

## Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education in Tanzania

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### Abstract

The inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms is becoming more prevalent and as a result researchers have started to examine its success as well as the attitudes of teachers. The attitudes of teachers have impact on the implementations of successful inclusive education. In the present study, pre-service teachers attitudes towards inclusive education were investigated. Six hundred forty one full time preservice teachers from two Teacher Training Colleges participated in this study. Their attitudes were measured by attitude scale in a 4 Likert point. The study found that some preservice teachers had positive attitudes and others have negative attitudes towards inclusive education. The majority of participants (80.2%) had negative attitudes towards inclusive education while 19.2 percent had positive attitudes. T-tests revealed that males were more positive than females (p.04 levels) towards inclusive education. Furthermore, the participants who reported to have contacts to people with disability were more positive to inclusive education than those who had no contact. The results of this study are important because the understanding of pre-service educators' attitudes is vital for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, attitudes, special needs and pre-service teachers

### Introduction

The inclusion of learners with special needs has been accepted by many countries and it is becoming one of the effective methods to address the special learning needs of all students in regular schools and classrooms. The history shows that, for many years, people with disabilities have been denied many of their rights, including the right to education. Inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca Conference in 1994 and the importance of reaching people with special needs was reinforced during the Dakar World Education Forum in the year 2000. The Salamanca Statement stated the intention of giving education to all groups of children. Specifically, it was stated in The Salamanca Statement that:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled, street and working children, the gifted, children from remote and nomadic populations, ethnic and cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged and marginalized groups (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6).

Tanzania is one of the world countries that have signed and ratified most of the international instruments that protect and promote the rights of all children. Like many other countries, Tanzania has adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action (1994).

The first inclusive schools in Tanzania were established in 1998 when a pilot project was carried out in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam. The project was carried out by the efforts of the Government of Tanzania, UNESCO and Salvation Army. Four schools were involved in this project and by 2010 the number of schools had increased up to 196. Efforts to increase the number of schools and training of teachers is going on.

### Attitude

'Attitudes are basic and pervasive aspects of human life' (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey (2010 p.39). Attitudes are very important in human beings in different ways including decision making, reacting to events and making sense our relationship with other fellow human beings. Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey (2010) clarified this when they said:

Our attitudes are made up of the groups of feelings, likes, dislikes, behavioural intentions, thoughts, feelings, and ideas we all have about the people and things we encounter in our everyday lives (p. 39).

Some people may have negative or positive attitudes towards other people or things. Passer, Smith, Atkinson, Mitchell & Muir (2011) had defined attitude as 'a positive or negative evaluative reaction toward a stimulus, such as a person, action, object or concept' (p.499). Our attitudes are, therefore, very important in our lives with other people regardless of setting.

### Teachers and pre-service teachers attitudes towards inclusion

Studies have shown that successful implementation of inclusive education is not an easy task. One of the main obstacles is negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and towards inclusive education. In order for inclusion to be successful teachers' attitudes are vital. Padeliadu and Lampropoulou (1997) reported that 'teachers' attitudes have been considered one of the major factors guaranteeing the success of integration of students with special educational needs (p. 174). Demographic and contextual variables have been linked with

teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The variables include teacher's gender, age, level of qualification in special education, number of students in the classroom and severity of the student's disability (Subban & Sharma, 2006). Other studies have reported that 'training in special/inclusive education and experience teaching or relating to students with disabilities have positive impact on attitudes' (Bawa, 2011 p.4). However, other studies found that 'the lack of training in the field of inclusive or special education may lead to less positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream settings' (Subban & Sharma, 2006 p.43).

Teachers' negative attitudes affect quality teaching and fairness in learning. Gary (1997) cited by Bawa (2011) warned that 'many regular education teachers who feel unprepared and fearful to teach students with disabilities in regular classes displayed frustration, anger and negative attitude toward inclusive education' (p.4-5).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education in Tanzania. In addition, the study examined whether some selected demographic variables affect the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education.

