

**Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions towards Inclusive
Education and Its Practice in Tanzania: A Case of Iringa
District Council**

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Abstract

This study explored teachers' and parents' perceptions towards inclusive education in Iringa District Council. A phenomenological research design was deployed to achieve the study objective. The study sample constituted 10 special education teachers and 24 regular teachers. The study also involved 12 parents whose children attended inclusive classes. The findings indicated that most teachers had negative perceptions about including pupils with disabilities in regular classrooms, whereas parents viewed them positively. Most of the teachers' perceptions were influenced by the situation of the learning environment, especially resources and their conceptualization about inclusion. The parents, on the other hand, doubted the attitudes of the teachers in the inclusive classrooms and the school management to effectively deal with disabilities. Therefore, further sensitization of teachers and parents on the education to children with disability and inclusive strategy is highly needed.

Keywords: Inclusion, Perceptions, Inclusive Education, Restrictive Environment

1.0 Introduction

Inclusive education has been conceived not only as a phenomenon but also a philosophy grounded on United Nations Conventional on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) (UNCRPD, 2006; United Nations 2016). Essentially, the idea of inclusive education has gained impetus due to various declarations including and not limited to The International year of the Disabled (1981), The Convention of the Right of the Child (1989), The Jomtien World Declarations in the Education for All (EFA) 1990 followed by the Dakar framework 2000, The Standard Rule on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1893), The Salamanca Statement of Frame of Action adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994), The Dakar Framework (2000) proclaimed the Right of the Child to full Primary Education and more profoundly, The education for the Disadvantaged Community such as girls, lepers, ethnic minorities children in different circumstances and the handicapped who have been overlooked in the traditional education system (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2000). Thus, we perceive and it is correct to state that persons with disabilities are members of the society and have the right to be educated within their local communities

Historically, education for persons with disabilities all over the World has been marginal together with provision of social services (Kokkala, 2005; United Nations [UN], 2005). In Europe, for instance, during the medieval, children born with disabilities such as mental, physical, visual or hyperactive were treated as curse and as such were succumbed to abandonment

from the society. However, with time the practice of exterminating disabled persons from social interactions in Tanzania and elsewhere slowly faded away. From the early 1950s, non-governmental associations initiated special education practices in the country by opening schools such as Buigiri in Dodoma, and a few schools in Dar es Salaam, and Tabora (Mbagga, 2002; Tungaraza, 1994). Later, the government took deliberate efforts to strengthen education for disability by first ratifying the EFA declarations on the right of education to all people regardless of their diversities, secondly putting a caption in the national constitution that spelled out categorically the right to quality education of persons with disabilities, which was implemented in the Education Act of 1978, and The Education and Training policy of 1995 and thereafter, the Primary Education Development Plan (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1995).

In Tanzania, inclusive education (IE) started as a charitable movement which involved mostly non-governmental organization (NGO). Tanzania has adopted the philosophy for inclusive education, which states: “learning to know, learning to be and learning to live together” (Jackson *et al.*, 1993). Based on this idea, the government decided to introduce inclusive education firstly as a project, which acted as a pilot study. The objective was to solicit information that would assist the government to make rational decision about the implementation of inclusive education in the country. The first launch was done in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam Region in 1994 (Posi, 2017). The major objective of the pilot project was to collect evidence-based information that would provide the basis for scaling up the programme nationally (Karakoski &

Strom, 2005). In the first three years of piloting, the results indicated that inclusive education was possible and it was deemed as the best strategy to provide education equitably and in a less restrictive environment whereby all the children regardless of their diversities study under the same roof and taught by the same teacher.

Later, the government scaled up the programme to other districts and now it is practiced in the whole country. Districts and municipals were urged to make sure that in every school, children with disabilities are included in the regular classrooms and taught alongside others except children with profound handicapping conditions, such as mentally retarded children (Kisanji, 2007). Furthermore, different associations have been formed such as Tanzania League of the Blind, Tanzania Association of the Deaf, Organization of the people with Disabilities in general known as the Association of the Disabled (TAD), Tanzania Association of Albinos, Tanzania Association of the Blind (TSB), and Tanzania Society for the Physically Handicapped to spearhead the process of inclusion and education for people with disability as a whole.

