

## *Full Length Research Paper*

# Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education in Enhancing Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Tanzania: Teachers Awareness

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**ABSTRACT:** This study assessed the effective implementation of inclusive education in enhancing quality education in public primary schools in Tanzania. It specifically aimed at assessing teachers' awareness in the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Karagwe district. The study employed a mixed method approach and was guided by behaviorism theory. Respondents were sampled by purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The target population included teachers, head teachers, Primary District Education Officer, Ward Education Officer, District Special Education Officer and Quality Assurance Officers. The sample size comprised of seventy-six respondents. Data were gathered using questionnaire, interview and observation methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and thematic analysis method for qualitative data. The study findings revealed that many teachers in Tanzania are not aware about inclusive education. The government of Tanzania is hereby advised to take very immediate steps to educate the teachers on inclusive education in order to enhance the realization and implementation of inclusive education in the country.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, quality education, behaviorism, awareness

## INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on effective implementation of inclusive education in enhancing quality education in public primary schools in Tanzania. This article is specifically focusing on teachers' awareness in the implementation of inclusive education in enhancing quality education in public primary schools in Tanzania. Teachers are the most important stakeholders as they implement inclusive education policies, strategies and guidelines.

In fact, the teachers' education curriculum in Tanzania does not provide how teachers should handle children with special needs within and outside classrooms (Mbwambo, 2015; Possi and Milinga, 2016). Consequently, teachers are not prepared to teach children with special needs. In Tanzania, only a few teachers have knowledge and skills on inclusive

education and culture. This situation has significantly hindered the practicability of attaining inclusive education in most of the public primary schools in the country. This situation has therefore affected the attainment of quality education in Tanzania (UNICEF, 2018).

## Literature review

According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the variety of wants of all learners through cumulative participation in learning culture and communities and reducing their segregation from education. UNESCO (2009) adds that the goal of inclusive education is to enable the entire education systems to facilitate learning situations where

teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenges and benefits of diversity. In an inclusive education, learning environments are nurtured whereby individual needs are met and every student has a chance to prosper.

According to Kozleski and Yu (2016), research in inclusive education started in the 1980s. By then it was framed as an alternative to special education. Inclusive education later expanded its activities in schools and the school system to increased access, participation and opportunities to marginalized learners.

Mbwambo (2015) state that the term inclusive education was coined as a result of the Salamanca Conference of 6th -7th June 1994 in Salamanca Spain organized by UNESCO. This conference advocated for children's rights to education, with special emphasis being placed on children with special needs. The Salamanca conference was an international inclusive education stakeholders' forum which provided a framework on how children with special needs should be accommodated in education systems all over the World. Possi and Milinga (2017) confirm that the government of Tanzania ratified the 1994 Salamanca statement which emphasized the need to provide basic education to exceptional individuals in Tanzania. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action have reinforced the obligation for schools to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

Mbwambo (2015) reveals that the government of Tanzania ratified inclusive education conventions and agreements including the Salamanca statement of 1994 and the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and prepared National Inclusive Education Strategies of 2014-2017. The current inclusive education strategy of 2018-2021 aims at providing better and inclusive education environment for children with special needs.

As a result of the Salamanca statement, the Government of Tanzania put in place some strategies that would ensure proper implementation of the inclusive education agenda. Among the strategies put in place were the formulation of the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)1 of 2002-2006 and PEDP 2 of 2007 -2011. Mbwambo (2015) argues that the aim of these plans was to translate Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and education and training policy of 1995 into specific priorities and achievable targets and to realize the goals and targets agreed upon in the Salamanca statement and the framework of actions of 1995, Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All (EFA) and the summit for Millennium Development Goal (MDGs).

The implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania started in 1998 in Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam region when the Ministry of Education, the Salvation Army and UNESCO conducted a pilot study (Mbwambo,

2015). Currently, inclusive education schools are found in all regions across Tanzania.