### **Methods**

#### ***Data collection techniques***

A two-part survey instrument was used in this study. Data was collected by using an attitude scale, which was adapted from Larrive and Cook (1979) with a few modifications made before the attitude scale was used for this study. The first section was designed to collect selected demographic information of the participants. The second section of the scale contained 22 items (as shown in Annex 1), which were designed to elicit information on participants' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes.

#### ***Measures***

Attitudes were measured on a 4 point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4= strongly disagree). The scale consisted of 22 attitude items to be measured. Eight items were negatively worded and students were instructed to respond to each of the statements on a 4-point Likert where in these items were then reversed after being coded to (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree) which meant that the statements were in negative directions hence when agreed by the participants then it reflected negative attitudes towards inclusive education. For example, the item '*the behaviour of pupils with disabilities will set a bad example for pupils without disabilities*'. If a participant agreed to this, it meant s/he had a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

#### ***Procedures***

The participants were informed on how to respond to the scale by ticking in the box after each item showing the level of agreeing with the statement while emphasizing that there was no wrong answer and all responses to be treated equally regardless of their diversifications. In order to ensure confidentiality, the students were informed that no names were to appear on the questionnaire. All students were gathered in the meeting hall where there were chairs and tables. The questionnaires were handed out to the students who agreed to participate in the study, filled them under supervision of the researchers and collected them on the same site so as to minimize intervening variables such as discussion. Also, students were allowed to ask the researcher whenever they found difficulty to conceptualize the statement.

Data collected was coded and entered to SPSS Version 21 where descriptive statistics were computed, visual binning for computerizing the mean attitude obtained to find the proportion between students with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes. Further analysis was done to examine whether there were any significant differences in attitudes based on sex, teaching experiences and having a friend with disability. Regarding the scale, subscales such as students' experiences, teacher training, academic skills, emotional and social development were established to find where attitudes differed among students.

### **Results**

#### ***Demographic information of the Participants***

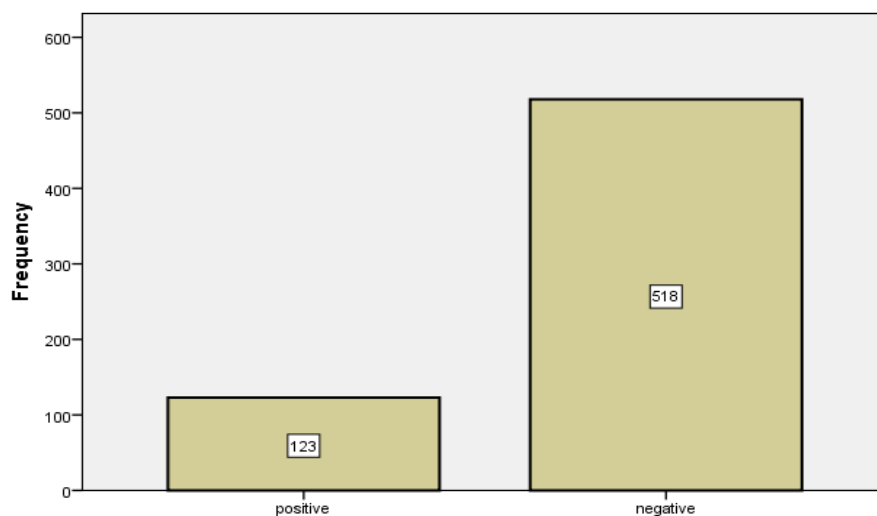
Six hundred forty one diploma in education students participated in the study. Their distribution by gender was three hundred twenty nine females (51.3%) and three hundred twelve males (48.7%). The participants were drawn from two teachers training colleges in Morogoro Region. Five hundred forty four participants (84.9%) had no any teaching experience while ninety seven (15.2%) had teaching experience, and at the time of the study they were upgrading to diploma level. Also three hundred seventy five participants (58.5%) reported that they had a friend with disability while two hundred sixty six (41.5%) claimed they never had a friend with disability.

