A Study on Access to Inclusive Pre-Primary Education for Children with Disabilities

June
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hakielimu

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Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

AIAL	All In All Learning
BEST	Basic Education Statistics Tanzania
CCI's	Cross-Cutting Issues
CRPD	Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DAO	District Academic Officers
DEO	District Education Officer
ECE	Early Childhood Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRE	Gross Enrolment Rates
LGA's	Local Government Authority
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NER	Net Enrolment Rates
PO-RALG	President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government Tanzania
PPE	Pre-Primary Education
QA	Quality Assurers
RAO	Regional Academic Officer
REO	Regional Education Officer
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWO	Social Welfare Officers
TAMH	Tanzania Association for Mentally Handicapped
TIE	Tanzania Institute of Education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
VEO/MEO	Village Executive Officer
WEC	Ward Executive Coordinators
WEO	Ward Education Officer

Executive Summary

Inclusive education aims at removing the barriers within education systems that exclude children with special educational needs including those with disabilities. It requires schools, teachers and classrooms to adapt to fit the needs of children with disabilities. Tanzania, in particular, understands and subscribes to international laws and frameworks to ensure inclusive education is on board. To realise this, the National Policy on Disability of 2004 clearly states a need for early identification of children with disabilities, followed by appropriate intervention. In line with this policy, the Tanzania Institute of Education has developed Early Childhood Education (ECE) Curriculum that requires teachers to conduct early identification of children with special needs and provide appropriate intervention. Even though, the pre-primary education advocates for inclusion, little is known on the extent to which the inclusive principles are translated into practice.

HakiElimu coordinated the study on behalf of the "All in All Learning Network" (AIAL Network) to explore access to pre-primary education for children with disabilities. The study aims at highlighting the contextual and institutional factors that prevent children with disabilities from accessing and participating in inclusive pre-primary education and suggest ways to improve educational opportunities for children with disabilities. The study was guided by the following objectives: to explore how existing policies, structures and environment support inclusion of children with disabilities in a pre-primary education setting; to establish the proportion of children with a disability enrolled in pre-primary schools and learn in the inclusive setting; to establish transition rate of children with disabilities from pre-primary to primary education, and to identify contextual and institutional factors that prevent children with disabilities from accessing and participating in inclusive pre-primary education.

The study employed qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. These techniques included; content analysis of relevant documents, key informants, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observation and post-observation interviews. The study was conducted in ten regions namely; Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mbeya, Tabora, Shinyanga, Kagera, Mtwara, Njombe, Kilimanjaro and Tanga. A total of 20 districts (2 in each participating region) were selected to participate in the study. The researcher, in collaboration with respective regional education officers, identified two districts, with "high" and "low" inclusive education practices in their regions. The districts were recruited randomly.

A total of 1,238 participants were involved in this study. These included officials from ministries and associate agencies responsible for pre-primary education and inclusive education. Furthermore, the study included education officials from regional, district, and ward levels. At the school level, the study recruited heads of schools, pre-primary teachers, and parents of children with or without disabilities. Findings from analysis of policy documents reveal that Tanzania has commendable legal framework ensuring the rights of people with disabilities across various contexts. The principle of an equal right to education has been expressed in various policies, guidelines and legislation. Further analysis reveals that pre-primary curriculum and syllabus and curricular materials are informed by the principle of inclusive education for example; children with disabilities are fairly and positively represented in the pre-primary school textbooks.

Furthermore, the study reveals that enrolment at pre-primary education fluctuates. This is consistent with enrolment at the national level. The gender gap is narrow. Children aged 5 years recorded higher enrolment compared to other ages. The enrolment of children with disabilities at the national level is disaggregated by disability type and gender. Statistics show that the enrolment of children with physical and intellectual impairment was higher across the years compared to other categories of disabilities. Enrolment of children with visual impairment recorded the least enrolment of pupils with disabilities across years. However, nearly all schools, wards, districts and regions visited have no comprehensive nor consolidated statistics of children with disabilities such as data on children with disabilities by age.

The study identifies various factors that hinder access to pre-primary education for children with disabilities. These factors range across family, school and community levels. There is a stigma against children with disabilities and reluctance to enrol them in schools. Some parents were reported to hide their children at home. Distance to and from school, lack of appropriate teaching-learning materials, lack of special funds for children with disabilities as well as a shortage of trained staff were other factors identified as hindering the participation of children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

This study argues that the government of Tanzania through its laws and policies is committed to providing education for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Children with disabilities of pre-primary school age have limited access to school. In a situation where they do have access, their participation in the teaching and learning process is limited. Most teachers have low self-efficacy to support children with disabilities. This could be attributed to limited training. Thus, there is a mismatch between policy intention and practices. The findings of the current study complement previous findings on inclusive education offering. The study further argues that despite advocacy for inclusive schools, integrated and special schools approaches to educating children with disabilities still exists. With the challenges facing inclusive schools, integrated school approach is favourable at least for the next few years while working on improving inclusive schools.

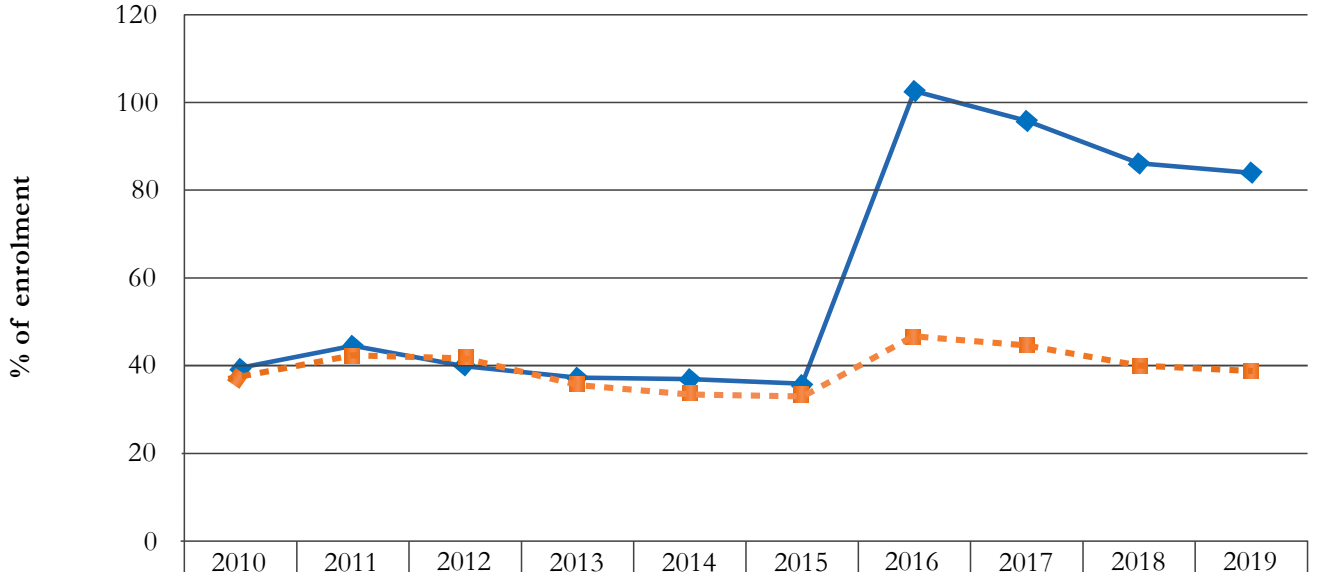
Recommendations

- Improve the on-going community sensitisation to raise awareness on the need to educate children with disabilities.
- Strengthen public-private partnership to collaboratively promote best inclusive practices and address barriers in their continued efforts to meet the educational needs of pre-primary children with disabilities.
- Develop a simple tool to support and guide all stakeholders including pre-primary teachers on how to identify children with low vision, hearing impairment and mild intellectual impairment at the pre-primary school entry.
- Develop guidelines and minimum standards on inclusive pre-primary classrooms to support and guide teachers on how to make their classrooms more inclusive.
- In collaboration with other stakeholders, the government should establish satellite centres that will provide opportunities for children with disabilities to have access to pre-primary education in nearest schools within their communities.
- Increase public expenditure to implement and support inclusive pre-primary education. One of the ways could be to expedite the implementation of a draft capitation grant formula, which targets children with special needs in a school, among others. The actualisation of the formula may encourage inclusive practices in schools.
- Improve data collection system on children with disabilities, and disaggregate data by age, type of disability, and gender at all levels.
- Educate children with severe disabilities in special or integrated schools where there is a special unit with specialised teachers to support children with learning disabilities.
- Review the pre-primary education curriculum and syllabus to strengthen curricular provisions related to performance indicators for children with hearing and visual impairment.
- Tanzania Institute of Education to adapt pre-primary school textbooks and storybooks to meet the needs of children with visual impairments.
- Explore and creatively use locally available, low-cost materials among stakeholders.

1. Contextual Background of the Study

Generating inclusive learning environments is a global priority and is recognised as being a key component in establishing a more equal world (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4). In particular, ensuring inclusion, that all young children have equitable access to quality early childhood development, care and education are one of the key outcome targets connected to this goal. In line with this goal, Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) Article No. 24 requires states to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to inclusive education in all levels and that it is a life-long learning process. This can be done by facilitating access to alternative modes of communication, providing reasonable accommodation and training professionals in the education of people with disabilities (UN, 2016). Inclusion seeks to celebrate and respect the rights of every child and thus within early years setting diversity is assumed, welcomed and viewed as a rich resource rather than perceived as problematic (Booth, Nes, Stromstad, 2003). Research reveals that the early stage of life is not only crucial to a child's future development - it can also be a time for children to discover differences in a positive light. Accepting difference is vital if we are to build inclusive communities and societies and challenge discrimination. On the other hand, inclusion is a contested concept (Florian, 2014).

Adding to the challenge of creating inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the idea that, inclusive education focuses not only on children with disabilities but also other characteristics that make some children at risk of disadvantage (e.g. gender, ethnicity, poverty). Early childhood education aims to foster the wholesome development of the child, attending to his or her 'care' and 'educational' needs in the mainstream (UNESCO, 2015). Understanding and accepting the unique profile and abilities of each child early and developing supportive policies, inclusive environment and learning opportunities is an important step in upholding the rights of all children (Beecham and Rouse, 2012).



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GER	39.5	44.5	39.9	37.3	36.9	35.9	102.6	95.8	86.1	84
NER	37.5	42.4	41.8	35.5	33.4	33.3	46.7	44.6	39.9	38.7

Source: BEST 2010 - 2019

Tanzania recognises the importance of ECE as reflected in the Education and Training Policy (2014). In this cognisance, pre-primary education is formalised, free and compulsory for children aged 4-5 years. In 2019, the total number of pre-primary schools in Tanzania was 17,771. Of the pre-primary schools, public schools were 16,155 (90.9%) while private were 1,616 (9.1%). In 2019, the overall Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) was 84.0% and Net Enrolment Rate (NER) was 38.7%. This implies that 61.3% of the compulsory 5-year-old population are not enrolled in pre-primary education. They might either be out of school or enrolled in primary schools.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires state parties to guarantee an inclusive education system at all levels. It enforces the parties to ensure that their laws promote the rights of persons with disabilities to education alongside their peers in inclusive schools. As such, the CRPD Article 24 obliges state parties to ensure that children with disabilities "are not excluded from the mainstream education system regardless of their disabilities and that they have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live". Furthermore, the convention requires the governments to ensure the provision of accommodation and individualised support within mainstream education. The adoption of the CRDP marked a turning point in inclusive education. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) further advocates for modifications to school practices, provision of support services to students and training of mainstream teachers so that they can support children with diverse educational needs. The Salamanca World Conference on Special Education calls upon all governments, including Tanzania, to adopt the principle of inclusive education and enrol all children in regular schools as a matter of law or policy.

Tanzania is a signatory to inclusive education frameworks. It adopted inclusive education in 1998 a few years after Salamanca Conference, through UNESCO pilot project called 'Special Needs in the Classrooms' (Tungaraza, 2012, Kisanga, 2017). The project started with two schools, namely Kibasila and Wailes Primary Schools in Temeke Municipality, Dar es Salaam. In 2005, the Salvation Army and Tanzania Association for Mentally Handicapped (TAMH) joined the government to support inclusive education in other parts of the region. Inclusive education aims at removing the barriers within the education system that exclude children with special educational needs including those with disabilities. It requires schools, teachers and classrooms to adapt to fit the needs of children with disabilities.