Currently, Tanzania practises both special and inclusive schools for disability such as Mgulan Primary School and Buguruni Secondary School all are situated in Dar salaam. There are regular schools with inclusive classrooms, for example, Uhuru Co-education in Dar es Salaam (URT, 2008). For example, in 2010, there were 34 special education units in the country with almost 1,615 visually impaired school children. For the case of secondary education, in 2010, there were 16 secondary schools enrolling visually impaired children countrywide with a total of

539 visually impaired students who were enrolled in schools such as Mpwapwa Secondary School in Dodoma (URT, 2010).

More importantly, the government has declared that all municipalities and district councils should make sure that children with disabilities access to education in an inclusive setting in which students with and without disability study together (URT, 2010). In order to spearhead the process of inclusion, the government formulated policies that focused more on inclusive education, for example, the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2009-2017) to enforce equality in education provision and access. The strategies included financing and resourcing inclusive education, developing curricula and learning materials to support learning, and developing inclusive assessment and evaluation tools for students and teachers were put forward (URT, 2008). Again, the United Republic of Tanzania passed the Persons with Disability Act of 2010 (9), which focuses on equity and protection of persons with disabilities, provision of education and training in inclusive settings (URT, 2008). Lastly, the National Policy for Disability (NPD) of 2004 to oblige the government and other stakeholders to provide early intervention services to children with special needs, and ensuring conducive learning environment for inclusive education (URT, 2004).

The Government of Tanzania declared explicitly that education to children with disabilities in school is a priority in its development plans (URT, 2017). For example, according to a report issued by the government in 2018, a total of 49,625 (Albino 2,778), autism (1,846), deaf mute (7,212), deaf blind (806), intellectual disability (15,177), physical disability

(14806), poor vision (5,849) and visual impairment (1,151) were in school. Proudly, in 2020, a total of 2,943 (blind 86), visually impaired (895), hearing impairment (739), mentally retarded (286) and physical handicap (937) sat for the Primary School Leaving Examination (Daily News, October 7, 2020). Despite the continued movement towards inclusive education; however, studies (Tungaraza, 2010) have found that the situation is still impressive. Pupils with disabilities included in regular classes are not learning and this leaves a lot of questions that demand immediate responses and attention. Such questions are what perceptions do teachers and parents have towards inclusive education? What influences teachers' and parents' perceptions about inclusive education? Do the perceptions towards inclusion of disabilities differ between special education teachers and regular teachers and among parents whose children attend inclusive classes? To address those questions a rigorous research was imperative.

However, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) ratified the United Nations declarations on the Right to Education for all persons regardless of their diversity and later the formulation of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2007-2017) to enforce equality in education provision and access (URT, 2010). Apparently, inclusive education for people with disabilities is unnoticed and that big population does not get access to it. The few existing schools offer services to specific disabilities such as visual and hearing and the schools are residential (Kisanji, 1997). Today, even though the demand of education services to disabled people is high, the situation has not changed remarkably. The need for expansion of education services particularly, inclusive education calls for

deliberate efforts not only on the part of the charitable organization by and large on the part of the government. However, one of the obstacles that seemingly effected the actualization of the government endeavors towards inclusive education was the mindset of the practitioners including the teachers and the parents (Tungaraza, 2018).

In Tanzania, like elsewhere teachers and parents have the power to influence successful implementation of inclusive education (Mbagga 2002). In other words, teachers and parents by virtue of their positions have the power to ensure children with disabilities are enrolled in schools and far in inclusive settings (URT, 2004). But, the fact that most teachers perceive children with disabilities as special and less able in terms of intellectual ability, this has a tremendous effect in the learning of these children (Kisanji, 1997). In many of the schools that have tried to include children with disability in the regular classrooms, those children do not learn because teachers perceive them as children who belong to special group and with special treatment (Madai, 2008)). As a result, children with disabilities attend classes but receive no education. The conclusion that can be drawn is that teachers in particular, seem to perceive children with disability negatively and less prepared to handle them accordingly. On the other side, parents affected by the long rooted conceptions about disability add to the same. This paradox has motivated the researchers to find out what perceptions do the schoolteachers and the parents whose children attend inclusive education have towards inclusion of disabilities. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore teachers' and parents' perceptions towards inclusive education and its practice in Iringa district council.

