

Training Teachers in Special Needs Education in Tanzania: A Long and Challenging Ordeal to Inclusion

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Abstract: *This study examined the training of special education teachers in Tanzania. Specifically it aimed at providing in brief, the history and the challenges that Tanzania is facing in the training of special education teachers. Fifteen special education teachers, five females and ten males, were interviewed. The results showed that Tanzania faced a plethora of challenges in the area of teacher training in special education. The challenges include lack of teaching and learning materials, few trained teachers, teacher attrition, negative attitudes, barrier to information, and inaccessible environment. The participants provided some recommendations to the government, which included training more teachers, removal of barriers to accessibility, curricular modification and motivating teachers in various ways.*

Key words: Special needs education, disability, inclusive education, teacher education

INTRODUCTION

This study looked at the history of special education in Tanzania and also the challenges facing special education teacher training in Tanzania. In Tanzania, children start primary education at the age of seven. Not all children aged five or six years get pre-primary education. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training reported that:

...the total enrolment and the enrolment of school age population in Pre-Primary Education is still low. The emphasis on implementation of the policy, which stipulates that each Primary School should have a Pre-Primary Stream(s) is crucial for achieving universal Pre-Primary Education' (URT, 2010, p.6)

Primary education takes seven years and after sitting for a national examination, those who pass the national examination at the end of standard seven are selected to enter ordinary level secondary education, which takes four years. At the end of the four years students sit for another national examination and those who pass enter advanced level secondary education. Advanced level secondary education takes two years; and those who pass the national examination, at the end of that level, are selected to enter university. Therefore, the structure of the formal education and training in Tanzania, as of now, is 2-7-4-2-3+, which means that there are 2 years

of pre-primary education, 7 years of primary education, 4 years of ordinary level secondary education, 2 years of advanced level secondary education, and 3 or more years of university education. Students with disabilities go through the same system of education, and, at present, they follow the same curricula, with few modifications, as deemed necessary. They have to take all the examinations, at every level, so as to qualify and be selected to higher levels of education.

Students who wish to go into teacher education can do so after ordinary level secondary education or after advanced level secondary education. The teacher training colleges award Grade 'A' Teachers' Certificate and Diploma in Education respectively. Those who study education at university level may be awarded degrees or diplomas in education. Ordinarily, Grade 'A' Teachers and a few diploma teachers teach in primary schools, while most diploma holders and university graduates teach in secondary schools. These graduates also teach in Teacher Training Colleges, where they prepare teachers for both primary and secondary education.

A SHORT HISTORY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

Before Independence

Studies show that teacher training in Tanzania began with the abolition of slave trade in East Africa in the 1860s (Lawuo, 1978, cited by Anangisyee, 2010). Teachers were prepared mainly so as to spread the word of God through the Gospel. Anangisyee (op. cit. 2010: 900) states further that:

The first group of people to undergo a teacher training course consisted of the freed slaves. As highlighted elsewhere, teacher training was an initiative of Christian Missionaries in pre-formal African societies. The mission to train teachers was carried out by French Holy Ghost Fathers (FHGF) and the University Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). Mission stations and villages were used as teacher training centers.

During pre-formal colonial era, the early teachers were taught Arithmetic, Geography, Kiswahili and Bible knowledge. As expected, Christians were given priority, while others who were not Christians were not necessarily included in such teacher training programmes.

The first teacher training center was started in 1892 at Tanga Region (Anangisyee, 2010). during German colonial administration The British colonial government established the teacher training colleges while the missionaries continued with training teachers as started before the German rule. This means that there were government and Christian teacher training colleges. However, it has been reported that each Christian denomination had its own curricula for its own teacher training programme. Thompson (1968) cited by Anangisyee (2010) revealed that the differences were to be expected, mainly, owing to the fact that the missionary educational activities were conducted separately by every denomination.

