachers for assistance in the areas their tutors did not cover, one respondent for example wrote;

We have very limited time for face to face sessions; therefore, we are forced to hire part time teachers in our own costs who assist us in areas not covered during these sessions.

The researcher interviewed one head teacher at one primary school where there were staff members who were distance learners and he said;

One of my teachers told me that time set for face to face sessions at the centre is not enough and that they do not get what they expected to get during those sessions. This has forced them to hire part time teachers who assist them every day evening after working hours (Interviewee, Respondent 5).

4.3.1.2 Financial constraints

Financial constraint was the second big challenge mentioned in the study. Most of respondents said that they took loans from the banks or seeking financial assistance from their families and friends for payment of tuition fees. This may imply that their financial status is poor. Probably, it is partly because most respondents were married

adults with other family responsibilities. This is supported by the following comment from a student;

I have four children who are all at school and I am also schooling. It is a big challenge when we are all required to pay tuition fees at the same time.

During a Focus Group Discussion session, certain respondents explained how it is difficult to get money for tuition fees while they were experiencing economic hardships. For example, one respondent said;

You know economic crisis we are facing in Tanzania right now, yet you have to pay tuition fee at the Institute, pay tuition fee for your children, buy food and clothes, just to mention few...it is not an easy task unless one is really devoted to learning (Focus Group Discussion).

It was stressed by the Resident Tutor who was the head of the study centre that distance learning students at her centre faced financial challenge when she said;

I now know well these students, some of them fail even to photocopy pamphlets and other study materials. It happens that some of them have to copy the materials by hand (Interviewee, Respondent 1).

In an interview session with the Adult Education Officer, he also told the researcher that there were cases when some students went to the employer to seek financial support. The officer said;

There are cases when these teachers come to our office to seek financial assistance to cover tuition fees. We normally provide them with salary advance.

The finding may entail that majority of the accessed respondents, who most of them were primary school teachers, lacked adequate financial earning to sustain several financial matters at a time. It should be born in mind that, almost all respondents were married and with children, meaning that they had other commitments back home. From this finding one may draw conclusion that there might be some primary school teachers who would wish to advance their carrier but could not afford paying tuition fees. One respondent for example, wrote;

My earning is not enough to settle all financial matters I have, therefore I normally take loans.

The above comment does not only indicate that the respondent had financial problem, but could also show that the latter was satisfied with his or her situation and that taking loans was the best option.

4.3.1.3 Poor Learning Infrastructure

Poor learning infrastructure was the third challenge that the learners identified as a challenge for them. In an interview session with one respondent, he said;

I think the proper name for these study centres should be “meeting places” and not “study centres” because a study centre must be fully equipped with teaching and learning infrastructure (Interview Guide, Respondent 3).

The interviewee further added;

Some of these centres have students with special needs but there is no supportive infrastructure to support them, for example there are students who are visually impaired, but the infrastructure is not friendly for them and there

are no even full package study materials prepared for them (Interview Guide, Respondent 3).

These responses may imply that the institution offering studies has not yet taken full attention to distance students with special learning needs; hence such students may be studying under hostile learning conditions. It was further reported that workplaces lacked good learning environment that would allow students to learn. One respondent for example wrote;

I face the challenge of poor learning infrastructure at my workplace. There is neither electricity nor even a silent place where I can sit and study.

Majority of respondents for this study were from urban areas where classes are always full of students and staff rooms full of teachers, which is a true situation to most urban primary schools in Tanzania. They said that that there is no even a room at their workplaces where they may sit for private studies. One responded reported;

No place where I can sit and study. The classes and the staff room are always occupied, and the environment is very noisy (Focus Group Discussion).

4.3.1.4 Social Responsibilities

Social responsibilities were also mentioned in the study as a challenge facing majority of the respondents. The study shows that many respondents are married men and women with children. To this group of respondents, it is inevitable to get away from social responsibilities. For this reason, these respondents must integrate work, learning and social responsibilities altogether. It has been shown in this study that,

majority of the respondents are those who previously studied under conventional mode of learning where they concentrated on learning only and that ODL seem to be a new mode of learning to them. For this reason, they face challenges when integrating work and learning. This is highlighted by one respondent who reported that;

These students fail to cope with this mode of study which requires them to balance their time for study, family responsibilities and job. Most of them have stayed long without engaging with studies and they were previously studying under conventional mode where they were not integrating work and study (Interviewee, Respondent 3).

In the interview session with the Resident Tutor, she said that amongst challenges facing students studying at her study centre is social issues. She said that some students have been postponing studies due to social responsibilities including illness. For example, she said;

Currently I have a student who has postponed studies because she is attending her mother who has been hospitalized for quite long now. Her fellow students have already gone far, and she can no longer join them and graduate together (Interviewee, Respondent 1).

On the other hand, some respondents mentioned other challenges facing them being lack of ICT knowledge and distance from the study centre. One interviewee for example, said that majority of them are not able to access study materials on the internet even though some of them have devices that would allow them to do so. He

emphasized that lack of ICT skills led some students fail to access their examinations results which are posted on the Students Admission and Results Information System (SARIS). He said;

Experience shows that most of our students cannot even access their examinations results posted on SARIS, therefore sometimes we are forced to print and pin their results on notes boards at their study centres (Interviewee, Respondent 1).

Another respondent wrote;

I lack skills on how to access study materials on the internet.

Responding to the researcher's question on what he thought was one of the solutions to challenges facing distance students, one head teacher admitted that lack of adequate knowledge on ICT was a challenge to distance learning students and he said;

I would advise that the ICT course which these students take should be more practical to enable them to acquire practical ICT skills; this would enable them to get supplementary study materials on the internet (Interviewee, Respondent 5).