1.1 The Concept of Inclusion and Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education (IE) is the process of attitudinal change; change of attitudes at community level has an impact in fostering enrolment, acceptance and interaction at school level (URT, 2007). It is also understood as a means to broaden educational opportunities for children with disabilities and marginalized groups to realize their full potentials. The term marginalized group, on the other hand, has been used to refer to people such as the hunters, and gatherers, fishing community, pastoralists' orphanage children and as far the street children.

Inclusive education is understood as a process of addressing instructional needs for all students with disabilities and other special needs in the mainstreamed setting. It is based on the principle that individuals are different and may present special needs based on non-extrinsic limitations and therefore, the education system and practice are expected to be flexible enough to adapt to individual needs (Inter University Council for East Africa [IUCEA], 2017). Therefore, the role of the school is to make sure that such groups are accommodated regardless of their diversities. Inclusive education should feature in its focus of revitalizing those who have been traditionally denied of their full participation in the social interactions instead of being stigmatized and marginalized.

Furthermore, inclusive education is a purposeful intervention designed to prevent, eliminate, and or overcome the obstacles that might keep an individual with disabilities from learning and from full and active participation in school and society (Blenk *et al.*, 1995; Howard, 2006). This means that inclusive education is a profession with its own history, cultural practices tools and research base focused on the learning needs of

exceptional children and adults. Broadly, inclusive education refers to the process of integrating children with disability in a regular classroom; the focus is valuing and acceptance of difference and rights of all students (Booth, Winslow & Kearney, 2009; Skrtic, 1991). In this context, inclusive education refers to the situation in which students with different disabilities receive instruction together with students without disabilities in similar learning environment.

1.1.1 Models of inclusion

Inclusion as a phenomenon and as practice features in different models. The models are explained in terms of types of placements of each exhibit. Madai (2008) identifies six models, and they are described in relation to the manner in which children with disabilities are included full time in ordinary classroom, most time in ordinary classroom, full time in special class/unit, most time in special class/unit, full time in special school, and full time in special institution. However, these models can well be categorized into mainstreamed settings and specialized classrooms or units. Mainstreaming includes both full time ordinary classroom and most time ordinary classroom (Madai, 2008). The full time in ordinary classroom inclusion means students with disabilities are placed in a normal classroom and are taught alongside other students who are non-disabled. They all receive the same instructional materials under the same teacher or instructor and these include; children with low vision, mild hearing impairment, physically handicapped and Albinos. Disabilities such as severe hearing visually impaired and mentally retarded are better placed in full time special school/units in which they are provided with special assistive devices and specialized instructional programs.

According to Odorn (2000), there are three stages of inclusion, namely: mainstreaming, integration and recently inclusion. Main steaming refers to the re-entry of children with mild disabilities into regular education programmes. Generally, main streaming has been understood as the practice of removing children from their special education classrooms for part of the day and placing them in general education classes (McLean & Hanline, 1990).

1.2 The Paradox of Inclusion

The belief that Inclusion would address marginalization of people in education has sometimes remained a dream (Mmbaga, 2002). This contention could be exemplified in the following scenario: A blind child aged 2 years goes to schools with the help of other students. At school, this student attends the inspection ceremony according to school routine and thereafter goes to class. During Kiswahili lesson, the teacher conducts a reading lesson. Most of the students who follow the reading lesson are the sighted. This student, who is blind, does not participate in any of the reading exercises (Twaweza, 2013). Physically, the blind student is included in the classroom, she is sitting in the same class as the sighted students, but when it comes to learning, obviously this blind child does not learn. The question is: is this an inclusive classroom? Basing on this scenario, it is clear that for inclusion to be a reality the following conditions that should be considered: the preparedness of the schools and the administration in general to implement inclusion (Power-de Fur & Orelove, 1997), the ratio of students and teachers in the classroom; the collaboration between regular and special education teachers; behaviour management practices; acceptance and involvement of parents

of students with and without disabilities in education system (Worthington, 1998).