After the Second World War, the British took over the administration of Tanganyika from the Germans and also took over teacher training established by the

Germans. The missionaries also continued with teacher training under the British colonial rule. Gottneid (1976) cited by Anangisye (2010) reported that 'by the end of March 1931 there were about sixteen teacher training centers owned by different Christian denominations (p. 903). This number had increased from seven schools of teacher training under Christian missions in Tanganyika, which existed in 1925 (Anangisye, 2010). Mpwapwa Teacher Training Center was established in 1926 (IPPMedia, 2011). It must be emphasized that both the Germans and the British trained only a few teachers and the training 'was offered along racial and religious lines and values' (Anangisye, 2010 p. 904).

Teacher Training After Independence

Tanzania got its independence in 1961 and it inherited all the teacher training facilities which had been established during the colonial period. At that time there were very few educated Tanzanians and thus, needless to say, there were very few trained teachers. In 1962 there were only 22 teachers' colleges scattered all over the country. Efforts were made to increase the number of colleges so as to enable the country to train more teachers. The need for more teachers was even more pronounced when Tanzania embarked on the implementation of the policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the mid 1970s. The government then took the audacious decision of selecting some primary school leavers to be trained to become primary school teachers so as to increase, to some extent, the number of teachers in schools. As the government increased the number of colleges, private teacher training colleges were also registered. In addition, some teachers were trained at universities especially at the University of Dar es Salaam, which, her efforts also helped to increase the number of teachers.

Furthermore, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), which prepares curricula for primary, secondary and teacher education, was established in 1975. At that time it was known as Institute of Curriculum Development (ICD) and in 1993 it was renamed the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE). Now, besides Patandi Teachers' College, which has a special education bias in its curricula, TIE has also tried to have a topic on special education in every teacher training programme, but it provides very little, introductory information. The 2010 statistics from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training show that the total number of teacher training colleges in Tanzania was 92. Of these, 34 (36.96%) were government-operated institutions and 58 (63.04%) colleges were privately owned.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the training of special education teachers in Tanzania. Specifically the study looked at the history and the challenges that confront Tanzania in the training of special education teachers.

METHODS

Participants

The participants of this study were special education teachers working in Dar es Salaam. The majority of these teachers had either certificates or diplomas in special education from Patandi Teacher College. The teachers were randomly selected according to their background.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected mainly through documentary reviews and interviews. Different documents, including government statistics and papers, were scrutinized and data was collected. In addition, fifteen special needs education teachers were, in addition, interviewed to discern their views on the training of special education teachers in Tanzania.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Characteristics of the Participating Teachers

Age and gender: Fifteen special education teachers were involved in this study and of these, ten (66.7%) were males and five (33.3%) were females. Their ages ranged from 43 years to 55 years old.

Teaching qualifications: From the interview, it was discovered that five of the participants were certificate holders and six were diploma holders. Four of the respondents had degrees in education, but originally they were diploma teachers.

Special Education Teacher Training in Tanzania

Training teachers for special education in Tanzania remains a huge challenge; and the country is farther from having adequate teachers in this particular area than in others. Some teachers are trained in Tanzania and a few have been sent abroad for training. At the outset, Tanzania began with only teacher training colleges, but now we have teachers who are also trained at some universities.

The first special education school in Tanzania was established in 1950, i.e. eleven years before Tanganyika got her independence from the British. The first school was named Wilson Carlile School for Blind Boys (now Buigiri School) in Dodoma Region. At that time, there was no teacher training college in Tanzania that trained special education teachers. For that reason, teachers were trained on the job. As schools increased, more teachers were trained on the job, but limited to only a single specific disability. In the early years, only teachers for students with visual impairments were trained. Bagandanshwa (2004) reported that teacher education for special education in Tanzania was started in 1972. The programme was conducted outside teacher training colleges, and 'school owners used all the means available to them to have teachers trained in special education (p. 204). This teacher training programme took place at Buigiri, Dodoma Region, in collaboration between the Anglican Diocese of Central Tanganyika and the Ministry of Education (Bagandanshwa, 2004). It should be reiterated here that special education teacher training at that time was only for teachers in schools for learners with visual impairments. Teachers teaching learners with other disabilities were not involved in this training.