From the findings, it was revealed that some distance students stay far from the study centre and this is a challenge to them especially during examinations and face to face sessions. This is a true challenge to majority of distance learning students because what determines them to learn is not only closeness to the study centre, but, personal determination to learning regardless of distance from the study centre. The

respondents said that it is very costly to pay for accommodation and stay out of their families for about two weeks consecutively. For example, one respondent said;

I am staying very far, and I do not have anywhere to stay during face to face and examinations' sessions except to hire a room for accommodation. This leads me to financial challenge because I have to pay for accommodation for almost two weeks of my stay at the centre (Focus Group Discussion).

From the foregoing, the learners identified several challenges that they face as distance learners. These include; insufficient time for learning, financial constraints, poor learning infrastructure and social responsibilities. Other challenges identified were lack of ICT knowledge and distance from the study centre.

These findings concur with what was revealed by Musingafi et al., (2015) in their study, *“Challenges for Open and Distance learning (ODL) Students: Experiences from Students of the Zimbabwe Open University”* who found that ODL learners were challenged by lack of sufficient time for study, difficulties in access and use of ICT, and lack of study materials. However, unlike Musingafi's findings, this study has revealed that students received adequate study materials from the institution offering studies with exception of only few students with special learning needs who lacked proper study materials.

4.3.2 How Distance Diploma Students Manage Challenges

The first objective sought to examine the ways employed students studying through open and distance education manage socio-economic challenges facing them.

Questionnaires were used to solicit information from 35 students. The question was: How do you manage the challenges facing you? The findings indicated several ways in which distance students use to overcome challenges that hinder them from learning effectively. The main ways mentioned by the respondents were; using evening and night time for study, taking loans from financial institutions, studying during weekends, seeking part time teachers, seeking financial support from family and friends and saving money for payment of tuition fee.

4.3.2.1 Evening and Night Time Study

All respondents for this study were employees. This means that their core role is first to perform employers' tasks. Other matters may be performed upon accomplishment of the employers' duties. For this reason, most distance students lack adequate time for studies at workplaces and therefore opt to study in the evening or night after working hours. One respondent from Focus Group Discussion said;

Study timetable is scheduled in the night at home when children are already asleep (Focus Group Discussion).

Some other respondents also reported that they do not get enough time at workplace due to work commitments and instead use the evening and night time for studies. Some respondents arranged study time at night while others stayed back at their workplace for studies. Some of them wrote;

I normally use up to three hours at night for my studies because I do not get enough time for study in the afternoon. I normally stay back at workplace after working hours for my studies.

It is evident from the above responses that, as a copying mechanism, most students set their own study time especially in the evening and night time as a compensation strategy to study time which could not be obtained at their workplaces. The findings also may reflect that home environments were not friendly for learning that is why some of them extended time at workplaces for studies.

4.3.2.2 Taking Loans from Financial Institutions

Another finding from this study has revealed that distance learning students borrowed money from various financial institutions to cover study costs. The implication here is that these students' financial status is not good to enable them meet diversified needs in their daily life. Some students wrote the following responses as means they used to manage economic challenge facing them;

I am taking loans from the bank to cover tuition fees.

When I failed to get money on time, I took loan from private financial institutions.

These findings corroborate with those of Nguyen and Halliday (2014) who also found that distance learning students took loans from financial institutions to cover study costs. However, their study differs from this in that, most of their respondents managed economic challenge by doing a variety of ways like skipping meals, using the library resources, and borrowing textbooks.

4.3.2.3 Conducting Week End Studies

Most respondents have indicated that they utilized effectively their weekends for personal and group discussion because they did not have adequate time for studies

during weekdays as they were occupied by work. It was established that some respondents had to leave aside other activities, which were to be performed during weekends to get enough time for studies. One respondent wrote;

I use my weekend for my studies and I have left pending other activities I used to do before joining the programme.

Another response from a Focus Group Discussion indicated that it is normally during weekends where most students had time to meet for group discussions than in weekdays where majority of students were busy with employer's tasks;

We do conduct discussion during weekends because it is when we can get time to meet (Focus Group Discussion).

According to Feldman et al., (2000), wherever it is feasible, opportunities for same-time same-place interchange between the teacher and student, or amongst students, should be built by arranging group meetings during weekend time. Feldman et al, found that there is something unique and important about the simultaneous visual and verbal interaction of individuals in the same place working together toward a common educational goal. These findings concur with the findings from this study, which have indicated that distance learning students used week end time for their studies.

4.3.2.4 Seeking Part Time Teachers

Amongst reported challenges, which hinder distance students as reported in this study included inadequate time allocated for face to face sessions. Some respondents in this study said that because of this challenge they failed to get enough academic

assistance about what is contained in their study materials. As an alternative, they sought part time teachers to assist them as reported by the following respondent;

We have hired a part time teacher who assists us after working hours and during weekends.

Another respondent from Focus Group Discussion said that;

We have mobilized together, and we are assisted by the Adult Education Officer and one retiree who teach us every evening and we pay them.

This finding provides the insight that some distance students still have the feeling that they cannot study on their own unless they are taught by the teacher like what is happening in regular mode. It may also mean that respondents had study materials which were not user friendly to distance learning students for them to study alone.

It is important that instructional designers for ODL learning materials prepare appropriate materials that will encourage learners to learn independently. Commonwealth of Learning (2005) for example, emphasizes that ODL study materials should be prepared basing on theories of adult learning and therefore they should differ from other educational materials. For example, they should include a study guide on how to use the materials and how to study alone, should include examples, diagrams and pictures, just to mention few.

4.3.2.5 Seeking Financial Support from Family and Friends

Findings from this study have shown that distance students got big support from their families and friends. Despite being supported morally; the findings have indicated that they were also assisted financially as illustrated in the comments below;

I sought assistance from my family and I was given money for paying tuition fees because they know that my capital is not enough.

The family and friends have been so helpful to me, for example at one time my friend paid me a one semester tuition fee.