According to Mbwambo (2015) the history of inclusive education is divided into four phases which are, the phase of segregation, extermination and total isolation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. In the first phase, people with disabilities all over the world did not have access to education at all. The second phase is the institutionalization phase. In this phase, institutions to accommodate persons with disabilities were formed in the Western World. The third phase was about integration and mainstreaming. Integration means the inclusion of people with disabilities in regular settings for a particular period of time based on their skills. On the other hand, mainstreaming means that children with disabilities have a little time for networking with their non-disabled peers as they attend special classes for most time of the day. The fourth and last stage is the stage of transition from integration to inclusion (Mbwambo, 2015). Inclusive education which will be discussed in this study is therefore, the one that commences from the fourth stage. Othman (2015) considers inclusive education as an act of integrating learners with special needs into the general education classes and that it is primarily for social purposes. He further notes that inclusive education entails all activities which ensure the integration of students physically, instructionally and socially irrespective of their disabilities. Inclusive education brings diverse learners, families, educators and the community members together to create school and their social institutions based on acceptance and belongingness to the community.

Possi and Milinga (2017) argue that inclusive education is basically a broader field of special education. It challenges the previous forms of special education and its practices. Carrington (1999) maintains that special education has failed to provide educational for all learners. The history of special education has progressed from the separation and integration or mainstreaming to inclusion with a new inventiveness in the area of special needs education which deliberates people with special needs within a wider viewpoint. Inclusive education is, therefore, a holistic, contemporary and up to date mechanism of accommodating children with special needs in the regular education systems.

Possi and Milinga (2017) assert that inclusive education is a method in which all children have the ability to partake in general education programs. They add that inclusive education is a social equity and is fundamentally a social construction viewpoint in which students with disabilities get socially accommodated by all school community members. Inclusive education transmits the rudiments of mainstreaming, integration, normalization, least restrictive environment, deinstitutionalization and regular education ingenuities.

Tanzania National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2018-2021) states that the core aims of inclusive

education is to enhance the human right access to education as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by recognizing diversity as the main characteristic of humanity. Education, as a human right, must be attained by all individuals regardless of their differences. Persons with disabilities have no exception when it comes to education. And indeed, education should not be discriminative. It should be inclusive so as to accommodate the children with disabilities in the social structures so as to enable them get integrated in society for their own and national development.

UNICEF (2018) asserts that inclusive education is a key factor for the attainment of a quality education. In other words, there can never be quality education without inclusive education. UNICEF adds that quality education can only be attained when the education systems embrace diversity and allows every child, including children with disabilities (CWDs) to study together receiving inclusive quality education that provides them with the learning required for life.

According to Open Society Foundation (2019), inclusive education provides better quality education for all children as it embraces diversity and socialization among the children with different backgrounds. Inclusive education helps teachers to train children on how to interact with the external World outside their families. This enhances social relationship and interactions. Open Society Foundation adds that inclusive education enhance respect and understanding among children with diverse abilities and backgrounds as they play, socialize and learn together.

Mwambo (2015) and Possi and Milinga (2017) have stipulated the challenges facing inclusive education in Tanzania. They point out that some of the challenges include insufficient funds to implement inclusive education policies, insufficient teaching and learning facilities, absence of support services, lack of supportive infrastructure and lack of properly trained personnel. They further note that stigmatization, physical punishment and nuisance and exclusion by teachers and students and other members of the community are serious challenges facing inclusivity in education in the country.

Several scholars have put forward some suggestions to improve the implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania. Mwambo (2015) and Hamad (2015) suggest that the ministry of education should provide inclusive education courses to all teachers. They also recommend that inclusive education should be accommodated in the teachers' training curriculum so that all teachers get inclusive education knowledge which they can apply in their schools. Also, they suggest that policy makers should formulate adequate policies and regulations to accommodate the need for implementation of quality education in the country. Furthermore, they recommend that the central government should allocate enough budget to the ministry of education so that the needs for

inclusive education can be met. Lastly, they suggest that since parents should play a vital role in the provision of their children education, they should always be supportive to the teachers. This will motivate teachers to teach the children with special needs with commitment.

