

Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Primary Schools in Bukoba Urban

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the enrolment of children with disabilities in inclusive primary schools and to establish the challenges facing inclusive primary schools in Bukoba Urban. Teachers and the head teacher were the main participants. The cross sectional survey research design was used and the instruments for data collection were the documentary review and interview guide, the study area was Bukoba urban. The study findings revealed that there was only one inclusive primary school which enrolled thirty one children with albinism, twenty four visual impairments and eighteen physical disabilities. The established challenges facing the inclusive primary school included general stigma attached to disability, lack of special needs teachers, lack of adequate and timely logistical support, lack of support from the parents of children with disabilities, lack of support from the neighbouring community, superstitious beliefs about albinism and unsupportive infrastructural environment. The wide spectrum of disability in children should be considered and all children should enrol in a neighbourhood primary school. The community should participate in the program of inclusive education. Knowledgeable teachers about special needs education should be employed. All children with disability should be given chance to enrol in the nearest inclusive primary school. The community should be sensitised about disability and the government should provide timely logistical support to inclusive primary schools.

Key words: Implementation, Inclusive education, Children with disabilities, Primary schools, Bukoba Urban.

INTRODUCTION

The global community established Universal Primary Education in the first year of the 21st century as a global agenda against exclusion in education through sustainable development goals. Consequently, progress in expanding access to education for all worldwide has been observed. As Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948) states that everyone has a right to education including children with disabilities. "Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms..." However, UNESCO (2014) states that 57 million primary school age children are still being denied the opportunity to learn. The number of children with disabilities who are excluded from education is considerably high in Sub Saharan Africa and they remain the most disadvantaged category in education.

Background to the problem

Education is a major development strategy in every economy and one of the sustainable development goals. Inclusion is a fundamental philosophy of how to provide equality while considering human differences. Inclusive education has emerged worldwide as one of the most central issues in education concerning children with disabilities. Inclusive education is globally accepted as a movement of educational reform in order to establish accessible quality basic education that may resolve the challenge of exclusion in education. Inclusive education is a system where children with disabilities are accorded full membership in a nearby primary school with appropriate supplementary aids and support services (Lipsky and Gartner, 1999). Inclusion accommodates children with disability unconditionally and accords them full membership in a regular classroom at a primary school within the local community (Antia *et al.*, 2002). Young (2002) views inclusion as a public discourse that focuses on embracing the excluded children from education like children with disabilities. According to Norwich (2013), inclusive education is a struggle for recognition in education that requires the majority able members of the community to accommodate the minority children with disabilities. It should serve to remove institutional barriers of access and participation to education (Camilleri, 1999). Notably, inclusive education is a basic human right and a foundation for a more just and equal society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

In Tanzania's society, inclusiveness is embedded in culture through the norms and values where every person regardless of the differences has dignity, equal opportunity and respect Mmbaga (2002). An inclusive attitude is set in the Nyerere policy "Ujamaa" (socialism) and this still guides the legislation on education today (Mmbaga, 2002). This policy was based on the culture of people living together, working together, and helping each other.

The Compulsory Education Act of 1978 is also relevant since it advocates for the right to education for every child within the general education system. Article 56 of the act, states that “every citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania is entitled to receive a level of education as the ability may permit” (Mmbaga, 2002:79). Tanzania is doing her best to realise this goal through implementing universal primary education by ensuring that education for all is realised. Tanzania’s government policies of post-independence emphasised equalisation of educational opportunities at all levels (Bhalalusesa, 2011). Evidently, Tanzania attained 96% (7-13 age range) enrolment in primary schools in 1983, yet these rates have been falling since then (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).

Rawls’ (2001) Social Justice Theory commonly referred to as "Justice is Fairness" is a buttress to this study. According to Rawls (2001), social justice is about assuring the protection of equal access to liberties, rights, and opportunities, as well as taking care of the least advantaged members of society. Thus, whether something is just or unjust depends on whether it promotes or hinders equality of access to civil liberties and human rights like basic education for all children including children with disabilities. Rawls assumes that society is guided by rules and procedures that are publicly recognized and agreed to, that the rules specify fair terms of cooperation and are rooted in the notion of reciprocity or mutuality so that each person has a chance to promote his or her own advantage or good. The theory guides stakeholders like the government of Tanzania to adhere to ordinances like the Salamanca Statement and framework for action, Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania that cater for the needs of children with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

