Investigation of Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Education in Same Public Primary Schools in Tanzania

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Abstract: *The present study examined various strategies for the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools within Same District. The research was carried out in the Kisima, Hedaru, and Same Wards and encompassed three primary schools. The research employed a case study design utilizing a qualitative technique. Secondary data in the form of documentary reviews was utilized, alongside in-depth interviews with participants, as the primary means of data collection. A purposive sampling method was employed to choose a group of 24 respondents, consisting of 6 regular teachers and 3 head teachers, 3 education officers serving as key informants. Besides, 6 pupils with special learning needs, and 6 normal pupils. The thematic analysis technique was employed for data analysis. The results indicated that the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools within Same district is hindered by several significant problems, including a lack of suitable solutions, unfavorable attitudes exhibited by instructors towards inclusive education, and insufficient financial resources. The study suggests that the successful implementation of inclusive education in Same district and other regions of Tanzania necessitates the adoption of regional and culturally suitable solutions. It is imperative for the government to make concerted efforts towards augmenting the money allocated for inclusive education. This initiative will contribute to the increased accessibility of inclusive educational materials and resources within inclusive learning environments.*

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Strategies, Disability, Resources, Social Justice, public primary schools

1. Introduction

Educational frameworks require schools to adhere to, develop, and execute strategies that facilitate the implementation of inclusive education. Notwithstanding the implementation of inclusive education policies, disability continues to be a significant factor contributing to the exclusion of individuals inside educational institutions (Tungaraza, 2018; Ohba & Malenya, 2020). According to Wolff et al. (2021), the global population of children aged 14 and below who have disabilities is estimated to be approximately 150 million. According to a recent study including 49 nations, it has been observed that children with disabilities who are of primary school age face a higher probability of being excluded from educational institutions and are less likely to successfully complete their education, in comparison to their non-disabled peers (Ohba & Malenya, 2020; Steven, 2021).

According to the World Bank (2017), in the African region, approximately 6.4% of children within the specified age group exhibit moderate or severe disabilities. Furthermore, the educational attendance rate for children under the age of 14 with disabilities is reported to be below 10%. Several studies conducted in the previous decade have identified the prioritization of educational rights for children with disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa as a crucial area for future focus (UNESCO, 2022; Ohba & Malenya, 2020). A study conducted by Ohba and Malenya (2020), indicates that the proportion of students without disabilities who pursue secondary school in the United Republic of Tanzania is 13 percent, whereas only 7 percent of children with disabilities continue their education at the secondary level. The results of this study offer additional understanding for governmental stakeholders on the

significance of implementing effective and suitable tactics in the realm of inclusive education. Furthermore, these findings can serve as guidance for policymakers in their efforts to allocate financial resources toward the promotion and sustenance of inclusive education. Tungaraza (2018) asserts that the extent to which teachers are able to cultivate inclusivity within the classroom is significantly shaped by their perceptions of the presence and engagement of students who face learning challenges. Tanzania's government officially endorsed the Salamanca Statement of 1994, which underscored the imperative of granting access to primary education to those with exceptional needs in Tanzania (Kasuga, 2019; Mbwambo, 2015). Hence, the objective of this study was to develop effective strategies for mitigating the challenges associated with inclusive education. The findings of this research are anticipated to provide valuable insights for researchers and policymakers in the field of education.

1.1 Problem Statement

The existing body of literature pertaining to inclusive education, both domestically and internationally, mostly centers around the responsibilities of various stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education, the proficiency of instructors, and the accompanying limitations (Tungaraza, 2018; Kasuga, 2019; Ohba & Malenya, 2020; and Steven, 2021). There has been limited coverage on the subject of strategies for the implementation of inclusive education. Hence, in order to address and augment this deficiency in information, it is of great significance in this study to examine the tactics and methodologies employed in the execution of inclusive education within public elementary schools within the aforementioned district.

1.2 Objectives

To examine strategies used in implementing Inclusive Education in inclusive schools in the Same District.