Several literatures reveal that teachers from many parts of the world, Africa in particular, are not fully aware of inclusive education (Zabel et al., 2020; Sulachini, 2019; Kafia, 2014; Possi and Milinga, 2017; Mbawambo, 2015)). For example, Kafia (2014), reveals that in Albania, the understanding of inclusive education tends to be polarised and perceived either in broad terms, access to quality, or individual participation of students with disabilities in education. Over the past 25 years after the Salamanca statement, the term inclusive education is still not well understood by countries in Africa (Sulochini, 2019). This is because they only refer it to only children with disabilities forgetting other vulnerable children. This is a great misconception which makes the continent to lag behind in the implementation of inclusive education. However, the misconception of inclusive education is not only in Africa but in many countries in the World (UNESCO, 2008). Sanagi (2016) claims that most teachers in Japan are not aware of inclusive education while others have never heard about it. This is supported by Mbawambo (2015) who states that teachers have poor awareness of inclusive education because it is not included in teachers' education curriculum in Tanzania. Similarly, Kafia (2014) adds that the teachers' curriculum in Albania falls short of preparing the teachers for inclusive schools. Moreover, Kafia (2014) explains that teachers' curriculum in Albania concentrate on content rather than on skills and values, hence, it is inadequate in preparing the teachers to handle children with special needs. The teachers' awareness of inclusive education in Cosovo is not satisfactory (Zabel et al., 2020). This is because teachers believe that children can accomplish more in terms of socialization and moulding of virtuous behaviour from their peers, but their success in academic achievement is poor due to inadequate knowledge of teachers about individual planning and differentiated teachings; and lack of institutional support and appropriate evaluation of each teachers' work (Zabel et al., 2020). There is evidence of teachers' negative perception toward inclusive education in various parts of the world. Research conducted by Mbawambo (2015) and Possi and Milinga (2017) in Tanzania revealed that teachers have a negative perception of inclusive education in the country. This study therefore sets out to assess teachers' awareness as far as the implementation of inclusive education is concerned.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study was guided by Behaviorism theory. Behaviorism theory was established by John. B. Watson and Burrhus. G. Skinner in 19th Century. These psychologists sought to focus on observable, quantifiable

events and behaviors. They claimed that science ought to take into account only apparent indicators. They helped make psychology more relevant by viewing that it might be precisely measured and understood, and it was not just grounded on sentiments. Watson and Skinner supposed that if given a group of infants, the way they raised them and the environment they put them in would be the eventual decisive factor for how they behaved, but not the influence of their parents or genetics. Western Governors University (2020) asserts that Behaviorism is a prevalent concept that emphasizes on how students learn. Behaviorism focuses on the impression that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment. The theory states that behaviors are learnt from the context and that inborn factors have quite little impact on one's behavior. Behaviorists argue that learning takes places when there is a change in behavior. They also assert that one's behavior occurs when consequences are allied with stimuli and response and is maintained by reinforcement. Al-Shammari et al. (2019) asserts that the key principle of behaviorism that support education are that behavior is learned. Behavior is governed by the context in which it transpires, hence, teaching and learning can be equated to changing behavior. Also, behavior is governed by what follows actions and is observable. Behaviorism theory is related to the best practices in inclusive education because the classrooms conditions are the basis of functional behavioral analysis. This theory is very applicable in inclusive education because we have witnessed a lot of biases against the vulnerable students in accessing education services. The root cause of this has been reported to be the negative attitude of the society towards children with disabilities or those from the marginalized population. This is in line with the findings by Liliane Foundation(nd) which argues that about 65 million school-aged children in developing countries have disabilities, out of which 50% are out of school. In addition, in places like Asia, Africa and Latin America where poverty is high, less than 10 per cent of children with disabilities have never been in a classroom. In fact, even those children with disabilities that are in school, are less likely to stay or are being promoted. Children with disabilities are similarly often excepted from mainstream education. Nevertheless, a disability of a child is not the main barrier to education. The utmost barriers include the attitudes of people in society (Liliane foundation (n.d); Possi and Millinga (2017), Mbwambo (2005). In this regard, in order to achieve inclusive education, we need a total change of the behavior and total cultural set ups and beliefs of the entire society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research approach and research design**

This study applied mixed method approach whereby

qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to study the same phenomena, from data collection to analysis stages. The researcher opted for this approach because it helped him explore knowledge from both qualitative and quantitative sources through the use of observation, interviews and questionnaires respectively. This study applied convergent parallel research design. By applying the convergent parallel research design, the researcher simultaneously collected data in one phase. Then, the collected data were analyzed separately, compared and combined. The researcher used convergent parallel research design because it is time convenient and cost efficient. This is because; convergent parallel design allowed the researcher to apply both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods simultaneously in one phase.

### **Study area**

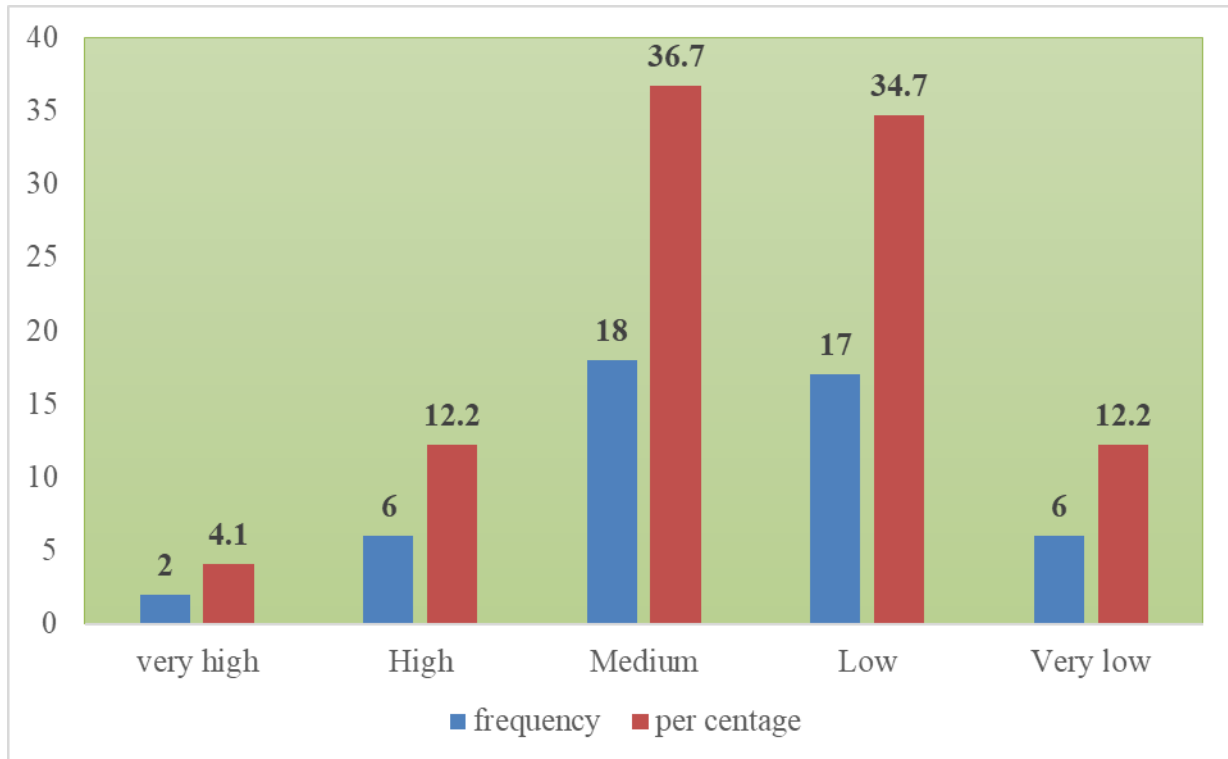
This research was carried out in Karagwe District of Kagera region in Tanzania. The researcher selected Karagwe district as a study area because the district is already implementing inclusive education. Also, the researcher is familiar with the district, a situation that simplified the data collection activity. The implementation of inclusive education is challenging in many parts of the world and Tanzania in particular. Therefore, the researcher opted to conduct the study in Karagwe District to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education in enhancing quality education in public primary school in Tanzania.

### **Sampling procedures and sample size**

The researcher applied two sampling techniques both purposive and simple random sampling to select the study respondents. The researcher applied purposive sampling technique to select the respondents due to their roles in implementing the inclusive education policy in Karagwe District. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select the four inclusive public primary schools under this study, because they are the schools already implementing the inclusive education in the district. Other respondents were sampled by simple random sampling technique. This study had a sample size of sixty respondents.

### **Data collection methods**

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The methods included questionnaires for quantitative data and interviews and observations for qualitative data. The quantitative findings were later analyzed by the help of SPSS and presented



**Figure 1:** Teachers' views on teachers' awareness about inclusive education. Source: Field data, 2021.

in figure. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers awareness in the implementation of inclusive education

In order to explore teachers' awareness in the implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania, both quantitative and qualitative data were presented. Figure 1 presents a summarized set of replies from the field on teachers' awareness in the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Karagwe district Tanzania. The question had five options which included Very high, High, Medium, Low and Very Low. The teachers' replies were summarized in (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that the teachers view on teachers' awareness on inclusive education are 4.1 percent is Very high, 12.2 percent High, 36.7 Medium, 34.7 Mediums and 12.2 very low.

The findings in (Figure 1) imply that teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district are aware about inclusive education. However, the level of awareness is low and not satisfactory to enable the effective implementation of inclusive education in the district. This is because the teachers are not aware of

basic concepts pertaining to inclusive education. There are several causes for this situation, but the most mentioned causes are due to the fact that public primary school teachers do not study about inclusive education at the teachers' colleges and the Government rarely provide in service trainings on inclusive education to in-service teachers. Again, the researcher had an opportunity to explore qualitative data pertaining to the objective. The discussion of this objective was guided by the following themes/issues.

### Teachers' comprehension of inclusive education

Most of the interviewed teachers could not precisely define the term inclusive education. The teachers seem to have some ideas about inclusive education. However, they lack some important concepts in the definition of inclusive education. One head teacher had this to say when asked what he understood about inclusive education?

*"What I understand is that inclusive education is when children with disabilities and those without disabilities study together"*

One Quality Assurance Officer (QAO) when responding on the teachers' ability in teaching students with special



education needs. She said, “We quality assurance officers do not have inclusive education knowledge. We therefore fail to advise the teachers on inclusive education matters whenever we go for monitoring and evaluation” (QAO, September 2021).

One head teacher when responding on the teachers’ ability in teaching students with special education needs in one of the visited schools commented: “Our school has only one teacher who is trained on special education. She is the only one who has knowledge about inclusive education” (Head teacher 1, Septer,2021).

Another quality assurance officer to the same question claimed:

*Most of the teachers in Public primary schools in Karagwe district are not aware about inclusive education. It is unfortunate that we quality assurance officers also do not understand well about inclusive education as we have never studied it anywhere (QAO 2, September 2021).*

When responding to the same question the Primary District Education Officer said that the ability of teachers in teaching students with special needs education is very limited. It is limited because most of the teachers have never had inclusive education trainings neither in college nor in service (PDEO, September 2021).

The findings communicate that most teachers in public primary schools in Karagwe district are not aware about inclusive education. The definitions given from the field only related inclusive education with disability. The definitions do not capture the real sense of inclusion. In fact, inclusive education goes beyond disability and accommodates all children with special needs Education (SNE) including children from poor families, orphans, children from the minority groups etc.

Therefore, inclusive education is a very broad terminology which accommodates the needs of all the children in the education system. Inclusive education does not only focus on children with disabilities. Defining inclusive education by only focusing on disability is defining it in a narrow perspective. This is supported by UNESCO (2009) who argue that inclusive education is a process of welcoming variety of needs of all learners through increasing involvement in learning culture and communities and reducing their elimination from education.

The goal of inclusive education is to enable the whole education systems to assist learning situations where teachers and learners embrace and comfy the challenges and benefits of diversity. In an inclusive education, learning environments are nurtured whereby every student has an opportunity to succeed and their individual needs are met (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is basically an act of integrating learners with special needs into the general education classes. Inclusive education entails all activities which ensure the integration of students instructionally, physically, and socially

irrespective of their disabilities (Othman, 2015).

Comparing the inclusive education perspectives, it is evident that the definition from the field lacks very basic ideas of inclusive education. This situation implies that the teachers in public primary schools in Karagwe have limited/low awareness about inclusive education. The low/limited awareness means that the implementation of inclusive education in public primary schools in Karagwe is not effective. This is due to the fact that the teachers cannot effectively implement inclusive education in their schools if they are not fully aware of the terminology.

This situation is very alarming because data from the field shows that it is not only the teachers who are not aware about inclusive education but also the school leaders. If the school leaders are also not aware, it means the practicality of the inclusive education in the schools is questionable. This is because the school leaders should be the role models in the implementation of inclusive education in their respective schools if at all the implementation of inclusive education is to succeed (Chaula, 2017).

### **Reasons for teachers’ low awareness on inclusive education**

Teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district had opportunities to explain why they have low awareness of inclusive education. One head teacher claimed that most of the teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district including himself are not aware about inclusive education because basically they never learnt it while in colleges. Another head teacher argued: “The government rarely provides inclusive education in-service trainings to the teachers. In my school, for over fifteen teachers, only one teacher had one inclusive education in-service training. This is why most of the in-service teachers in public primary schools in Karagwe district are not aware of inclusive education” (Head teacher 3, September,2021).

One quality assurance officer also said, “Teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district have low awareness about inclusive education because the government has not put much effort to enforce the practicality of inclusive education. That is why inclusive education is not accommodated in the teachers’ education curriculum” (QAO, September 2021).

Finally, the PDEO said:

*Teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district have little understanding of inclusive education because they think it is not their responsibility to handle children with disabilities in their schools. They believe that handling children with disabilities is the responsibility of special education teachers (PDEO, September 2021).*

The findings indicate that teachers are not aware of

inclusive education due to genuine reasons including; the Tanzania teachers' education curriculum not to include inclusive education course. Inclusive education course is provided to few student teachers who opt for special education major. In fact, the teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district who studied special education are very few.

Another major reason from the field is that the Government of Tanzania rarely provide in service inclusive education training to teachers. This means that most of the teachers in inclusive public primary schools have never had opportunities to attend the trainings. It was found that there is a misconception by the majority of teachers in the inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district that inclusive education is not their responsibility. Most of them believe that handling children with special educational needs is the responsibility of the teachers who studied special education course. This situation has negatively impacted the implementation of inclusive education in the schools. The statement by the QAO above proves that inclusive education knowledge is needed not only by teachers in schools but also other education professionals. As stated, inclusive education knowledge is needed by the quality assurance officers to help them advise the teachers accordingly when they visit the schools for monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance in the schools.

Supporting this discussion, Mwambo (2015) and Possi and Milinga (2017) assert that the Government of Tanzania rarely prepares in service inclusive education training for public primary school teachers. Teachers are the main implementers of the education curriculum in their respective schools. This being the case, they should be aware of both theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education which is unfortunately not the case in Karagwe district.

The findings above also concur with a study done in Philippines by Ecoben (2019). Ecoben narrates that teacher in Philippines has general teaching skills but lack skills on inclusive education. This makes the implementation of inclusive education in Phillipines to be less effective similar to the situation in Karagwe district. Also, a study done by Rombo (2007) in Papua New Guinea concurs with the discoveries of this study. The study revealed that teachers and school administrators in Papua Guinea seem to have inadequate knowledge and understating on what institutes special and inclusive education practices. Like Tanzania, teachers in New Papua Guinea do not learn about inclusive education in teachers' colleges and there are no inclusive education in-service trainings offered to in -service teachers.

Finally, a study conducted by Mutungi (2011), concurs with the findings of this study. His study publicized that special education teachers' professional knowledge and skills are insufficient to efficiently teach students with disabilities in normal schools. The study further revealed that the public primary school teachers lack essential

skills and knowledge to be able to include learners with special needs in the education systems in Kenya which is similar to the situation in Karagwe District.

### **Suggestions on how to improve teachers' awareness on inclusive education**

Head teachers, quality assurance officers, Ward Education Officers, District Special Education Officer and the District Primary Education Officer were asked to give views on what could be done to promote inclusive education awareness among the teachers. Most of the respondent directed much of their suggestions to the Government of Tanzania.

One head teacher said;

*"I think; the government should arrange for in-service inclusive education training for in-service teachers. I would propose that inclusive education is accommodated in the teachers' education curriculum so that all teachers have inclusive education understanding while in college" (Head teacher 4, September 2021).*

The findings of this study concur with several scholars who claim that many teachers in many parts of the world including Tanzania are not aware about inclusive education. This is because inclusive education is not accommodated in the teacher's education curriculum (Possi and Milinga, 2017). Therefore, inclusive education should first of all be accommodated in the teacher's education curriculum and secondly provide inclusive education in service training to the in-service teachers all over the country. This is also supported by Kafia (2014); Mbwapo (2015); Possi and Milinga (2017); Sulachini (2019); Zabel et al. (2020).

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that majority of the teachers in the inclusive public primary schools in Karagwe district have no awareness about inclusive education. The main cause for this situation is the fact that the teacher's education curriculum in Tanzania does not prepare teachers to practice inclusive education in schools (Mbwapo, 2015; Possi and Milinga, 2017). Not only that but also the study revealed that the government of Tanzania has not provided inclusive education seminar to in-service teachers for so long and most of the teachers have never had one. This makes it difficult for the teachers to have awareness about inclusive education because they didn't have it in college and still have never had an opportunity to get it while in service. Therefore, the government of Tanzania should take necessary steps to enhance teachers' awareness on inclusive education. This is very important and crucial because the implementation of

inclusive education cannot be realised unless the teachers are fully aware about inclusive education.

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