The estimates of children with disabilities are between 180 and 220 million worldwide, and nearly 80% of them live in developing countries (United Nations, Division for Social Policy and Development, 2011). The exact number of children with disabilities living in Tanzania is not known, however estimations vary from 3% to 10% of the population (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). The Ministry of Education and Vocational training (2008) estimates the number of children with disabilities of 7-13 age range in Tanzania to be between 150,000 and 350,000 of these more than 80% live in remote areas. However, inclusive primary schools in Tanzania still face challenges of enrolment, insufficient trained teachers and poor infrastructure. (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1996). UNESCO (1994) asserts that all children are free to enrol in their neighbourhood primary school, despite whether they are disabled or not. Are children with disabilities in Bukoba Urban accessing education at the inclusive primary school near their homes? The government of Tanzania developed the 1992 Primary Education Developmental Plan which gives priority to enrolment of all children with emphasis to children with disabilities (CWDs) in primary schools. Hence, promises like “the Government shall therefore ensure that adequate resources are made available and provided to enhance access and equity in education” were made (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1992). Is the government providing adequate resources to inclusive primary schools in Bukoba urban?

Tanzania’s commitment to availing equal opportunity in education is evidenced by a clause in her constitution which states that; “Every person has a right to self-education, and every citizen shall be free to pursue education in a field of his choice/her up to the highest level according to his merits and ability” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1998:19). Bhalalusesa (2011) states that, in 1978 Tanzania’s National Education Act No.25 amended in 1995 was passed to consolidate the UPE efforts. Section 35 of the Act recommends compulsory attendance of basic education for every child aged 7-13. Are inclusive primary schools in Bukoba urban adequately equipped to avail this right to all children with disabilities?

Bukoba Urban is one of the eight districts that constitute Kagera Region. It is bordered to east by Lake Victoria and to the west by Bukoba Rural District. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census, the population of Bukoba Urban was 128,796 with an annual growth rate of 3.1% (Tanzania National Census, 2012). The Tanzania national strategy on inclusive education of 2009-2017 defines inclusive education as a system of education in which all children are enrolled, actively participate and achieve in regular schools and other educational programs regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination of barriers and maximisation of resources. Disabilities in children are physical disabilities, giftedness, chronic diseases, hearing impairment, mental disability, learning disability, intellectual disability, speech and language disorders, visual impairment, behavioural disorder and multiple or co-existing disabilities. Are all these disabilities in children categorised and considered in the only inclusive primary school in Bukoba urban? The study examined the enrolment of children with disabilities in the inclusive primary school and established the challenges facing the inclusive primary school in Bukoba Urban.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used was cross sectional survey. The study sample consisted of 13 participants (12 teachers and 1 head teacher). Purposive sampling was employed. Document review and an interview guide were used to collect data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics through calculations of frequencies and their respective percentages.

Validity and reliability of instruments

Document Review: Documents do not speak for themselves but they require careful analysis and interpretation which was cautiously done in this study. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2011) states that to ascertain validity and reliability of documents the author, place and date of its production should be verified by the researcher.

Interview guide: A conclusion about validity in interviews begins with the use of face validity. That is whether the questions asked measured what they claim to measure. Invalidity is caused by bias which is a systematic tendency to make errors in the same direction that is to overstate or understate the true value of an attribute (Cohen et al, 2011). Therefore bias was minimized as much as possible. Reliability was ascertained by ensuring that the interview guide is structured, with the same format, sequence of words and questions for each respondent (Amin, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Enrolment of children with disabilities in the inclusive primary school in Bukoba Urban.

In Bukoba urban there is (1) one designated inclusive primary school and the other (24) twenty four primary schools are not inclusive. Note: Bukoba urban has a total of 25 government primary schools in total. The assigned inclusive primary school (School A) is a zonal inclusive primary school meant to serve two regions that is Kagera and Kigoma regions. It is meant to enrol all children with or without disabilities except those with hearing impairment. Therefore, this study is solely from one inclusive primary school (School A). The process of enrolling children with disabilities in this school takes place once a year. Announcements are made in the media inviting parents to bring those children whom they suspect to have a disability for diagnosis and categorisation, after which the identified children with disability are enrolled in the inclusive primary school A. Diagnosis, is done by itinerant experts like medical doctors and special needs education experts.

The only inclusive primary school (school A) has enrolled 18 children with physical disabilities, 31 children with albinism, 24 children with visual impairment and 647 *ordinary* children, to a total of 720. There was no evidence of enrolment of children with other disabilities like autism, dyslexia, behavioural disabilities, intellectual disabilities and mental retardation. One wonders whether these disabilities do not exist in the surrounding community. An ideal inclusive primary school should recognize and respond to the diverse needs of each pupil by ensuring quality education to all children..... (UNESCO, 1994). Therefore, an inclusive primary school should accept all children and should respond to their diverse needs (Norwich, 2013). The fundamental principle of an inclusive primary school is that all children should learn together regardless of their different needs. Since the school does not have records of enrolment of children with other disabilities implying they are not considered in the school inclusive system.