1.3 Research Question

What are strategies used in implementing Inclusive Education in the public primary schools in Same District?

2. Literature Review
2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is informed by the social justice theory formulated by John Rawls, a renowned scholar in the field of fairness and social justice, in 1971 (Rasari, 2022). The primary focus of this concept was centered on the allocation of capital, property, and wealth in response to the significant disparities arising from the social class hierarchy in Europe (Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Therefore, social justice theory also promotes the examination and alteration of inequitable power dynamics, encompassing the provision of equal educational opportunities for all individuals. The participants of this study expressed the necessity for a shift in societal attitudes and public recognition of students with impairments, whose presence must be valued to achieve educational fairness.

The concept of social justice encompasses the principles of fairness and equity, which are crucial for ensuring the safety and security of individuals and communities (Al-Shammari et al., 2019; Milner, 2022). The theory emphasizes the importance of implementing and applying principles such as the human right to access resources that guarantee a conducive teaching and learning environment for students, leading to improved academic achievement (Haki Elimu, 2008; UNESCO, 2022). Furthermore, it acknowledges the involvement of marginalized and disadvantaged students in expressing their viewpoints and apprehensions in decision-making processes that impact their well-being and quality of life (UNESCO, 2022). Hence, the purpose behind employing this theory was to comprehensively encompass all factors pertaining to the equitable provision of education to every child and ensuring timely access to their rightful educational opportunities.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

The placement of students with special educational needs is a significant aspect of inclusive education, as discussed by Poss and Milinga (2017), Namirembe (2019), and Wolff et al. (2021). The concept of inclusive education encompasses the systematic approach of acknowledging and accommodating the various requirements of all students, hence mitigating instances of exclusion both from and inside the educational framework. Inclusive education pertains to the placement of learners inside mainstream educational settings, accompanied by a steadfast dedication to eliminating any obstacles that hinder the complete engagement of every kid as a respected and distinct individual.

The implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on the presence of comprehensive policy guidelines that provide solutions for schools to overcome physical barriers. These guidelines are crucial as they ensure that the needs of all learners are effectively addressed (Rasari, 2022). According to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST, 2022), policy rules pertaining to inclusion empower educational institutions to reconfigure their approaches in order to facilitate equitable access to course materials, active engagement in learning exercises, and the ability to showcase individual aptitude during assessments. Inclusive teaching strategies encompass a range of approaches that

aim to cater to the diverse requirements of students with varying backgrounds, learning modes, and skills (Rasari, 2022). The aforementioned tactics have a role in fostering a comprehensive learning environment where every student is seen as valuable and capable of achieving success (Mcgovern 2019; Chelulei, 2021; Steven, 2021). The Tanzanian government developed a comprehensive educational strategy in 2009 with the objective of enhancing support services for children with disabilities in the country. This national inclusive education strategy was designed to be implemented through 2017 (URT, 2022). Mmbaga (2002) and Tungaraza (2018) have posited that the primary objective of the National Inclusive Strategy was to enhance endeavors and allocate resources towards the advancement of schools, with the ultimate goal of fostering greater responsiveness to the diverse needs of both learners and teachers. According to a report by URT (2022) and MoEST (2022), numerous public primary schools are encountering various difficulties, such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient human resources, and a lack of teaching materials. These challenges have resulted in disabled students either discontinuing their education or experiencing subpar academic performance in examinations.

Every child is entitled to receive the optimal level of support and resources during their early years and throughout their formative period. According to Rasari (2022) and Warman (2021), children with impairments, regardless of their birth order, possess equal rights as their non-disabled counterparts. The act of excluding children with disabilities from education has been found to have negative economic consequences at various levels, including the family, community, and country (World Bank, 2017; Kapinga and Bock, 2021). According to a recent comprehensive study report including 49 nations, it has been observed that children of primary school age who possess disabilities exhibit a higher probability of being excluded from educational institutions and have challenges in successfully completing their academic pursuits, as compared to their non-disabled counterparts (UNESCO, 2022). UNICEF (2016) asserts that the prevalence of children with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa is elevated due to insufficient access to healthcare and nutrition, resulting in heightened occurrences of sensory and motor impairments. According to a report by UNICEF and Welfare (2018), the proportion of students in Tanzania who receive secondary education is at 13 percent, while only 7 percent of children with disabilities have access to this level of education.

