



# Assessment of Access and Retention of Learners with Special Needs in Primary Education in Tanzania: A Study of Arusha District

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**Abstract:** Education is a universal right and non-discriminatory process to both healthy and physically challenged. The study specifically assessed access and retention of Learners with Special Needs (LSN) in primary schools in Arusha district and the challenges facing LSN and their intervening measures. Descriptive survey design was employed. A total of 121 respondents (55 teachers, 11 parents and 55 students) were involved. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to gather quantitative data while document analysis and interview guide were employed for qualitative data from the respondents. Validity of research instruments was established through expert judgment. Reliability of quantitative research instruments was determined through test re-test in a pilot study and found to correlate at Cronbach Alpha coefficient  $r=0.687$ . Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The results were presented in tables of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically alongside research questions and presented in narrative forms. The findings show that, the rate of enrolment of LSN was low and unsatisfactory. Moreover, the finding shows inadequate teaching and learning materials was the major challenge for learners with LSN to acquire their education. Thematically, the findings found that parents do not see importance of enrolling children with LSN because they think that LSN cannot be employed in any organization. Therefore, this study concludes that, there is low and unsatisfactory completion of studies for most LSN. It is recommended that education stakeholders and government should put more emphasis on enrollment of LSN and to support schools in training and policy implementation.

**Keywords:** Access and Retention, Learners, Special Needs, Primary Education, Arusha District and Tanzania

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## 1. Introduction

United Nations (2011) reported that education is a universal right for all children in the world, and contributes to a qualitative intellectual and emotional growth. Educational process helps children to maximize

their full potential for life. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), access to education refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure or at least strive to ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education (UNESCO, 2016). This is a non-discriminatory process

which does not matter whether the children have health issues and social problems or not. Therefore, the state (government) must find and provide children with the best and most inclusive methods and resources for schooling. For children with a diagnosis of disability and serious health problems, who have special educational needs, the government should create special school programs that can offer them equal opportunities to education. In this regard, Mary (2008) observed that, Special Needs Learners refers to the children with conditions, barriers or factors that hinder their normal learning and their development. The conditions may include disabilities emotional or health difficulties which may be temporary or lifelong. Retention in education focuses on rates of enrolment and completion at a particular level of education like secondary, or college. Therefore, these Learners with Special Needs should be given opportunity to accomplish their goal in education. These goals can only be achieved by allocating funds and by educating people in order to eliminate stigma (Gavrila, 2018).

In the views of Hallahan et al, (2014), Special Needs Learners have various set of conditions that includes a set of categories such as intellectual disability, physical and health disability, visual and hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorder, behavioral and emotional disorder, communication disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, and talent and giftedness

According to UNESCO (2016), few persons with disability received any formal education until the introduction of inclusive education along with continuing educational opportunities offered by specialized schools and target programs which helped a number of disabled children attending different Schools. For example, a report by UN (2011) pointed out that in Philippines in 2011 only 1.16% disabled children of the nation's 3.5 million school aged children accessed school. In Ethiopia only 1.1%, in Mozambique only 0.7% and in Tanzania it was 0.8% school aged children with disabilities who accessed schools. The findings by Lo (2015) posit that there is a general increase in the number of Special Needs Learners accessing education. The study recorded that in Ethiopia 11.1%, in Mozambique only 7.7% and in Tanzania it was 10.8% school aged children with disabilities who accessed schools which is still below the expectation of the general public.

United Republic of Tanzania (2013) reported that Special Needs Education in Tanzania were developed and supported by efforts of non-governmental organizations. The first services (residential special schools) for the children with disabilities in Tanzania were provided in 1950 by the Anglican Church in Buigiri primary school in Dodoma for blind boys while the Roman Catholic Church started the first school for deaf children in Tabora in 1963. Services for persons with physical disabilities were founded by the Salvation Army in 1967. The first government school in the field of special needs education

was established in 1982. The school provided services for children with mental retardation. Limited services for children with autism and deaf - blindness were established in 1984.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) survey based on 2017 population estimates that the world has 6.9 billion people, but 110 million people live with some types of disabilities which vary according to a complex mix of factors, including age, sex and stage of life. Other factors are; exposure to environmental risks, socio economic status, culture and available resources (WHO, 2017).