These findings imply that the family, friends and even the community at large have important role to play in assisting distance learning students to attain their educational goals. Perhaps, it is because they knew that these students were attached to other family responsibilities. It is evidenced that most married distance learning students face financial challenges than unmarried ones. This is supported by Kwaah (2017) who found that married students felt more stressed with financial problems and family/marriage problems than unmarried students.

4.3.2.6 Serving Money for Payment of Tuition Fee

When human beings face challenges tend to find some ways of solving them. Another mechanism used by distance students in solving challenges facing them was the strategy of serving and accumulating money for payment of tuition fees. Some respondents said that their families had to minimize some of the unnecessary expenses like spending money for leisure as a strategy to get money for tuition fees. Others reported that they did petty business and kept money for tuition fees as explained below:

My family has reduced unnecessary expenses to get money for my studies.

I am doing petty business and serve money for my tuition fees.

Probably, the strategy of saving money for payment of tuition fee was the best strategy to manage financial challenge amongst distance students. This strategy could ensure that money for tuition fee is always available when it was needed, and a student could learn more comfortably than seeking assistance from the family or taking loans from financial institutions. Other Negotiations mentioned by the respondents were the support they solicit from various individuals including employers, learning institution and family and friends. The following are some of the responses.

4.3.3 Support from Employers

The findings have indicated that some respondents sought support from their employers as a means to manage challenges, which they faced. The major support reported by most respondents from their employers was permission to attend face to face and examinations sessions at the study centre as seen in the following response;

No problem with my employer when I ask permission to attend examinations and face-to-face sessions.

Even respondents who did not find big support from their employers, they appreciated that they at least got permission to attend sessions at the study centre;

I am independent in my studies, my employer is not very supportive, but I am at least given permission to attend face-to-face session.

In an interview session with the Resident tutor who was the head of the study centre, she concurred with the above findings by saying that always employers authorize students' permissions upon request. She said that sessions are always scheduled to be

conducted during holidays, but, in some minor occasions when sessions fall before holidays, students are still released. She reported;

.... we normally allocate face to face and examinations sessions during holidays, but if it happens the timetable has changed I normally write letters requesting for permission and the employers have never refused (Interviewee, Respondent 1).

Some respondents reported to have been exempted from some work-related duties, permission to leave before departure time, encouragement and reduced work load. This support gave them ample time for individual or group study within or outside work premises while their colleagues are still proceeding with daily responsibilities. One respondent wrote;

I really thank my Head teacher. At our school we are normally released at 1:30pm daily which is not a typical departure time so that we get time for study.

Generally, the findings have shown that, the major support given to distance students by their employer was permission to attend face to face and examination session at the study centre. It was also found that, a few students got extra support from the employers, like exemption from certain tasks and reduced workload. The reason for these variations is explained by the Adult Education Officer during an interview session when he said;

The major support given to distance learning students by their employer is permission when they are required at the study centre, other supports depends on the

prevailing situation at the workplace such as availability of enough teachers which may determine one's teaching load. He also said that they financially support some students in terms of salary advancement in case they reported to have failed paying tuition fees. This may imply that there was no clear or intact plan to financially assist employed distance students unless they request for assistance.

Although there is not always a plentiful amount of money to spend on motivation for employees (Burton; 2012), it is important that employers feel important to develop clear policies on how to provide financial support to employed distance students. This strategy will add value to the organizations because such students proceed with studies without leaving workplaces, unlike employees who leave for studies and yet receive financial support.

4.3.4 Institution Offering Studies

The findings have revealed that respondents received various support from the institution offering their programme. The support included provision of tutorial support, study materials, guidance and counseling services and they were allowed to pay tuition fee in installments. This is supported by the comment;

Tutors are ready to assist and leave us with their mobile numbers for us to call in case we need assistance.

Some respondents said that they received guidance and counseling services during and after face-to-face sessions. They said that they were guided and counseled on matters related to studies. For example, one interviewee explained how she counseled one student who was about to terminate studies after she sat for the first examination and found it was tough. The interviewee said;

I remember the case when one student wanted to terminate studies just after doing the first examination and thought it was very tough and she said if it happens the same to other examinations she would have been wasting time for nothing. I encouraged her, and she managed to complete her studies (Interviewee, Respondent 7).

Furthermore, the findings have indicated that some respondents appreciated support given by the institution offering their studies which allowed them to pay tuition fees under installment basis. Some respondents said that sometimes they could fail to continue with studies because they were not in the position to pay full tuition fees on time. During a Focus Group Discussion, one respondent said;

The Resident Tutor is very attentive and has been allowing us to pay tuition fees in installments...what matters is one to fulfill the promise.

From the findings, it is true that some challenges which faced distance students were partly managed by the institution which offered their programme of study. That is, where they faced financial challenge they could make payment in installation, when they failed to understand what contained in the study materials, they called their tutors for clarification. On the other hand, when they faced social challenges they received guidance and counseling support services.

According to Simpson (n.d), distance learning institutions should organise their student support systems in various ways. He suggested the criteria for an effective support system should be that there is: reactive support system which answers student enquiries quickly and effectively. Secondly, he suggested proactive support

system which systematically proactively contacts students at appropriate critical times, especially to reinforce their motivation and lastly, he suggested personal support system which should clarify about who gives that support, how personal and individual it is and over what period of a student's studies.

4.3.5 Family and Friends

The findings have shown that family and friends play a big role in assisting distance students. The main support given as stated by the respondents were financial assistance, encouragement and the permission to attend face to face and examinations sessions. The implication from the findings may mean that a student may have enough money to pay tuition fees but, may fail to join or proceed with the study programme if he or she lacks permission and encouragement from the family members, especially to those who are married.

Majority of the respondents appreciated the big support played by their families and friends as follows;

I am given permission by my wife to leave and stay out of my family for about two weeks and she trusts me.

I get financial support from my family, especially my wife.

Other comments were;

My family pays me tuition fees and pays for accommodation during face-to-face sessions.

My wife takes over my responsibilities when I am away for studies and encourages me to study hard.