It was later realized that the Buigiri programme was not producing enough teachers, and, therefore, a group crash programme was launched at Tabora Teacher College in October 1973, and another one in 1974 (Bagandanshwa, 2004). The support and push for this effort came from the Tanzania Society for the Blind (TBS) and the Ministry of Education. It was further reported by Bagandanshwa (2004) that between 1975 and 1976, about ten secondary school science teachers were sent to

the UK for a Diploma programme in special education sponsored by the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (RCSB). The aim was to get secondary school science teachers who could support and teach learners with visual impairments at that level.

In 1976, the Ministry of Education started training teachers for learners with visual disabilities and those with hearing disabilities at Tabora Teacher Training College (Tungaraza, 1994). This college admitted sighted teachers only, and students with visual disabilities who wished to become teachers were enrolled at Mpwapwa Teacher Training College. Other records show that in 1977, with the support of the Tanzania Society for the Deaf (TSD) and the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Deaf, some teachers for learners with hearing impairment were sent for a certificate course in Ghana. All these efforts were made so as to meet the academic needs of learners with disabilities. Tabora Teacher Training College began to prepare teachers for students with intellectual impairments in 1983. In the early years, only five student teachers for special education were given the opportunity to study at Tabora Teacher Training College for a certificate.

In 1996, the special education teacher training programme was moved from Tabora to Patandi Teacher Training College in Arusha Region. Teachers at Patandi are trained to cater for blind students, deaf students, and learners with intellectual disabilities. Some teachers are admitted for certificate courses while others enroll in diploma programmes. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that Tanzania supports inclusive education, teachers trained at Patandi are not trained in inclusive education, but only in single disability areas.

Recently a few universities have also included special education courses in their programmes. For example, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) teaches introductory courses in special education for students who are enrolled in education programmes. Unfortunately, although this is the oldest university in the country, and some students are interested in special education, there is no degree programme in special education at UDSM. However, some degree programmes are offered at The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Sebastian Kolowa University College (SEKUCo), which is an affiliate college of Tumaini University, and The University of Dodoma (UDOM).

The Open University of Tanzania offers special education courses as part of its education programme through the open and distant mode of learning. Sebastian Kolowa University College, which was established in 2007, prepares teachers in different disabilities and they offer courses for a B.A (Special Ed.) degree. The University of Dodoma introduced BED (Sp.Ed) programme in 2008 and in 2011 the first group of 55 student teachers graduated from that University. Some colleges train teachers for learners who are deaf, others for learners who are blind and yet others for learners who have intellectual disabilities. Regrettably, these are the only three disabilities that student teachers are trained to cater for. It is noted further that at Patandi Teacher College, students study only one disability of their choice.

Challenges Facing Special Education Teacher Training in Tanzania

The teachers interviewed had different views on what the challenges were that Tanzania faced in the area of teacher training in special education. Their responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges facing teacher training for special needs education

Challenges	f	%
Inadequate number of trained teachers in SNE	8	53.3
Inadequate training of teachers	11	73.3
Teacher attrition	9	60
Lack of/inadequate teaching and learning materials	12	80
Negative attitudes	7	46.7
Curriculum and evaluation procedures	5	33.3
Barriers to physical accessibility	8	53.3
Barriers to information accessibility	4	26.7
Lack of cooperation with other professionals	6	40

Inadequate number of trained teachers

In this study, eight (53.3%) teachers reported that the number of trained teachers is not adequate for our national needs. The Tanzania government ratified the Salamanca Statement in 1994; and the goal for the Dakar Framework for Action is to ensure that by the year 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNESCO, 2000). It seems that having only one teacher training college preparing special education teachers is a serious shortcoming, particularly so, since Tanzania agreed to attain Education for All goals by the year 2015. For instance, from 2005 to 2010, a period of five years, Patandi Teacher Training College trained a total of only 1,104 certificate teachers and 498 diploma teachers. On the other hand, in 2010 the number of learners with disabilities in primary schools was 36,585. Similarly, in 2010 Tanzania had 15,816 government and private primary schools with a total of 156,733 qualified teachers (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2010). On this state of affairs, one special education teacher had this to say:

I think only one Teacher Training College for the whole country cannot meet our national needs. In addition, Patandi trains very few teachers, only for the blind, deaf and mentally retarded, but not in other disabilities, such as deaf-blind, and children with autism. We need to change so that teachers are trained in inclusive education. As it is now, no one of us can effectively teach in an inclusive classroom.