Furthermore, in the early 2020, UNESCO estimated that perhaps, 97% of the world disabled people were unable to read or write, leading to significant efforts throughout the developing world to ensure that all children with disabilities attended school through Inclusive education programs. However, the vast majority of persons with disabilities who are now young (children), adolescents or adults will go beyond the classroom education or the estimated 90% of disabled children who will "age out" of the system before such inclusive education is available in the communities (GEM, 2020).

Children with disability in Tanzania represent a significant but largely invisible population. According to 2017 report on adolescence in Tanzania by UNICEF, about 4.5% of children enrolled in primary schools were children with disabilities. In secondary schools, 3.2% of boys and 2.4% of girls had disabilities. These percentages are extremely low when compared with the estimated 17.8% of Tanzanians' population with disabilities (UNESCO, 2019).

The study finding by Aldersey (2018) emphasized the need for providing education to people, with disabilities, especially those from remote and rural areas. The finding encourages the educational planners and policy makers to be fully aware of many advantages if such people are educated and also many disadvantages if such people are not educated.

Since 1990's the Tanzanian government had struggled to identify disabled people with specific problem and to ensure that the government allowed different formation such as; The Tanzania Federation of Disabled peoples' Organization (SHIVYAWATA) which is non - government federation that was established in 1992 and brings together ten national Disabled people's organizations (DPOs), namely:-Tanzania Albino Society (TAS), Tanzania League of the Blind (TLB), Tanzania Association of the Deaf - Blind (TASODEB). Tanzania Association of the Deaf (CHAVITA), Tanzania Association of the Physically Handicapped (CHAWATA), Tanzania Association for the Mentally Handicapped (TAMH), Psoriasis Association of Tanzania (PSORATA), Tanzania Users and Survivors of Psychiatric Organization (TUSPO), Association of Spinal

Bifida and Hydrocephalous of Tanzania (ASBAHT), Kilimanjaro Association of Spinal Cord Injuries (KASI). The Federation is a mouthpiece for matters pertaining to Persons With Disabilities, including right to education (PWDS). All these formations aim at fighting equal right like other people in their different societies. The essence is to afford a longer boulder and common voice on issues of lobbying and advocacy (URT, 2011).

Therefore, it is important to assess the accessibility of education of disabled people in their learning journey in order to justify the truth and greatly aiming to finding out ways to motivate the disabled people by eradicating illiteracy among them, hence to let them perform and become productive in their societies and the nation at large. Filmer (2008), states that often times, people who have disability are not necessarily born with them, disability can happen to anyone at any time if they have a misfortune. Very often people who are disabled prefer to be known as a person with special needs rather than the disability labels (UNESCO, 2019).

In Tanzania people with disabilities and older people are chronically excluded from accessing education and health services. They are also prone to be victims of sexual violence and marriage breakup suffer from poor treatment from family members. People with albinism in particular are very often victims of violence and discrimination because of traditional beliefs and practices (Mwakyusa, 2019). In fact, the government and other stakeholders have been taking numerous actions and means to solve the problem of disabilities. Therefore, this background prompted the researcher to assess the access and retention of special needs learners in primary schools in Arusha District, Tanzania.

## 2. Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical literature was reviewed with reference to research objectives. The study was anchored on Classical Liberal Theory.

### 2.1 Classical Liberal Theory

The theoretical framework of this study bases on the Classical Liberal Theory of equal opportunities propounded by Myneni (2018). The major gist of the theoretical underpinning is that there is need to aspire for equal opportunities in education for all eligible learners. This theory contends that each individual is born with a given amount of capacity. According to this theory, educational systems should be designed with a view to remove barriers of any nature for example, barriers based on socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, geographical factors, school-based factors, which prevent learners who have special needs to take advantage of their inborn talents since disability is not inability. The education offered to such groups of learners will

accelerate them to social promotion since education is a great equalizer which enhances life chances of the children with special needs. The theory demands that opportunities be made available for individuals to go through all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) to which access will not be determined by the disability of the learners but on the basis of individual's capability. The education offered to such groups of learners will accelerate them to social promotion since education is a great equalizer which enhances life chances of children with special needs.