Further, research (Mmbaga, 2002; Lieber *et al.*, 2000; Tungaraza, 2018) has identified the following factors that tend to influence effective implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania: negative social attitude towards children with disabilities, prevalence of environmental and communication barriers, poverty, lack of knowledge and skills to manage the teaching and learning of the children with special, educational needs and lack of awareness of parents and community. In addition, the prevalence of untrained teachers, absence of appropriate teaching and learning materials and equipment for children with disabilities. Therefore, for inclusion to be a reality, literature (Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997; URT, 2007 & Poverty Alleviation Seminar, Nairobi, 2007) suggest the following conditions: firstly, the teaching content for an inclusive classroom should be modified to meet special education needs and to allow for flexibility to suit the environment that is friendly to children with disabilities. Secondly, professionals should acquaint with the relevant teaching methodology that responds to individual needs, knowledge and skills to children with disabilities. Thirdly, teaching and learning resources including the teaching materials should be adaptive to all groups of children. Generally, the literature establishes that inclusive education is yet to be achieved. Therefore, further research is required.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study employed qualitative approach in data collection. Interview guides and semi-structured interview items were the

principal means of data collection. In research, Creswell (2013) indicates that interviews have gained considerable attention in generation of freedom of expression among participants. The researchers' interest was to find out teachers and parents perceptions towards inclusive education and its practices. This study used qualitative descriptive research design to collect information from the respondents about their perceptions towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities in regular classes. Through this design, the researchers were able to make conclusions regarding the respondent's perceptions about the phenomenon. This study was conducted in Iringa District Council. The selection of Iringa District Council was based on: firstly, this district has more experience in the implementation of inclusive education and secondly, it has the highest number of pupils with different disabilities in the region (327) compared to other districts such as Iringa Municipality (256), Kilolo (279), Mufindi (252) (Basic Education Statistics and Regional Report [BEST], 2018).

2.1 Data Collection and Sampling Techniques

This study used purposive sampling techniques to obtain the sample. In a purposive sampling, usually the researcher selects individuals at his/her discretion for the study. The sample of this study constituted 34 (10 special education and 24 regular teachers) and 12 parents whose children attended inclusive education. The process of data collection, in this study, was mainly through interview guides and semi-structured interview items. Interviews were administered to both teachers and parents aimed at obtaining their experience and perceptions towards inclusion of disabilities in regular classrooms. Bradbury *et al.* (2009) and Hummelvoll (2008) argue

interviews are particularly suitable when inquiring into peoples' experience and views, as they bring their values, social interactions and differing experiences, and their way of interpreting and responding to the world. Thus, the main reason for using interviews in the study was essentially to obtain deeper insights of the respondent's ideas, experience and views regarding the problem under study.

2.2 Data Analysis Procedures

Content analysis was employed as the principal technique during data analysis. It is the process of open coding to establish categories and subcategories or category of description was performed. The coding process also involved identification of themes and forming meaning of the themes. Table of main category and sub-categories was made to allow deeper understanding of the main ideas that were studied (Strauss & Corbin, 2010). In addition, narratives were used to describe the phenomenon. Reliability and validity were ensured through peer reviewer reading through the data to verify that the themes and categories correspond to the research questions and were properly analyzed. Presentation of the research findings is preceded by the demographic information of the teachers participated in the study.

Table 2.1: Teachers' Information (N=34)

School	Special Education Teacher	Regular Teacher	Total
A	2	6	8
B	3	5	8
C	2	6	8
D	3	7	10
Total	10	24	34

Source: Field data, 2019.

Table 2.1 shows only 29% of teachers teaching in the schools which practiced inclusion had training on special education and over 70% were regular teachers (teachers without any training in special education).

3.0 Results

3.1 Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

The findings from the study showed that teachers had multiple perceptions about including pupils with disabilities in regular classrooms. Some teachers showed positive perceptions, while about half of them indicated negative perceptions and argued that children with disabilities should be taught separately with special assistance from experts. Moreover, they perceived children with disabilities required specialized instructional materials and approaches and therefore they deserve to be placed in special units. In addition, mostly regular teachers added the same as they argued that teaching and managing a class with diverse learners was a burden. To confirm the above statements one of the regular teachers complained:

You meet some students who cannot express themselves. Others too cannot read normal books because they have low vision and they just don't know what to do to help them [A Teacher at Primary School B: September, 2019].

As illustrated in the foregoing quote, some teachers were reluctant towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities in their classes as they realized that they could not help such pupils to learn. Generally, teachers both trained in special education and untrained or regular viewed inclusive education as a difficult process due to various reasons including unsupportive learning environment in the schools, lack of relevant teaching and learning materials and absence of assistive devices to pupils especially visually impaired. In addition, special education teachers in particular though demonstrated more positive perceptions they urged that school management should sensitize the other teachers within their schools on issues pertaining to inclusion.

