

**INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS CURRICULUM IN
PUBLIC PRIMARYSCHOOLS IN ARUSHA REGION,
TANZANIA**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of parental involvement on implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools in Arusha Region, Tanzania. The objectives included to assess the status of implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools and establish the influence of parental involvement on implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools in Arusha region.

Research methodology: A mixed research methodology was used and concurrent triangulation research design. Target population was 146 respondents which comprised 34 head teachers, 108 special needs teachers and 4 education officers from which a sample of 108 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified, purposive and simple sampling techniques were used. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

Findings: The study established that implementation of special needs curriculum has been low characterized with the fact that most of the special needs teachers do not cover syllabus in time.

This has occasioned low academic performance among learners with special needs in public primary schools. This is attributed to infrequent involvement of parents in key decisions pertaining to the process of implementation of special needs curriculum.

Recommendations: The study recommends that school managers should involve parents in all critical decision-making committees to enable them own the key policy decisions made by the school concerning the process of implementation of special needs curriculum. In conclusion, educational institutions should prioritize and encourage parental involvement as a crucial strategy for the successful implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools.

Keywords: *Parental involvement, public primary schools, special needs curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement is considered vital to the success of schools. In the context of implementation of special needs curriculum, parents, teachers and students share the responsibility of promoting value and standard discipline which help to establish sound behavioral codes for life and successful mastery of content among special needs learners (Masa & Mila, 2017). Parents can support their students' schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations like stakeholder conferences. They can become more involved in helping their students improve their schoolwork by providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior such as reading for pleasure, monitoring homework and actively tutoring their special needs children at home. Halford (2010) asserts that parents can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom or they can take an active role in governance and decision-making necessary for planning, developing and providing education for students including those with special needs. This implies that special needs learners feel secure and perform and behave better if their parents and other caregivers are involved in school activities.

Kraft and Shaun (2011) support this view by stating that if students with special needs realize that their parents and educators are collaborating to manage difficulties, they experience more consistency and feel more contained. This implies that the relationship among parents has great benefits. Parents also have a great impact on their children's behavior by ensuring that they arrive at school on time, behave correctly, wear relevant clothing, have required books and equipment and complete tasks on time. In keeping with these assertions, Castello, Gotzens, Badia and Genavard (2010) carried out a study in Spain that revealed that parents are

responsible in maintaining behaviour patterns of learners with disabilities within the school. According to Castello et al (2010), beyond their responsibility for implementation of special needs curriculum, parents are also responsible for the moral development of learners and to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens.

To corroborate these assertions, Ojedapo (2011) carried out a study in the Netherlands which established that improved instruction, better learning and enhanced school effectiveness or organizational efficiency are the most commonly cited reasons for implementing collaborative school practices such as school councils, collegial instructional leadership and parental or community involvement. According to Ojedapo (2011), this is achieved because moving the school closer to the parents and other members of community and listening to the sentiments of concerned parties create synergy and interdependence or connectedness that promote a learning organization towards better decisions concerning education of learners with special needs. This is indicative of the fact that allowing parents to take part in decision-making yields salutary results.

In many Sub-Saharan countries, parents play an important part in the implementation of special needs curriculum. For example, a study carried out in Botswana by Garagae (2015) established that implementation of special needs curriculum makes full use of the strengths available to it through partnerships with parents. Such relationships are all used to enhance the quality of the school as a community, and to help maintain high expectations. In Kenya, a study conducted in Nyandarua and Laikipia Districts by Kiumi, Bosire and Sang (2013) established that implementation of special needs curriculum depends on whether the head teacher, as the chief executive of the school, enlists the support of parents in the process. The study found that inclusive approach is more likely to increase teachers' and parental input on implementation of special needs curriculum. The finding point to the fact that, schools should strive to network for ideas of good practices. In other words, for successful implementation of special needs education, schools should enlist parents as partners.

In Tanzania, the scenario is the same where special needs education is crucial in ensuring that students with disabilities are catered for. For example, a study carried out by Sijaona (2011) found that, despite the observed enhancement of the right of education and increase in enrolment for the children with disabilities in Tanzania, implementation of special needs curriculum has not been devoid of challenges. According to Sijaona (2011), about 56.9% of special needs teachers rarely complete their syllabus in time which a paltry 24.8% of learners with special needs able to register good grades in national examination. In the same token, a study conducted by Mapunda, Omollo and Bali (2017) revealed that implementation of special

needs curriculum in public primary schools has faced numerous challenges which has made over 50.7% of teachers unable to finish their syllabus in time with only 33.1% of the special needs students registering impressive grades in national examinations.