This theory is relevant to this study because it contends that each individual is born with a given amount of capacity. According to this theory, educational systems should be designed with a view to remove barriers of any nature for example, barriers based on socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, geographical factors, school-based factors, which prevent learners who have special learning needs to take advantage of their inborn talents since disability is not inability. The education offered to such groups of learners will accelerate them to social promotion since education is a great equalizer which enhances life chances of the children with special needs (Mwakyusa, 2019).

### 2.2 Rate of Retention and Completion of Learners with Special Needs in Primary Schools

Children with Disabilities even at family level are neglected and rejected by their families whereby the disabled are rarely sent to school, in the uncaring society with a notorious global reputation for hypocritical piety and institutionalized neglect of the poor and disadvantaged. For instance, in a study by Rasheed (2016) on Rate of Retention and Completion of Learners with Special Needs in Primary Schools in Pakistan, an estimated 1 million children aged four to sixteen years with mental and physical disabilities are out of School. The overwhelming majority of them are vagabonds not out of volition but because of callous communities and parents. Most of the parents are lower income earners and they have no sustainable income to support their lives. As a result, they have no time to look after their children's school progress and therefore create a gap not only between them and their children but also between them and teachers who are supposed to advise them on academic issues. The experience shows that most children who come from the unstable economy are the victims of truancy. This is also supported by William *et al.*, (2015) that poverty is one of the main reasons for school dropouts among primary and secondary school students.

In Kenya, as observed by Christoffel-Blinden Mission in Kenya (2014), children with disability have been viewed as outcasts who are limited to begging on the streets. The introduction of Free Primary Education facilitated fertile

grounds for all children to join the education system. The overpopulated classes in public primary schools have been cited as sources contributing to poor learner retention in public primary school.

Karangwa (2008) conducted a study about inclusive higher education in Rwanda. The study used correlation research design and university students. The study reports how a team in the Kigali Institute of Education reviewed application and selection criteria and advised the Ministry about adjustments and equipment needed to assist 23 disabled students. Therefore, it is suggested that efforts to make education for learners accessible starting from the grassroots should be emphasized.

Aldersey & Turnbull (2018) maintained that in Tanzania, it is reported that enrolment of learners with special needs is making progress gradually, but is a long way off in becoming international and country norm as human capital issue needs first to address the basic education needs of the disabled people. Enrolment and retention must in fact be seen as equal opportunity for all citizens any society and therefore, education should be physically and economically accessible to all without discrimination. Furthermore, the school should be within safe reach or alternatively, must be made available to ensure that children with special needs get to school safely. Where possible it is suggested that there should be transport provision for disabled learners who travel long distances on foot from their homes to school.

In Tanzania, data show that in 2019, only 9.35 percent of all children enrolled in primary schools were children with disabilities. In secondary schools, 6.3 percent of boys and 5.25 percent of girls have disabilities. These percentages are extremely low when compared with the estimated 17.8 percent of the population with disabilities in Tanzania and indicate that most children with disabilities are not enrolled (UNESCO 2017). This small number of disabled students enrolled in primary and secondary schools predicts very low enrollment rates at higher learning institutions in Tanzania. For those children with disabilities who are enrolled, regular attendance is often extremely difficult.

### **2.3 Intervention Measures to the Challenges that Face Disabled Learners in Accessing and Participating in Primary Education**

Teaching children with diverse special needs is a big challenge, especially in terms of creating a friendly environment. According to a research done by UN (2011) learner's diverse needs and inaccessible environment within or outside the school may contribute in excluding them from learning institutions (Kapinga, 2014). Further, accessible environment helps to keep learners with special needs in schools unlike where schools have inaccessible

environment. To alleviate this problem, then the environment should be adapted to suit the diverse learners' needs. This involves organizing the classroom and the school compound. Special needs education requires the adoption, innovation as well as the installation of special immovable and movable facilities in the school to cater for these specific needs of the learner (Tanzania Human Rights Report (2014). This move makes the school physical environment friendly to the learners with special needs (UN, 2011). Also more important is the school social environment, it calls for an awareness and sensitization of the school fraternity to shun from any form of discrimination or stigmatization due to ignorance. With such an environment, the learners with special needs would to a greater extent exploit their potential.