This is a genuine concern because at Patandi Teacher College trainees are trained in only one category of disability and not in inclusive education. This means that a teacher trained in visual impairment will not be in a good position to work effectively to meet the needs of all learners in an inclusive classroom. As Rose and Howley (2007) warned, 'Even the best organized and most effective teachers occasionally have difficulties in managing some pupils with SEN' (p.12). This indicates that training in inclusive education is very important for teachers. According to Lipsky and Gartner (1996), inclusion is defined as:

The provision of services to students with disabilities, including those with severe impairments, in the neighborhood school in age-appropriate general education classes, with the necessary support services and supplementary aids (for the child and the teacher) both to ensure the child's success – academic, behavioural, and social – and to prepare the child to participate as a full and contributing member of the society (p. 763).

Provision of inadequate training

Some (73.3%) of the teachers interviewed felt that at Patandi teacher trainees are not adequately trained to meet the needs of even one of the categories of disabilities they learn about. Special education teachers need training in both theory and practice. According to the responses of some teachers interviewed, Patandi Teacher College lacks competent tutors and these tutors do not focus seriously on practical issues; and as a result teacher trainees may fail to help students with ancillary problems, yet germane to academics. It is obvious, for example, that simple identification procedures are necessary because some children may have more than one problem. Yet, teachers are not trained to carry out those procedures. One of the teachers trained in deafness complained that they were not taught adequately about sign language. He said, 'at Patandi Teacher College we did not have an expert in sign language and, as a result, we graduated as teachers for the deaf, but without competence at sign language'. Sign language is an organized established system of manual gestures used for communication, and it is a vital language of communication for persons who are deaf. Smith (1998) emphasized the importance of communication saying:

Communication is unsuccessful if the sender or receiver cannot use the signals or symbols adequately. And if either person has defective mechanism for sending or receiving the information, the communication process is ineffective (p. 182).

In Tanzania, many students who are deaf, fail examinations or drop out of school because they do not know how to read or write. One of their main barriers to learning has been seen to be lack of language of communication.

Another teacher trained for the blind also complained that teachers trained at Patandi Teacher College were not competent in Braille reading and writing. She said: 'we are certified, but we have no knowledge because there were very few Braille machines, which made it impossible for most of the teachers to practice.' Certificates are important, no doubt about it, however, without the knowledge the certificates purport to certify, those certificates are worthless. It should be remembered that 'schools will be inclusive only at the point when teachers feel that they are equipped to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes' (Rose and Howley, 2007: 22).

Teacher Attrition

All teachers who train in special education in Tanzania go to teach in special education schools. Sixty percent of the participants in this study mentioned teacher attrition as a challenge. After graduation at Patandi Teacher College, some teachers go back to normal schools and others even change profession altogether, which,

consequently, reduces the number of teachers who are expected to teach students with disabilities. When this researcher wanted to know why teachers leave the profession one teacher said:

Teaching students with special needs is not an easy task. Teachers run from this field because there is no motivation from the government. You would expect at least an increase in salary after graduation, but there are no salary increments. And remember that we were teachers before joining Patandi Teacher College and we go to Patandi expecting that our salaries would increase, but this does not turn out to be the case, thus discouraging many of us!

Other reasons mentioned by teachers were that some teachers join the field of special education not because they like the profession, but because of personal reasons such as getting good administrative posts or going abroad. When such dreams fail, they then decide to leave the teaching profession.