To mitigate this, stakeholders have tasked parents to collaborate with schools. According to a study conducted in public primary schools in Arusha Region, Baraka and Maria (2017) found that parents are challenged by not having sufficient time to share with their children after school hours and on non-school days. Baraka and Maria (2017) further established that majority of children with special needs spend less than one hour in a week sharing with their parents on educational issues, feelings, school reports and future plans. However, much still needs to be done since Baraka and Maria (2017) as well as other reviewed studies have not interrogated the extent to which specific roles undertaken by parents influence the management of public primary schools, hence the need for this study. The study examined the status of special needs curriculum implementation in Arusha Region's public primary schools and investigated the impact of parental involvement on its implementation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parents play an important role in complementing the efforts by other stakeholders in ensuring that special needs curriculum is effectively implemented in special or integrated schools. However, in Arusha Region, this has not been the case since implementation of special needs curriculums in many public primary schools has not been devoid of challenges. Many teachers rarely cover syllabus in time nor do students with special needs register good grades in examinations. As indicated earlier, Mapunda et al. (2017) found that implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools has faced numerous challenges which has made over 50.7% of teachers unable to finish their syllabus in time with only 33.1% of the special needs students registering impressive grades in national examinations. Despite this, minimal research has been done in Arusha Region to interrogate the extent to which parental involvement has influenced the implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools; hence the need for this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status of implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools in Arusha Region.
- ii. To establish the influence of parental involvement on implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools in Arusha region.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the stakeholder involvement theory which was postulated by Freeman in the year 2000. Freeman (2000) set out his model as if a chart in which the company is positioned at the center and is involved with stakeholders connected with the company. The theory focuses on the nature of these relationships in terms of processes and results for the company and for stakeholders, the interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value and that there is no single prevailing set of interests. In this study, this theory was suitable in that it underscores the vitality of parents in key decision-making processes which are consistent with the needs and priorities of learners with special needs. The study was also guided by the curriculum implementation theory which was postulated by Bobbit (1918). This theory was anchored on the assumption and belief that any curriculum worth being implemented should prepare students for their future roles in the new industrial society and thus, influenced school curriculum by showing how teaching classical subjects should be replaced by teaching subjects that correspond to social needs. According to this theory, a curriculum has to adapt to the needs of an individual industrial society. In this study, this theory fits in that implementation of special needs curriculum considers learners' strengths, weaknesses, needs and preferences and advocates for instructional approaches. It taps into learner competencies and talents and mastery of school subjects and examinations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed research methodology was used and concurrent triangulation research design. Target population was 146 respondents which comprised 34 head teachers, 108 special needs teachers and 4 education officers from which a sample of 108 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create four strata based on the number of zones in Arusha Region. From each zone, two head teachers and all the four education officers were selected using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, 24 special needs teachers were selected using simple random sampling. These procedures realized a sample of 8 head teachers, 96 special needs teachers and four education officers. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

RESPONSE RATES

In this study, 96 questionnaires were administered to special needs teachers and, in return, 94 questionnaires were filled and returned. The researcher also interviewed seven (7) head teachers as well as 4 education officers. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1

Table 1: Response Rates

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Head teachers	8	7	87.5
Special Needs Teachers	96	94	97.9
Education Officers	4	4	100.0
Total	108	105	97.2

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 1 shows that head teachers registered a response rate of 87.5%, special needs teachers registered 97.9% whereas education officers registered a response rate of 100.0%. This yielded an average response rate of 97.1% which is consistent with the assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate. This information was important since it allowed the researcher to generalize the study outcomes to the target population.