Singh and Agarwal (2013) states that problem behaviors have been identified consistently as perhaps the greatest impediment to effective educational services. These researchers look at the importance of implementing individualized behavior plans for students with the most severe behavioral problems, specifically emotional disturbance, in helping them succeed within the public school setting. Special education has a very unique and important place within the education field. It is unlike any other type of education because of the students it caters to. Each student with a disability requires a different type of education with different techniques and practices (Rasheed 2016). One way of educating one student may not work for another, even if they have similar disabilities.

There are mixed ideas about whether the inclusion model is the most beneficial learning strategy for students with special needs or not. The arguments supporting the inclusion model are that it is a less restrictive environment and students are able to participate in all of the activities that regular education students do (Mwakyusa, 2019). But while the inclusion model may be more beneficial for some students, it does not necessarily work for everyone. Some students need a restrictive environment, even if it is temporary, in order to learn (Fredrickson and Cline, 2020). But, more research needs to be done on schools that specialize in special needs and practices for an accurate comparison. Additionally, to that curriculum should be improved from the inclusive one. This will make the accessibility of accessing in education. Nevertheless, materials for teaching and learning, infrastructure, strong government support. Those need to put into action and find solution to react on them especial on this current study.

Burke and Allison (2015) asserted that a learner with special needs many challenges that attributed to parents such as: early marriages; negative culture toward women; inferiority complex of women; and force marriage. These challenges limit these people to achieve their goals due to some obstacles education should prepare all people (children) for both domestic roles and public world beyond home. Furthermore, the non-governmental

organizations educate parents on some of the unhealthy socio-culture practices such as female circumcision, early marriages, and the discriminations against disable people access to education and encourage them to be involved in their education. It is similarly accentuated by Christoffel (2014) that increasing community involvement in public school will increase community members' (especially parents') which in turn will promote higher and better performance which will ultimately lead to improved achievement. This could be done by decentralizing educational responsibility to communities, providing better information to community members and sensitizing them about the importance of education and or training them to teach children. On the other hand, International Institute for Education Planner (IIEP) stated that, the parents and guardians who are illiterate often have low education aspiration for their children in that there is little perception of the value of schooling and hence little encouragement for people with disabilities to go to school (IIEP, 2018). That is to say, major factors that affect enrolment and retention of special needs in primary schools in Tanzania are the attitudes of parents and guardians towards children with special needs. However, in many parts of the world, home background of parents and guardians basing to cultural practices perceive people with special needs are given less in access and retention to education because they are considered physically weak and less capable (Warren, 2013). Although, increasing resource flows and other support to the education sector is necessary to give poor people greater access to quality education, in no way is that sufficient amounts. It also is necessary to translate those resources into basic services that are accessible to the poor (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2017).

Moreover, increasing community involvement in public school will increase community members' (especially parents') which in turn will promote higher and better performance which will ultimately lead to improved achievement. This could be done by decentralizing educational responsibility to communities, providing better information to community members and sensitizing them about the importance of education and or training them to teach children (Christoffel, 2014).

Many Tanzanian parents and guardians have low turn out to academic affairs to people with disabilities and they are not aware of their roles in improving education toward people with disabilities (Kapinga, 2014). Many parents believe that to educate people (children) with disabilities is like throwing stones in water because, disabled people

will not achieve anything and so it is better for parents and guardians to educate children who are not disabled.

There is a need to remove of negative cultural beliefs with its traditional and customs especially which do disvalue children with disabilities (Hay, 2019).. In connection to that is poor and low self-concept among children with disabilities themselves as always do consider weak, unable to manage even an access to education. All these two are wrong perspectives that dwindle educational development among children with disabilities.

### **3. Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was employed. A total of 121 respondents (55 teachers, 11 parents and 55 students) were involved. Questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from teachers as well as pupils and interview guide was used to seek information from heads of schools and the parents. Validity of research instruments was established through expert judgment. Reliability of quantitative research instruments was determined through test re-test in a pilot study and found to correlate at Cronbach Alpha coefficient  $r=0.687$  and according to Bailey and Hutter (2013), the instrument was reliable for the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the SPSS version 20. The results were presented in charts, tables of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically alongside research questions and presented in narrative forms. Document analysis was also employed such that Retention of learners with SNL in primary schools was obtained using attendance registers as from 2017 to 2020.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The findings were discussed with regard to research objectives.