However, the responses from the parents who were involved in this study revealed diverse perceptions about inclusive education which were categorized into positive and negative perspectives. About three quarters of the parents were positive towards inclusion of disabilities. They viewed inclusive education as an ideal practice that needs to be promoted however; they were concerned about the capacity of regular schools to promote the learning of these children. Besides, some held negative perception about inclusive education they considered that schools lacked the capacity to accommodate children with different disabilities due to lack of resources

required to support learning. Notwithstanding, some parents expressed their concern about the preparedness of the teachers to support inclusive education. Hence, they recommended their children to be taught in special schools than inclusive schools as one of the parents remarked:

We like to educate our children in inclusive setting but, there is acute shortage of resources such as hearing aids, Braille, and other assistive devices. My child was placed in the inclusion last year, at the end of the year; I found the child had learned very little, the 3Rs were not well mastered [A Parent from School B: September, 2019].

Generally, although most parents conceived inclusive education positively because it promoted equity, equality and socialization, minimizes disparity, eliminates stigmatization and discrimination in education, some were negative because they considered teachers did not have the required capacity to deal with inclusion issues effectively.

3.2 Factors Influencing Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions towards Inclusive Education

The findings indicated that teachers' and parents' perceptions towards inclusion and inclusive education were influenced by a number of factors, for example teachers were influenced by: multiple conditions. The factors were systematically categorized in four themes conceptualization of the inclusive education, expertise in inclusive education, teaching resource and external support.

3.2.1 Conceptualization and expertise in inclusive education

Over half of the teachers conceived inclusive education as a place where children with disabilities and those without disabilities are taught together. Less than half of the teachers focused more on the rearing of those children. However, a few conceived inclusive education as a process of acquiring language skills and social ethics. Further, analysis revealed inadequate expertise in inclusive education particularly for teaching children with disabilities and mentally retarded influenced teachers' perception towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities. This can be seen in the following statement:

I like teaching inclusive class but an expert teacher should be present during the lesson because don't have the expertise. This discourages me teaching in this class. Without training, it is difficult to manage the class effectively with diverse groups [Regular Teacher, School C: September, 2019].

A similar statement was made by another regular teacher regarding what influenced her perception towards inclusion of disabilities in regular classes. This is what was said:

I like to have several subjects in nth inclusive classroom as it provides a wide range of knowledge; the problem that might arise in how to teach across the diverse groups as they require special skill and strategy which I miss [Teacher X from School A: September, 2019].

3.2.2 Teaching resources

Availability of teaching and learning resources was the most influential condition that motivated teachers teaching inclusive education class. In school where resources were scarce or not available, both trained and untrained teachers were less motivated. The following precept explains:

I like teaching inclusive class because most of the resources are available for example we have braille machine and braille papers for the visually impaired. We have also resources for the low vision and mild hearing. It is easy to communicate with the children with disability [A Special Education Teacher, School D, 2019].

3.2.3 External support

The more the decision makers supported inclusion made great impact inclusive practitioners including the teachers who are in schools. To confirm this one of the teachers said:

If we receive support from higher authorities such as District Education Office, Regional Education Office and the ministry at large, we can teach and like inclusion. But, if we are not supported either from the authority or from other external interested people or companies, we lose morale teaching inclusive classes. We want people who can help in the improvement of the poor school infrastructure in most schools [Teacher Y from School D: September, 2019].

Nevertheless, there was an incongruence regarding what influenced teachers perceptions towards inclusive education practices between the experts and non-experts in special education; however, the most outstanding conditions were state of resources, situation and level of expertise and the extent to which inadequate external support was in place and the state of infrastructure in schools. Parents' perceptions were mostly influenced by a myriad of factors such as social interaction, parents' attitudes towards teachers, school capacity to handle children with disabilities in regular classroom, and psychological/emotional.

3.2.4 Social interaction

Social factor was concerned with promoting social integration, development of communication, play, and cooperation between students and teachers. Parents' attitudes towards teachers in this study were rather negative because they thought that teachers did not have the ability to promote effective communication and cooperation with the students with diverse needs. Those teachers do whatever they could to ensure that the weaker pupils also get along with others. Also, parents worried about caring of their children when in school as teachers were not skillful enough to handle difficulty situation in case it occurred. For example, deal with the diverse social background of the pupils (linguistic, emotional and psychological aspects). Regarding the academic aspects, parents were concerned more with the provision of time to pupils in inclusive setting. This is to say teachers' ability to arouse interest of the pupils to learn and work with good relationship with their pupils. This is because parents had observed that there was tendency that the

teacher did not always allocate time in order to give more attention to the special needs pupils.