From the above findings, despite challenges faced by distance learning students; they developed various negotiation strategies hence they were able to proceed with their studies. The major reported challenge was insufficient time for studies. Majority of respondents managed this challenge by using evening and night time for their studies; others utilized their weekends for studies and left pending other unnecessary matters. Also, students took loans from financial institutions while others borrowed or sought financial assistance from family members and friends as a strategy to overcome financial challenge. Further, they sought support from their employers and the institution offering their studies. Moreover, they hired part time teachers who assisted them in academic matters.

These findings seem to corroborate with those of Mensah and Amoah (2015) in Ghana. In their study, Mensah and Amoah found that the majority of the respondents relied on support of family and friends as a negotiation strategy of socio-economic challenges facing them. However, their study differs from this as many of their respondents took things easy, enjoyed their work, employed effective time management, exercised on regular basis, listened to music, read favourite books, sang aloud and made themselves happy.

4.4 Ways Diploma Students Relate Workplaces with Learning Environment

The second objective was to assess ways diploma students relate workplaces with learning environment. This objective aimed at determining the extent to how their workplace supported their learning. The question was: How do they rate their working place in relation to learning? Questionnaire was used to solicit information

from 35 students. The findings indicated in Table 4.5 show how respondents rated their working places in relation to learning.

Table 4.5: Ways Diploma Students Relate Workplaces with Learning Environment

Factors	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Highly Supportive	3	9
Supportive	11	31
Less Supportive	17	49
Not Supportive	4	11
Total	35	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 4.5 indicates the responses on the ways diploma students relate workplaces with learning environment. The findings demonstrated that the “less supportive” factor had the most frequent responses indicating that majority of the respondents rated their work places as being less supportive of their learning. This factor was identified by 17 respondents (49%).

A follow up question through the interview brought to view the following:

There is no silent place where you can seat and study because each room is occupied by students; the two offices are full of teachers and always noisy. There is no school library, unless you go to the nearby teacher’s house where you may hardly spend 40 minutes and, yet the place may not be conducive for learning.

As a ward Education Officer, I am always busy visiting schools in my ward therefore time for study is very limited, I can say my office is not stationed at one point like others, mine is always mobile.

Another response was;

My working place is less supportive because I do not have enough time for study and no good learning infrastructure.

The above comments show that some of respondents related their workplaces less supportive learning environments because they lacked time for study and the infrastructure were not supportive for them to learn comfortably. These findings may mean that, even though time would be available, still the infrastructure was not friendly for learning. Other respondents rated their workplaces less supportive learning environments because they felt less support from their head teachers who were their immediate work supervisors. These respondents had a feeling that the immediate support was expected to come from their supervisors at their workplaces.

For example, one of the comments was;

Besides my employer who is not supportive to me, even my head teacher is not supportive and has never asked me how I proceed with studies.

What is learnt from the above finding is that, sometimes employees may not need very tangible support like financial assistance from their employers; rather, they may only need recognition and appreciation. For example, appreciation that they have taken the right decision to upgrade their knowledge. This is what Burton (2012) calls “non-financial motivation”. However, basing on motivation theories; employees

should learn how to motivate themselves before they are motivated. Therefore, distance learning students should strive and believe in themselves that they are capable of studying even without support from their employers.

On the other hand, 4 respondents (11%) had a feeling that there was no supportive learning environment at their workplace. In this case also, the major reasons reported by respondents were lack of time for studies due to compressed time tables and poorly developed learning infrastructure at their workplaces. Some had this to say;

I am working in remote area where no network connections, no electricity power and even though I have study materials in hard copies, I do not have time to study because we are few teachers and school timetable is so tight that I have to work from morning to evening.

Another response was;

I have six (6) periods to teach per day, I have to teach and mark students' work, each class has between 130 to 150 students therefore it is difficult to get time for study.

Basing on Gilaninia et al. (2013) findings, the afore discussed findings contradicts with organizational learning theories which, according to Gilaninia et al. presume that, leaders in an organizational learning must create an environment that all organizational members as flourish to increase what they choose, they do and have ability. These findings entail that employers should create conducive learning environments that will enhance learning at workplaces.

However, there were few respondents who agreed that there were some elements of supportive environment in their workplace, a response of 11 (31%). Some of them reported that there were enough teachers at their working stations hence they were allocated reasonable number of periods while others reported that their workplaces had supportive learning infrastructure. The narrative for this response focused on such statements:

There are enough teachers at my school and therefore I do not have many teaching sessions, there is electricity power and the school environment is conducive for learning.

I am given time for studies without any problem and my Head teacher is very understanding; I am released before departure time so that I get time for studies.

My head teacher provides me with time for study in special cases like when preparing myself for examinations.

Few, only 3 respondents (9%) had a feeling that they had highly supported learning environment. Amongst reasons for their choices was good support given to them by their Head teachers at their work stations as explained by the following narratives;

My head teacher is very supportive, I am given time for study, my teaching load has been reduced and I am given permission for studies during holidays.

...my Head teacher helps me in many things like providing me with some materials and I am given time for studies.

The findings have revealed that, while majority of respondents related their workplaces less supportive for learning, few of them related supportive. There is a need for employers to find the best way to support their employees, especially those who advance their carrier while working.

According to Burton (2012), managers are the resources for employees and they should make sure that their work environment is pleasant and desirable. This will help the productivity and improvement of their employees hence managers will have a fully motivated team.

Table 4.6: Time from my Employer to Pursue Studies

Factors	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Agree	17	48
Disagree	9	26
Strongly Disagree	9	26
Total	35	100

Source: Field Data, 2017

Table 4.6 shows that 48% of respondents were in the agreement that they had enough time from their employers to pursue their studies. Others disagreed, 9% and strongly disagreed 9%. Majority of respondents agreed that they got enough time for studies from their employers. Respondents described specifically that they were given time to attend face to face and examinations sessions at the study centre. For example, one respondent wrote;

I am given permission to attend face to face and examinations sessions at the study centre.