#### **4.1 Rate of Retention and Completion of Learners with Special Needs in Primary Schools**

On the objective to find out the rate of retention and completion of learners with special needs in primary schools in Arusha District, table 1 gives the summary of the findings.

**Table 1: Rate of Retention and Successful Completion of Learners with Special Need**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Rate of Retention of Special Needs learners Students (n=55) f(%)</b>	<b>Rate of Retention of special needs learners Teachers (n=50) f(%)</b>	<b>Successful Completion of primary education Students (n=55) f(%)</b>	<b>Successful Completion of primary education Teachers(n=50) f(%)</b>
Low and Unsatisfactory	12(22)	3(14)	11(20)	24(48)
Moderate and Standard	24(44)	24(48)	20(44)	20(40)
High and Satisfactory	19(34)	19(38)	24(44)	6(12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>55(100)</b>	<b>50(100)</b>	<b>55(100)</b>	<b>50(100)</b>

f = frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of students and teachers who agreed with the statement. Hence, those with contrary opinion to the statement are implied.

The findings show that, both students (44%) and teachers (48%) reported that the rate of retention of LSN were moderate and standard. While majority of students agreed that the successful completion of primary education for LSN was high and satisfactory at 44% and majority of teachers argued that successful completion of primary education for SNL was low and unsatisfactory at 48%.

Retention of learners with SNL in primary schools was also obtained using attendance registers as from 2017 to 2020. Findings show that between 2019 and 2020, the retention of LSN was higher compared to between 2017 and 2019. However, the figures display a gradual decrease in the rate of completion compared to retention of LSN from 2017 to 2020. This study discovered six major causes of LSN not completing their studies these were, negative perception of parents/guardians. Other causal reasons include; insufficient fund to send SNL to school, related Health problems of LSN, cultural belief where they are considered for traditional sacrifice, absconding from studies after getting intended skills and intolerable indiscipline cases. Most of the parents are lower income earners and they had no sustainable income to support their lives. As a result, they have no time to look after their children's school progress and therefore creates a gap not only between them and their children but also between them and teachers who are supposed to advise them on academic issues. The experience shows that most children who come from the unstable economy are the victims of truancy. This is also supported by William *et al.* (2015) that poverty is one of the main reasons for school dropouts among primary and secondary school students.

However, some LSN do not complete their studies because of their age that makes them not to be comfortable to study with young learners. In this regard, a respondent had this to say:

For sure, some of LSN do not want to finish their studies because they become older than others when still studying, so they find themselves not suit to study with young ones.

Thus, they drop out of the school (Personal Interview 30<sup>th</sup>May, 2021).

Nevertheless, Bouillet and Mirosevic (2015) explained that, lack of enough teaching materials special for students with special needs and unfriendly environment/infrastructure that were found out to be limiting the access and retention of LSN. Also, Chireshe (2013), argued that access and retention to education is still very low for the SNL, this is due to cultural bias in favor of non-disabled people; lack of financial resources, perceived returns from the educational investment and the anticipated roles of disabled people in the society.

This was also reported by one respondent as follows:

I admit that we are making a great mistake by training together ordinary students and those with special needs. But all this come from the top leaders, sometimes our planners don't involve key stakeholders when developing curricula. Students with LSN need special curriculum that addresses their needs (Personal interview, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2021).

Though the experience of learners with special need will not be the same as studying in the main stream but the educational needs of people can be addressed to a large extent. The realization of the slogan of the millennium *Education for All* is not possible unless educational opportunities are provided to all, including the children with special needs. Knowing the massive number of children with special needs and limitations of the formal system, it is necessary that informal mode of education provide their support. Consequently, flexible and relevant curriculum with measurable and achievable learning outcomes without affecting the quality is necessary. Preparation of child centered learning materials should be encouraged. In a related study, Filmer (2018), reported that appropriate material for children with disabilities were not in place. In such scenario, one cannot be assured of retention of students with special needs.