Writing about teachers of children with behaviour and emotional disorders, Smith (1998) also observed that 'because of the stress of working with such challenging children, these professionals are more likely to seek reassignment or leave their positions (p.336). The attrition of teachers is a big problem in Tanzania, because very few teachers are trained. Children with disabilities are very much adversely affected because they cannot learn without teachers.

Lack of or inadequate teaching and learning material

Fourteen (80%) of the respondents stated that: "the Patandi Teacher College does not have enough teaching and learning materials. A teacher may graduate from college, but still feel not well prepared, lack of teaching and learning materials is another major challenge facing some people with and without disabilities. Consequently, quality of learning for the students is compromised due to lack of materials. Teacher may not be well prepared due to lack of learning materials. This also applies to the students. One respondent said that there were no materials written in Braille for tutors and students with visual impairments. Because the college does not have adequate teaching and learning materials, both teaching and learning process is adversely affected.

Negative Attitudes

Special education teachers continue to face problems of negative attitudes from their fellow teachers and also from the community in general. Seven (46.7%) of the respondents mentioned this as a challenge. A teacher of children with mental retardation talked about her experience when she said: 'you will never believe it, but some of my fellow teachers and even some community members think that I am also mentally retarded just because I teach such children'.

Lack of awareness of what is involved in the education of persons with disabilities make some people think that becoming a teacher of persons with disabilities is both a waste of time and degrading. Due to such attitudes, some teachers run away from special education programmes.

Curriculum and Evaluation Procedures

Tanzania has a national curriculum, and all learners at primary, secondary and teacher training levels must learn the same content and pass national examinations before moving from one level of education to another. Evaluation procedures are also similar, with very minor modifications, particularly for those who have visual impairment. Five (33.3%) of the interviewed teachers saw curriculum and evaluation procedures as posing a challenge. Globally, it has been recognized that inclusive education efforts cannot succeed with such rigid and exclusive curricula, which fail to meet the individual needs of all the learners. Writing about the national curriculum in England, Richards and Armstrong (2011) reported that: 'The National Curriculum inclusion statement outlines how teachers can modify, as necessary, the curriculum's programmes of study to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each Key Stage (p. 72). In Tanzania teachers do not have that authority of making curriculum changes. On the issue of evaluation, McKeachie (2002) cautioned that: 'If we fail to establish an evaluation system that accurately assesses students' progress, we are abdicating our responsibilities to both the student and the profession (p.314). There is need, therefore, for the government of Tanzania to seriously consider the issue of curriculum and evaluation for all learners so that each learner benefits depending on individual special needs.

Barriers To Physical Accessibility

A person with disability may become handicapped due to physical barriers. There are some students with disabilities who are trained to become teachers. Many school buildings, including teacher training colleges in Tanzania, are built without consideration of persons with disabilities. Many multi-storey buildings have stairs leading to doorways or rooms without special corridors for the disabled. Obviously, teachers and teacher trainees in wheelchairs, or who are blind, cannot access the physical environment where there are stairs or steps. In this regard, one respondent said:

Even here at Patandi Teacher College, the campus is not user friendly to those with disabilities; and some rooms and toilets are totally inaccessible. In addition, the public transportation systems, such as buses, are not accessible to persons with disabilities and this makes travelling to school or other places a major hustle for them.

Barriers to physical accessibility, therefore, may also lead to poor teaching and poor learning.

Barriers to Information

Nearly 27 percent of the respondents mentioned barrier to information as one of the challenges facing special education teacher training in Tanzania. Some students such as those who are deaf and those who are blind need a different method of communication. For example, deaf people need to learn sign language, and those who are blind need to learn Braille reading and writing, for effective learning. Little wonder, therefore, that one of the challenges that teachers mentioned is barrier to information, which meant that some teachers and learners could not access information written in normal print owing to their disabilities. In order for students to learn effectively, teachers must be trained in these other languages of

communication so that they can effectively communicate with all pupils entrusted to them. Yet, some teachers complained that they were not trained in sign language and Braille reading and writing. However, Rose and Howley, (2007) stressed that: ‘...it is essential that teachers are well trained in their use to ensure that these communication aids are exploited to their full potential (p. 64) Other studies have also shown that ‘the impact of communication aids in the classroom can be beneficial in a number of areas, including increased pupil involvement in class discussion, increased interaction in group work, increased confidence and reduced isolation (Wright *et al.*, 2006 cited by Rose and Howley, 2007: 64) ’.

Lack of Cooperation with Other Professionals

Six (40%) of the teachers complained that there was no cooperation between teachers of learners with special needs and other professionals. Classroom teachers need support from other professionals because some students with special needs also have needs which may require other such professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, teacher aids and physiotherapists. Such cooperation is lacking in Tanzanian colleges and schools, and teachers carry a heavy burden on their own. Wall, (2008) maintained that ‘Working with other agencies is an integral part of supporting children with special educational needs (SEN) and their parents (p.162).

CONCLUSION

While it is gratifying to note that the distance that Tanzania has travelled, from the time special education teacher training began, to the present, has given some hope and encouragement, one must nonetheless admit that the destination is still far from being in sight. It is true that due credit has to be given and tribute paid for the achievements obtained so far. Yet, major impediments still have to be surmounted. Lingering challenges seem to be many and serious. There is need for more serious plans to make sure that more teachers are trained and retained, so as to meet the needs of all children. There is also need to make sure that the barriers facing both tutors and students are stumped out immediately, so that effective teaching and learning may take place in our schools and teacher training colleges. Worldwide, education has been viewed as a powerful agency, vital for bringing the desired changes in the lives of people in any country. Adadevoh (2009) stated that ‘Education creates the foundation of all of our lives and teachers are at the heart of that process for the most part’ (p. 1). If Tanzania wants to meet the EFA goals, and, therefore, meet the needs of all children, then special education teacher training should be given due weight.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Number of Teacher

Having only one government teacher training college to train special education teachers at certificate and diploma levels is not enough. It is thus strongly recommended here that the curriculum of all teacher training colleges be modified to include special education programmes so that all teacher trainees may learn how to teach all children, including children with disabilities.

Removal of Barriers to Accessibility

It is hereby recommended that the government of Tanzania should make it compulsory for all new buildings to be designed with the needs of persons with

disability in mind all over the country so as to make the environment disability friendly. In addition, there is need for some modifications on the existing infrastructure so as to lessen the burden endured by those with disability. Public transport systems should also be made easily accessible to persons with disabilities, so that movement may be easy for them, too.

Curricular Modification and Adaptation

In order to meet individual needs, it is imperative to modify our national curricula in order to ensure effective provision of equitable and quality education to all learners. Tanzania should try to put more emphasis on effective learning rather than on the passing of 'ambush' examinations alone. Since students, especially those with disabilities, learn differently, and their learning needs are also different, the evaluation procedures should also be different, and should be keyed on individual needs. It should be remembered that passing examinations alone does not necessarily connote that someone has acquired knowledge. Emphasis should, therefore, be put on learning that meets individual needs.

Teacher Attrition

Both special education student teachers and other qualified serving teachers should be motivated in various ways, so as to make them stay in the job. Such motivational strategies should include improving teacher salaries, providing them with scholarships for further studies, rewarding effective teachers, and providing teachers with housing and adequate teaching and learning materials. Many teachers and student teachers will be motivated to teach and/or learn when the teaching and learning environment is conducive - hence the problem of teachers running away may be greatly minimized if not completely solved.

Training of Other Specialists

In the field of special education, there are other specialists required besides classroom teachers. Those specialists should be trained on how to help when they come into contact with children with disabilities, especially now that inclusive schools are being given recognition. The specialists, namely: school administrators, therapists, school nurses, school drivers, cooks, wardens and other students, should be aware of the needs of children with special needs and they should work together with the teachers. When these supporting staff are trained or made aware, that will lessen the burden on the teachers, and we will have schools where everyone feels she/he belongs, is accepted, is loved and respected.

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