Also, during an interview session with the Adult Education Officer, he said;

These students are always given permission by their employers when they are needed at the study centre, but study time given to them at work places mostly depend on one's work environment like availability of enough teachers. Otherwise, they have to know how to fix their own timetable for studies (Interviewee, Respondent 2).

Despite time given to students by their employers to attend at the study centre, it was revealed that employers did not give distance students ample time neither to study at their workplaces nor to prepare for examinations. This is supported by such comments like;

My employer does not give me any time for preparation of examinations, I am only given fixed time for face to face sessions and examinations.

I am only given permission to attend face to face sessions but not given time for studies at workplace.

The above responses have shown that both students and the employer agreed that time for studies is given to distance learning students, but, it is only time to attend face to face and examinations at the study centre. Most respondents seemed to have feelings that the employers' support should be extended for employees to be given time also for studies at workplace and for preparation of examinations.

4.4.1 Conducive and Friendly Work Places for Learning

The respondents were further asked to comment on what they considered to be conducive environment for their learning. This is because; people tend to relate

conducive environment with different things. The question was: What do you consider to be conducive and friendly work place for your studies? The main findings have revealed that majority of respondents considered a conducive and friendly workplace for studies as one having good infrastructure for learning, support from supervisors and co-workers and availability of ample time for studies.

According to the findings, majority of the respondents indicated that availability of good infrastructure for learning like internet access, electricity power and library services at a workplace makes it conducive and friendly for learning. Some of the respondents had the following comments;

I wish there would be a special study room at my working place where one would go and concentrate with studies, we do not have such a room at our school.

A conducive workplace for learning would be the one where it is near to library services and where there are internet connections.

Some respondents thought support from their supervisors and co-workers is essential for a workplace to be conducive learning environment. They considered a conducive and friendly workplace for learning to where employers provide them with support like financial assistance and where co-workers would support them in their learning. For example, some of them felt that co-workers who are ahead of them academically would provide academic assistance within the working area premises and probably get rid of hiring part time teachers. This is observed in such comments like;

A conducive learning environment would be the one which my employer provides me with financial support.

To me a conducive workplace learning environment is the one with colleagues who are ahead of me academically who can assist me in case I need academic assistance.

Furthermore, the findings have indicated that respondents considered a conducive and friendly workplace for studies as the one where they would be given ample time for their studies. They felt that they lacked time for study at workplace because of heavy work load. They also considered a conducive and friendly environment for learning to where there would be more than one student studying the same course so that it would be easy for them to study and discuss together. Some of their supporting comments were;

It is an environment where my teaching load is reduced to allow me integrate learning and studies.

... where I am exempted from certain duties like exemption from remaining back after working hours to teach standard four and seven.

I would prefer an environment where there is more than one student so that it is easy to discuss together.

Moreover, the above findings have indicated that, majority of respondents considered conducive and friendly workplace for learning as the one where students get enough time for their studies and where they would get support from their employers and co-workers. They highlighted that, while employers would support them financially

beside other support services, co-workers would assist them to perform their duties when they are studying. It was further revealed that a conducive workplace for learning is where there is good infrastructure for learning like availability of internet services and electricity power. Despite the stated findings, this study has revealed that most workplaces where these respondents worked lacked what was considered to be conducive and friendly workplace for learning.

These findings agree with those of Gert et al. (2014). In their study, Gert et al. (2014) found that workplace climate like employers' support and good learning infrastructure directly influenced employees' approaches to learning. These findings concur with the findings from this study where most respondents considered employers' support and good learning infrastructure as determinants of conducive workplace for learning. However, their study differs from this as most of their respondents were motivated to learn despite the prevailed workplace climate.

Also, the findings by Caruso (2017) concur with the findings of this study. Caruso found that workplace formed a valuable intangible asset which allowed students to share their knowledge and skills, especially the sharing of the knowledge and skills valuable to their learning. This study also has identified the role of knowledge sharing amongst co-workers and its advantages to employees who are learning. However, this study differs from that of Caruso in that majority of respondents have considered other factors like sufficient time for study and availability of good learning infrastructure at workplaces as contributors to conducive environment for learning.

Another question required them to comment on the relationship between workplace and learning environment. Basing on organizational learning environment theory, the question was developed to determine whether the learners' workplace was supportive of their learning. The question was: How do you relate your workplace with learning environment?

According to findings, majority of respondents thought that their workplaces were not favourable environment for learning. Only few respondents related their workplaces as favourable for learning. It was found that most respondents who related their workplaces with environments which are not favourable for learning reported insufficient time for study at workplace as the major hindrance to their learning. They said that they lack time for studies because their school timetable is very tight to allow them get time for studies. They wrote;

I consider my workplace not supportive to my learning because my work time table does not give me enough time for group discussion with my colleagues whom we are studying the same course and work together but each of us is always busy with work and no even a single hour for discussion.

Another respondent wrote;

My workplace does not allow me to study freely, for example I have insufficient time for study, learning infrastructure is poor and I get less support from my employer.

From the findings above, it may be said that majority of distance learning students lack adequate time for studies at their workplaces. There might be some reasons for

this, including unbalanced ratio between teachers and pupils hence making teachers busy with teaching and lack time for studies. This is partly because of the current government policy on free primary education, which has led to high pupils' enrollment.

Few respondents who related their workplaces with favourable learning environment commented that;

My workplace is very friendly for learning. I have ample time for studies, the school has electricity and there are enough teachers therefore my teaching load is very manageable.

Another response was that;

My workplace is very conducive for learning. I am in good terms with my fellow teachers and there are graduate colleagues at my work place who are very much supportive to me.

