

# **Parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities in inclusive primary schools in Tanzania**

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This study investigated Parental Involvement (PI) in the education of children with disabilities in inclusive primary schools in Tanzania. It used Mbeya Region as a case study to represent other regions in Tanzania. Specifically, the study identified the activities that parents of CwDs are involved in the education of CwDs. It also explored the ways in which schools use to involve parents of CwDs in the education of those children. The study was further set to identify the challenges facing PI in the education of CwDs. The study was guided by the conceptual framework adopted from Epstein (2002). Qualitative approach was used where the case study method was deployed in order to achieve the purpose of the study. The target populations were parents, CwDs, teachers, heads of schools, members of school committees and Child Support Tanzania (CST) project coordinators. Purposive sampling, random purposive sampling and criterion sampling were used to obtain 67 participants. Semi structured interview, focus group discussion, non-participant observation and documentary review were used to collect data. Data were analysed qualitatively by employing thematic analysis. The study found that parents were involved in the area of identification and understanding of CwDs, CwDs' learning at home decision making, enrolment of CwDs' academic development. Actually, the revealed activities in which parents are involved were useful but not much operative. The effectiveness of involvement in those activities was inadequate in some schools. This happened because of some schools' failure to create a welcoming environment that enables parents to get involved in the whole process of educating CwDs. Identification and understanding of CwDs, CwDs' learning at home, enrolment of CwDs and CwDs' school performance gained much parents of CwDs' involvement because they were directly connected to CwDs. Also, the findings disclosed that teachers' home visit, parents' voices, PSGs, seminars and special events, as well as local government were the ways used to involve parents of CwDs in the education of CwDs. The ways used were suitable PSGs, teachers' home visit, and parents' voices actively attracted the

involvement of parents. However, seminars were uncommon and not adequate. Also, the use of local government was not actively responded by many parents in almost all the sampled schools. The study revealed disappointment of parents due to CwDs, low progress, community stigma about disabilities, burden of care needed by CwDs, reluctance of parents regarding having CwDs and lack of adequate resources to accommodate CwDs as among the challenges facing PI in the education of CwDs in inclusive primary schools. Most of the challenges found in this study were rooted from IE stakeholders who are CwDs, teachers, parents and community. The study concluded that, due to activities and ways used to involve parents of CwDs in the education of CwDs, parental involvement in the education of CwDs is practiced in inclusive primary schools though the practices are not much effective due to the challenges identified. The study recommended that, parents should be cooperative to teachers and schools should create a welcoming environment for parents to be involved in the education of CwDs. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology should authorize a compulsory representation of parents of CwDs in committees of inclusive schools in order to activate parents' voices in inclusive schools committees.