

Teacher's Attitude towards Inclusive Education in Tanzanian Primary Schools: A Case of Iringa District

Kristofa Z. Nyoni

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5714-2948>

Department of Psychology, Ruaha Catholic University, Tanzania

Email: mazulukris@gmail.com

Copyright resides with the author(s) in terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY-NC 4.0.
The users may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the work, but must recognize the author(s) and the
East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: The study sought to establish teacher's attitude towards inclusive education in Tanzanian primary schools: A case of Iringa District using the qualitative approach and a case study design. The population of the study was primary school teachers of whom a total sample of 36 respondents was selected in the following distribution: 30 primary school teachers and 6 head teachers. Thirty (30) primary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling while three (6) heads of schools were purposely selected. The study employed semi-structured interview and focus group discussion (FGD) as instruments to obtain data which was analyzed thematically. The study established that while school heads had positive attitude toward inclusive education, teachers had a limited understanding of what inclusive education actually is as they considered it as simply combining disabled learners in the mainstream classes. Teachers had negative attitude toward inclusive education as they believe that having a mixture of students with behavioral challenges and learning disabilities makes the class not easily manageable. Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that the government should conduct capacity building seminars and workshops in which teachers can gain knowledge and appropriate skills on how to have challenged learners included in the mainstream classrooms. Finally, administration of schools need to ensure availability of appropriate teaching and learning resources for inclusive classrooms so that learners of various kinds may be met at the points of their needs during the teaching and learning sessions in the mainstream classrooms.

Keywords: Teachers' Attitude; inclusive Education; Primary Schools; Iringa District; Tanzania.

How to cite: Nyoni, K. Z. (2022). Teacher's Attitude towards Inclusive Education in Tanzanian Primary Schools: A Case of Iringa District. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 3(6)8-14
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2022v03i06.0232>.

Introduction

Inclusive Education (IE) philosophy is based on the principle that every school should be able to accommodate all children including those with special needs (UN, 1949). Inclusive education is an approach which transforms the education system, including its structure, policies, practices and human resources to accommodate all learners in mainstream education by addressing and responding to learners' diverse needs (MoEST, 2017). The inclusive education philosophy was emphasized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 where it was declared that education is a fundamental right for all children regardless of

individual differences. This right was further emphasized and affirmed as plan of action in the World Conference of Special Needs Education held in Salamanca and Spain. The Salamanca statement firmly called on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools by implementing practical and strategic changes in schools (UNESCO, 1994).

The world Education Forum held in 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, recognized education as an important basic right to all people that can be used to facilitate the Education for All policy. In the Dakar meeting, 164 governments together with partner institutions

adopted a framework of action focusing on the achievement of six Education for All goals pertaining to expansion of inclusive learning and the achievement of universal opportunities for all youths and adults, the achievement of gender parity and gender equality in education and the improvement in education quality and equity (Benavot, 2004). The forum also confirmed that education can play a pivotal role in overcoming exclusion.

The same resolutions were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 Article 24 which ensured that persons with special needs should not be excluded from the general education system on basis of their handicap. For that reason, children with special needs should not be excluded from free and compulsory primary education (United Nations, 2006). As a result, many nations are now increasingly recognizing that the policy of inclusion where children with challenges are taught in ordinary schools with various forms of special support is preferable to segregating them in those institutions (UNICEF, 2010). Inclusion creates child-friendly schools which operate with the interest of the learner by creating a safe and healthy environment provided with trained teachers, adequate resources and appropriate physical, emotional and social conditions for learning. It also provides dignity and personal empowerment (UNICEF, 2010).

Tanzania was a signatory to the Education For All documents which are all important tools for achieving education for all children in the country. The Salamanca statement is the most central educational agent for all, taking into account the main goal, which is to explore the development of inclusive education in the Tanzanian primary schools. To reach this goal Tanzania formed several policies to put into effect the implementation of inclusive education such as Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1978, the Education and Training Policy of 1995, the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) 2002 and Education and Training Policy of 2014. All these policies were enacted to ensure access and equity in the education system of Tanzania.