#### **General attitudes towards inclusive education**

The frequency and percentage mean of attitude level of participants was calculated to identify students' general attitudes towards inclusive education. A total of one hundred twenty three students (19.2%) were positive while five hundred eighteen (80.2%) were negative. Since the scale was in 4 points the mean found was 2.26. This

meant that the majority of pre-service teachers had negative attitudes towards including students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The results of this study differ from the results of a study done by Mdikana, Ntshangase and Mayekiso (2007) who found that pre-service educators had positive attitudes towards inclusive education.

**Table 1: General attitudes of pre-service students towards inclusive education**



In this study, some items were picked and grouped into three main themes to show the attitudes of pre-service teachers on those areas. The themes are:

- Academic and social advantages of inclusive education,
- Inclusive classrooms,
- Inclusive education and the teacher

#### **Academic and social advantages**

Items 3, 5, 10 and 21 of the attitude scale were selected as examples to explain the pre-service teachers' attitudes. As shown in Table two, 425 pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with item 3 that *'The challenge of being in a regular classroom will promote the academic growth of pupils with a disability'*. Item ten was also supported by the majority (388) of the students that *'The pupil with a disability will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a regular classroom than in a special classroom'*. The social aspect of inclusive education (items 5 and 21) was also supported by a big number of the respondents. Four hundred eighty six respondents supported item five that *'Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among pupils'*.

Briefly it can be argued that the pre-service teachers support inclusive education because it benefits students with disabilities and those without disabilities. These findings were similar to those found by Mdikana, Ntshangase and Mayekiso (2007) who found that 'pre-service education students have a positive attitude towards inclusive education' (p. 129). Allen and Cowdery (2012) have also reported results of some studies, which revealed that there are social and academic benefits of inclusive education to students with disabilities. On the other hand, other studies have shown that many students with learning disabilities 'do not do well academically in general education classrooms at the elementary level' (Freund & Rich, 2005, p.76)

**Table 2: Academic and social advantages of inclusive education**

NO.	STATEMENTS	Sex of the respondents									
		Female					Male				
		Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	The challenge of being in a regular classroom will promote the academic growth of pupils with a disability	329	126	89	63	51	312	117	93	53	49
5	Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among pupils	329	134	112	47	36	312	127	113	42	30
10	The pupil with a disability will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a regular classroom than in a special classroom	329	109	101	63	56	312	102	76	72	62
21	The pupil with a disability will not be socially isolated in the regular classroom	329	117	95	67	50	312	120	103	55	34

Teachers have the main role of teaching and behavior changing in the schools. Some studies have revealed that 'better prepared teachers are more likely to have positive attitudes towards students with disabilities and would be more willing to include them in their classrooms' (Sharma et al. 2003, p. 207). In this study, items 14, 17 and 22 are chosen to discover the attitudes of student teachers. In this present study, 279 respondents agreed with statement 14 that *'pupils with disabilities will not monopolize the regular teacher's time'* and this was positive according to how the statement was put. Two hundred sixty one student teachers disagreed with the statement. Responses to item 17 revealed that 504 respondents agreed or strongly agreed while only 137 disagreed that *'Teaching pupils with disabilities is better done by a special than a regular classroom teacher'*. The majority of the student teachers also agreed that *'Inclusion of pupils with disabilities will require extensive retraining of regular teachers'*. The respondents saw the need of training teachers for inclusive education and this is essential during both pre-and in-service training. Marchesi (1998) cited by Al-Zyoud (2006) found that 'professional training of teachers was reported to be one of the key factors of successful inclusion' (p.57).