## 4.2 Intervention Measures to the Challenges that Face Disabled Learners in Accessing and Participating in Primary Education

Table 2 gives the summary of the findings on the objective to determine intervening measures to the challenges that face disabled learners in accessing and participating in primary education in Arusha District

**Table 2: Intervention Measures to the Challenges Facing Learners with Special Need (LSN) in Accessing and Participating in Primary Education in Arusha District**

Statement	Teacher (n=50)	Student (n=55)	Total (n=105)
	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)
Provision of SNL materials	39(78)	40 (73)	79(75)
Training and recruiting more teachers	39(78)	40 (73)	79(75)
Need to increase capitation	39(72)	44(80)	83(79)
Clear curriculum for SNL	36(72)	39 (71)	75(71)
Instituting clear education policy	35(70)	47 (85)	82(78)
Education to the parents and community	40(80)	36 (65)	76(72)
Improvement of infrastructure	39(72)	48 (87)	87(83)
Change of parents attitudes	38(76)	50 (91)	88(84)
Strong emphasis from government	39(72)	44 (79)	83(79)

f = frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of students and teachers who agreed with the statement. Hence, those with contrary opinion to the statement are implied.

On the sub –item provision of Special Teaching Materials for LSN (Learners with Special Need) as a remedial measure to successful implementation of special education/learning, the findings in table 2 reveal that a total of 75% of respondent(teachers and students)agreed and 25% of the respondent disagreed. The researcher found that there are special teaching materials that are very necessary for successful teaching. Since inadequate teaching and learning materials was found to be one of the challenges of enhancing and retaining LSN, it came out as a measure because teaching and learning material facilitate learning for special needs learners. This measure was also found to be similar to finding by Kapinga (2014), who discovered that, appropriate materials for children with disabilities or SNLwere not in place. Nevertheless, Adeogun (2018) and Bouillet & Mirosevic (2015) observed a positive significant relationship between instructional resources and academic performance of special need students. Furthermore, according to Ade (2017), schools endowed with more materials performed better than schools that are less endowed.

Training and recruiting more Teachers with Special Education Training was identified as another intervening measure. The findings were found out as a way to enhance accessibility and retention of SNL. The findings from the tables 2 reveal that, a total of 75% of teacher and students agreed, as they also voiced their opinion in agreement of the above-mentioned measure that training and recruiting more teachers with special education knowledge would be a measure to enhance the accessibility and retention of LSN while 25% represented who disagreed. This will make the teachers’ pay more attention to this group of people. The finding is in harmony with the contention of

teacher and student ratio as considered in Msuya(2019).Having teachers trained in SNE is perhaps the most important element in the teaching-learning process of children with disabilities. The process of training SNE teachers is designed to equip them with professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they are able to address the needs of learners with special needs. The educational needs of children with disabilities are better understood by SNE trained teachers. Despite this fact, the assessment found inadequate numbers of SNE trained teachers, which clearly points to an existing lacuna in current study. For instance, Open University of Tanzania (OUT) conducts course in special and inclusive education, therefore, there is need to train more SNE teachers in university. Another private university of Sebastian Kolowa College (SEKUCo) in Lushoto district, started to offer a bachelor’s degree in various specializations within special needs education for both pre-service and in-service teachers in 2009. In 2008/2009, the University of Dodoma (UDOM) started to offer a bachelor’s degree in the same area for both pre-service and in-service teachers (Kapinga, 2014).

There is need to increase capitation for LSN. In this regard, the findings revealed that on the part of teachers and students, a total of 79% of respondent agreed and 21% of respondent disagreed. There is a need to increase capitation for the learner in order to create conducive environment for them and to make sure all are in place for their learning. There is need for more capitation grants as highlighted at various points in this report is to make resources available to public schools to help in upgrading facilities such as teaching and learning materials, furniture, textbooks, hygiene and sanitation, health

facilities, infrastructure sports equipment. The availability of and easy accessibility to such facilities enhances the quality of teaching and learning. The researcher established the amount of money allocated to each LSN through government capitation is inadequate. Their allocation is equivalent to that of nondisabled learners yet their needs are unique and surpass the needs for nondisabled learners. Therefore, increase in capitation grant allocated for LSN should be increased. Research by the Brookings Institute (2009), showed that capitation disbursements often fall short of what schools expect, which made it difficult for them to execute activities that would improve quality.