Inclusive education is beneficial to special need learners in several ways; it fosters the spirit of learning together and learning to live together (Save the Children, 2017). Inclusion and participation are essential for human dignity and for enjoyment and

exercising human rights (Salamanca Statement, 1994). Education for All as an inclusive concept must take account of the needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health and those with special learning needs (Dakar framework for Education, 2000). Thus, the scope of inclusive education goes far beyond learners with disabilities and has now been extended to cover all learners with special educational needs, whatever their origins (Mitchell, 2015). Inclusive education a) improves learning for all children both those with and without disabilities, b) promotes understanding, reduces prejudice and strengthens social integration c) and ensures that children with disabilities are equipped to work and contribute economically and socially to their communities (UNICEF, 2017).

The implementation of Free Basic Education (FBE) program in Tanzania aims at leading the country towards the goal of Education for All (EFA). However, this goal might be theoretical in its implementation as far as children with disabilities still encounter some obstacles in inclusive primary schools.

UNICEF (2017) identified that Eastern and Southern Africa emphasized the importance of disabled pupils having access to education. Researchers (Al-Zyoudi, 2006) & Galaterou, 2017) further identified the disability prevalence rate in populations to be between 10 and 16 per cent, yet the reported number of children with disabilities in schools is much lower, for example, 1.7 per cent of total enrolment in Uganda, 1.1 per cent in Rwanda and 0.7 per cent in Ethiopia. One of challenges for effective learning in classrooms is the attitudes that teachers hold towards inclusive education. Only a few teachers have willingness to teach students with special needs in their classrooms, especially those pupils with mental retardation as they have challenges in learning how to write, read and do arithmetic apart from behavioural difficulties (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Galaterou, 2017).

Tanzania like other countries around the world has an effort to adopt international educational reforms in making sure that every child has access to quality education. It adopted Article 28 of the convention on the rights of the child (CRC), which emphasizes

that every child has a fundamental right to receive a high-quality education (Farrell & Ainscow, 2021).

Apart from different international education ratifications to ensure equality and quality provision of education to all children, still there is a challenge in the provision of quality education to pupils with disabilities in Tanzania. Possi and Millinga (2017) asserted that many children in Tanzania who have been identified as vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled face barriers to learning and participation, preventing them from attending school as they are required to do, despite the ratification of internal documents and positive statements from national documents like education policy, circulars and guidelines.

Despite the Tanzanian government's efforts to develop various programs and strategies for inclusive education, teaching and learning are inhospitable to learners who face barriers to learning and participation. Therefore, this study sought to establish teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in primary schools in Iringa District. The study was guided by the following research question: What are the teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education?

Theoretical literature

The study was guided by Planned Behavioral Theory pioneered by Ajzen in 1985). The central theme of this theory is an individual's attention to perform a given task. The theory emphasizes that the performance of a given task is a function of both intention and perceived behavior control. The intention is to capture the feelings and emotions (affective) that influence an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 2019). As a result, if primary school teachers are well trained in IE and have positivity about it, they will have confidence and ability (self-efficacy), especially having a positive attitude towards IE so as to foster an inclusive culture and practice inclusive practices in classrooms.

Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusive Education

Various studies around the world have empirically shown the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. A positive attitude towards inclusion is considered one of the most influential factors and even a prerequisite for the success of inclusive education (Nogaibekova *et al.*, 2017). A study by Unianu (2012) in Romania revealed that teachers with more experience in primary schools are more convinced that they are capable to adapt educational activities to take into consideration all

children's needs. Furthermore, the researcher emphasised level of education as an important factor in developing a certain attitude towards inclusive education (IE). Apart from that, the study findings showed that the high school curriculum was not sufficiently developed to teach students about inclusive education and form proper attitudes towards IE. Ghergut (2010) stated that the quality of inclusive education depends on the level of professional qualification and also on the skills needed in the field of social work. Therefore, teachers need to be equipped with sufficient qualifications to handle learning in inclusive atmospheres.

A study by San Martin *et al.* (2021) in South America found that the Chilean in-service teachers who participated in the study maintained a positive attitude towards inclusion when taken as a whole. On the other hand, the study shows that teachers involved in the study had a high level of self-efficacy related to inclusive practices compared to the overall results obtained in other countries like Japan. Regarding the influence of demographic and professional characteristics of teachers, the result indicates that preschool, primary and special education teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in terms of teaching than secondary school teachers. Apart from that, the study findings indicated that age had a negative effect on participants' attitudes. As the age of the teacher increased, they become less favorable in their attitudes towards inclusion.