3.2.5 School capacity and psychological

Regarding capacity of the schools to manage inclusive education practice, most schools did not have enough resources to cater for the different disabilities. Moreover, schools did not have friendly infrastructures such as school fence, stairs, toilets, playgrounds and assistive devices. This factor was concerned with sense of respect, empathy, love, and caring for each other while respecting differences. Most parents were concerned more with teachers' attitudes to demonstrate sense of respect to diverse class, and spread loving spirit to all without discrimination. Consequently, they were worried about the children's safety as teachers tended to create among pupils with disability some sense of insecurity when in an inclusive classroom.

3.2.6 Differences in perceptions towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities between special education teachers and regular teachers and parents whose children attended inclusive classes

The findings from this question revealed moderate variations in perceptions towards inclusion of pupils with different disabilities in regular classrooms. Of the ten special education teachers, over half showed positive perception about inclusion of disability and confirmed that such pupils deserve close assistance from both teacher and peers, while a few demonstrated slightly negative perceptions claimed that they should be included but an expert teacher should be present during the lesson. However, very small number had total

negative perception towards inclusion of disability in regular classrooms.

Further analysis showed that of the twenty-four regular teachers, three-quarters had positive perception towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities in regular classes because they thought that such inclusion will significantly improve pupils' intellectual ability through collaboration with peers. However, less than half of the regular teachers demonstrated negative perceptions as they argued that teaching inclusive class was a burden. Only a small fraction showed moderate perceptions as they claimed that inclusion had both benefits and challenges and so more arrangements must be instituted in terms of resources and expertise. To confirm this one regular teacher commended:

If inclusion is to be a reality, the government should improve the school infrastructure, resources and the teaching profession. It should allocate enough budgets and produce clear policies that would guide the implementation of inclusion in schools (A Teacher from school A: September, 2019).

Generally, the results of this question revealed insignificant difference in perception towards disability inclusion in regular classes. Nevertheless, both trained and untrained or regular teachers viewed inclusive education as having beneficial and challenging aspects to both teachers and pupils.

As far as the parents were concerned, the findings revealed moderate variations in perceptions among parents whose children attend inclusive classes. Of the 12 parents, over half

showed positive perception about inclusion of children with disability and confirmed inclusive classes provided opportunity for disabilities to get close assistance from both teacher and peers, therefore inclusion was the only strategy to achieve this objective. One of the parents whose child attended the inclusive class explained:

I have a child with disability at my home. She attends inclusive education and goes to school together with others. I give her clothes like others and treatment when sick likes others. Teachers love my child like any other children in the class. I love her like her brothers who are not disabled [Parents X during Interview: September 2019].

A few parents thought schools did not have the capacity to manage inclusive education practice because of lack of friendly infrastructure such as school fence, stairs, toilets, playgrounds and assistive devices that would facilitate the learning of children with disability. Nevertheless, many of them were positive towards inclusion of children with disabilities in schools.

4.0 Discussion

There is a noteworthy discrepancy in perceptions between and among teachers and parents towards inclusion of pupils with different disabilities in regular classrooms. The findings from this study revealed that most teachers had negative perceptions towards inclusion of pupils with disabilities except a few. Such perceptions were mostly influenced by the manner in which they interpreted inclusive education and their knowledge base,

the nature of expertise necessary for inclusive education, the situation of resources and the kind of support required for effective implementation of inclusion. These findings were in line with Schwab *et al.* (2019) that teacher's attitudes towards teaching children with disability in schools were rather negative. Tungaraza (2010) found that teachers' negative attitudes persists to-date, although there is some positive societal awareness of disabilities and of persons with disabilities that tend to erupt the positive consistency of providing education to these groups of students which is grounded on intellectual ability of the disabled. Madai (2008) observes teachers refuse to accept a visually impaired child simply because such pupils require special expertise therefore teachers were more prone to support children whose disability did not require extra instructional or management skills on the part of the teacher.

Again, Carroll *et al.* (2003) as well as Schwab *et al.* (2019) found that teachers' perceptions were mostly influenced by the nature and situation of resources in inclusive setting. A study by Krohn-Nydal (2008) confirms that shortage of teaching expertise was a problem in most schools practice inclusive education in Tanzania. This was also observed by Said (2017) in a study which involved primary school teachers in Morogoro and confirmed that teachers were complaining about inadequate skills and knowledge to deal with inclusive education classes.