The inclusive primary school A is served by 12 teachers of which only 5 are special needs specialists (visual impairment) and 7 are ordinary teachers. High pupil teacher ratio of 60:1 is noticeable and very high for an inclusive class. Teacher expertise tends to favour visually impaired children, what about the needs of the physically impaired and those with albinism. Given a society where stigma is rampant, it's imperative that all teachers are equipped with knowledge of special needs so that all diverse needs of children with disabilities are met. Children with disabilities in this school are all boarders (*residing at school A*), the justification being children's security and safety like children with albinism, as well other children with disabilities come from very far places (other regions) as far as 500 kilometres. The *ordinary* children come from surrounding communities and therefore commute from their homes to the inclusive primary school.

Challenges facing the inclusive primary school in Bukoba Urban

The study sought to establish the challenges facing the inclusive primary school in Bukoba Urban. Teachers and the Head teacher gave their opinions which are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Challenges facing the inclusive primary school in Bukoba Urban

S/N	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
1.	General stigma attached to disability	13	18
2.	Lack of knowledgeable SNE teachers	13	18
3.	Lack of adequate and timely logistical support	11	15.3
4.	Lack of support from parents of CWD's	10	13.8
5.	Lack of support from the neighbouring community	09	12.5
6.	Superstitious beliefs about albinism	08	11.2
7.	Un-conducive infrastructural environment	08	11.2
	Total	72	100

Source: Data from the field elicited from teachers and the head teacher.

Table 1 shows that general stigma attached to disability contributed 18% of the responses. This is a challenge to the school because disability is interpreted in many ways by different people and different communities' especially cultural fallacies that are deeply entrenched in the internal beliefs of society. O'Toole (1998) stipulates that in the West, disabled people have been stereotyped as being needy, cut off, unhappy and emotionally unstable. Such negative feelings are magnified in the least developed countries like Tanzania where the overwhelming impression of different occurrences, cultural beliefs and practices towards the disabled is very negative. Due to stigma towards disability some stakeholders may not see the rationale of offering education to these children; hence they are not supportive to the inclusive primary school. In this case, the head teacher notes that even when parents of children with disability are called upon for meetings at school the bigger percentage of them never turn up and most of them are not willing to provide basic requirements for the child since most parents consider children with disabilities as *children belonging to the government*.

Lack of support from parents of children with disabilities (13.8%), is also identified as one of the challenges facing the inclusive primary school. As observed, some parents perceive the inclusive primary schools as wealthy; therefore the school is seen as able to relieve them from their parental responsibilities. This belief among parents contravenes article 59 of the Salamanca statement which states that "the education of children with special educational needs is a shared task of parents and professionals. A positive attitude on the part of parents of children with disabilities is very important for the success of inclusive education, therefore parents and teachers should devise means of working together as equal partners". (UNESCO, 1994)

Eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents articulated lack of knowledgeable special needs education teachers also as a major challenge facing the school. Evidently, there are only five (5) special needs education teachers specialising in visual impairment. This finding shows that there is a dire need for special needs education teachers, specialised in different disabilities. The high teacher- pupil ratio of 1:60 is too high and therefore should be reduced. Studies of Avramidis, Bayliss and Burdenet, (2000) notes that teachers' working conditions, skills and knowledge of special needs education have a direct influence on teachers' attitude, process and the outcome of inclusive education. Mmbaga, (2002) stipulates that, the inclusive classroom in Tanzania is more or less non-existent; some pupils who are not able to follow the education provided because of their special needs are labelled "slow" or stupid and are ignored. All the same, inclusive education exists in schools in Tanzania, but its development is facing social, economic and administrative constraints (Mmbaga, 2002).

Fifteen point three percent of the respondents (15.3%) expressed that Lack of adequate and timely logistical support is another challenge, in a way that the only consistent financial support is given by the government of Tanzania, which is *considered* inadequate given the needs of children with disabilities in this inclusive primary school. On a similar note, the empirical observations of Rodda and Eleweke, (2001) in Africa show that the implementation of inclusive education programmes has not been sufficiently supported in terms of planning and resource allocation by the governments. These tendencies of inadequacy lead to frustration and isolation of learners with special needs (Abosi, 1996). Inclusive primary schools have to be well-equipped in all aspects to cater and deliver quality education to **all** children considering their special needs. This includes having teachers who can handle children with different special needs within the classroom and thereby promoting an environment where personal development, social skills and learner participation are strongly encouraged (Balasubramanian, 2012). However, in consideration to the GoURT, (2004:16) which states that, "the Government of the republic of Tanzania, in collaboration with stakeholders shall provide a conducive environment for inclusive education that takes care of children with special needs and disabled children". One wonders whether the implicated stakeholders (*parents of children with disabilities, teachers and the Government*) are providing this conducive needed environment.