In the study of school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, Rathee (2017) identified a significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to type of schools but they did not significantly differ based on professional experience.

In Indonesia, Kawi (2021) found that Indonesian teachers have a moderate attitude towards inclusive education. The study showed that teachers' experience affected their attitude towards students with disabilities. Based on teachers' experience, the study found that teachers with long working experiences have a more positive attitude towards students with disabilities. On the other hand, the study findings showed that school level has a significant impact on teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities.

A study by Fu *et al.* (2021) in China shows that majority of ordinary primary school teachers have

negative attitude about children with special needs entering ordinary schools. One of the reasons is that teaching students with disabilities in regular class increased the workload of the teachers. The study further shows that parents' attitude is another important concern as most ordinary primary school teachers thought that some parents would object and refuse children with disabilities to study together with their children. A study by Agavelyan *et al.* (2020) in Kazakhstan shows that teachers are critical of the idea of inclusion because they are not ready to accept in their classes children who need an individualized curriculum and children with complicated disorders. Furthermore, the study revealed that rural school teachers are more positive about inclusion than their urban counterparts. Apart from that, the study findings show that female teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusive education than their male counterparts.

Lao *et al.* (2022) found a significant difference in the attitude towards IE between male teachers and female teachers. Male teachers were reported to be neutral, while females had negative attitudes. The study findings also show that female teachers were more unprepared in dealing with children with special needs than males.

In Kenya, a study on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion education by Odongo and Davidson (2016) established that teachers believed that if students with disabilities were included in regular classes, it would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities.

In Tanzania, Mbwambo and Nes (2022) found that most of teachers had negative attitudes toward teaching pupils with behavioral problems, pupils from poor and minority families like orphans who seemed not to have school requirements like exercise books. This situation made teachers perceive them negatively as most of the time teachers used their money to buy them some requirements.

Furthermore, most teachers had negative attitudes toward students who scored below average. Finally, the study showed that teachers had negative attitude to pupils with poor school attendance and other related problems such as children with HIV positive status and those with skin cancer as they affected the accomplishment of syllabus on time. However, a study by Lyakurwa and Tungazara (2013) showed that pre-service teachers in Tanzania

supported inclusive education. T-test results further indicated no significant difference based on teaching experience.

Methodology

This section presents the methodology that guided the study.

Design and Approach

The study employed the qualitative approach and a case study design to reach the goal. Qualitative approach is oriented towards deep exploration of respondents' views about their world in order to obtain information that is comprehensive and exploratory in nature (Creswell, 2009). The researcher used the qualitative approach so as to acquire information from its natural settings.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Iringa District. The population of the study was primary school teachers of whom a total sample of 36 respondents was selected in the following distribution; 30 primary school teachers and 6 head teachers. Thirty (30) primary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling while three (6) heads of schools were purposely selected.

Instrumentation

This study employed semi-structured interview and focus group discussion (FGD) as instruments to obtain qualitative data which was analyzed thematically. The instruments were prepared under the guidance of experts.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The analysis focused on themes on teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

Ethical Considerations

Various ethical issues were considered including procedures for gaining access to schools and individual participants through seeking official permission. Alongside seeking official permission for conducting the study, respondents were ensured that the information they shared would not by any means be used contrary to this study's aim. Confidentiality of information was maintained to ensure the safety of the informants.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study and was guided by research questions. Literature was used to enhance the discussion of findings.

Research question 1: What are the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in primary schools in Iringa district?

Through a semi-structured interview, one of the head teachers had this to comment regarding inclusive education:

Inclusive education makes children feel part and parcel of society; they become comfortable and it influences them to learn effectively. Through the inclusive approach, children get assistance from teachers and their fellow learners; so, I think it is a good thing to have inclusive education for children's development.