To promote inclusive practices, Tanzania introduced guidelines, including the review of the 2017-2021 National Strategy for Inclusive Education, and development of the draft 2018-2021 strategy. The purpose of the recently introduced strategy is to strengthen the education system, to provide an equitable manner, access, participation and learning opportunities for all children. The strategy further proposes to train administrators and teachers on inclusive education, and distribution of appropriate teaching and learning materials to facilitate teaching and learning and teacher education. Despite the efforts to promote inclusion so far, it is estimated that less than 40% of children with disabilities are enrolled in primary school and less than 2% are enrolled in special education programmes (Njelesani, Couto, and Cameron, 2011).

Furthermore, research reveals that only 38% of primary school-aged children with disabilities attend school and only about 0.4 of all children in school are identified as having 'special needs or disabilities' (Lehtomaki, Tuomi, and Matonya, 2014). Also, seems children with disabilities have by and large been ignored with limited studies (Alisha, 2020), if any, exploring the development of this group within an inclusive ECE framework. Similarly, HakiElimu and other organisations forming AIAL Network identified this gap of knowledge. It was deliberated that key issues under the question, "What are the contextual and institutional factors that affect the implementation of inclusive Early Childhood Education in Tanzania?" are: state of inclusive ECE in Tanzania; the legal and policy frameworks for ECE across the country (Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar); the extent of inclusive ECE in Tanzania (access, retention and transition and participation); existing structures (higher level being government/ministries and lower-level community structures, as well as commendations for change.

The pre-primary education curriculum targets all children aged five years, including those with special needs. Children aged three to four years may be allowed to enrol in pre-primary schools if the early assessment reveals that they are ready for school. The indicators of school readiness include the ability to be independent; ability to express him/herself; interest of the child and ability to follow simple instructions. Among others, pre-primary education is informed by an inclusive perspective, advocating for the need to address children's requirements, including for those with special needs. To realise this, the National Policy on Disability of 2004, clearly states a need for early identification of children with disabilities that should be followed by appropriate intervention. In line with this policy, the Tanzania Institute of Education has developed an ECE curriculum that requires teachers to conduct early identification of children with special needs and provide appropriate

intervention. Even though the pre-primary advocates for inclusion, little is known on the extent to which the inclusive principles are translated into practice.

In this regard, HakiElimu coordinated the study on behalf of AIAL Network to explore access to pre-primary education for children with disabilities. The study aims at illuminating contextual and institutional factors that prevent children with disabilities from accessing and participating in inclusive pre-primary education and suggest ways to improve educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

1.1 Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- Explore how existing policies, structures and environment support to include children with disabilities in a pre-primary education setting.
- Establish the proportion of children with a disability enrolled in pre-primary classes and learn in inclusive settings.
- Establish a transition rate of children with disabilities from pre-primary to primary education.
- Identify contextual and institutional factors that prevent children with disabilities from accessing and participating in inclusive pre-primary education.
- Suggest ways to improve access to pre-primary education for children with disabilities.

1.2 Key concepts and definitions

- Pre-primary education: means a compulsory, fee-free education for children aged 4 - 5 years.
- Inclusive education: In the context of this study inclusive education refers to a system of education in which all children are enrolled, actively participate and complete 1-year of pre-primary education cycle regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination through minimisation of social, contextual and institutional barriers and maximisation of resources. This study, however, is delimited to the inclusion of children with disabilities with an age range between 4 and 5 years in pre-primary education.
- Inclusive pre-primary education: means a pre-primary education setting where barriers have been removed to enable pre-primary children with disabilities to learn and participate effectively in the school system.
- Integrated classes/schools: means a setting where students with disabilities learn alongside peers without disabilities, where; extra support may be implemented to help them adapt to the regular curriculum and sometimes separate special education programmes are in place within the classroom.
- Disability: in relation to pre-primary school means loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in pre-primary education setting on an equal level with others due to physical, mental or social factors.
- A child with disability: In the context of this study a child with a disability refers to a pre-primary-school age child (4 - 5 years old) with a physical, intellectual, sensory or mental impairment and whose functional capacity encountering attitudinal, environmental and school is limited.
- Access: means enabling or allowing a pre-primary school child with a disability to have access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, and environment in a pre-primary education context.

- Participation: some children will need additional individualised accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning activities with peers and adults.
- Supports: an infrastructure of systems-level supports must be in place to undergird the efforts of individuals and organisations providing inclusive services to children and families.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

1.3.1. Ecosystem perspective for inclusive early childhood education

This study is inspired by the ecosystem perspective for inclusive early childhood education. The perspective considers the complex influences on children arising from their interactions and interrelations between themselves and the surrounding systems – micro, meso, exo and macro – in which they function and grow. The perspective provides an opportunity to understand what constitutes quality in inclusive early childhood education from the outcome-process-structure levels. The main outcome or goal and measure of the quality inclusive early childhood education is each child's level of participation in the social and learning settings. The child's participation is enabled through the surrounding inclusive structures that operate at the micro-system level that consists of the physical, social, cultural and educational environment.

Normally, what happens at the micro-system level is influenced by structural factors at the mesosystem level, coming from the community where the inclusive setting is located. What happens at an inclusive setting is influenced by more distant structural factors at the macro-system level. These include the existence of the policy, legal frameworks and curriculum standards at various levels. In the context of this study, the ecosystem perspective serves as an analytical framework, which facilitated understanding of early childhood inclusive education from policy and practical levels, within and across sub-systems.

2. Methodological Approach

2.1 Research sites and participants

2.1.1 Regions

The study was conducted in ten regions; Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mbeya, Tabora, Shinyanga, Kagera, Mtwara, Njombe, Kilimanjaro and Tanga. Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and Tabora were purposively selected based on their long-standing history to establish schools for children with disabilities. The first two special schools for children with visual impairment, for example, were established in Dodoma and Tabora Regions in 1950 and 1962, respectively. Also, Dar es Salaam was the first region to establish an integrated school to accommodate children with visual impairment in a regular school in 1963 and 1984 established the first special school to accommodate children with mental impairment. Besides, Dar es Salaam was the only region to practice inclusive education school as a pilot study in 1997 and 2002 respectively. Shinyanga Region was involved to participate in the study because of the killings of people with albinism in the past years. The region was of interest for exploring community members and inclusive practices. Kagera, Lindi, Tanga and Kilimanjaro Regions were randomly selected to participate in the study. Also, the selection of regions was informed by existing education zones for geographical representation: Southern Zone (Lindi Region), Central Zone (Dodoma and Tabora Regions), Lake Zone (Kagera Region), Northern Zone (Tanga and Kilimanjaro Regions), Eastern Zone (Dar es Salaam Region) and Southern Highlands Zone (Mbeya and Njombe Regions). Considerations of regions according to zones were based on the need for geographical representation and a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation from areas with diversities in terms of the social, cultural and economic context.

2.1.2 Districts

A total of 20 districts, two districts from each participating region were selected to participate in the study. The researchers, in collaboration with the regional education officers, identified districts with high and low rates in inclusive education practices. The districts were recruited randomly..

2.1.3 Schools

A total of 80 schools were selected to participate in the study. Four schools with pre-primary classes were selected from each participating district. As a result, a total of 72 public and 8 private schools were engaged to participate in the study. Of the selected classes, 11 were integrated, 65 inclusive and 4 regular classes. The aim was to explore practices from different categories of schools/classes. Researchers, in collaboration with district education officers, identified two schools rated high and two schools rated low in inclusive education practices. Inclusion of private schools depended on availability in respective districts. Thus, 80 schools were recruited to participate in this study.

2.1.4 Participants and selection procedure

A total of 1,238 participants at various levels were involved in this study. These included officials from ministries and associate agencies responsible for pre-primary education and inclusive education. Furthermore, the study included participants from regional, district, ward, school and community levels. Table 1 presents some participants by levels.

Table 1: Number of Participants by Levels

Level	Prospective Participant	Total
National-Level	4 officials from MoEST (Director of Basic Education, Director of Policy and Planning, 1 pre-primary focal person and 1 official from special education unit), 4 officials from PO-RALG (1 Director of Basic Education, Director of Policy and Planning, 1 pre-primary focal person and 1 official from special education unit), 2 officials from TIE (1 Director of Curricular materials and 1 pre-primary focal person), 2 individuals from Baraza la Watu wenye Ulemavu.	14
Officials at Regional-Level	10 Regional Education Officers (REO) and 10 Regional Special Education Officers)	20
Officials at District-Level	20 District Education Officers (DEO), 20 District Academic Officers (DAO) and 20 Quality Assurers (QA), 20 Special Education Officers, 20 Social Welfare Officers/Medical specialists	100
Officials at Ward and Village Levels	80 Ward Education Officers (WEO), 80 Ward Executive Officers (WEC), and 80 Village Executive Officers (VEO)	240
School and community Levels	80 Heads of schools, 80 School Committee Chairpersons, 77 pre-primary teachers, 507 parents, both with children with and without disabilities (at least 6 from each participating school)	744
Total		**1118**

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

The study employed qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. These techniques included: a content analysis of documents, key informants' in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observation and post-observation interviews. Table 2 presents the research objective and the corresponding data collection technique.

Table 2: Research objective, understanding and corresponding data collection technique

Research Objective	Team's understanding of the objective	Potential technique to realise the objective
1. Explore how existing policies and structures support inclusive early childhood Education and development.	We understand that this objective intends to generate understanding of existing national and local policies, legislation, structures and support that give the right, without exception, to all 4/5 years old children to attend and participate mainstream pre-primary education.	1. Content analysis of relevant documents 2. Key informants' in-depth interviews 3. School and classroom observation 4. Post-observation interviews

2. Establish the proportion of children with disability enrolled in pre-primary and learn in inclusive setting	We understand that this objective intends to generate knowledge on the percentage of children with special needs who attend and participate in the teaching-learning process in mainstream pre-primary education. Furthermore, the objective intends to generate understanding of enabling conditions and barriers preventing some children with special needs from accessing mainstream pre-primary education.	1. Key informants' in-depth interviews 2. Questionnaire
3. Establish transition rate from inclusive setting (from pre-primary to primary) for children with disability	We understand that this objective intends to generate understanding of the transition rate (from pre-primary to primary education) of children with special needs including disability. Moreover, the objective intends to generate understanding of enabling conditions and barriers preventing children with special needs to transit from pre-primary to primary education.	1. Key informants' in-depth interviews 2. Content analysis of relevant documents
4. Suggest ways to improve access to pre-primary education for children with disability	We understand that this objective targets at establishing actionable recommendations on how to improve access, participation, completion of pre-primary education and transition to primary education for children with special needs	1. Key informants' in-depth interviews 2. Focus group discussions 3. Reflection of key findings including identified best inclusive early childhood education practices

2.2.1 Content analysis of documents

Documents such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, Constitution of Tanzania, Education Act, 2009 Law of the Child Act, Child Development Policy, Education and Training Policy (2014), ESDP 2017/2018-2020/2021, National Five-Year Development Plan 2016/2017 – 2020/2021 and National Strategy on Inclusive Education in Tanzania were inquired and subjected to content analysis. Other documents subjected to the content analysis included pre-primary education curricular materials, (curriculum, syllabus, teacher's guide and textbooks), professional standards for ECE teachers and pre-primary pupils register books.

2.2.2 In-depth Interviews with key informants and focus group discussions

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with selected MoEST, PO-RALG and TIE officials, regional, district, and village officers, quality assurers, social welfare officers, wards education officers, ward executive coordinators, school heads, pre-primary teachers and school committee chairpersons. A total of 507 parents (33%M, 67 % F) were recruited to participate in the focus group discussions, 9.1 % were from private schools while 90.9 % from public schools. At least 62.3 % of parents reported having a child with a disability. A total of 75 focus group discussions were conducted with parents, of which 8 were conducted with parents in private schools while 67% were from public schools. At least six parents from the selected schools were conveniently recruited to compose a group. All groups composed were heterogeneous, comprising of males and females, and parents of children with and without disabilities. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in Kiswahili language spoken and understood by the majority, and medium of instruction in public primary schools in Tanzania. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and were audio-recorded. This allowed the preservation of participants' words and retrieval of information during data processing and report writing.

2.2.3 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to selected pre-primary teachers. The questionnaire sought participants' views and experiences on inclusive education practices at the pre-primary level. Furthermore, questionnaires explored information related to pre-primary school teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, attitude and motivation to teach children with special needs in an inclusive setting as well as to establish the needs for continuous professional development. A software system, 'Mobenzi', was used to facilitate quantitative data collection, supporting data collection on Android devices (phones and tablets). The questionnaire was adapted and coded in the system.

2.2.4 'Dot' ethnographic observation and post-observation interviews

School and classroom observations were conducted. Among others, observations explored issues related to instructional practices, teaching-learning facilities and resources as well as school infrastructure. Observations were conducted during a full pre-primary class session guided by observation schedule. Post-observation interviews were conducted with heads of schools and pre-primary teachers to complement other generated information. These interviews were conducted immediately after observations.

2.3 Data Management, Processing and Analysis

2.3.1 Data from interviews, focus group discussion and observation

The analysis of qualitative data was both deductive and inductive. The data was not approached with a rigid set of pre-conceptions nor fully inductively, rather abductively, combining the two. This assumed that a better and broader understanding of the matter under investigation would be informed by both research objectives/questions and emerging insights from the data. Three main steps, however, guided the analysis of qualitative data: preparing and organising data, creating categories/themes, coding, presentation and interpretation.

Preparation and organisation of the data for analysis began in the field. This involved listening to each audiotaped interview/focus group discussion, followed by a verbatim transcription of the interviews and focus group discussion proceedings. Thereafter, themes were deductively derived from the research questions, and then inductively approached. The inductive approach involved reading the transcripts repeatedly to identify relevant texts and make interpretations. Step three involved coding, presentation, and interpretation of findings. The transcribed data were re-read for coding, that involved associating data with the themes created. This involved identifying text elements – words, sentence (s), and or paragraph (s) – from each transcript, dragging-and-dropping them into respective themes. Furthermore, an independent researcher reviewed all the coded data extracts for each theme. This enabled the researchers to rework and refine the themes and related extracts.

2.3.2 Quantitative data management and analysis plans

The research team ensured a high quality, cleaned dataset and codebook available. It began in the field and continued through the end of data collection process. Data were cleaned and checked the data carefully for errors, accuracy, and identifying and handling missing values. Data checking responded to questions such, as are the responses legible? Are the responses complete? Are the important questions answered? Is all relevant contextual information (e.g., data, time, place) included? Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean were performed and presented in tables and charts.

2.4 Quality control measures

The quality of the research was embedded ineffective and implementable plans, recruitment procedures, training of the research teams, pre-test and revision of data collection tools. Enumerators were provided with a data collection protocol to guide day-to-day data collection; close supervision to support enumerators in technical issues regarding updating data collections tools in android devices, lead enumerators and supervisors

conducted visual quality checks on-field activities through direct observation on interviews, daily debriefing meetings at various levels for experience sharing from the field and way forward.

2.5 Ethical Consideration and Safeguarding

Participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study before the interviews, benefits likely to arise from this research, and their rights to participate or withdraw from the study at any particular moment. They were also told that the information to be provided would be kept confidential and that the information would not be linked to their identity in any way. Thereafter, participants were asked to provide informed consent to participate in the study. Children were given simple oral explanations and informed consent was sought, supported by the consent from their parents/guardians or school heads, adhering to the Child Safeguarding Policy.

3. Study Findings

3.1 Legal and Policy Environment

3.1.1 Laws and Policies

Analysis of policy documents reveals that Tanzania has a commendable legal framework ensuring the rights of people with disabilities across various contexts. This is backed-up by Tanzania's decision to subscribe to various international and global frameworks favouring the rights of all people including those with disabilities. Tanzania, for example, has ratified the United Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which emphasises the rights of children to an education, for them to achieve social integration, among other things.

Similarly, the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) urges the states to ensure that all girls and boys have equal access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030. In Tanzania, the principle of an equal right to education has been expressed in various policies, guidelines and legislation (examples include The Education Act, 1978; The Education and Training Policy, 1995; The Child Development Policy, 1996; The National Policy on Disability, 2004; The Persons with Disability Act, 2010; The Education and Training Policy, 2014).

The Persons with Disability Act, 2010, advocates for health care, social support, accessibility, rehabilitation, education and vocation training, communication, employment or work protection and promotion of basic rights for the persons with disabilities. The Act states that persons with disabilities across all ages and gender shall have the same rights to education, training in inclusive settings and the benefits of research as other citizens. Furthermore, the Act stresses that every child with a disability shall have equal rights to admission into the public or private schools.

Similarly, the Education and Training Policy (2014) emphasises on equitable access and participation of all children in a compulsory and fee-free basic education as a foundation for further education, the policy stipulates practices that accommodate learners in the whole education system that will ensures no exclusion of any child. The National policies have been translated into various national and education sector development plans and strategies. As mentioned elsewhere, a recently developed National Strategy of Inclusive Education 2018-2021, for example, stresses on the need to ensure:

- Equitable access and participation in education including in at least one year of pre-primary education enhanced for all 5 years old children with particular attention to vulnerable groups.
- Train administrators and teachers on the identification and improve screening system of pre-primary age children.
- Procure and distribute pre-primary accessible teaching and learning materials that prepare teachers for inclusive pre-primary education. Table 3 summarises law/policies related to persons with disability.

Table 3: Policies and Laws on children with disabilities and education

Law/Policy	Law/policy provision
Law of the Child Act (2009)	▪ Education should be made accessible to every child through the most practical methods including but not limited to, equipment to assist children with special education needs and those with disabilities…
The National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2009-2017)	Aims at ensuring that: ▪ Education policies and programmes are informed by inclusive values and practices ▪ Teaching and learning respond to the diverse needs of learners ▪ Professional capabilities for inclusive education are widened and strengthened
The Persons with Disability Act (2010)	States that: ▪ Persons with disabilities in all ages and gender shall have same rights to education, training in inclusive settings and the benefits of research as other citizens. ▪ Every child with a disability shall have equal rights in relation to admission to the public or private schools.
Education and Training Policy (2014)	Advocates for: ▪ Use of sign language and braille in all levels of education. ▪ Increase of education and training opportunities for all children including those with special needs ▪ Ensuring that all necessary infrastructure to accommodate all learners are built in school settings.
Education Sector Development Plan (2016/2017-2020/2021)	▪ Advocates for inclusion of children living with disabilities into the mainstream education system and special school to those whose disability is severe. ▪ Advocated for a screening programme to check children's disabilities. ▪ Offers and encourages fellow students to support those students with minor impairments.
Pre-primary Curriculum and Syllabus (2016)	▪ One of the objectives of the pre-primary education is to identify children with special needs and provide appropriate intervention ▪ Informed by the inclusive principle as it addresses the needs of all children including those with special needs ▪ Advocates for individualised instruction ▪ Emphasises on the promotion of the rights of and responsibilities of the child

Proposed Revised Capitation Grant Allocation Formula by MoEST and PO-RALG (2017)	▪ Improve the equity of Capitation Grant allocation by considering number of children with special educational needs in a school. ▪ Provide additional resources to cater for special educational needs to schools.
The New National Strategy of Inclusive Education (2018-2021)	Strengthen education system to provide, in an equitable manner, learning opportunities for all children. ▪ Equitable access and participation in at least one year of pre-primary education enhanced for all 5 years old children with particular attention to vulnerable groups. ▪ Train administrators and teachers on the identification and improve screening system of pre-primary age children. ▪ Procure and distribute pre-primary accessible teaching and learning materials that prepare teachers for inclusive pre-primary education.

3.1.2 Inclusivity of curriculum and curricular materials

The Pre-Primary Curriculum and Syllabus 2016 and curricular materials are informed by the principle of inclusive education. The curriculum aims to enable every child to develop competencies that will help him/her to acquire their educational and developmental needs. The curriculum is informed by the inclusive principle as it addresses the needs of all children including those with special needs by facilitating their development and ability to perform specific actions. One of the objectives of pre-primary education is to identify children with special needs and provide appropriate interventions. The curriculum further addresses various cross-cutting issues (CCIs), with the promotion of the rights of, and responsibilities of the child. The CCIs are integrated into the expected competencies and reflected in the various teaching and learning activities.

The pre-primary school curriculum further advocates for appropriately trained teachers and at least two teachers per pre-primary class. The recommended teacher to child ratio is 1:25. In terms of non-human resources, effective curriculum implementation requires the availability of adequate and child-appropriate infrastructure, furniture, and teaching-learning materials, which cater to the needs of all children including those with special needs. The curriculum also calls for continuous professional development for teachers through different modes including school-based learning for practising teachers. To further this provision, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) in collaboration with other stakeholders developed six modules to support school-based practices. One of the topics in the modules focuses on developing pre-primary school teachers' capacity for inclusive education.

3.1.2.2 Textbooks

The Pre-Primary Education (PPE) curriculum and syllabus assert that; six textbooks and twelve storybooks are expected to be available for each child in a pre-primary class. Besides assistive devices are expected to be available to support children with disabilities to learn. The study, however, found that textbooks, storybooks and assistive devices were largely lacking. This was reported by the majority of the participants and was observed in schools visited. The available observed books were colourful and the font size used could be described as readable and child-appropriate. However, there were no adapted textbooks or storybooks for students with visual impairments.

Further analysis reveals that children with disabilities are fairly represented in the pre-primary textbooks. Only two out of six textbooks represent children with disabilities. For example, in the 'Caring for the Environment', textbook there is a picture on Page 18, showing a child with albinism, on Page 32 the picture of a visually

impaired child, while Page 35 has a picture of a physically impaired child. Likewise, in the 'Relating with Others' textbook, on Page 22 the picture shows a physically impaired child and shows ramps for easy classroom access. Positive representation of children with disabilities is commendable as it helps change attitudes and break stereotypes. However, all buildings portrayed in the textbook do not show ramps used by physically impaired children. Of all 53 buildings depicted in all textbooks, only two buildings show ramps for physically challenged. The textbook shows a toilet with a staircase for physically and visually impaired.

A Picture extracted from the 'Caring for the Environment', textbook on page 22 showing a physically impaired child in an inclusive learning environment

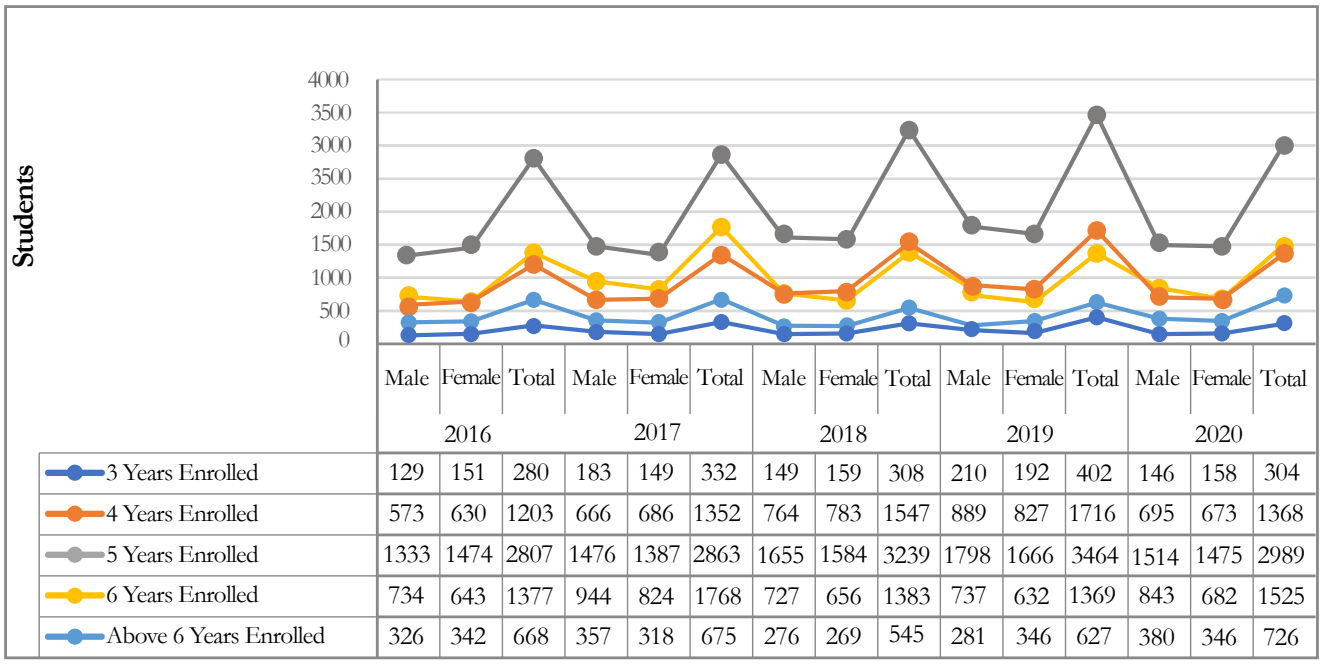
From the legal and policy analysis, we learn that pre-primary education in Tanzania is fee-free in public schools and compulsory for children aged 4 to 5 years. It is a one-year programme to prepare children for primary education. There is no doubt that the government of Tanzania provides strong support for the education of children with disabilities across all levels. The policies and guidelines advocate for equitable access and participation of children with disabilities in an inclusive pre-primary education setting.