Mostly, the findings contradict with organizational learning theories which state that an organization should facilitate the learning of all its employees and should have a climate in which individual members are encouraged to learn and to develop their full potential. The findings have revealed that, workplace environment of most respondents was not favourable for learning as there was poor learning infrastructure and inadequate time for studies, just to mention few. This is true of the Tanzanian context where infrastructure of most public primary schools where most respondents work are overcrowded by students and teachers may only have staff rooms to seat and would hardly get venues for their studies.

4.5 How Distance Students Use Knowledge from the Study in Their Work

The third and the last objective was set to solicit information on how distance learning students used their knowledge from study in their work. The question was: How do they use their knowledge from the study in their work? Questionnaire was used to get information from 35 students. The main findings indicated that most distance students used their knowledge from the study in their work by improving their job performances, solving work related challenges and provision of guidance and counseling support services at their workplaces. These findings concur with other findings in this study which indicated that respondents' job and their programme of study were related and therefore they would easily apply what they learn at college in their work.

Some respondents provided the following comments in relation to how they improved their job performances using knowledge they obtained from the study;

I have changed academically since I joined this programme, I have acquired learning techniques and I have developed a reading habit than before. Previously I only relied on the available sources at school when I was going to teach my students but now I prepare for a period thoroughly before entering the class by reading various sources of information.

Another respondent wrote;

I am now teaching with confidence because I have gained new knowledge especially on participatory teaching and learning techniques.

Furthermore, some respondents who were in administrative positions like head teachers and ward education officers reported to have improved job performances

using knowledge specifically gained from courses related to their carrier, for example, management course. They had the following comments;

Being the ward education coordinator, I have gained enough experience on leadership and management and I now manage well monitoring all schools under my ward.

From this finding, it is clear that there is a need for employers to regularly provide in-service training especially for employees who are in various official positions so as to remind them of their roles. The fact that what was only obtained from the leadership and management course enabled some respondents to improve their work would mean the course content was relevant, but it could also mean that the respondents lacked proper prior knowledge relevant to their job.

The findings have also revealed that respondents used the knowledge obtained from the study in solving various work-related challenges like assisting their colleagues in areas that they lacked adequate knowledge. In some instances, it was reported that respondents were invited to teach pupils the so called “tough topics”. It was written by one respondent that;

I was once requested by my fellow teacher to assist him teaching English grammar in standard six and I did so.

The implication from the above finding is that, respondents’ colleagues at workplace believed that there is knowledge gain if one advances his or her carrier, but there is an implication that some teachers lack adequate knowledge to teach certain topics and therefore, some pupils are fed wrong subject content. Therefore, in-service training programmes should always be done to keep employees up to date.

Other respondents explained how gained knowledge assisted them in handling various challenges amongst adolescents. All respondents for this study were professionally teachers, meaning they already covered some aspects on psychology during their course of study at colleges and had prior knowledge on how to handle teenagers. But, it seems they acquired extra knowledge, which improved their way of handling matters related to their pupils especially amongst adolescents. Probably curriculum for primary school teachers should be improved to capture all what a teacher is supposed to acquire in relation to the pupils' needs. One respondent had the following comment;

I have gained knowledge from psychology on how to assist teenagers, specifically on learning challenges associated with their age.

Moreover, some respondents said that, they used knowledge obtained from their study to provide guidance and counseling support services to their colleagues and pupils. This finding may provide an implication that some schools lacked professionals who would provide guidance and counseling services, not only to pupils, but also to teachers. In this case the reflection may be that, had it been the respondents did not join the programme, there would not be guidance and counseling services provided. One respondent wrote;

After coming back from studies, I have begun providing guidance and counseling services to my pupils on proper study habits and how to avoid bad company.

The afore discussed findings indicated that most distance students used their knowledge from the study at their workplaces by improving their job performances,

solving work related challenges and provision of guidance and counseling support services at their workplaces. From these findings, it is true that employees' carrier development is essential in improving work efficiency at workplaces bearing in mind that time changes and new things emerge in the system.

The findings seem to concur with human resource development theories, which emphasize on knowledge and skills of employees to be constantly developed to be in line with changes and new technologies. According to these theories, the goal of learning is for employees to master the knowledge, skills, and behaviours and apply them to their day-to-day activities.

Furthermore, the findings seem to agree with those of Waller (2011). Waller found that programmes learned provided participants with the means to do their jobs better and improved the quality of their work. His study differs from this in that his respondents applied much of the learning in tackling unfamiliar tasks, gained confidence and saw benefits to their ways of working.

The findings also seem to concur with those of Lee and Doyle (2007) who found that some students solved their employer's problems related to employment contracts, tenancy laws, and investments by refining and confirming the problems through their course materials and textbooks to research and get the options. However, their study differs from this in that, their respondents found learning beneficial for work and it was an opportunity for them to earn more respect at work as they demonstrated the relevance of their learning to their employers.

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings for this study. The study was guided by three objectives. The first objective was to examine the ways employed students in open and distance learning managed socio-economic challenges facing them; the second objective was to assess ways diploma students related workplaces with learning environment and the third objective was to assess ways diploma students integrated their knowledge into work. The findings show that ODL diploma students developed various strategies as a mechanism to manage challenges that they faced during their studies. For example, they used evening and night time for their studies, took loans from financial institutions, studied during weekends and sought part time teachers. The study further found that majority of respondents thought that their workplaces were not favourable learning environment. Moreover, it was revealed that most distance students use their knowledge to improve their job performances, solved work-related challenges and provided guidance and counseling support services at their workplaces.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study findings, the significance of the findings, conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study. The summary of findings, conclusions and recommendation are based on the challenges perceived by students pursuing diploma at the Institute of Adult Education. The chapter also has presented the suggestions and recommendations for further studies.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

The purpose of this study was to analyze challenges perceived by students pursuing diploma at the Institute of Adult Education. The findings of the first objective revealed that distance students managed challenges facing them by using evening and night time for study, taking loans from financial institutions, studying during weekends and seeking part time teachers. It was further found that students had to seek financial support from family and friends and saving money for payment of tuition fee. Mechanisms used to manage challenges show that respondents had a lot of responsibilities at workplaces, which did not give them a room for studies. Also, the implication from the findings is that majority of respondents had low economic power that they were forced to loan and seek financial assistance from family members and friends. Partly, this may mean primary school teachers who were respondents for this study are paid inadequate salaries. Moreover, it seemed that majority of the respondents had a feeling that it is difficult for distance learning

students to study without being taught by a teacher in the class hence they hired part time teachers.