Through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), teachers were also required to express the meaning of inclusive education which would help to determine their attitude toward the inclusive concept. One of teachers defined inclusive education as follows: "Inclusive education is the kind of education which combines both disabled children and normal children in one classroom." The definition given suggests that teachers had a narrow understanding of inclusive education. They conceptualise it as simply having disabled pupils in a class with pupils without disability learning together. This is supported by the finding by Fu *et al.* (2021) that teachers had little understanding of what IE means and that's why they considered it as a burden as having pupils with special needs in normal classes disturbed their teaching workload.

On the other side, pre-service teachers had negative attitudes toward inclusion. For them, they believe that having a mixture of students with behavioral challenges and learning disabilities makes the class not easily manageable. These findings are similar to other studies like that by Lao *et al.* (2022) who said that the teachers did not believe in quality provision of education to children with emotional and behavioral problems when arranged in mainstream classrooms.

Through FGD, one of the teachers said that the majority of teachers are not empathetic to challenged learners particularly those with mental-related issues because teachers are not trained how to handle such students in the mainstream class which leads them to perceive those learners negatively. The finding is similar to that by Mbwambo and Nes (2022) who established that most teachers had a negative attitude on teaching pupils with behavioral problems, pupils from poor

and minority families like orphans who seem not to have school requirement like exercise books. This situation made teachers to perceive them negatively as most of times teachers used their money to buy them some requirements. Also the study found that teachers have negative attitude to pupils with poor school attendance and other related problems such as children with HIV positive and those with skin cancer as they affect the accomplishment of syllabus on time.

During semi-structured interview with head teachers, they proclaimed that teachers are not in favor of the increased enrolment of students with diverse learning disabilities, especially the mentally retarded students as they increase the teaching load in mainstreaming classes. One of the head teachers, for instance, had this to say:

The majority of teachers are against enrolling more disabled students in our school. They assert that having more disabled students, especially the mentally retarded ones makes it hard for them to teach as they need special care and special teaching strategies in contrast to their peers without disabilities. They also claim that they were trained to teach students without a disability so to have them in their class is a bit challenging to meet their understanding needs.

This suggests that teachers in the mainstream were not prepared to teach students with difficult learning, especially mentally retarded learners. Therefore, the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion are a result of their training deficiencies. This finding is in line with a study finding by Fu *et al.* (2021) who established that teachers perceived having mental retard students in their mainstream classes negatively. The study also found that teachers had a belief that to have inclusion education deteriorates academic performance of students without disability as teachers cannot move with a desired teaching pace as a result of having learners who need more time to learn a certain concept. Similarly, study findings by Odongo and Davidson (2016) in Kenya established that teachers believed if students with disabilities are included in regular classes, it would affect the academic performance of their peers without disabilities.

This study also established that teachers who had training to teach learners with disabilities had a more positive attitude towards inclusive education than teachers who had no or little training. The finding is in line with Gokdere (2012) who found

that there were overwhelming differences between the in-service and the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The author concluded that these differences were related to experience and the preparation levels of teachers.

The author recommended that professional development workshops and seminars on special and inclusive education would improve the knowledge of teachers and enhance their qualification to handle the inclusive practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that while school heads had positive attitude toward inclusive education, teachers had a limited understanding of what inclusive education actually is as they considered it as simply combining disabled learners in the mainstream classes.

While school heads held that Inclusive education makes children feel part and parcel of society and influences them to learn effectively, teachers had negative attitude toward the inclusive education as they believe that having a mixture of students with behavioral challenges and learning disabilities makes the class not easily manageable.

Some teachers were not empathetic to challenged learners particularly those with mental-related issue. One of the reasons would be lack of training on how to handle such students in the mainstream classes which led them to perceive those learners negatively.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that the government should conduct capacity building seminars and workshops in which teachers can gain knowledge and appropriate skills on how to have challenged learners included in the mainstream classrooms.