Clear curriculum for SNL, was also brought out as a measure to enhance accessibility and retention of SNL. The findings from teachers and students who constituted 71% agreed that a clear curriculum acts as a measure in enhancing the accessibility and retention on SNL to obtain quality education like other children. During the visit in schools, the researcher found that some SNL need special attention such as those with hearing impairment and autism cases who may not cope up with regular class session. Therefore, a clear curriculum specifying how they should handle or put in their own class for effective learning should be put in place. Those who had contrary opinion on clear curriculum constituted 29%. That being the case, from the findings it shows that, clear curriculum should be implemented in order to allow the necessary reforms on the SNL accessing education. Therefore, policy makers should sit together and find the way on how to improve the existing curriculum, which is based on Inclusive education. The findings are related to the study by Charema (2010) that advocated for a special curriculum designed for children with disabilities to increase accessibility and effectiveness to those with language exemption, hearing impairment, difficulty in communication and children with cerebral palsy. When these children enter regular school, they may find it difficult to learn the general curriculum. The general curriculum needs to be adapted to the different formats that the special curriculum is available to make it accessible to children with disabilities.

A study by (Kohama, 2017) showed incompatibility of the curriculum for example, content, teaching strategies, teacher preparation between the content and the learners with disabilities or at risk of developmental delay. The study recommended that, the curriculum should be made flexible enough so that each learner is challenged to do his/her best regardless of the type of setting and the centers where these programs are conducted.

On the sub item Instituting Clear Education Policy as a measure, the findings found out that 78% of respondents had similar opinion regarding the same while 22% disagreed. So, it is clear that, education policy should be carefully made and there is need to involve these groups of SNL during preparation of education policy to make it

possible for accessing and completing their school without any limitation of rooms. Charema (2010) supports the findings; however, the study argues that developing countries have not yet arrived at the point where every school in each and every developing country would have to implement special needs education. Because it will require all teachers in regular schools to be prepared to teach all children irrespective of the children's individual differences. All learning and other school activities should be accessible to all children. Curriculum materials and assessment procedures should be adapted to suit and reflect the background and experience of all learners.

Education to the Parents and Community was cited as one of the measures to enhance the accessibility and retention of SNL. A total of 72% teachers and students agreed while 28% disagreed. The type of education meant here is the special education for students with special needs. The findings of the study revealed that most parents live with these students based on their day today experience, with no special knowledge of how to handle them, especially in their education. Related Study by Mwakyeja (2018) illustrate that the government should provide enough teaching and learning resources to these inclusive schools, and to students with visual impairments in particular. Things like models, talking books, printers and photocopiers should be made available. Besides, the Government in collaboration with parents should provide devices like perking Braille, magnifying glasses, lenses to improve teaching and learning of students with visual impairments in inclusive classroom.

Connected to the findings, Chiresha (2011), Christoffel (2014) and Filmer (2018), point out that, negative attitude of parents and guardians to these SNL, results on the negative parental attitudes characterized by lack of interest by parents to assist and encourage their children with special needs (CWSN) which is pertinent to deterring access to education for children with special needs. However, the study went further and found out that the same parents are at the same time de-motivated with low expectations over their children. This was reported by parents who held that they have negative attitude towards CWSN and they are de-motivated with low expectations over their children.

Improvement of Infrastructure, especially in the school settings, would be one of the intervening measures towards enhancing retention and access of SNL whereby 83% of respondents agreed and 17% disagreed. School which enrolls students with physical disabilities should have special toilet facilities for students with disabilities built in one place that is, between the classes and the dormitories. Presence of good sanitary facilities helps children with disabilities to learn comfortably without being discriminated against by their fellow pupils after failing to access these services (Chugh, 2012).

Another related finding to this study states that The Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), further provides a comprehensive legal framework which outlaws all forms of discriminative treatment of persons with special needs and disabilities. This includes, among others, access to education and training. It provides for adaptation of infrastructural, socio-economic and environmental facilities to ensure conducive environment for persons with special needs and disabilities.

Change of parents' attitude also came up as one of the measures to enhance the access and retention of special needs learners in primary school. This is because in the study, it was found that, one of the reasons for some of the SNL not completing their primary education is because parents do not see the need for them to study. In this respect, 84% teachers and students agreed and 16% disagreed with the findings that changing parents' attitude will work out as a measure to enhance access and retention of SNL. It is vivid from the result that for any intervention for the young learners, one might want to consider changing the attitude of parents first.

From the interviews that were conducted with the heads of schools, who were considered as key informants, their reaction was also similar to the above quantitative findings. Most of them supported the idea that changing parents' attitude is a way forward to solving challenges facing students with special needs or special need learners (SNL). In this regard, one of the heads of school put forward the following views:

*Putting the intervention of the government aside, we also have to look on the parents. The parent's attitude is not that much pleasing, therefore, if we have to start solving the challenges of these kids, I think we should start by changing the parent's attitudes, because some parents do not value the existence of their disabled children. Some think it's a curse, some think its an abomination for such kids to be born in the family. Some think if they are left to flourish the lineage will continue because they believe it is something hereditary (Personal Interview 31<sup>th</sup>May, 2021).*

According to the respondent, community involvement in public school will increase community (especially parents') awareness, which in turn will promote higher and better performance, which will ultimately lead to improved achievement. This could be done by decentralizing educational responsibility to communities, providing better information to community members and sensitizing them about the importance of education and or training them to teach children (Christoffel, 2014).

Moreover, study conducted by Benerjeetal (2018), Guerrero (2017), and Warren (2019), on Changing parents' attitude and the attitude of the society at large, strongly argued that attitude is everything to getting things done. Yes, policies are important, but attitude may equally

share the same strength when it comes to getting things done, hence it is measure to the education of CWSN.

The findings revealed that 79% of the respondents agreed there is need for strong Emphasis from the Government regarding accessibility and retention of SNL while 21% disagreed. However, the findings of the study indicates that the government is not doing enough as far as emphasizing education for students with special needs is concerned. Nonetheless, it is not significant enough to dismiss the effort put in place by the government. For the efforts aimed at enhancing the access and retention of SNL, the emphasis from the government should be vividly noticed. The reaction of the key informants regarding the emphasis from the government was almost similar to the above statistical information. Almost all of the heads of school were in agreement that the government is not doing enough as far as special education is concerned. Therefore, as a remedy, it should start from the government. While commenting on the same the issue of centralization and decentralization was brought into perspective. One of them remarked that:

*If we are to start from somewhere, I think we should start from the government. The government should give us the light to go ahead. You see sometimes in past, decentralization was much stronger than nowadays. These days we have to first listen to our "big bosses", this includes even the issues of finance. But sometimes in past, we could organize out strategies (Personal Interview 31<sup>th</sup>May, 2021).*

From the above argument, one can realize that what is being said is that, through the new program of free education, it looks like the heads of schools are frustrated; hence they have to depend on most of the directives from above. That is why they argue that if there is anything to be newly initiated, it must start from the government. The study by Mary (2008) holds that in most cases the laws and policies are made without taking into consideration the training capacities of the teachers, suitable physical school environment in terms of infrastructures for accessibility, the large classroom sizes in relation to the student/teacher ratio and most importantly instructional materials and resources.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study concluded that, access and retention is gear for learners with SNL to get education in primary schools. The results of this study show that there is low rates of access and retention of learners with SNL in Arusha district. Thus, successful completion of studies for most students with special needs among the selected schools studied is not promising. But looking at the reasons why there is no successful completion; the following are

notable reasons; parents not seeing the need for their children to study, some parents sacrificed their children, especially the children with albinism, economic problems of the parents and health associated problems of the children. All these reasons sound as clear setbacks to access and retention of students with special needs.

Despite the challenges regarding to parents, SNL prevailed with the following challenges when at school; lack of enough teaching materials, lack of enough special education teachers, the problem of inclusive curriculum and lack friendly environment, limited capitation grants.

Therefore, a better solution to success completion of SNL in primary school is to make parents and teachers as the core implementers as they have a great role to play in children's schooling. They act as partners and their role cannot be overemphasized even though schools have traditionally kept them at arm's length.

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## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations for action were developed:

- i. The study recommends the government to provide sufficient funds to schools with LSNSo that the schools can run their activities smoothly;
- ii. Enough teachers should be recruited to match the increasing number of SNL and also to have more specialized teachers who are able to deal and properly teach students with special needs.
- iii. Sensitization of parents on importance of education for SNL should be emphasized in the society;
- iv. Good learning environment such as enhancement of infrastructures and provision of good learning equipment should be considered for students with special needs.

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