**Table 3: Inclusive education and the teacher**

NO.	STATEMENTS	Sex of the respondents									
		Female					Male				
		Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14	Pupils with disabilities will not monopolize the regular teacher's time	329	58	80	98	93	311	39	102	91	79
17	Teaching pupils with disabilities is better done by a special than a regular classroom teacher	329	176	80	42	31	312	159	89	39	25
22	Inclusion of pupils with disabilities will require extensive retraining of regular teachers	329	168	99	43	19	312	175	86	32	19

During this present study some respondents had different views on having students with disabilities in the regular classroom as shown in Table 4. Item 1 stated that *'The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes'*. Three hundred and four respondents agreed with the statement and 343 disagreed with statement 1. The responses show that the majority of pre-service teachers (343) were against the statement, which meant that they supported inclusive education. However, 167 respondents agreed with item 4 that *'The extra attention needed by a pupil with a disability will be to the disadvantage of the other pupils'* while 474 disagreed, and, therefore, supported inclusive education.

**Table 4: Pupils in an inclusive classroom**

NO.	STATEMENTS	Sex of the respondents									
		Female					Male				
		Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes	329	87	77	56	109	312	90	50	70	102
4	The extra attention needed by a pupil with a disability will be to the disadvantage of the other pupils	329	25	53	106	145	312	34	55	90	133
8	The behaviour of pupils with disabilities will set a bad example for pupils without disabilities	329	189	100	21	19	312	182	89	24	17

**Attitudes of student teachers to students with disabilities with behaviour problems in inclusive education**

Further analysis was performed by grouping the items which were intending to measure the attitude of student teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education based on students with disabilities' needs, behaviours disorders, time management, ability to pay attention including efforts and adjustment in the context of classrooms. The students' attitudes on the aspects of students with disability in inclusive education was found that five hundred seventy nine (90.3%) was negative while only sixty two (9.7%) students attitudes was positive.

Table 5: Attitudes towards disabled students with behaviour problems

Attitudes	Frequency (number of students)	Percent
Positive	62	9.7
Negative	579	90.3
Total	641	100.0

**Attitudes of student-teachers to teachers in the inclusive education**

Among scale items, there were four statements which intended to capture the attitude of students on inclusive education based on teachers' expertise, having sufficient training or having a need of training special teachers. The results show that three hundred forty two participants (53.3%) were positive with teachers in inclusive education while two hundred ninety nine (46.6%) were negative.

Table 3:

Attitudes	Frequency	Percent
positive	342	53.4
negative	299	46.6
Total	641	100.0

**Attitudes of student-teachers to academic skills of students with disability in inclusive education**

Three hundred fifty participants (54.6%) were positive that students with disability in inclusive classroom grow and succeed or benefit academically while two hundred ninety one (45.4%) were negative.

Table 4

Attitudes	Frequency	Percent
positive	350	54.6
negative	291	45.4
Total	641	100.0

**Attitudes of student-teachers to social and emotional development of students with disabilities in the inclusive education**

It was found that four hundred thirty eight (68.3%) participants were negative whether students with disability develop or improve social and emotional domains while two hundred and three (31.7%) were positive.

Table 5

Attitudes	Frequency	Percent
positive	203	31.7
negative	438	68.3
Total	641	100.0

**Tests to show significance differences in student-teachers attitudes towards inclusive education**

**Having a friend with disability:** T-tests were conducted to check significant differences in students- teachers' attitudes. Generally there was no significant difference in attitudes between student-teachers who had friends with disabilities and those with no friends with disabilities. However, specific variables revealed that there were significant differences in attitudes of student-teachers in students' behaviours  $p=.002$ , (yes= frequency 375, mean=1.89, No= frequency 266, mean=1.92,); academic skills  $p=.01$ , (yes= frequency 375, mean=1.42, No= frequency 266, mean=1.50,); and social and emotion development  $p=.000$  (yes= frequency 375, mean=1.66, No= frequency 266, mean=1.72). Therefore, it is argued that student-teachers with friends with disability are more positive to inclusive education than those with no friends. Subban and Sharma (2006) found that 'those respondents who had a family member or close friend with a disability appeared to hold more positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom' (p. 47). In addition, Loreman, Sharma, Forlin and Earle (2005) said that previous contact with a family member or friend with a disability indicated more positive sentiments upon interaction and less concern regarding inclusive practices.

**Teaching experience:** The T-test shows that there was no significant difference based on teaching experience, either student teachers with teaching experience and those without experience did not differ in their attitudes. Contrary to gender where it was found that males were more positive than females in inclusive education,  $p=.04$  (males= frequency 312, mean=1.82, females= frequency 329, mean=1.79) though the difference was small, it was significant.

### Conclusions

The present study achieved several major findings. Firstly, overall students-teachers attitude towards inclusive education showed that the majority were not in favour of inclusive education, due to existing education contexts. Secondly, specifically participants were positive or favourable attitudes to inclusive education only if teachers preparations be done thoroughly and about academic skills, the participants believed that students with disability benefits various academic skills.

Thirdly, the tests revealed that males were more positive than females towards inclusive education.

Lastly, student teachers having friends with disabilities have shown having positive or unfavourable attitudes towards inclusive education on three areas; students capabilities, academic skills, and socio-emotional development. Therefore, having exposure to people with disability influences attitudes of individuals as clearly shown by the findings.

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ANNEX 1.

NO.	STATEMENTS	Sex of the respondents									
		Female					Male				
		Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The needs of students with disabilities can best be served through special, separate classes	329	87	77	56	109	312	90	50	70	102
2	The classroom behaviour of pupils with disabilities generally does not require more patience from the teacher than does the behaviour of a pupil without a disability	329	30	38	97	164	312	17	32	97	166
3	The challenge of being in a regular classroom will promote the academic growth of pupils with a disability	329	126	89	63	51	312	117	93	53	49
4	The extra attention needed by a pupil with a disability will be to the disadvantage of the other pupils	329	25	53	106	145	312	34	55	90	133
5	Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among pupils	329	134	112	47	36	312	127	113	42	30
6	It is not more difficult to maintain order in an ordinary classroom tha has a pupil with a disability than in one that does not have a pupil with a disability	329	77	114	93	45	312	69	94	93	56
7	Regular classroom teachers have a great deal of the expertise required to teach pupils with disabilities	329	79	80	82	88	312	70	85	79	78
8	The behaviour of pupils with disabilities will set a bad example for pupils without disabilities	329	189	100	21	19	312	182	89	24	17
9	Isolation in a special class has beneficial effect on the social and emotional development of a pupil with a disability	329	131	54	80	64	312	114	61	59	78
10	The pupil with a disability will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a regular classroom than in a special classroom	329	109	101	63	56	312	102	76	72	62
11	Most pupils with disabilities will make an adequate attempt to complete their assignments	329	92	136	71	30	312	65	135	78	34
12	Inclusion of pupils with disabilities will require significant changes in regular classroom practices	329	117	148	35	29	312	126	132	35	19
13	Inclusion of pupils with disabilities in a regular classroom will create too much additional work	329	78	97	84	70	312	68	99	91	54
14	Pupils with disabilities will not monopolize the regular teacher's time	329	58	80	98	93	311	39	102	91	79
15	Inclusion of pupils with a disability in a regular classroom will improve his/her social independence	329	130	129	37	33	311	136	113	40	22
16	It is likely that the pupil with a disability will show behaviour problems in an regular classroom	329	97	101	85	46	312	83	85	89	55
17	Teaching pupils with disabilities is better done by a special than a regular classroom teacher	329	176	80	42	31	312	159	89	39	25
18	The inclusion of pupils with disabilities in a regular classroom can be beneficial for pupils without disabilities	329	98	114	62	55	312	96	117	54	45
19	Inclusion is likely to have a negative effect on the emotional development of the pupil with a disability	329	92	110	73	54	312	95	87	81	49
20	Increased freedom in the regular classroom creates too much confusion for the pupil with a disability	329	71	95	86	77	312	69	81	99	63
21	The pupil with a disability will not be socially isolated in the regular classroom	329	117	95	67	50	312	120	103	55	34
22	Inclusion of pupils with disabilities will require extensive retraining of regular teachers	329	168	99	43	19	312	175	86	32	19