Furthermore, the study recommends a need to ensure availability of appropriate teaching and learning resources for inclusive classrooms so that learners of various kinds may be met at the points of their needs during the teaching and learning sessions in the mainstream classrooms. This should go hand in hand with in-service training on how to use various instructional resources in the inclusive classroom.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1985). *Attitudes, Personality and Behaviour* (2nd Ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Agavelyan, R. O., Aubakirova, S. D., Zhomartova, A.D., and Burdia, E.I. (2020). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Kazakhstan. *Intergratsiya Obrazovaniya=Intergaton of Education*, 24(1), 8-19.
- Al-Zyoudi, M (2006). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Jordania School, *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(2), 55-62.
- Benavot, A. (2004). *A Global Study of Intended Instructional Time and Official School Curricula, 1980-2000*. Paper Commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, *The Quality Imperative*. Geneva: IBE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Qualitative and Quantitative and Mixed Method Approach*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Dakar Framework for Action (2000). *Dakar Framework for Action—Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*. In *World Education Forum, UNESCO, Dakar, Senegal held on April* (pp. 26-28).
- Farrell, P., & Aiscow, M. (2021). (Eds.). *The duty to promote an inclusive educational system: a phenomenological study on the assessment procedures of pupils with special educational need in Madrid (Spain)*.
- Fu, W., Xie, Y., Li, R & He, X. (2021). General teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Yunnan Province in China, *International Journal of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, 7(1), 1-8
- Galaterou, J., (2017). Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education: the role of job stressors and demographic parameters, *International Journals of Special education*, 32(4), 643-658.
- Ghergut, A., (2010). Analysis of inclusive education in Romania. Results from a survey conducted among teachers. *Procedia social and Behavioural Sciences*, 5, 711-715.
- Gokdere, M. (2012). *A Comparative Study of the Attitude, Concern, and Interaction Levels of*

- Elementary School Teachers and Teacher Candidates towards Inclusive Education. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 12(4), 2800-2806.
- Kawi, N., (2021). Indonesian teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education. *Discourse and communication for sustainable education*, 12(2), 31-44.
- Lao, C. A, K., Lao, A. H., Siason, A. V., Cabangcala, B. R., Cadaptan, C. E & Alieto, O. E., (2022). Attitude towards inclusive education (IE) among prospective teachers: Is the gender polarization? *International Journal of Special Needs*, 37(3), 4946-495.
- Lyakurwa, E., & Tungaraza, D.F (2013). Pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Tanzania. *Journal of culture, social and development-An open Access International Journal*, 2, 11-17.
- Mbwambo, B.A and Nes, K. (2022). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in regular primary schools in Tanzania. *Direct research journal of education and vocational studies*, 4(6), 174-178.
- Mitchell, D. (2015). Inclusive Education is a Multi-Faceted Concept. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*. 5. 9-28. Retrieved from <https://ojs.cepsj.si/index.php/cepsj/article/view/151/79>.
- MoEST, (2017). National Strategy for Inclusive Education 2018-2021 MoEVT. (2001). Education Sector Development Programme. Dar es salaam: MoEVT.
- Nogaibekova, G., Zhumazhanova S., Korokikh E. (2017). Monitoring framework for inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Asia; Information and Analysis Centre.
- Odongo, G & Davidson, R. (2016). Examining the attitudes and concerns of the Kenyan teachers towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classroom; A mixed method study, *International Journal of Special Education*, 31(2), 1-30.
- Possi, M. K., and Milinga, J. R. (2017). Special and inclusive education in Tanzania: Reminiscing the past, building the future. *Educational process: International Journal*, 6(4), 55-73.
- Rathee, I., (2017). Schools teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(31), 5677-5679.
- Salamanca statement (1994). The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education; Adopted by the world conference on special needs education: Access and quality; UNESCO, Salamanca, Spain.
- San Martin, C., Ramirez, C., Carvo, R., Munoz-Martinez, Y & Sharma, U (2021). Chilean teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, *International, and Self-Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Practice*, 13, 1-17.
- Save the Children (2017). Inclusive education: Children who learn together, learn to live together. Retrieved from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12351/pdf/pr>.
- UNESCO. (1994). World Conference on Special Needs Education Access and Quality. Salamanca: UNESCO.
- Unianu, M E., (2012). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 33, 900-904.
- UNICEF (2017.) Inclusive Education including Children with Disabilities in quality learning: What needs to be done? Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/uni>.
- UNICEF. (2010). Protecting Children from Violence in Sport: A Review with a Focus on Industrialised Countries. Florence, Italy: Odongo.
- United Nations (1949). United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, New York:
- United Nations. (2006). UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Mainstreaming Disability into Development. New York: UN.