Status of Implementation of Special Needs Curriculum in Public primary Schools

The study sought to establish the status of implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools. This was measured by assessing the frequency of timely syllabus coverage among special needs teachers and academic performance of special needs learners in national examinations for the last five years. Results are shown in Table 2

Table 2: Frequency of Syllabus Coverage by Special Needs Teachers in Public Primary Schools

Frequency of Timely Syllabus Coverage by Special Needs Teachers	Number of Teachers	
	f	%
Often	28	29.8
Rarely	52	55.3
Never	14	14.9

Table 2 shows that most of the teachers do not often cover syllabus in time, 45.9% rarely whereas 11.3% never do. During the interviews, head teachers also stated that most special needs teachers do not cover syllabus in time. Head teacher, H1, noted;

In my school, I have had cases where special needs teachers do not cover syllabus in time to accord students adequate time for revision.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Mapunda et al (2017) which revealed that implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools has faced numerous challenges which has made over 50.7% of teachers unable to finish their syllabus in time. Having collected and analyzed data on syllabus coverage, the researcher further sought to assess the status of academic performance in national examinations among learners with special needs for the last five years (2018-2022). Results are shown Table 3;

Table 3: Academic Performance of Special Needs Students in National Examinations (2018-2022)

Results in Mean Score (Points)	Years of Examination				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	%	%	%	%	%
1-2.9 points (Poor)	40.2	43.5	44.2	47.3	48.9
3-4.9 points (Below Average)	36.9	35.1	34.9	33.5	32.5
5-6.9 points (Fair)	15.4	15.1	14.8	13.7	13.4
7-8.9 points (Good)	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6
9-11.9 points (Excellent)	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6

Table 3 shows that, from 2018 to 2022, most of the learners with special needs register dismal grades in national examinations. The results are in consistent with the findings of Mapunda et al (2017) who indicates that implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools has faced numerous challenges which has occasioned low performance in national examinations (33.1%) among learners with special needs. This implies that, in many public primary schools in Arusha Region, academic performance of learners with special needs has been on a downward trend.

Parental Involvement and Implementation of Special Needs Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to assess the extent to which parental involvement influences implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools. Results are shown in Table 4;

Table 4: Teachers’ Views on the Influence of Parental Involvement on Implementation of Special Needs Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
In public primary schools, schools collaborate with parents to pay fees as a way of improving implementation of special needs curriculum	59.6	15.5	5.7	11.4	7.8
Implementation of special needs curriculum has been smooth since parents are frequently involved in the decision-making	32.6	11.9	6.2	37.8	11.4
Involving parents on discipline management has seen improved implementation of special needs curriculum	40.4	8.3	6.7	37.3	7.3
Inability of schools to implement special needs curriculum has been attributed to ineffective collaboration with parents in monitoring the academic activities of special needs students	68.4	14.5	3.6	9.3	4.1
In public primary schools, parental involvement has rarely been given priority as a strategy for effective implementation of special needs curriculum	58.0	7.3	4.1	21.2	9.3

Table 4 shows that 56(59.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public primary schools, schools collaborate with parents to pay fees as a way of improving implementation of special needs curriculum whereas 15(15.5%) agreed, 5(5.7%) were undecided, 11(11.4%) disagreed whereas 7(7.8%) strongly disagreed. The study revealed that 31(32.6%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that implementation of special needs curriculum has been smooth since parents are frequently involved in the decision-making while 11(11.9%) agreed, 6(6.2%) were undecided, 36(37.8%) disagreed whereas 11(11.4%) strongly disagreed.

These findings support the assertions of Halford (2010) asserts that parents can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom or they can take an active role in governance and decision-making necessary for planning, developing and providing education for students including those with special needs. This implies that special needs students feel more secure and perform and behave better if their parents and other caregivers are involved

in school activities. This further supports the assertions of Kraft and Shaun (2011) support this view by stating that if students with special needs realize that their parents and educators are collaborating to manage difficulties, they experience more consistency and feel more contained. This implies that the relationship among parents has great benefits. Parents also have a great impact on their children's behavior by ensuring that they arrive at school on time, behave correctly, wear relevant clothing, have required books and equipment and complete tasks on time.

The study revealed that 38(40.4%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that involving parents on discipline management has seen improved implementation of special needs curriculum while 8(8.3%) agreed, 6(6.7%) were undecided, 35(37.3%) disagreed whereas 7(7.3%) strongly disagreed. Majority, 64(68.4%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that the inability of schools to implement special needs curriculum has been attributed to ineffective collaboration with parents in monitoring the academic activities of special needs students whereas 14(14.5%) agreed, 3(3.6%) were undecided, 9(9.3%) disagreed whereas 4(4.1%) strongly disagreed. Most, 55(58.0%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public primary schools, parental involvement has rarely been given priority as a strategy for effective implementation of special needs curriculum while 7(7.3%) agreed, 4(4.1%) were undecided, 20(21.2%) disagreed whereas 9(9.3%) strongly disagreed.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out in Spain in which Castello et al (2010) revealed that parents are responsible in maintaining behaviour patterns of learners with disabilities within the school. According to Castello et al (2010), beyond their responsibility for implementation of special needs curriculum, parents are also responsible for the moral development of learners and to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens. These findings also lend credence to the findings of a study undertaken in the Netherlands in which Ojedapo (2011) established that improved instruction, better learning and enhanced school effectiveness or organizational efficiency are the most commonly cited reasons for implementing collaborative school practices such as school councils, collegial instructional leadership and parental or community involvement.