These findings corroborate with those of Beccaria (2013) who found that distance learning students used proactive approaches such as time management to best meet the demands of family, work, and study to cope with social challenges facing them. Beccaria's findings differ from the findings of this study in that most of his respondents maximized their time to study using moments within their day (e.g., lunch breaks) and used health-promoting behaviours like participating in recreational activities such as watching television to manage social challenges facing them.

Further, the findings concur with those of Nguyen and Halliday (2014) who found that students used variety of ways to cope with financial challenge faced them. For example, photocopying relevant sections of the book instead of buying the whole book and depended on their family and friends for financial assistance which included paying for transport (bus/train passes, petrol or car registration). However, Nguyen and Halliday's findings differ from the findings of this study in that their respondents depended on their partners for domestic activities like cooking and doing housework around examinations time to allow them to study.

Some of these findings partly contradict with Ujamaa philosophy in the context of Tanzania, especially where findings revealed that respondents took loans and sought financial assistance from family members and friends to cover study costs. Ujamaa philosophy cultivated amongst Tanzanians a sense of being self-reliant, both

economically and culturally. Economically, everyone would work for both the group and for him/herself; culturally, Tanzanians must learn to free themselves from dependence. For Nyerere, this included Tanzanians learning to do things for themselves and learning to be satisfied with what they could achieve as an independent state. For this matter, respondents of this study would also learn to be economically independent and by looking for other ways to get money than merely depending on loans and seeking assistance from family members and friends.

The findings of the second objective revealed that majority of respondents thought that their workplaces were not favourable learning environment. The major reason identified by most respondents was inadequate time for studies and unfriendly learning infrastructure at workplaces. It was evident from the findings that, most respondents were tasked with many responsibilities at workplaces, specifically heavy teaching load due to inadequate number of teachers in relation to the number of pupils. Further, the findings have indicated that, most workplace environments had poor learning infrastructure including lack of electricity power and lack of studying venues.

In the context of Tanzania, the situation in most public primary schools is still not promising despite the government initiatives to make Tanzania a middle economy country by 2025. This is supported by Matete (2016) who found that abolition of school fees at primary school level appeared to have increased the enrolment of standard I pupils. As a result, teaching and learning have been compromised by large classes and a shortage of teachers. The number of teachers has not kept pace with

expanding enrolments. It was further found that teachers complained of a heavy work load and poor infrastructure in such a way that some of them sat outside in the corridor and performed their duties like marking pupils' work.

The findings of the last research objective showed that most distance students used their knowledge from the study by improving their job performances, solving work related challenges and by providing guidance and counseling support services at their workplaces. These findings show that before joining the programme, most respondents had low efficiency in some areas of work because they lacked adequate knowledge related to their work that they were doing. The findings therefore provide the insight that workers who do not regularly upgrade their carrier are likely to underperform at work.

The above findings relate with those of Leberman (1999) who found that, upon completion of their studies, graduates adopted skills learned in the class in improving service delivery to their clients at workplaces. Also, Lee and Bruvold (2003) underlined that employee development is crucial in keeping and improving the abilities of employees at the workplace. Findings from both studies have earmarked that there is knowledge gap between employees who upgraded their carrier and those who did not and hence difference on work efficiency between the two groups.

According to the World Development Report (2016), technological change means that many routine tasks will soon be done by machines which will make many tasks carried out in white-collar jobs redundant. In contrast, education systems have been

slow to respond to this challenge. Furthermore, the pace of change is fast, and the types of skills in demand change quickly. So, workers will have to upgrade their skills frequently throughout their careers. These findings are relevant to the Tanzanian context where like in other countries, organizations strive to compete in the labour market. This can only be successful if both the employees and their employers make learning a lifelong process to cope with the rapidly changing world. Distance education is one way in which more flexible learning opportunities can be offered.

The findings imply that distance students lack adequate time for studies at their workplaces, therefore they use evening time after working hours and week end days for their studies. There is still feeling amongst some distance students that they cannot study alone without a teacher like in conventional education setting. All the same, the findings imply that some distance students' financial status is not adequate to cover family and educational needs.

Furthermore, the study findings also imply that some workplaces do not have good learning environment like support from the employer and well-developed learning infrastructure to allow integration of work and learning.

Moreover, the study findings provide the insight that efficiency at workplaces may be attained if workers upgrade their carriers and acquire new knowledge which in turn it is utilized at workplaces to improve their job performances. The implication is also that there are various challenges at workplaces and may be solved by learning proper ways of solving them.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it is evident that employed students in open and distance learning face challenges that hinder them from effective learning including lack of adequate time for studies. It is true from the findings that most distance students integrating work and learning may not perform better in their studies, not because they are incompetent but only because time for studies is not enough. The findings have also found that students had to seek financial support from family and friends and serving money for payment of tuition fee. Therefore, unless these students are supported financially, some of them may fail to accomplish their studies.

On the other hand, it has been revealed from the findings that most workplaces are either not favourable or less favourable learning environments where students can easily integrate work and learning. It is therefore true that there is a need to improve workplaces to be favourable for learning to take place, especially the environment that will favor integration of work and learning.