The government policies and guidelines focus not only on enrolment of children with disabilities but also are

clear in their intention that schools and classrooms should become inclusive for children with disabilities and be able to respond to all learners' needs. The policies and guidelines define a child with a disability. This is important for programming. To meet the needs of children who attend pre-primary education, the Pre-Primary Curriculum and Syllabus 2016, for example, advocates for early identification and appropriate intervention for children with special needs. It further urges a need to adapt curriculum and individualised instruction to allow children to attend and participate in the teaching and learning process. Provisions on the inclusion of every child in the teaching-learning process. Nevertheless, none of the learning performance indicators seems to consider the needs of children with, for example, hearing and visual impairments. There is no mention of the use of sign language or assistive devices and braille. Besides, there are no specific and established arrangements for the transition of children with disabilities from pre-primary to primary education.

3.2 Access of children with disabilities to pre-primary education

Analysis of data reveals that enrolment at pre-primary education fluctuates. This is consistent with enrolment at national level. Gender gap is narrow. Children aged 5 years of age recorded higher enrolment compared to other ages. See Figure 2.



	2016			2017			2018			2019			2020		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
3 Years Enrolled	129	151	280	183	149	332	149	159	308	210	192	402	146	158	304
4 Years Enrolled	573	630	1203	666	686	1352	764	783	1547	889	827	1716	695	673	1368
5 Years Enrolled	1333	1474	2807	1476	1387	2863	1655	1584	3239	1798	1666	3464	1514	1475	2989
6 Years Enrolled	734	643	1377	944	824	1768	727	656	1383	737	632	1369	843	682	1525
Above 6 Years Enrolled	326	342	668	357	318	675	276	269	545	281	346	627	380	346	726

Figure 2: Enrolment of pre-primary school children by age, for the period 2016 to 2020

Source: Field Data

Figure 3 presents a number of pre-primary school children enrolled in 2020 in the visited pre-primary classes, showing that more children aged 5 years were enrolled in pre-primary classes in 2020 compared to those who are 6 years old. This is not surprising though, for 5 years is the compulsory age for pre-primary school entry.

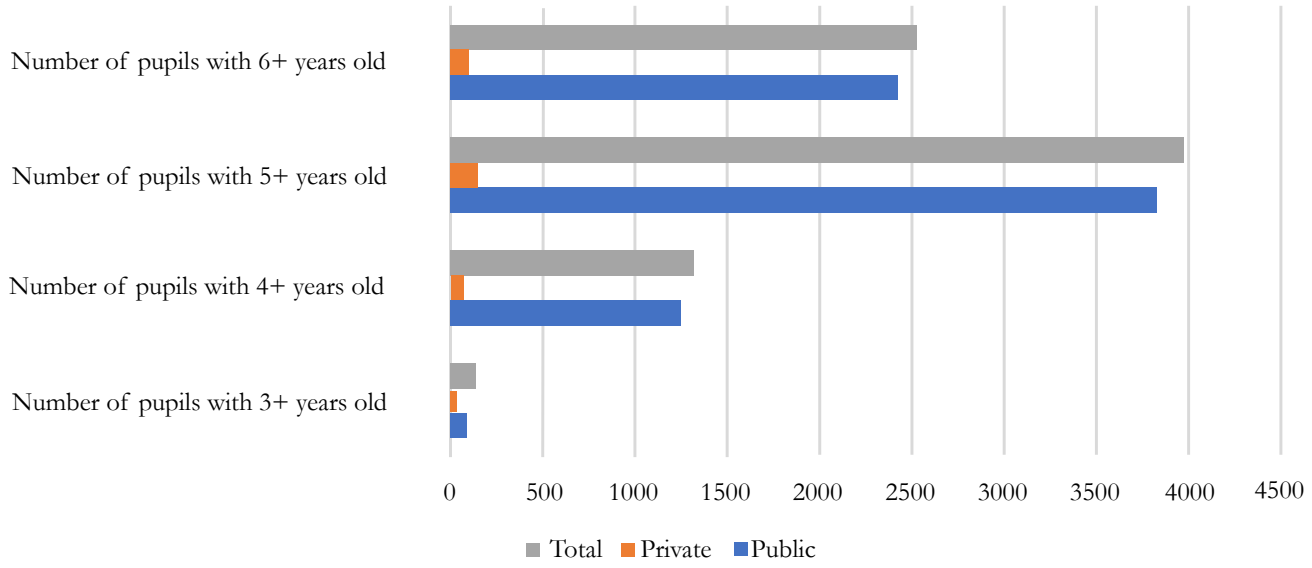


Figure 3: Pre Primary children enrolment according to age, 2020

Source: Field Data

Figure 4 shows 14% increment of enrolment of children with disabilities in pre-primary school at the national level increased from 3,713 children in 2,017 to 4,240 children in 2,019. However, the enrolment is not constant, it fluctuates. For example, in 2018 it dropped by 6.4 % compared to the 2017 enrolment. In 2019, it increased by 21.5% from that of 2018. Similarly, the enrolment of children by categories of disabilities fluctuates.

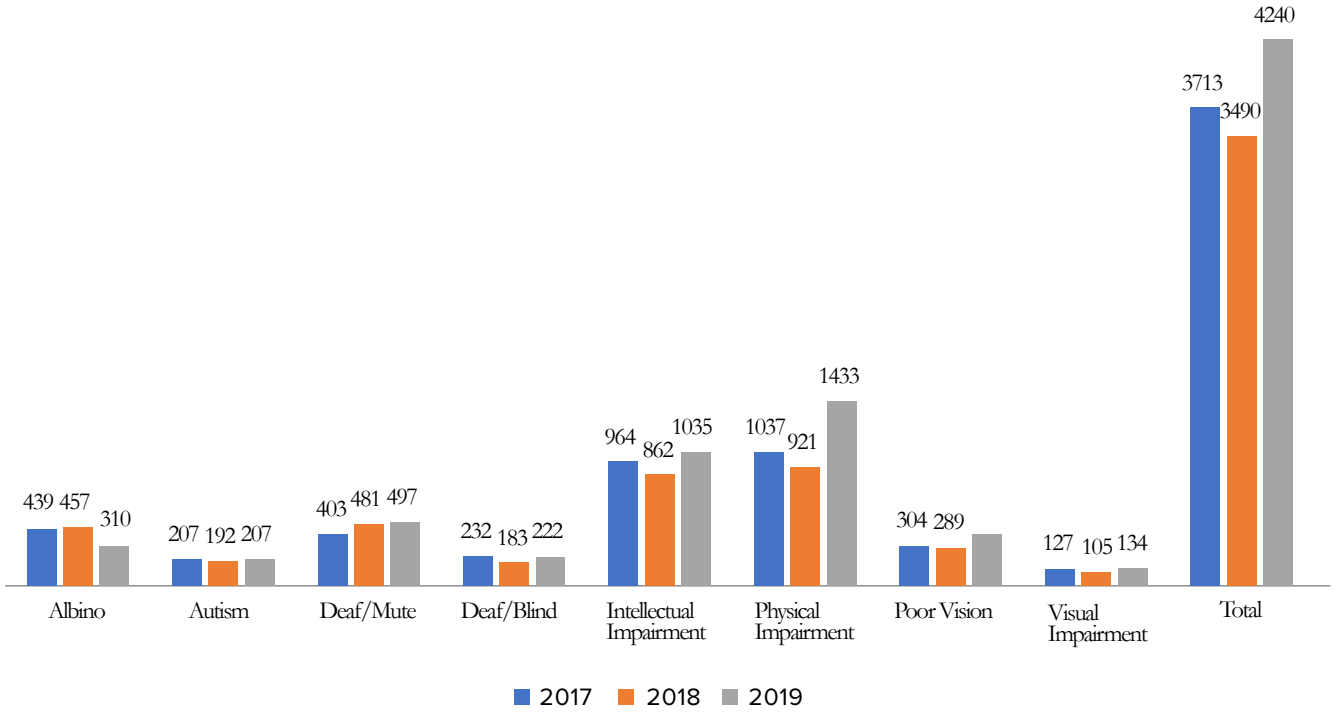


Figure 4: Enrolment of pupils with disabilities in pre-primary classes Nationally, 2017-2019

Source: Basic Education Statistics Tanzania (BEST), 2017, 2018 and 2019

The enrolment of children with disabilities at the national level is disaggregated by disability type and gender. Enrolment of children with physical and intellectual impairments was higher over the years compared to other categories of disabilities. In 2019, for example, the enrolment of children with physical and intellectual impairments was 34% and 24 % respectively. This was 58% of the total enrolment. Visual impairment category has recorded the least enrolment. Although data on children with disabilities by age was lacking, disaggregation of enrolment by gender and disability type is important for planning and programmes purposes. 3.3 Enrolment trend of children with disabilities by region, 2016-2020.

3.3 Enrolment trend of children with disabilities by region from 2016 to 2020

The study further sought to understand enrolment trend of children with disabilities over the past five years by region. *Figure 5* shows the enrolment trend

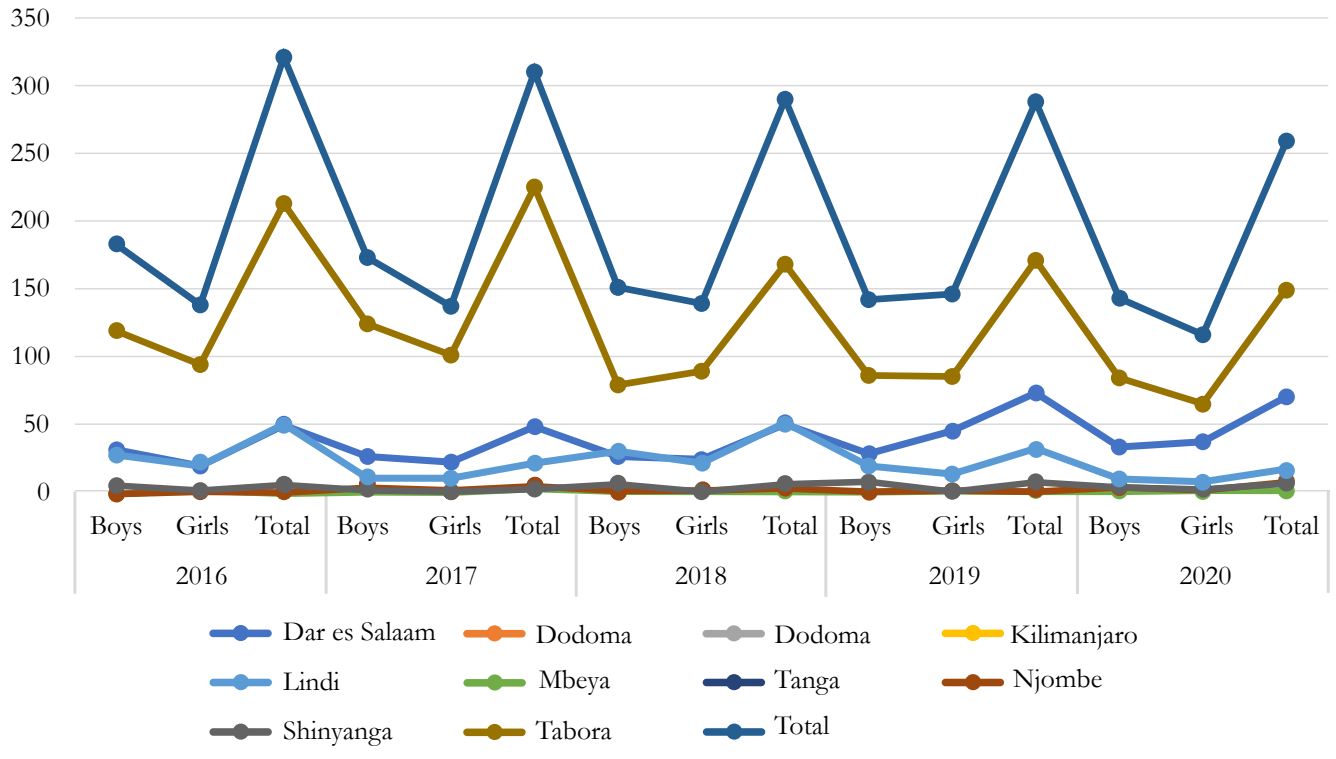


Figure 5: Enrolment trend of children with disabilities from 2016-2020

Source: Field Data

Figure 5 shows that although there was a steady enrolment decrease from 2017 to 2020, Tabora Region recorded the highest enrolment over the years followed by Dar es Salaam and Lindi Regions. In other regions, enrolment has been constantly low. A regional discrepancy in enrolment of children with disabilities may be attributed to several factors, including communities' awareness of rights to education for children with disabilities and existing mechanisms to identify children with disabilities in the communities.

Figure 6 shows the trend of pupils with disabilities enrolled in pre-primary classes during the 2016-2020 period. Children with mental impairments recorded the highest enrolment trend whereas those with hearing and vision impairments recorded the lowest enrolment rate over the past five years.

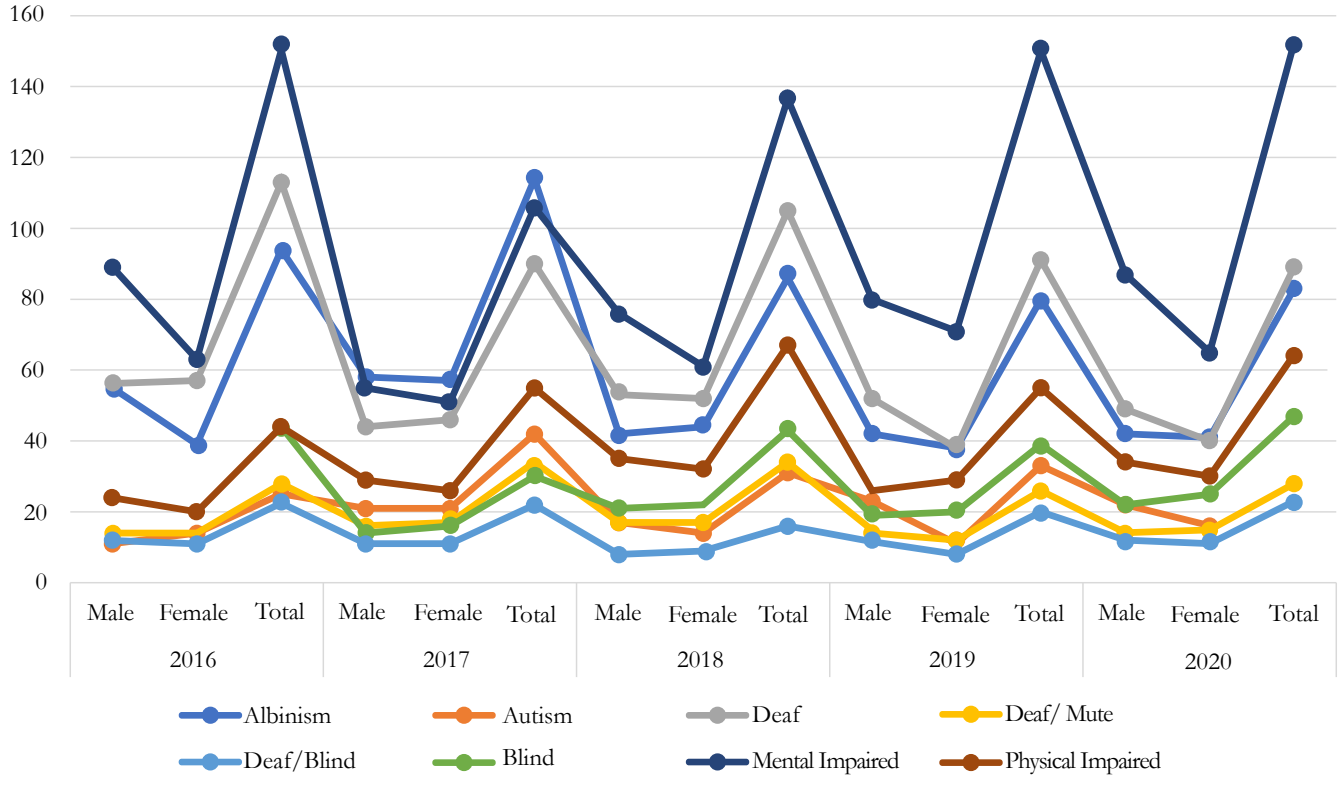


Figure 6: Trend of enrolment of pupils with disabilities 2016-2020 by disability category.

Source: Field Data

The enrolment data of children with disabilities in pre-primary education is informative. However, it does not establish the proportion of pre-primary school children, enrolled in schools against the total pre-primary school age group population. This implies that the current statistics do not show the percentage of children with disabilities, who are yet to be enrolled.

Nearly all schools, wards, districts and regions visited have no comprehensive and consolidated statistics of children with disabilities in place. They might have the number of pupils with disabilities enrolled in PPE classes but not by age or type of disabilities. There were also no comprehensive statistics related to children with disabilities on completion and transition at ward or district levels. The majority of ward executive officers (WEOs) did not have consolidated statistics at their disposal. Furthermore, findings from the field reveal that there were no statistics on the total population of PPE age group children (4 and 5 years) with or without disabilities at the ward, district and regional levels. ward executive officers, district education officers and ward executive coordinators reported that they often requested local village administration to identify children with disabilities and provide their number in respective villages, however, when data was acquired, it was not established to the expectations.

Despite an increase in enrolment of children with disabilities, we cannot claim achievement in terms of enrolment in pre-primary education since we do not know the percentage of pupils enrolled in pre-primary classes out of the total population of children with disabilities and those who are out of school. Nevertheless, data reveals that some children with disabilities have limited access to pre-primary education. About 29% of the heads of school disagreed with the statement that children with disabilities have equal access to pre-primary education.

3.4 Completion & transition rate of children with disabilities (pre-primary to Standard I)

Statistics are largely lacking to establish the transition rates of children with disabilities from pre-primary to primary education. The Basic Education Statistics of Tanzania indicates that children with disabilities are enrolled in Standard I, and the enrolment has been increasing. *Figure 7*, however, shows the enrolment trend of pupils who transited from pre-primary to primary education. Pupils with albinism have recorded high transition rate over the years compared to pupils with other disabilities. Transitions of pupils with visual and hearing impairments have been low.

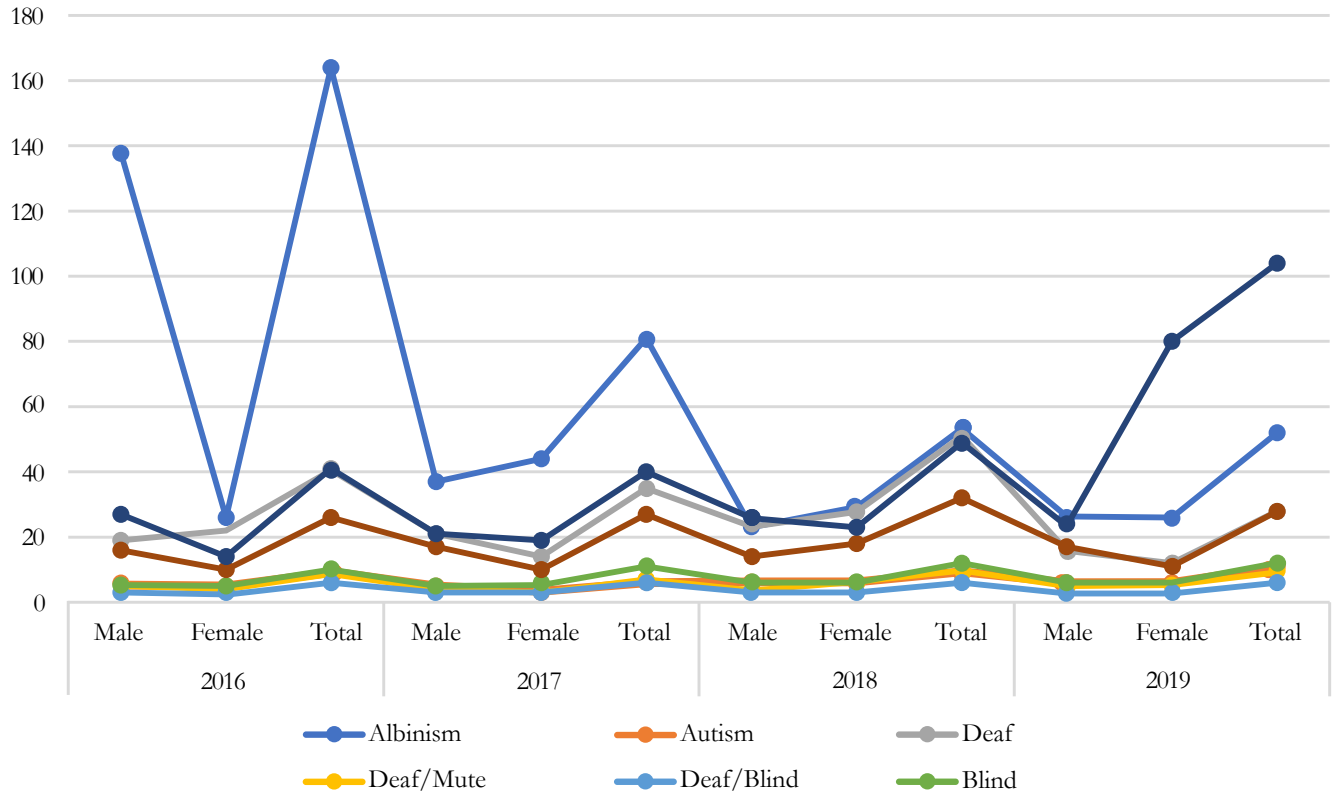


Figure 7: Transition trend of children with disabilities

Source: Basic Education Statistics Tanzania (BEST), 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019

Even though there is a steady increase in percentage (from 54.8% in 2014 to 78.6% in 2019) of children entering Standard I with a pre-primary education background. Statistics on the enrolment of children with disabilities in Standard I (See **Figure 8**) are not informative enough to demonstrate that the enrolled pupils attended pre-primary class.

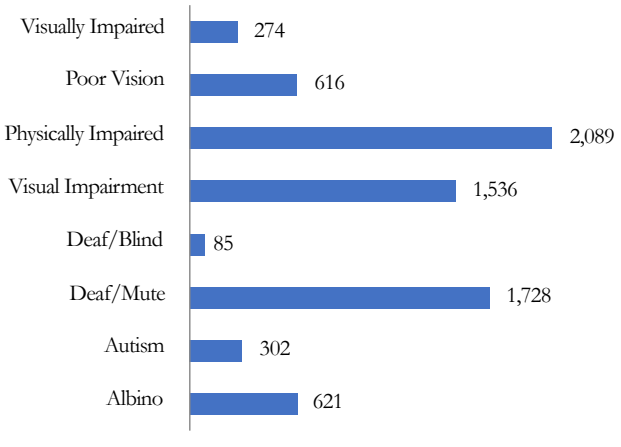


Figure 8: Enrollment for Children with Disabilities.

Source: Field Data

3.5 Factors inhibiting children with disabilities access to pre-primary education

There were various factors, which were reported to hinder children with disabilities to access pre-primary education, ranging from family, school and community levels. The majority (71%) of heads of schools, for example, reported that parents perceived children with disabilities could not learn. This perception influenced parents not to enrol children with disabilities to school. About 57% of school heads reported that there was a stigma against children with disabilities and families among community members. As a result, the parents were hiding their children at home. The findings further reveal that 57 per cent of heads of the schools visited reported that children with disabilities, particularly those with severe forms of disabilities were denied access to pre-primary education. Figure 9 Summarises factors, inhibiting children with disabilities access pre-primary education.

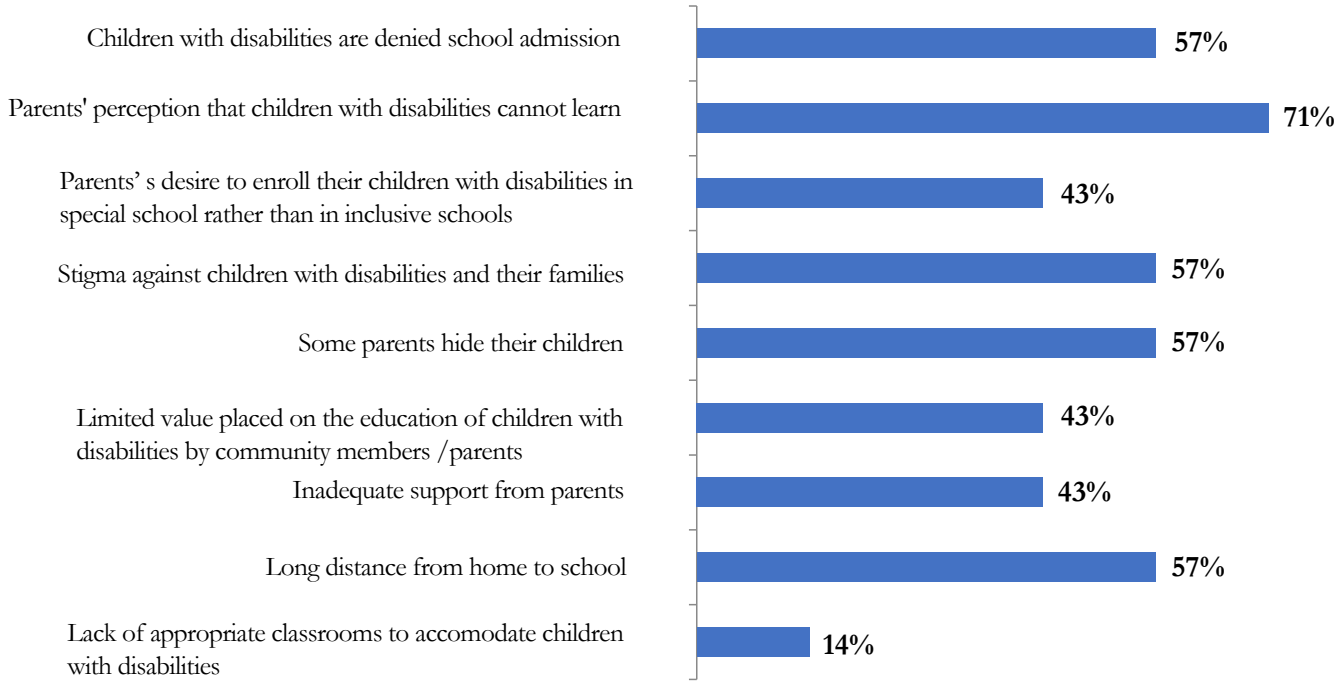


Figure 9: Factors inhibiting children with disabilities access to pre-primary education

Source: Field Data

These inhibiting factors could be clustered into three broad categories; community, school and geographical. When quantified, community-based factors overweighed other factors by far, occupying about 67% while school-based and geographical factors occupy 22 % and 11% respectively.