Multiple studies conducted both within Tanzania and internationally have identified insufficient ways to address the challenges encountered during the implementation of inclusive education (Tungaraza, 2018; Chikoko and Mthembu, 2020; Chelulei, 2021; Steven, 2021). The impact of socioeconomic and cultural factors on the efficacy of teaching and learning in special schools has been explored by Jolley et al. (2018) and Mokaleng and Mowes (2020). These studies highlight the significance of variables such as policy development, teachers' attitudes, and resource inadequacy in influencing the effectiveness of educational practices in this context. Moreover, Mazuruse et al. (2021) identified some significant obstacles that hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools. These obstacles include the absence of suitable techniques, unfavorable attitudes exhibited by instructors, limited capacity of schools, and insufficient physical resources.

3. Methodology

The present study employed a case study methodology and adopted a qualitative research approach. This study employed a case study approach to narrow down a broad area of inquiry into one or a few researchable issues, as suggested by Creswell and Hirose (2019).

3.1 Sample size and sampling procedure

The two key aspects to consider when doing research are sample size and sampling procedure. These factors play a crucial role in ensuring the validity and reliability of the study's findings. The study employed a purposive sample technique to pick 24 respondents from the three wards of Kisima, Hedaru, and Same. This methodology entailed the selection of individual units, specifically teachers and pupils, from the overall population. The selection of a specific school for each ward was based on the enrollment figures of students with disabilities in each ward. Furthermore, a selection was made in each school consisting of two students with disabilities and two students without impairments. The study's key informants were the District Education Officer (DEO), District Academic Officer (DAO), and Special Needs Education Officer (SNEO).

3.2 The tools utilized for data collection

The data was obtained through the utilization of documentary reviews, direct observation, and in-depth interviews. The study involved conducting interviews with the head teacher, two classroom teachers, and a combined total of three head teachers and six classroom teachers across each participating school.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data that was gathered was analyzed qualitatively utilizing thematic data analysis techniques. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic

classification, which involved organizing the story presentations through descriptions and quotations (Creswell & Hirose, 2019).

3.4 Ethical Consideration

To serve and promote the welfare of the respondents, the researcher applied for ethical clearance at St John's University of Tanzania's University's Ethical Review Committee. The research was certified as ethically compliant and an ethical clearance certificate was issued to the researcher prior to embarking on the data collection process.

4. Results and Discussion

The study's results are presented and discussed in this section. The Participants interviewed in this study were 9 (38.0%) of the heads of schools and classroom teachers, 3 (12.0%) education officers, and 12 (50.0%) pupils with and without disabilities.

4.1 One research question served as a guide for the findings

The findings of this study are presented based on the research question. Finally, conclusions were made in relation to the findings of the research question (main themes) and sub-themes.

Themes and Sub-Themes of Study Objectives

S/N	Theme	Sub-themes
1	Inclusive education practice and strategies	• Developing teacher's and pupils' relationship • Teachers' familiarization with pupils • Forming effective study groups • Allocated resources to support pupils with disabilities • Financial support for IE • Engaging pupils in a variety of activities

Source: Field data (2023)

Research Question: What are the strategies used in implementing Inclusive Education in the public primary schools in Same District?