Lack of support from the neighbouring community (12.5%) is also a challenge facing the inclusive primary school. This is manifested through lack of respect for the school rules and bylaws that support all children in the inclusive primary school. The school head teacher expressed that *"there are several cases when some members of the surrounding community sold unhygienic food to school children which made them sick especially children with disabilities who are in the boarding section. Much as the school prohibits the buying and selling of food stuffs to pupils in the school, neighbours will always smuggle food in the school"*.

Eleven point two percent (11.2%) of the respondents identified Superstitious beliefs about albinism as another challenge facing the inclusive primary school. *An albino is a person with a pale skin, eyes and hair as a result of genetic condition that impairs the normal skin pigmentation. Albinos are often shunned as outcasts and some of them die of skin cancer before the age of 30 (Garcia, 2008). Albinism is a genetic deficiency of melanin pigment production. Melanin production is rarely or totally absent, It is usually inherited as a recessive condition (Draper, 2009).* In support of the finding harmful traditions and practises have contributed to the poor situation of children with disabilities in Tanzania (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1996). Tanzania citizenry is largely precipitous in traditional and superstitious beliefs (Kisanji, 1998), for example the killing of albinos in hunt for their body parts, which are suspected to be used for rituals and also as ingredients in witchcraft fetishes. Consequently, the trade in albino body parts is a very lucrative (Magram, 2009). This

makes children with albinism vulnerable and keeps the school administration on tension in order to ensure effective security at the inclusive primary school. According to Tanner (2010) by June 2009, some 48 albinos had been killed in north-west Tanzania and Kiishweko (2008) states that over 50 albinos have lost their lives in Tanzania since 2007. Surprisingly, some parents have been accused of complicity in the crimes against their own albino children. Some families perceive albinos as a product of a curse placed on such families (O'Toole, 1998).

Responses on un-conducive infrastructural environment was at eleven point two percent (11.2%). Sanitary facilities and inadequacy of essential infrastructural facilities in inclusive primary schools are very minimal; that are meant to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities. There are several barriers that hinder education for children with special needs in an inclusive education setting in Bukoba urban district-Tanzania, such as superstitious beliefs about disabilities, lack of funds to implement the program and lack of skilled personnel that have for so long inhibited involvement of children with disabilities in education.

CONCLUSION

An inclusive primary school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every child matters not only to those children with albinism, the physically challenged and the visually impaired but also those children with other forms disability. The success of inclusive education resets with the schools which should believe and implement that inclusive education is not just for children with disabilities but for all children, educators, parents, families and community members who must all participate. Basic education is a human right and therefore inclusive education should be provided without precincts. It should be accorded to all children in the convenient neighbourhood primary school and the wide spectrum of disability in children should be put into consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of this study:

1. Since universal primary education provides open access to all children in primary schools, all primary school teachers should be equipped with Knowledge of special needs education. This knowledge should be incorporated in the teacher education curricular. In service training and re-training of practising teachers should be done consistently. This is confirmed by the Tanzania Education and Training policy (1995) which states that "the government shall facilitate proper training ...of teachers for primary schools". It also promises to strengthen capabilities of teachers colleges to provide training on inclusive education and provide opportunities for professional development for education administrators. Equally UNESCO (1994) asserts that suitable training of all educational staff stands out as a means to promoting advancement towards inclusive schools.
2. All children with disability should be given chance to enrol in the nearest inclusive primary school. This is well articulated by UNESCO (1994) which emphasised that "a child with disability should attend the neighbourhood school that is, the school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability".
3. The community in general should be sensitised about disability and a specific emphasis should be made on some disabilities like albinism, local leaders should be involved. The Tanzania National Strategy on inclusive education (2009-2017) states its 5th objective as enhancing community ownership and participation in inclusive education, it's therefore imperative to work towards this objective. Policy makers as well should regularly re-affirm their commitment to inclusion and promote positive attitudes towards those with special educational needs in this Mass media can play a powerful role (UNESCO, 1994).
4. The government should provide timely logistical support to inclusive primary schools so as to improve services for all children. To make this possible the Salamanca statement and framework for action asserts that; "The development of inclusive schools as the most effective means for achieving education for all must be recognised as a key government policy and accorded a privileged place on the nation's development agenda. It is only in this way that adequate resources can be obtained. Changes in policies and priorities cannot be effective unless adequate resources are met. Political commitment at both the national and community level is needed both to obtain additional resources and to redeploy existing ones. While communities must play a key role in developing inclusive schools, government encouragement and support is also essential in devising effective and affordable solutions". (UNESCO, 1994)

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