Factors inhibiting children with disabilities access to pre-primary education were reiterated with participants during the interview and focus group discussion sessions. These included stigma against children with disabilities and their families and related consequences, parents' desire to enrol their children with disabilities in special rather than in inclusive schools, a long distance from home to school and limited resources to accommodate children with disabilities in regular schools.

3.5.1 Stigma against children with disabilities and their families

A certain portion of community members in the areas where the study was conducted perceive that a child with a disability is useless, a curse and God-given punishment for a family to have such a child. Furthermore, some participants were of the perception that children with disabilities attend school just to play with their peers. They could learn very little compared to a child without a disability. Thus, according to the participants, sending a child with a disability to school was wastage of fiscal, human and time resources. Consequently, some parents were reported to hide their children, particularly those with severe mental and hearing impairments and opted not to send them to school as doing so would bring shame and embarrassment because they would perform poorly.

One pre-primary school teacher had the following to say: *"Parents are reluctant to send their children with disabilities to school because they feel embarrassed. Most, if not all, think the best course of action is to keep their children indoors doing nothing and not allow them to have contact with the outside world."*

Similarly, one district "special education needs official," remarked:

> *"The big predicament is the community behaviour of hiding disabled children because they feel shame to bring them to school. Thus, we may have disabled children in inclusive classroom but that may not reflect the send an actual number of their population in the district. So often, we use the village leaders, teachers and ward education officers to identify and have such children registered in inclusive education settings. So far, we have 258 disabled pupils in inclusive education settings within our district."*

3.5.2 Parents' desire to enrol children with disabilities in special rather than inclusive schools

During focus group discussions, some participants were of the view that all children regardless of their disabilities were equal. According to the participants, a child with a disability like any other child deserves the right to education and thus they should have equal access to education. Participants were of the view that if children with various forms of disabilities such as sensory and visual impairments, among others, were provided with all the necessary support including individualised instructions, and special consideration to learning resources such as Braille machines, large font prints, wheelchairs, and hearing aids, sign language interpreters among others, they could learn at the same pace as normal children. The participants, however, revealed that these materials were largely lacking in regular schools. As a result, parents opted to keep their children with disabilities at home because they anticipated that their children would not benefit from the teaching and learning process.

One parent in one of the FGDs sessions remarked:

> *"Frankly speaking, in our area, parents are more than ready to provide their children with an education regardless of their disability. All children are equal and they receive fair treatment and basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter from parents, except that, they face a challenge in the formal education system. For example, a child with hearing impairment is ought to be taught with the help of the sign language interpreter, who are scarcely available in our schools and thus parents choose not to send the child to school. The government should employ sign language interpreters to assist children with disabilities".*

Similar views were held by other participants including officials at regional and district levels, heads of schools and pre-primary teachers. For example, 53% visited school heads expressed that, pre-primary children with disabilities should attend special schools and not regular schools.

We learn from data that there were misconceptions and stereotypical beliefs among members about children with disabilities and their education. Despite recognition that all children deserve access to education, some community members felt that children with disabilities were perceived as a burden and huge embarrassment to families, and the community at large. Some community members believed that children with disabilities could not be enrolled in general education settings, rather they should be taken to special schools. According to the participants, regular pre-primary schools lacked appropriate facilities to accommodate children with severe disabilities, such as severe mental and hearing impairments. Consequently, parents would prefer to enrol them in special schools. In the absence of special schools within the community, children were left at home. Furthermore, some parents believed that some children with disabilities were 'unteachable', dull or sick and thus they were not enrolled in regular schools. Therefore, it was wastage of time to enrol such children into schools.

3.5.3 Long Distance from home to school

About 57% of school heads in the visited schools reported that a good number of pre-primary school pupils including those with disabilities walk a long distance from home to school. During interviews and focus group discussions, it was revealed that some pupils with and without disabilities were walking for about 28 minutes

to and from the school. While others have to walk 12 kilometres every day. Long-distance was challenging to parents as they struggle to send their children to school every day while maintaining their farm work, which was observed to be the most common source of income for families.

According to the participants, some children with disabilities sometimes needed to take motorcycles to school, because they could not manage to walk alone. This was among the cases complained by parents; the daily travelling costs were a hindrance to them. Thus, long distance-limited children with disabilities to access school, as remarked by one of the parents:

> *"…It is challenging for both parents and children with disabilities. How can a child, with mental impairment walk up to six kilometres alone to go to school? Parents could take care of that, but how can they manage, while they need to work in their farms to support the family."*

3.6 Schools and classrooms preparedness to support inclusive pre-primary education

The study sought to understand how schools and classrooms were prepared to support the participation of children with disabilities to access and participate in inclusive pre-primary school classes. School and classroom preparedness for inclusive education was assessed through infrastructure, teaching-learning resources and materials, instructional practice and availability of trained teachers and their attitudes towards inclusive education.

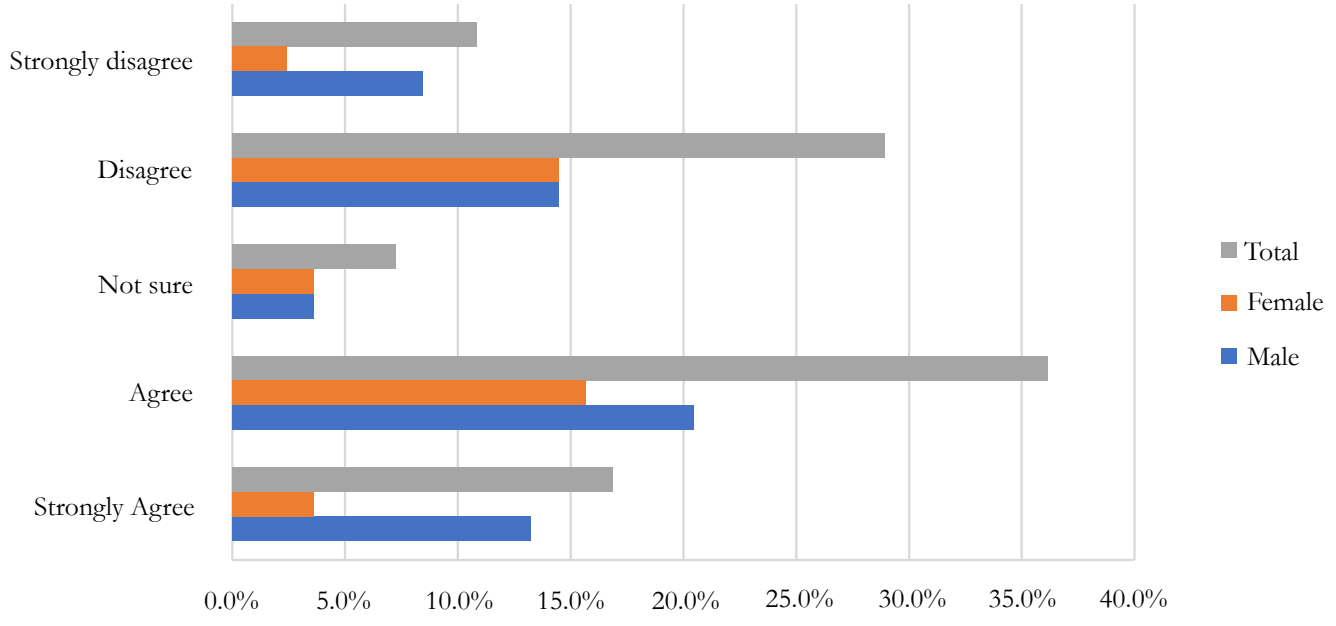


Figure 10: Whether Schools and Classrooms are prepared for inclusive education

Source: Field Data

3.6.1 Heads of schools and pre-primary school teachers' readiness to handle pupils with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

The study sought to understand the readiness of school heads and teachers to handle pupils with disabilities in an inclusive pre-primary school setting. Readiness, in the context of this study, refers to training in inclusive education. It was found that only 42.2% school heads have ever attended a course to teach children with disabilities, of them, 42.9 % attended a course which lasted for less than a month while only 8.9% attended a one-year course. About 37.1 % attended a few days course. Only 25.3 % school heads, however, have attended a course in inclusive education in the past twelve months.

As mentioned elsewhere, a total of 77 pre-primary school teachers were recruited to participate in this study. The majority (70%) of the teachers were holders of Grade III A teaching certificate while 22 % were holders of Diploma in Education. A total of 74% of teachers reported having been trained in early childhood development. The study further found that only 24 % of teachers were trained in special needs education while

15% reported having attended in-service training on inclusive education in the past 12 months.

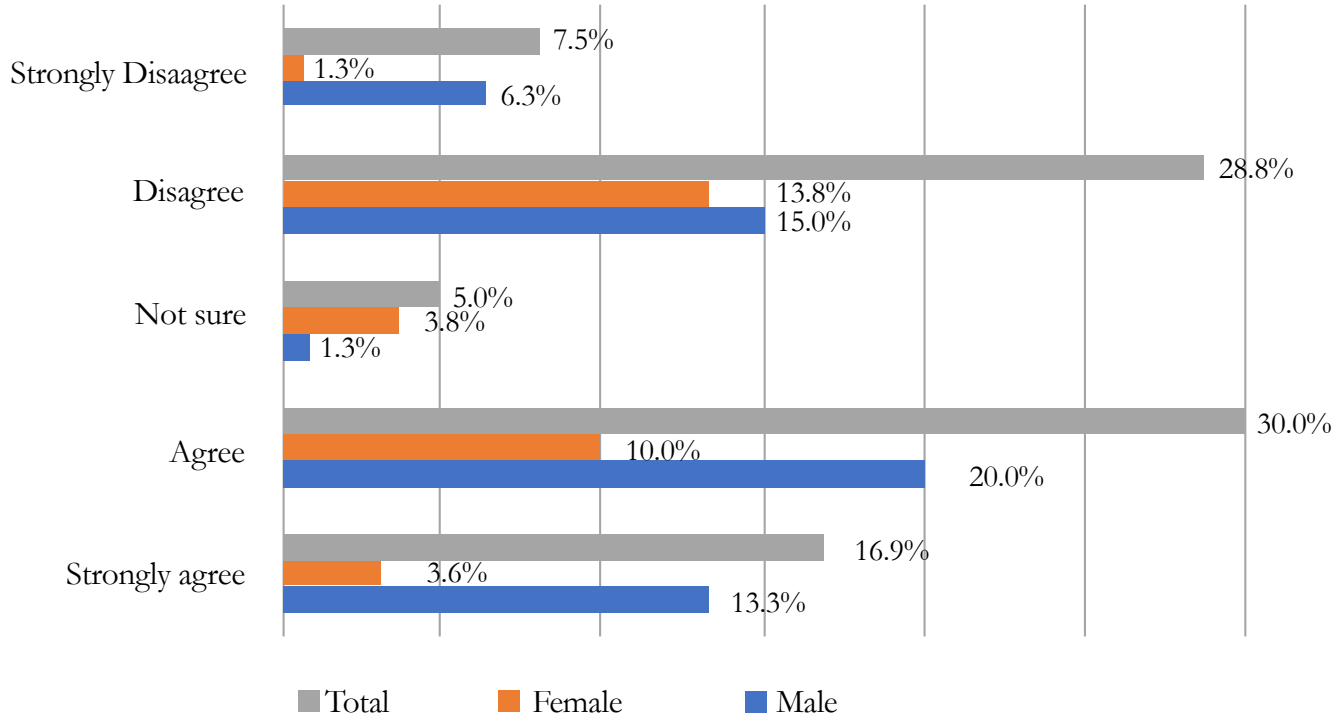


Figure 11: Percentage of school heads agreeing or disagreeing with the statement 'pre-primary pupils with disabilities increases teachers' workload.