This inquiry sought to ascertain the strategies employed in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) within the confines of Same District. The researcher expressed curiosity regarding the existence of solutions that might be employed to effectively tackle the challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education. A significant majority of the participants, specifically 75%, affirmed the presence of techniques being actively implemented in public schools within the district, as outlined in the following description:

4.2 Strengthening Teachers' and Pupils' Relationship

Sixteen respondents, accounting for 67% of the total sample, affirmed the utilization of the technique of developing the interaction between teachers and kids, which was found to contribute significantly to the successful implementation of inclusive education within schools in the Same District. This assertion is supported by one of the teachers in the sixth grade, as seen below:

In my opinion, the relationship between teachers and pupils in classrooms helps to create a good learning environment that could contribute to better academic performance for the pupils. (Interview with |Class Six Teacher, 29/4/2023)

The statement made by the sixth-grade teacher aligns with the findings of Jolley et al. (2018), which indicate that favorable teacher-pupil interactions have a positive impact on a student's academic achievement. According to Ludago (2020), a correlation exists between a detrimental rapport between children and school authorities and diminished academic performance. This suggests that in order to achieve significant professional satisfaction, children must take initiative and actively participate in their own development, particularly when the teacher-student relationship is strengthened. On the other hand, one of the class five pupils with a disability from school X pointed out the following clauses;

In the class, teachers helped me when I had questions about a particular subject. They treat us

like other pupils with non-disabilities, we are all learning together in the same classroom (Interview with |Class Five Pupil, 18/4/2023)

Likewise, during the interview, a pupil from class seven with non-disability from School Z reported the following;

> *We have cooperation with all teachers; most of our teachers insist we ask questions in class in case we do not understand. Such a situation helps us to understand well and perform better in our exams* (Interview with |Class Seven Pupil, 17/4/2023)

The aforementioned results align with the research conducted by Kapinga and Bock (2021), which emphasized the significance of comprehending and fostering positive peer connections as a critical measure for facilitating the effectiveness of inclusive practices in special needs schools. According to Mangope et al. (2018), it has been suggested that establishing strong teacher-student relationships can contribute to the development of self-regulation skills in children, specifically in terms of fostering autonomy and self-determination. The aforementioned comments suggest that fostering a positive relationship between teachers and children may serve as a potential strategy for enhancing academic performance within inclusive educational environments.

4.3 Forming Study Groups as a Strategy

The results of the study revealed that a majority (65%) of the participants identified group discussion as a prominent instructional approach employed in the facilitation of inclusive education within public primary schools in the Same District. During the interview conducted with a representative from school X, a teacher emphasized the significance of including study groups as a pedagogical and learning strategy.

> *Group discussion helps to enhance cooperation and socialization among pupils. It indeed embraces diversity between children with disabilities and those without disabilities as they can both sit together and share ideas based on a certain phenomenon. (Interview with |Head Teacher of school X, 17/4/2023).*

Similarly, a group of nine pupils in the seventh grade highlighted the effectiveness of utilizing group discussions as a means to comprehensively grasp the educational material presented by their instructors. One individual maintained that the assessment of their academic performance can be effectively accomplished through group discussions. This observation was made by a pupils in the seventh grade at School Z, as demonstrated below:

> *I believe that frequent team-building activities promote mutual relationships and understanding among the pupils. Such a situation tends to foster peer-learning platforms in a classroom environment.* (Interview with |Class seven pupil, from School Z, 20/4/2023).

The aforementioned remark on the effectiveness of organizing study groups in inclusive schools is supported by the research conducted by Jolley et al. (2018). Moreover, according to Rosari (2022), study groups have been found to be highly beneficial in promoting task competitiveness, facilitating the development of presentations, and facilitating the comparison of class notes. These activities ultimately enable students to compensate for any missing material during classroom sessions. Hence, the promotion of group learning in inclusive education has the potential to mitigate feelings of inferiority among students with impairments.

4.4 Facilities to support pupils with disabilities

The results of the study revealed that among the examined schools, only School Z demonstrated the presence of several facilities, such as wheelchairs, playground equipment, toys, and braille materials, that were expressly created to facilitate inclusive education. In contrast, the other schools did not exhibit comparable levels of support for inclusive education. The interview conducted with one of the Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) provided insights into the actual circumstances, as indicated by the following remarks:

> *I can say that the implementation of inclusive education is not very effective. Most of the infrastructures are not supportive of children with disabilities. There are no ramps in several classrooms available classes are not supportive, and lack of favorable toilets, desks, and playgrounds to support pupils with disabilities.* (Interview with |DAO, 24/4/2023).