These findings further corroborate the findings of a study conducted in Arusha Region in which Baraka and Maria (2017) found that parents are challenged by not having sufficient time to share with their children after school hours and on non-school days. Baraka and Maria (2017) further established that majority of children with special needs spend less than one hour in a week sharing with their parents on educational issues, feelings, school reports and future plans. In summary, these findings point to the fact that, though not always the case, parental

involvement is crucial for the implementation of special needs education. In other words, in schools where parents are often involved, implementation of special needs curriculum is often smooth and effective characterized by timely syllabus coverage and improved academic performance in examinations.

Inferential Analysis

To verify the influence of parental involvement on implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools, data were collected on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) the sampled seven (7) public primary schools involve parents in the implementation of special needs curriculum in relation to frequency (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) of timely syllabus coverage as well as average academic performance in national examinations for the last five years (2018-2022). Results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Frequency of Parental Involvement and Frequency of Timely Syllabus Coverage and Academic Performance in National Examinations

How Often Schools Involve Parents in Implementation of Special Needs Curriculum	Frequency of Timely Syllabus Coverage	Academic Performance in National Examinations (Mean points)
1	1	2.76
2	2	3.34
1	1	2.79
5	4	3.71
4	4	3.57
4	3	4.01
5	2	5.91

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 5 indicates that in public primary schools which often involve parents in their key decision-making with regard to implementation of special needs curriculum tend to register improved syllabus coverage among special needs teachers as well as academic performance. These results were subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis and results are shown in Table 6

Table 6: Relationship between Parental Involvement and Implementation of Special Needs Curriculum in Public primary Schools

		X1	B	C
X1	Pearson Correlation	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	7		
B	Pearson Correlation	.781*	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038		
	N	7	7	
C	Pearson Correlation	.762*	.225	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.627	
	N	7	7	7

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Key: X1- Frequency of Parental Involvement; B-Frequency of Timely Syllabus Coverage; C- Academic Performance. **Field Data (2023)**

Table 6 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis which generated correlation coefficients of $r_1 = 0.781$ and $r_2 = 0.762$, with corresponding significant levels (p-values) of 0.038 and 0.046 which were less than the predetermined level of significance, 0.05, that is, $p\text{-value} = 0.038$ and $0.046 < 0.05$. Thus, the data shows that there is significant influence of parental involvement on implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools.

Thematic Analysis

On their part, the head teachers also responded in favour of the view that schools collaborate with parents to pay fees as a way of improving implementation of special needs curriculum. They supported the view that implementation of special needs curriculum has been smooth since parents are frequently involved in the decision-making. Head teacher, H2, noted;

In my school, I always involve parents in all decisions right from academic activities of learners with special needs. I always ensure that parents provide the necessary support and scholastic materials for the learners at all times. This has seen improved implementation of special needs education.

On their part, education officers stated that parental involvement in aspects of special needs curriculum is key to its successful implementation. Education officer, EO1, observed;

Parents are supposed to own every decision taken by school management concerning the implementation of special needs education and this cannot happen if they are not made part of it right from the beginning.

These views further support the fact that parents constitute a key pillar in the successful implementation of special needs curriculum.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the study findings, it is evident that implementation of special needs curriculum has been low characterized with the fact that most of the special needs teachers do not cover syllabus in time. This has occasioned low academic performance among learners with special needs in public primary schools. From the study findings, this has been attributed to infrequent involvement of parents in key decisions pertaining to the process of implementation of special needs curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that school managers should involve parents in all critical decision-making committees to enable them own the key policy decisions made by the school concerning the process of implementation of special needs curriculum. Furthermore, schools should collaborate with parents to address financial aspects, such as paying fees, to support the effective implementation of special needs education. Additionally, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize and encourage parental involvement as a crucial strategy for the successful implementation of special needs curriculum in public primary schools.

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