Source: Field Data

The analysis further reveals that more than half of the teachers in public schools felt they did not have enough training to accommodate the diverse needs of children with disabilities in an inclusive pre-primary class. It was also found that 68% of teachers in public schools said teaching pupils with disabilities in inclusive classrooms increased their workload. Similar views were held by heads of schools (See **Figure 11**). About 59% of interviewed teachers agreed with the statement that, including pupils with disabilities together with those without disabilities in the regular classroom led to challenges during teaching and learning process.

3.6.2 School Environment

3.6.2.1 Accessibility to school buildings/paths

Analysis of data reveals that most schools visited are not well prepared to support the equitable access and participation of children with disabilities in pre-primary education. For example, about 66% of schools have pathways with pebbles, stones and rough surfaces. The study further found that only 16% schools had ramps, which were in good conditions, 35 % schools have no ramps at all, while 35% schools have ramps or flat surfaces in specific areas, especially in designated classrooms for children with disabilities. This suggests that children with disabilities can easily access selective areas.

Field Photo: Showing stair case with ramps for ease of access(left), and stair case without ramps (right)

3.6.2.2 Toilets Access

Most of the schools have pit latrines, although in different conditions. Some toilets were in good condition while others were not. About 75 % of schools have no toilets adapted for children with disabilities. In these schools, children with disabilities were sharing toilets with other children. Only 15 % of schools have adapted toilets for children with disabilities. About 10 % of schools have toilets for children with disabilities; however, they were not adapted to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. They have no ramps and were not clean. Some schools were found to have adapted toilets but they were not in use. For example, in one of the primary schools visited in Tanga Municipality, there were special toilets designated for children with disabilities, However, they were not used, instead, they were used as a store for empty water bottles. Similarly, in another school, the toilets for children with disabilities were available and in good condition but not used as they were always locked. It was further noted that 70% visited schools did not have toilets designated for pre-primary school pupils. Thus, pre-primary school pupils shared toilets with pupils from other grades.

3.7 Classroom setting and atmosphere

Ideally, an inclusive pre-primary class is one where the ratio between teacher and students falls within the set guidelines (1:25 or less). The teacher would be professionally trained to teach pre-primary students including those with various disabilities and would have an assistant to ensure all students are being attended to. The classroom would be physically accessible to all students and would be a "talking class" with various tools to help facilitate their learning experience.

3.7.1 Lack of classroom designated for pre-primary class

The study found that 72.5% of schools have classroom designated for pre-primary pupils. Of the designated classrooms, however, 66% were organised like primary school classes with no learning corners, desks were arranged in rows, and no classroom displays. Only 32 % of classrooms could be described as appropriate with child-size desks, learning corners, and classroom displays. In other schools (about 7.5%) pre-primary class children were sharing classrooms with early grades. About 3.8% visited schools, pre-primary pupils neither had designated class nor classroom to share. Their classes were conducted outside.

Photo taken from the field showing a pre primary classrooms arrangement resembling primary schools classes. Pre primary classrooms are supposed to have learning corners, classrooms displays and circle sitting arrangement.

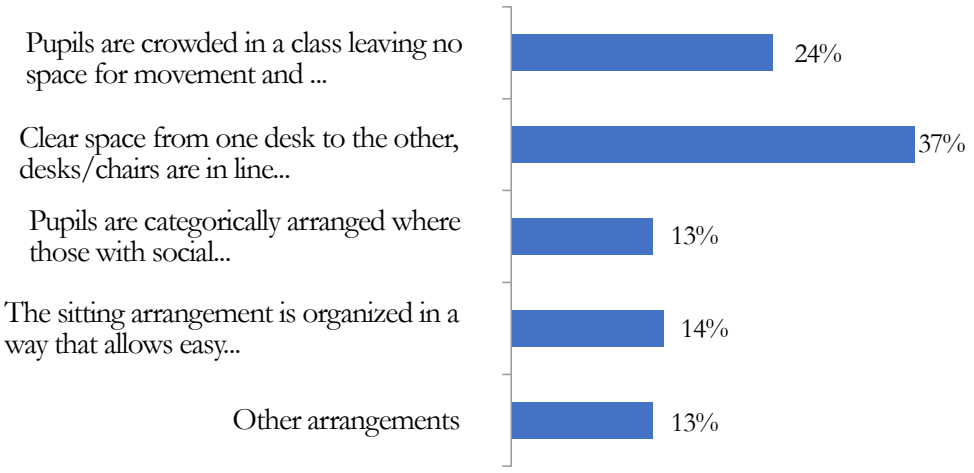


Figure 12: Field results on the state of pre primary classrooms arrangement and convinience

Source: Field Data

Figure 12 shows, 37 % visited classrooms have clear space between desks, arranged in rows, giving pupils ease of movement. It further demonstrates that only 13 % of classes observed pupils with special needs were seated in front rows.

Of the classrooms observed, 53 % had a sufficient number of desks to accommodate all children. The desks observed in the classes were age-appropriate. Only 14 % of classes had pupils seated on mats, on the floor. These classes can be described as appropriate for pre-primary pupils as they were in line with curriculum provision. In the majority of the classes visited, children were seated facing the teacher in front of the classroom.

Nearly all the teaching observed was whole-class based, relied on traditional methods and focused on completing the curriculum irrespective of the pupils' learning needs. There was no evidence that teachers adapted the curriculum for differentiation of teaching and learning outcomes.

3.7.2 Shortage of teaching and learning materials

An inclusive classroom requires every child to have access to teaching and learning materials to support their teaching and learning activities. The study found that teaching-learning materials were largely lacking. Nearly all (80%) interviewed pre-primary school teachers had pre-primary curriculum, syllabus and teachers guide. Nevertheless, in nearly all visited schools across regions, adapted textbooks, especially for children with low vision, were lacking. This might be a big predicament towards the attainment of inclusive education target that requires every child to access education regardless of his or her disability. One of district education officers had the following to say:

> *"…Just recently I received few Braille books, with syllabus not meeting the requirements. We have very few magnifiers, Braille machines and Braille papers. For example, five children have to share one Braille machine. So, it is so hard to achieve the targeted results in the absence of supportive resources."*

The pre-primary school curriculum advocates for a variety of materials in drama, arts, manipulative and functional storybooks for all children to engage with. Nevertheless, as Figure 13 shows that schools have limited teaching-learning materials. Analysis of data further reveals that about 70% of pre-primary school teachers were poorly equipped with teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities. Insufficient teaching-learning materials limit children's opportunities to interact with and learn from, materials for pupils including those with disabilities.

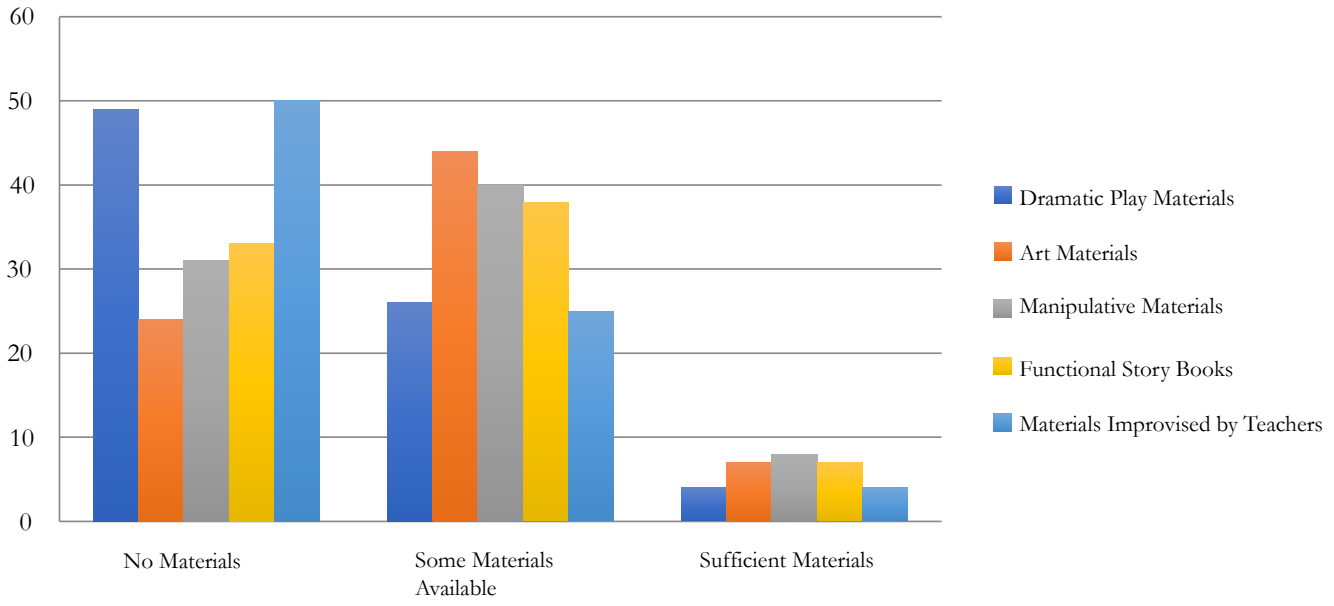


Figure 13: Availability of teaching -learning materials

Source: Field Data

3.8 Teaching and Learning

Although 74 % school heads reported pre-primary teachers were flexible enough to adapt the curriculum and learning activities to accommodate pupils with disabilities, classroom observations reveal that there were no evidence teachers employed different teaching strategies to ensure that all children were learning and able to participate effectively. It was reported that some teachers were not prepared to adapt the instructions, as stated by one of the DEOs:

"…Pre-primary school teachers are regular teachers, usually selected/appointed to teach PPE classes. They don't have enough skills to handle and maintain the content, nor to adapt instructions to meet the needs of children with disabilities. In my view, in most cases, children with disabilities are denied the opportunity to participate effectively in learning."

The most common reported strategies to support children with disabilities included seating them at the front of the class, and provide additional time on teaching-learning tasks. Other reported strategy included repeating a class to support children who did not meet the learning expectations. Evidence was largely lacking on teachers' individualised instructions and differentiated learning outcomes, to accommodate pupils according to their learning needs. Lack of individualised instructions could have been attributed to high teacher-pupil ratio, teacher overload and limited time.

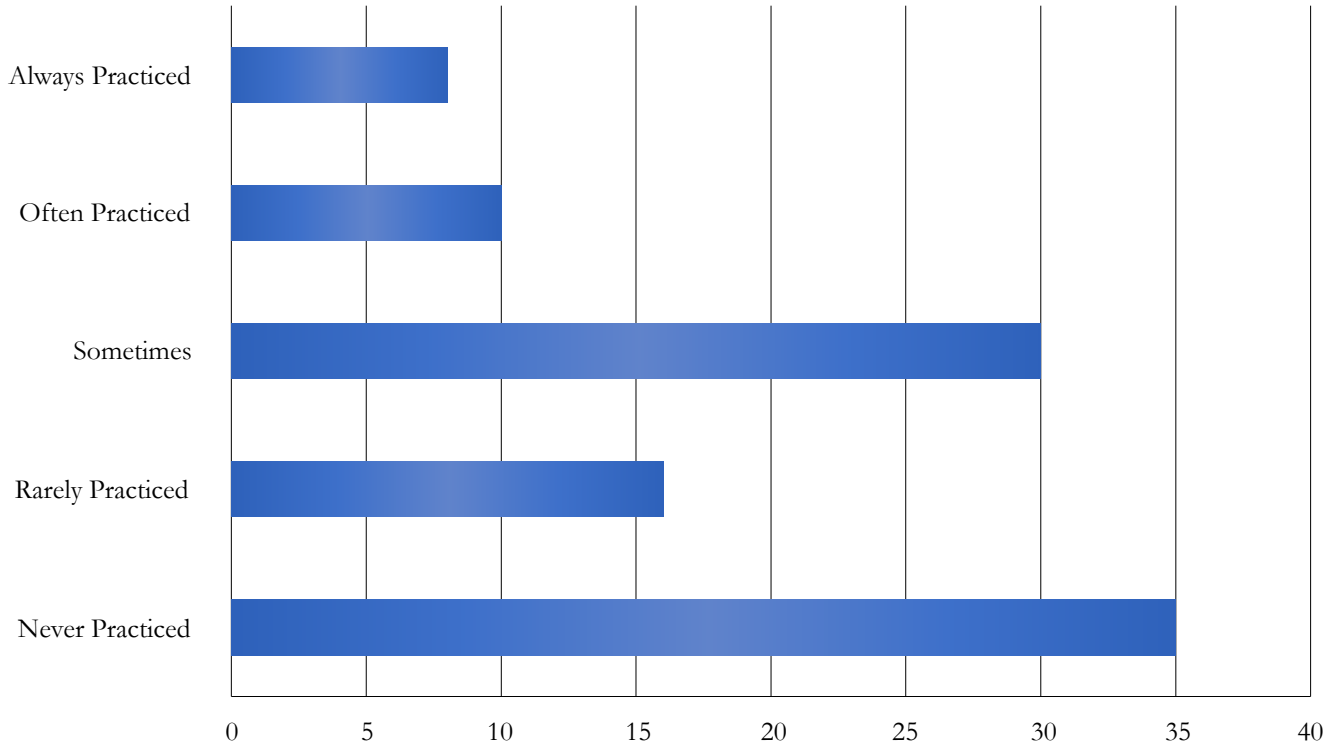


Figure 14. Percentage of observed pre-primary school teachers using a range of teaching techniques

Source: Field Data

Figure 14 shows the percentage of observation of how teachers use different teaching techniques to accommodate all learners. In the majority of the classes, however, the teacher-pupil interaction was positive. There was no sign that teachers excluded pupils with disabilities from participating in the lesson. Teachers seemed to be positive with all students.