Furthermore, the interview conducted with the Special Needs Education Officer highlighted the insufficient teaching and learning materials in primary schools with the following narrations;-

> *The available teaching and learning materials are not supportive. Like inadequate braille machines, wheelchairs, hearing aids, toys for pupils with eyeless/blind, and lenses to support short and long-sighted pupils.* (Interview with |SNEO, 28/4/2023).

In addition, during the interview one of the class six pupils with a disability from school Y reported the same challenges stated by the previous interviewees;-

> *The learning and teaching resources to support us are not sufficient at all. When we are in class, we use one textbook that is written in ordinary font size. Thus, it became difficult for me to read, and forced to rely on my friends to help me read after finishing their work. This makes me fail to accomplish my tasks on time.* (Interview with |Class Six Pupil, 19/4/2023).

The above assertion was supported by a disabled class six pupil from school Z who reported the challenges he encountered during the classroom sessions;

> *The blackboard is quite damaged and has not been repaired for a long time now. it doesn't show well when the teacher writes on it, and with my eyes' problems I can't see clearly when assignments are written on it".* (Interview with |Class Five Pupil, 21/4/ 2023)

The researcher discovered a limited availability of outdated textbooks for the subjects of English, Science, and Mathematics in the fifth-grade classroom. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the blackboard has several fissures, thereby impeding the legibility of the instructional content inscribed by educators. In addition, the prevalent activity observed in all courses was the practice of reading aloud, when students emulated their instructors. Moreover, teachers supplemented this practice by furnishing additional reading materials. Chuaungo (2018) and McGovern (2019) contend that children with impairments of all kinds require specialized resources, equipment, and gadgets in order to effectively engage with instructional processes within the educational setting. Moreover, Ludago (2020) documented that a significant number of schools in Tanzania suffer from insufficient infrastructure and materials, posing challenges for teachers in their instructional delivery and impeding students' comprehension of the lessons. Implementing inclusive education in a school context is a significant challenge for instructors. However, it is imperative for schools to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary basic facilities to accommodate such students. Insufficient facilities may result in subpar academic achievement among these students.

4.5 Provision of adequate financial support

Most Heads of Schools mentioned financial support as another intervention needed to make a friendly school environment for children with special needs. Teachers indicated that although the fund is highly needed for purchasing teaching and learning facilities for children with special needs education, as well as improving infrastructure, the budget that is normally allocated is very small to satisfy the needs. When asked if the government currently provides any support in terms of funds, one head of the school said that;

> *Honestly speaking, the budget allocated for special needs pupils in our schools is consistently inadequate, preventing the effective implementation of inclusive education due to financial constraints.".* (Interview with the Principal of School X, April 17, 2023).

This is echoed by another head of school who stated the following:

> *I do support inclusive education, but frankly speaking, we don't seem to have a robust resource mobilization strategy. Since the allocation of financial support for pupils with special needs has always been insufficient for our school. How can we sufficiently provide education to pupils with special needs in this situation?" (Interview with the Principal of School X, 17 April 2023).*

According to research by UNICEF and Welfare (2018), the poor allocation of budgetary resources to special education in Tanzania can be attributed to the presence of conflicting demands from the health, agricultural, and infrastructure sectors. According to Chuaungo (2018), it is argued that the responsibility for funding inclusive education, particularly in economically disadvantaged nations, should rest with the government. This approach

is advocated in order to prevent the emergence of inequalities that may occur as a result. According to the study conducted by Mazuruse et al. (2021), it is recommended that the government bear the expenses associated with inclusive primary education, as it generates societal advantages that counteract the principles of exclusion. The findings indicate that the government's budget is often insufficient to adequately support Inclusive schools. This implies that the successful execution of inclusive education policies in Tanzania necessitates sufficient financial resources.