The findings indicated that parents' perceptions were mostly influenced by the social interaction; the attitudes of the teachers; state of the school management and some psychological or emotional aspects of teacher and children.

Parents were concerned about the learning of their children as they thought that teachers might not be having positive attitudes towards children with disabilities in terms of love, helping attitudes and ability to effectively teach. Parents suggested different placements for children based on their disability. For example, children with profound disability should be placed separately so that they could be taught as per individual needs. This suggestion is in line with Schwab *et al.* (2019) and Narumanchi *et al.* (2011) who content that, inclusive teaching is more effective when individualized programs are instituted. Even though, few parents showed positive attitude towards inclusion, while special education teachers as well as regular teachers confirmed that education was one of the basic needs for the child with special needs to become independent.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that teachers reflected more negative perceptions towards inclusion of children with disabilities than the parents whose children attended inclusive education classes. However, parents were of the opinion that separate classes for children with profound disability be established. In sum, all (teachers and parents) agreed that education was a basic requirement so it should be provided to all regardless of their diversities.

4.1 Summary

The study on teachers' and parents' perceptions about inclusive education in Iringa District Council, on the one hand, showed firstly, teachers had divided opinions about the placement of students with disabilities in regular classes. Those teachers perceived such students as "Special" and therefore required special treatment in terms of teacher's expertise, teaching and

learning facilities and total management in general. Secondly, teachers perceived students with disabilities as “Burden” in the class and therefore were left without adequate attention. On the other hand, few teachers had perceived students with disabilities as part of the learning society and therefore should be treated equally like other students in the learning process. On the part of the parents, the study indicated that three-quarters of the parents participated in the study supported inclusion, but disregarded students with profound handicapping to be included in regular classes and opinioned that such students should be placed in special units. Further, the parents were more comfortable having their children included in the regular classes as they thought that they could be more assisted in the learning process by not only the teachers but also by the other students. Therefore, the study found it worth noting the importance of creating more awareness among teachers and parent about inclusive education practices in schools to mitigate learning barriers to children with disabilities.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall conclusion is that, for effective inclusion of pupils with disabilities requires among others a paradigm shift of the mind set among practitioners and the community at large. This is because inclusion means more than simple putting children with disability together with non-disabled children. It should go beyond physical placement of the individual in the learning environment. Inclusion should focus on equal and quality services that would enable a person with disability to benefit from the instructional materials as other non-disabled peers. And more profoundly, to ensure interaction that does not base on social, physical or intellectual differences. Further, to ensure

that all facilities and environments are welcoming, comfortable, and accessible authentic and fully functioning for all users with varying category of people with disabilities and special needs (IUCEA, 2017).

Based on the findings the following are the recommendations: firstly, pupils with different disabilities should be taught in ordinary classrooms as full-time ordinary students. However, pupils with profound disabilities should be taught in separate units in which resources are made available with special education teachers. Secondly, the government through the Ministry of Education Science and technology should envisage programmes to empower teachers with appropriate methods of teaching inclusive classes and manage school curriculum in a diverse situation. Thirdly, the effort to implement inclusive education should be a priority in their plans and make sure that schools establish inclusive programmes. The schools should be well staffed and equipped with the necessary facilities including teaching and learning materials and infrastructures which are friendly to both non-disabled and disabled. In addition, the idea of inclusion should be promoted in the school culture and ideology among teachers and students and that the teaching pedagogy should be geared towards helping children learn in inclusive setting more than in separate settings except for students with the profound cases.

Furthermore, in dealing with disability issues school management should collaborate with other stakeholders such as Tanzania League of the Blind, Tanzania Association of the Deaf, Organization of the people with Disabilities in general known as the Association of the Disabled (TAD), Tanzania Association of Albinos, Tanzania Association of the Blind

(TSB), and Tanzania Society for the Physically Handicapped to spearhead the process of inclusion and education for people with disability as a whole. Lastly, sensitization about education and inclusive education in particular should be a national agenda. Basically, UN declaration on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4 emphasizes the need to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of long life learning opportunities for all by 2030. Therefore, teachers, parents and the community at large should forge for effective implementation of inclusive education for the current and future generation.

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