It has also been indicated in this study, that some workers under perform in their duties because they lacked proper skills on what they were doing. Therefore, they have to upgrade their carrier so as to improve their performances. This is evident because the findings have indicated that respondents used knowledge from study to improve their job performances. Basing on the findings, one may also conclude that there are various work-related challenges at workplaces which need guidance and counseling support services. Therefore, there must be mechanisms to address them by having people with skills on this area.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based along the study findings, the following are recommendations on how to ensure challenges facing distance students integrating work and learning are efficiently addressed;

- (i) Employers of distance students should find the proper way to provide their employee with at least few study hours in their school timetables. For example, this may be done by reducing work load and exempting from certain duties employees who are studying.
- (ii) Students are encouraged not to depend on loans but open up various projects that may add their income and enable them tackle financial challenges like lack of tuition fees.
- (iii) Distance students are encouraged to adopt ICT skills that will enable them access easily various study materials even if their workplaces have poor learning infrastructures. For example, a student can simply use his or her cellular phone to access study materials.
- (iv) The Institute of Adult Education (IAE) which is offering the programme should strive to ensure their students are provided with all support services necessary for a distance student to study comfortably when away from the study centre. For example, the IAE would establish an Online Management System Platform on its website to enable easy accessibility of study materials by students.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

This study on challenges perceived by diploma students at the Institute of Adult Education has partly enlightened the effective ways of addressing challenges perceived by distance diploma students at the Institute of Adult Education. It is important that this study is done in other higher learning institutions of Tanzania offering their courses through Open and Distance Learning. Preferably, another subject area can be extended to distance education students' satisfaction level in quality of education.

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APENDICES

Appendix 1

Appendix I: Questionnaires for ODL Diploma Students at the Institute of Adult Education at Tabora Regional Study Centre

Topic: Analysis of Challenges Perceived by Students Pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education

Dear Respondent,

My name is **JUSTINE GOODHOPE MBWAMBO**, currently pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania. I am doing research on “**Analysis of Challenges perceived by students pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education**”

I kindly request you to complete this questionnaire as truthfully and accurately as possible. The researcher undertakes to keep your information confidential and that it will only be used for the purpose of this study. Thank you very much for your time and efforts to complete this questionnaire.

Please mark/ fill in the applicable blocks/space to indicate your current status

1. Sex (Male/Female):
2. Age:
3. Working Experience (in years):
4. Location of your working station (Rural/Urban):
5. Marital Status: Married/Divorced/ Single/Widow/Widower.....
6. Number of Children:
7. Position/title at work:

A: The ways employed ODL Diploma students manage socio-economic challenges facing them

1. What are the challenges facing you? Please, mention;

.....

2. What kind of support do you get from the following?

1. Your employer:

.....

2. Institution offering your studies:

.....

3. Family and friends:

.....

3. How do you manage the challenges facing you?

.....

B: Ways Diploma Students Relate Workplaces with Learning Environment

4. How do you rate your working place in relation to learning?

1. Highly supportive, 2. Supportive, 3. Less supportive, 4. Not supportive

Please, provide any comments for your choice above.

.....

5. I have enough time from my employer to pursue my studies

1. Strong agree, 2. Agree, 3. Slightly agree, 4. Disagree, 5. Strong disagree

Please, provide any comments for your choice above.

.....

.....

.....

6. What do you consider to be conducive and friendly work place for your studies?

.....

.....

.....

7. How do you relate your workplace with learning environment?

.....

.....

.....

C: Ways Diploma Students integrate their knowledge into work

8. What is the relationship between your job and the programme of study? (tick what is applicable)

1. Highly related, 2. Closely related, 3. Less related, 4. Not related

☐

Please explain

.....

.....

.....

9. How do you use your knowledge from the study in your work?

.....

.....

.....

Appendix II: Focus Group Discussion

Respondents for Focus Group Discussion:

Topic: Analysis of Challenges Perceived by Students Pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education

S/N	Sex	Age	Education level	Occupation
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Questions

1. How do you manage work and study?
2. Please explain the relationship between your work and what you learnt in college.
3. Please explain how you use the knowledge gained to solve some of the challenges at your workplace.

Appendix III: Interview Schedule for the IAE Deputy Director

Interview schedule for the IAE Deputy Director (Academic Research and Consultancy), Tabora Municipality Adult Education Officer, Head of Distance Education Department at the Institute of Adult Education, Diploma Programme (ODL) Coordinator at the Institute of Adult Education, Lecturers at the Institute of Adult Education and employers of ODL Diploma students.

Topic: Analysis of Challenges Perceived by Students Pursuing Diploma at the Institute of Adult Education

Sex	Age	Education Level	Occupation

1. What are the challenges facing ODL diploma students studying at the Institute of Adult Education?
2. What kind of support do you provide to ODL diploma students studying at the Institute of Adult Education?
3. What competences do ODL Diploma students expected to gain to demonstrate at workplaces?

Appendix IV: Research Clearance Letter

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS, AND POSTGRADUATE STUDIES



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22/6/2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE

The Open University of Tanzania was established by an act of Parliament no. 17 of 1992. The act became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notes No. 55 in the official Gazette. Act number 7 of 1992 has now been replaced by the Open University of Tanzania charter which is in line the university act of 2005. The charter became operational on 1st January 2007. One of the mission objectives of the university is to generate and apply knowledge through research. For this reason staff and students undertake research activities from time to time.

To facilitate the research function, the vice chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania was empowered to issue a research clearance to both staff and students of the university on behalf of the government of Tanzania and the Tanzania Commission of Science and Technology.

The purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **MBWAMBO, JUSTINE GOODHOPE, with Reg. No. PG201404189** who is a Master student at the Open University of Tanzania. By this letter, **Mr. MBWAMBO** has been granted clearance to conduct research in the country. The title of his research is **"ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS PURSUING DIPLOMA AT THE INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION"**. The research will be conducted in Tabora District. The period which this permission has been granted is from **26/6/2017 to 25/07/2017**.

In case you need any further information, please contact:

The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic); The Open University of Tanzania; P.O. Box 23409; Dar Es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and facilitation of this research activity.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Hossea Rwegoshora
For: VICE CHANCELLOR
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA