PERCEPTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN DAR ES SALAAM

Ali M. L.
Open University of Tanzania, Tanzania

Abstract

The study focused on assessing the level of students and teachers' perception of the importance of education in Dar es Salaam. It was carried out using a case study method in Dar es Salaam. The sample included 246 teachers, 36 students, and two hundred and ten (210) students. The study utilized a case study approach to assess the level of teachers' and students' perception of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam. The study was carried out through a survey with a questionnaire that was designed to collect quantitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used in data analysis based on Likert Scale model for questionnaires. The results revealed that the level of students and teachers' perception about the importance of education in Dar es Salaam is very high (92%) and (80%).The study noted that a comprehensive research on inclusive education in Dar es Salaam is needed. The research should be carried out by educational institutions and other non-government organizations in the city. It should also be conducted in rural areas since the government is responsible for education.
Keywords: perception, inclusive, education, public schools

Introduction

Over the years, the educational system for special needs children has remained focused on ensuring that they are provided the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Education for children with special needs is becoming more prevalent. This is because of the promise of free education to all. In Dar es Salaam, for instance, after the 1964 Revolution, the promise was made. The education now being most advocated for children with disabilities is inclusive education (Mittler, 2000). In Dar es Salaam, the movement for inclusive education started after the 1964 Revolution. This was after the government proclaimed free education to all is irrespective of race, sex, colour or religion and abolished all kinds of discrimination in education (Mapuri, 1996).

Various international treaties and conventions have also helped in developing the concept of inclusion. One of these is the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989. According to UNICEF, the convention recognized the rights of all children. The United Nations Children's Fund is the only organization that works for children with special needs. Through the organization, they help ensure that children with special needs are given the opportunity to be happy and healthy. According to the UNICEF convention, every child has the right to be happy and healthy. It also states that they have the right to be treated fairly and have clean water and nutritious food. The implementation of the convention has allowed the whole world to see the potential of inclusive education.

Inclusive education is a process that aims to give all students equal opportunities and involve them in all aspects of the school day. This is achieved through the inclusion of students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (CACL, 2012). Stubbs (2002) defined inclusive education as the process of increasing the participation of students and reducing their exclusion from cultures, curricula and communities of local schools. According to UNESCO, inclusive education is a process that aims to address the diverse needs of students. It involves working with schools and communities to create programs and structures that cater to the unique needs of students.

Education is a vital aspect of developing a vibrant and diverse community. It allows children to grow and develop together. Inclusive education is important because as Tanzanians, people value our diverse communities. These communities start at school, where all students learn to live alongside peers. In inclusive education, children develop their individual gifts and talents according to their abilities. They also learn by interacting with other kids their age. All children benefit from inclusive education (Singal, 2009). It allows them to: Firstly, develop individual

strengths and gifts, with high and appropriate expectations for each child. Also, work on individual goals while participating in the life of the classroom with other students their own age. hirdly, involve their parents in their education and in their activities of their local schools. In addition to that, foster a school culture of respect and belonging. Inclusive education provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying. Encourage children to involve their parents in their school's activities and programs. This ensures that the school culture is welcoming and inclusive. Fifthly, develop friendships with a wide variety of other children, each with their own individual needs and abilities. Developing strong foundations for each child is very important. They also need to work on their individual goals while they're in school. Aside from having a school culture that is inclusive, this also helps build a strong foundation of respect and belonging.

An inclusive education system is one that provides all students with equal opportunities and resources. It is believed that this process can help eliminate discrimination in the educational sector. Through inclusive education, individuals can have a better understanding of how the system operates in their society. This is the reason why the objective of this study is to determine the level of understanding of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam.

Purpose of the Study

The major objective of this study was to identify the level of comprehension of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam. The specific objectives are:

To examine the teachers' level of understanding of the concept of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam.

To examine the students' level of understanding of the concept of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

1. What is the teachers' level of understanding of the concept of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam?

2. What is the students' level of understanding of the concept of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam?

Methodology

The research approach used in this study was a case study approach. The researcher collected opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values of teachers and students about the level of teachers' and students' understanding of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam. The participants were teachers and students from standard six (6). The sample size of this study was consisting of thirty (36) teachers and two hundred and ten (210) students to make a total of 246 respondents. The sampling procedure used was systematic random sampling. Questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument were validated by three experts in Special Education. A reliability index of .73 were obtained for the instruments using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected through questionnaire were analysed by using SPSS computer software. Also, the data gathered through interviews were analysed and presented qualitatively via content analysis as per research objective and research questions.

Result

Assessing the Teachers' Level of Understanding the Concept of Inclusive Education

A total number of 36 respondents answered the questionnaires, according to their attitudes, experiences, behaviours as well as their perceptions.

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the Level of Teachers' Understanding the Concept of Inclusive Education

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SA
1.	Inclusive education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs.	26	7	2	1
2.	I have attended classes/lessons on inclusive education in school or teachers' centre.	14	16	10	6
3.	I have received information about inclusive education from one of the following sources radio, TV, magazine, cinema, internet or seminar/workshop.	15	15	4	2
4.	A pupil/teacher who is living with disabilities can be allowed to continue with the school system programme.	22	8	5	1
5.	There is evidence that a person with disability can perform well in his/her study.	20	10	3	3
	Percentage (%)	**72.2**	**19.4**	**5.5**	**2.7**

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.

In Table 1 above, the results show that the level of perception the concept of inclusive education by the teachers and students is high (92%) but still problem of low level or lack of understanding the concept of inclusive education by the teachers and students in public schools in Dar es Salaam is existing (8%) especially in rural areas. Therefore, the study showed that teachers level of perception of the concept inclusive education in their schools was high (92%).

Assessing the Students' Level of Understanding the Concept of Inclusive Education

A total number of 210 respondents answered the questionnaires, according to their attitudes, experiences, behaviours as well as their perceptions.

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the Level of Teachers' Understanding the Concept of Inclusive Education

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SA
1.	Inclusive education is a process of enabling all	152	44	10	6

	children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs.				
2.	I have attended classes/lessons on inclusive education in school or teachers' centre.	58	57	64	32
3.	I have received information about inclusive education from one of the following sources radio, TV, magazine, cinema, internet or seminar/workshop.	78	74	39	21
4.	A pupil/teacher who is living with disabilities can be allowed to continue with the school system programme.	145	40	11	16
5.	There is evidence that a person with disability can perform well in his/her study.	142	60	4	6
	Percentage (%)	**54**	**26**	**12**	**8**

Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.

From Table 2 above, the results show that the level of perception the concept of inclusive education by the teachers and students is high (80%) but still problem of low level or lack of understanding the concept of inclusive education by the teachers and students in public schools in Dar es Salaam is existing (20%) especially in rural areas. Therefore, the study showed that teachers level of perception of the concept inclusive education in their schools was high (80%).

Discussion of Result

The level of perception of inclusive education among students and teachers in Dar es Salaam is is about 92% and 80%. That is to say the level of perception of the concept of inclusive education by teachers and students is high and the rest (8%) and (20%) are having low level of perception of inclusion. It was revealed that the level of perception of the concept of inclusive education was higher in urban areas (95%) than in rural regions (65%). This suggests that the lack of media resources and environment factors have affected the level of awareness about this concept among teachers and students. It can be assumed that the lack of media outlets in rural areas could be the reason why the education system in the country is not as accessible as it is in urban areas.

It can also be seen that many disabled children are not informed about their rights to education. The above situation may result many of disabled children to be hidden in their houses and their rights to access education to be denied. While education for them is the fundamental rights under United Nations Convention (UN 1989); for example, Article 26(1), (2) and (3) state the right to education for all. Due to the nature of the goals of the EFA and UPE, inclusive education is very important for achieving the goals in the right time. Therefore, the government should provide the necessary support to teachers and students in implementing inclusive education.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study are based on the objectives and findings of various research questions. It also describes the concept of inclusive education as the first variable that can help schools in developing effective strategies and implementing it. Most teachers and students in the country consider the concept of inclusive education as very negative. This indicates that they do not understand the concept of special education.

The role of government in creating an environment that is conducive for inclusion is a crucial aspect of this study. It has been argued that the various regulations and procedures that are imposed on the micro-entrepreneurs will have a negative effect on their operations. Indeed, harassment, corruption, bureaucracy, cumbersome procedures and regulatory framework will definitely negatively impact on micro-enterprises (Berner et al, 2008). In line with such arguments this study has indicated that the restructuring of the clear and high level of teachers' and students' perception of inclusive education in public schools in Dar es Salaam creates opportunities for the emergence of an inclusive society at the ground or lower level group which is ready for providing downstream services to the children with disabilities.

It is also important that policies that are aimed at attracting businesses are focused on issues that are disabling and facilitating various aspects of entrepreneurship. Aside from developing policies that will support entrepreneurship, it is also important that the public and private sectors collaborate to provide the necessary infrastructure to enable the budding entrepreneurs to operate efficiently. The study has also recommended that the government focuses on the role of inclusive education in addressing the various challenges faced by the disabled community. It is also suggested that the government create an enabling environment that will allow entrepreneurs (investing in education) to thrive and grow their businesses. In addition, the government should remove unnecessary taxes and promote the use of technology in order to improve the living conditions of the entrepreneurs (investing in education).

References

Berner, E., Gomez, G. M. and Knorringa, P. (2008). *Helping a Large Number of People become a Little Less Poor: The Logic of Survival Entrepreneurs*, *Paper at the conference on Entrepreneurship and Economic Development*, Helsinki, Volume 10, No. 165.

CACL, (2012). *Inclusive Education.* [http://www.inclusiveeducation. ca/ documents /IncEd%20brochure%20Nat%20Eng.pdf] site visited on 15/12/2021.

Mapuri, O. R. (1996). *The 1964 Revolution: Achievements and Prospects*, Dar es Salaam-Tanzania, TEMA Publishers Company Ltd.

Mittler, P. J. (2000). *Working Towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts*, New York, David Fulton Publishers.

MoEVT, (2012). *Budget Speech of the Minister of Ministry of Education and Vocational Training-Zanzibar,* Hon. Ali J. Shamuhuna: Financial Year 2012/2013, Revolutionary Government of Dar es Salaam.

Rieser, R. (2008). *Implementing Inclusive Education: A commonwealth Guide to Implementing Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities,* Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK.

Singal, N. (2009). *Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, Reaching the marginalized*, UNESCO.

Stubbs, S. (2002). *Inclusive Education: Where there are few Resources,* the Atlas Alliance Global Support to Disabled People.

UNICEF (1989). *Fact Sheet: A Summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*[www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf] site visited on 14/12/2021.

UNICEF, (1989). *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/Our-mission/UN-Convention/] site visited on 14/12/2021.