The following narration from one of the classes observed exemplifies teacher's interaction with a child with a disability in an inclusive setting:

"…During observation in one of the classes, a pre-primary school teacher asked students to count out loud from 1to 10. Several students volunteered including one student who was later described by the teacher as having an intellectual impairment (II). With excitement, he counted perfectly from 1to10. Then the teacher asked students to volunteer writing 1to10 on the blackboard. Three students did so with complete accuracy. Once again, the student volunteered. However, this time his classmates shouted, "He can't do it". The student, however, was not deterred and finally, the teacher selected him. When he stepped to the board, he wrote several zeros in a row and stepped off beaming with a sense of accomplishment. The teacher congratulated him and the entire class clapped for him.

3.9 Other factors inhibiting inclusive education

3.9.1 Lack of systematic methodologies for diagnosing children with disabilities at pre-primary school entry

As mentioned elsewhere, one of the objectives of the pre-primary education is to identify children with special needs and provide appropriate intervention at pre-primary school entry. To realise this systematic mechanism or assessment requires tools. The study sought to understand whether there were any mechanisms or assessment tools to support schools and teachers to identify children with special education needs.

Analysis of data reveals that there were no assessment tools in place for identification of children with special needs at pre-primary school entry. Schools/teachers relied heavily on teacher's daily observation during teaching and learning process (88%) and other mechanisms such as parents' report and a face-to-face interview with a child. This suggests that identification of children was ad-hoc. Although it could not be denied these mechanisms were informative it cannot be underestimated that there is still a need for national assessment tools.

3.9.2 Lack of in-service training for pre-primary schoolteachers

Most teachers lack the necessary training capacities needed to manage inclusive classrooms and consequently refrain from teaching such classes. Handling an inclusive classroom adds the workload to the teacher but the load gets even heavier in the absence of necessary skills to handle an inclusive classroom. This is well phrased by pre-primary school teacher:

> *"…Just imagine, having normal and disabled children in the same classroom increases the burden to the teacher. How about when such a teacher does not know how to manage such classrooms? The answer is crystal clear, that, the burden on the teacher only gets harder."*

Similarly, a special education officer had this to say

> *"We have a serious shortage of teachers for special education needs. For example, there are only five special education needs teachers within six special education centres in our district, some of them do not possess the skills to handle more than one disability. A teacher trained to handle deaf pupils does not have the skills to attend to intellectually impaired pupils."*

3.9.3 Inadequacy of trained personnel needed to help disabled children at schools

The majority of teachers interviewed revealed that they have never received any training catered to help disabled children in inclusive classrooms, and thus most of them dwell on using their experience in helping such children and consequently the schools refuse indirectly to admit children with disabilities. The pre-primary school teachers were of the view that skills such as identification, diagnose and provision of early support to children with disabilities were highly missing amongst them. The worst-case scenario is that at some point, children with disabilities may be present in the classroom but teachers' lack the capacities needed to identify, diagnose and provide the required early support to such children in the course of teaching and learning processes. This was expressed by one of the pre-primary school teachers as she commented:

> *"…I used to work as a primary school teacher for standard one and three. Then I was shifted to an inclusive pre-primary school class. It was very complicated for me as I was not provided with any sort of training on how to teach an inclusive pre-primary school class. I did not know what to do to identify, diagnose and provide the required support to pre-primary school children who were having various forms of disabilities such as albinism, mental and physical impairments." This made my work a lot more difficult."*

3.9.4 Limited funding

The study sought to understand the financing of pre-primary school children with disabilities. Interviews with ministry officials (MoEST and PO-RALG) reveal that there was no special funding for pre-primary school children with disabilities. Since pre-primary school education is part of basic education, it is thus financed through capitation grant, whereby TZS 10,000 is allotted for every pupil. On the issue about the amount allocated, 60 % is expected to go directly to school whereas the remaining 40 % is used for textbooks. Findings from the school heads, however, reveal that the capitation grant received did not accommodate pre-primary school children. Besides, the capitation grant is not equity-based. Thus, there was no special funding for pre-primary school pupils from the government.

Heads of schools were further asked whether there was funding in place to support pre-primary school pupils with disabilities in an inclusive education setting. About 72.3 % visited school heads acknowledged that there was no extra funding to support pupils with disabilities. Of the few heads of schools reported to have extra funding, the sources of funding were from parents' contribution (30.4 %), funding from donors (56.5%), school self-reliance (39.1%) and other sources (34.8%).

Analysis of a proposed revised Capitation Grant Allocation Formula (2017) reveals that the draft formula is equity-based. It considers a set of adjusters/parameters beyond the number of students including the presence of learners with special needs in schools. The formula addresses broad needs and equity issues. According to the ministry official, however, the formula is yet to be approved for implementation.

3.10 School infrastructural variation by school category

The study involved three categories of schools namely integrated, inclusive and regular schools. The purpose of inclusion of these categories was to understand whether there were variations in terms of availability of infrastructure to accommodate pre-primary school children with disabilities by school category. The findings reveal that public inclusive schools have limited infrastructure compared to integrated schools. For example, 75 per cent of inclusive schools have no special toilets designated for pupils with disabilities. Pupils with disabilities shared toilets with other children. Only 57 per cent of integrated schools have no toilets for pupils with disabilities. About 34 per cent of inclusive schools have no ramps compared to 30 per cent of integrated schools.

3.11 Best Practices

3.11.1 Billboard to sensitization communities on children with disabilities right to education

To change community members' misconceptions and stereotypes about children with disabilities, one of the integrated schools visited designed a billboard, which advocated for children's rights to education, to be loved, to be valued, not to be stigmatised and discriminated.

Field photo showing a billboard to sensitize community's education rights of children with disabilities

3.11.2 Availability of ramps

For purpose of anonymity, the two schools mentioned in the following section are named as school "Y" and school "X". All school 'Y' buildings have ramps, making all buildings accessible for children with physical impairments, those using a wheelchair in particular.

Field Photo showing Ramps in classroom entrance at school 'Y'.

3.11.3 Adapted toilets

School 'X' is a public primary school in one of the regions involved in this study. The school is designated as an inclusive school. It enrols children with physical disabilities. The school has 8 classrooms of which one is for pre-primary children. Despite the fact that the school has no special toilets for pre-primary children it has two adapted flashing toilets for children with disabilities. However, according to the participants, there was no constant water supply. Likewise, school 'Y' has an adapted toilet.

Adapted toilets in school 'X'

3.11.4 Availability of outdoor play facilities

It was further found that school 'Y' had two classrooms set for pre-primary children and outdoor play facilities such as swings, for pre-primary school children. On top of that, the school has a water pump for two tanks. Thus, the school has running water used for drinking, gardening and other utilities.

3.11.5 Factors driving best practices

The study sought to understand factors driving best inclusive practices. Findings reveal that despite the fact that school leadership was a crucial factor there was external support mainly from non-governmental and religious organisations. For example, school 'X' adapted toilets were supported by a religious disabled children's centre located close to the school. The centre accommodated children with disabilities, who were enrolled at school 'X'. The centre provided the school with grants for equipment and rehabilitation of the school. Similarly, the

water pump and adapted toilets in school 'Y' were supported by a non-governmental organisation. To this end we learn from the finding that public – private partnership is one of the factors driving best inclusive practices.

Field photo showing outdoor play facilties at school 'Y'.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

The government of Tanzania has demonstrated commendable commitment and support for the education of children with disabilities through its policies, laws and strategies. Policies and laws not only make explicit references to the education rights for all children but also communicate commitment that all schools should become inclusive and respond to the needs of all learners.

However, the study has shown that policy commitment is not necessarily a reality. Schools and classrooms are not prepared enough to accommodate pre-primary school pupils with disabilities. Accessibility and effective participation of pre-primary pupils with disabilities in an inclusive education setting is threatened by some socio-cultural factors, including stigma against children with disabilities and their families, community members' and parents' negative attitudes towards educating children with disabilities and hiding of children with disabilities.

Other challenges include limited funding targeting children with disabilities, inadequate number of teachers, trained in special needs & inclusive education, lack of adapted infrastructure, special classrooms, instructional practices and adapted teaching-learning materials (Braille). Also, the curriculum is not flexible enough. There is a lack of minimum standards for inclusive classrooms, and systematic methodologies to diagnose and identify children with special needs at pre-primary school entry. Furthermore, comprehensive statistics on children with disabilities in and out of school are largely lacking. This poses a threat to the planning and quality delivery of inclusive education.

In this regard, this study argues that the government of Tanzania through its laws and policies is committed to providing education for children with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Children with disabilities of pre-primary school age have limited access to school. In case they do, their participation in the teaching and learning process is limited. Teachers held low self-efficacy to support children with disabilities. This could be attributed to limited training. Thus, there is a mismatch between policy intentions and practices.

The findings of the current study complement previous findings on inclusive education offering. The study further argues that despite the advocacy of inclusive schools, integrated and special school approaches to educating children with disabilities exist. With the challenges facing inclusive schools, integrated school approach might be favourable at least for a few years to come while the improvement of inclusive schools is ongoing.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the recommendations are focused on awareness creation, partnerships and government engagement to ensure guidelines and policies are implemented at all levels, including teachers' training. The following is recommended:

- Continue the on-going community sensitisation to raise awareness on the need to educate children with disabilities..
- Local government authorities to establish and enforce by-laws, encouraging parents to enrol their children with disabilities instead of hiding them
- Strengthen public-private partnership to collaboratively promote best inclusive practices and address barriers in continued efforts to meet the educational needs of pre-primary school children with disabilities.
- Develop a simple tool to support and guide all stakeholders including pre-primary school teachers on how to identify children with low vision, hearing impairment and mild intellectual impairments at pre-primary school entry. These categories of disabilities might not be easily identified through mere observation.
- The inconsistencies on inclusive practices in schools could be attributed to limited guidelines and lack of minimum standards on inclusive classroom and school practices, among others. There is a need to develop guidelines and minimum standards on inclusive pre-primary school classroom to support and guide teachers to make their classrooms more inclusive.
- Increase public expenditure to implement and support inclusive pre-primary education. One of the options could be to expedite the implementation of a draft Capitation Grant Formula, which considers the allocation of targeted funds for children with special needs in schools, among others. The actualisation of the Formula may encourage inclusive practices.
- Improve data collection system on children with disabilities, disaggregate data by age, type of disability and gender at all levels.
- Improve teachers' attitudes towards children with disabilities and inclusive instructional practices. Teacher educators should provide on-going in-service training of teachers. This was categorically cited by 61 % of school heads.
- Despite government's policy provisions that every child has the right to be educated in an inclusive setting, data reveals that it may not be possible for some children's needs to be met in the mainstream classroom. This suggests a need to educate children with severe disabilities in special or integrated schools where there is a special unit with a specialised teacher to support learning for children with disabilities.
- Need for respective communities in collaboration with other stakeholders to establish satellite centres. These centres may provide opportunities for children with disabilities to have access to pre-primary school education in nearest schools within their communities.Review pre-primary education curriculum and syllabus to strengthen curricular provisions related performance indicators for children with hearing and visual impairment.
- Review pre-primary school education curriculum and syllabus, strengthen curricular provisions related to performance indicators for children with hearing and visual impairments.
- Tanzania Institute of Education to adapt pre-primary textbooks and storybooks to meet the needs of children with visual impairments (Braille).
- Explore creative use of locally available, low-cost teaching and learning materials and engage stakeholders to provide support and partnersh

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