4.6 Engaging pupils in a variety of activities

Furthermore, the study findings from the interview revealed that the engagement of pupils in a variety of activities is one of the effective strategies that has been used in implementing IE in inclusive schools in Same District. This was revealed by class five teachers that;

> *Engaging in a variety of activities for pupils has great advantages. Pupils being engaged in one activity as routine work makes them feel bored, but when they switch to another, they feel comfortable and ready to participate* (Interview with |Class Five Teacher, 25/4/2023)

Furthermore, another class two teacher had this to add;

> *For the pupil to succeed in the learning process, we break down tasks and offer them the most support we can. This promotes and supports their self-confidence and heightens their interest levels in learning".* (Interview with |Class Two Teacher, 24/4/2023)

The findings of this study align with the observations made by Green (2015), who posited that students who are adept at transitioning between activities are more likely to be well-equipped to face various academic challenges. According to a study conducted by WarmanURT (2021), it was shown that the active involvement of students in diverse activities within inclusive educational settings was associated with favorable academic and life results. According to the statements made by the teachers of classes five and two, it has been observed that engaging students in classroom activities during instruction has shown to be beneficial in accommodating the diverse range of students with varying levels of comprehension within the class. Consequently, this fosters enhanced classroom engagement and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study aims to investigate the strategies employed in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) within schools located in the Same District. The results of the study revealed that a diverse range of solutions have been employed in the implementation of inclusive education within inclusive schools. These strategies encompass the cultivation of positive teacher-student relationships, the establishment of productive study groups, the promotion of teacher familiarity with students, and the facilitation of student engagement through diverse activities. Additionally, the study revealed that the implementation of inclusive education practices has proven to be effective in facilitating students' comprehension and enhancing their academic performance. Nevertheless, the results indicated that the diverse range of instructional approaches employed by educators contributed to enhanced participation across the overall student body, rather than solely benefiting those individuals who are receptive to a specific mode of learning and communication.

The implementation of strategies in inclusive education is associated with several limitations, such as inadequate learning resources, including textbooks that are of substandard quality or completely unavailable in certain classrooms. One of the challenges in the field of education is the insufficient availability of a suitable number of specialized educators who possess the necessary skills and expertise to effectively support students, particularly those with special needs. The insufficient provision of inclusive education training to teachers is a significant factor that commonly leads to suboptimal implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools.

5.1 Recommendation

Based on the research findings and the conclusions drawn in the preceding section, two categories of recommendations are made.

5.2 Recommendation for Action

It is imperative for governments to establish a conducive atmosphere in primary schools that not only facilitates the enrolment of kids with special needs but also enhances their retention and graduation rates. This is crucial for effectively implementing inclusive education inside mainstream schools and classrooms.

The implementation of additional measures by the government is necessary to enhance the training and recruitment of a sufficient number of special education teachers in primary schools, with the aim of ensuring equitable, high-quality, and inclusive primary education. It is imperative for the government, in conjunction with other educational partners, to undertake the responsibility of procuring sufficient teaching and learning resources for primary school students with special needs. This initiative aims to facilitate and streamline the educational process.

In order to address the requirements of students with disabilities, both the government and primary schools must allocate dedicated financial resources through the development of specialized budgets. It is imperative for the government to prioritize the widespread accessibility to contemporary educational resources, particularly for students with disabilities, in order to facilitate effective knowledge retention as imparted by educators.

5.3 Recommendation for Further Studies

The present study was conducted with a specific focus on Same district, examining techniques for the effective implementation of inclusive education within school settings. Tanzania is a country located in East Africa. However, additional research is required to identify the primary factors that impede the effective execution of the National inclusive education strategy across various educational levels in Tanzania. This research will facilitate the establishment of supportive learning environments for all students, encompassing those in primary schools and beyond.

The study should also prioritize the examination and integration of diverse methodologies employed in other countries with regard to the implementation of inclusive education, in order to establish a solid foundation.

In addition, regular assessments and evaluations of the overall implementation of inclusive education should be conducted in order to enhance the strategies employed to attain the program's objectives.

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