

Tanzanian teacher's constructions and perceptions of 'inclusive education' for girls and girls with disabilities.

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

The context for the proposed research is the development of inclusive education in Tanzania and an intended contribution to the analysis of how successful the development of inclusive education in the country has been. More specifically the proposed research will focus on the inclusions of girls and girls with disabilities in the Tanzanian education system as these two demographics have been shown to be most at most risk of exclusion (Lewin, 2009; Lewin and Little, 2011).

Current analysis in the research literature has predominantly relied on a quantitative methodology (Lehtomäki, Tuomi, Matonya, 2014). This has demonstrated some successes, with regard to the development of inclusion in the public school system. For example, the 2002 Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) set enrolment expansion as a target priority aiming for *all* children, regardless of gender or special educational need, to be enrolled in primary education by 2005. Statistical analysis has shown that there has been an overall gross and net enrolment rate for both girls and boys, with a gender parity of 1:1, indicating that inclusive targets have been met (Carr-Hill and Ndalichako, 2005; URT, 2011).

Despite such positive findings, in order to further and deepen the analysis and understanding of inclusive education in Tanzania, it has been put forth that a qualitative methodology "is recommended to complement, confirm and contradict statistics" (Okkolin, Lehtomäki, Bhalalusea, 2010, pg. 69)

RESEARCH FOCUS

The proposed research aims to expand on the current state of knowledge, and the gaps within it, by employing a qualitative research methodology to elicit the views and experiences of educational professionals engaged in inclusive education practices in Tanzanian schools.

Current qualitative research has focused on disability and education in the local socio-cultural context; social constructions of disability, attitudes towards the disabled and understandings of models of disability have all been explored (Devlieger, 1999; Kisanji, 1995; Stone-MacDonald, 2012). However, although the views of girls have been explored there has been little analysis of the views of teachers with regard to the inclusive schooling of girls and girls with disability. The role of teachers in mediating successful inclusion being as pertinent as it is, arguably the perceptions and constructions of this demographic should be better understood. Thus the research will explore the perceptions and constructions held by teachers with regards to the inclusion of girls and girls with disabilities.

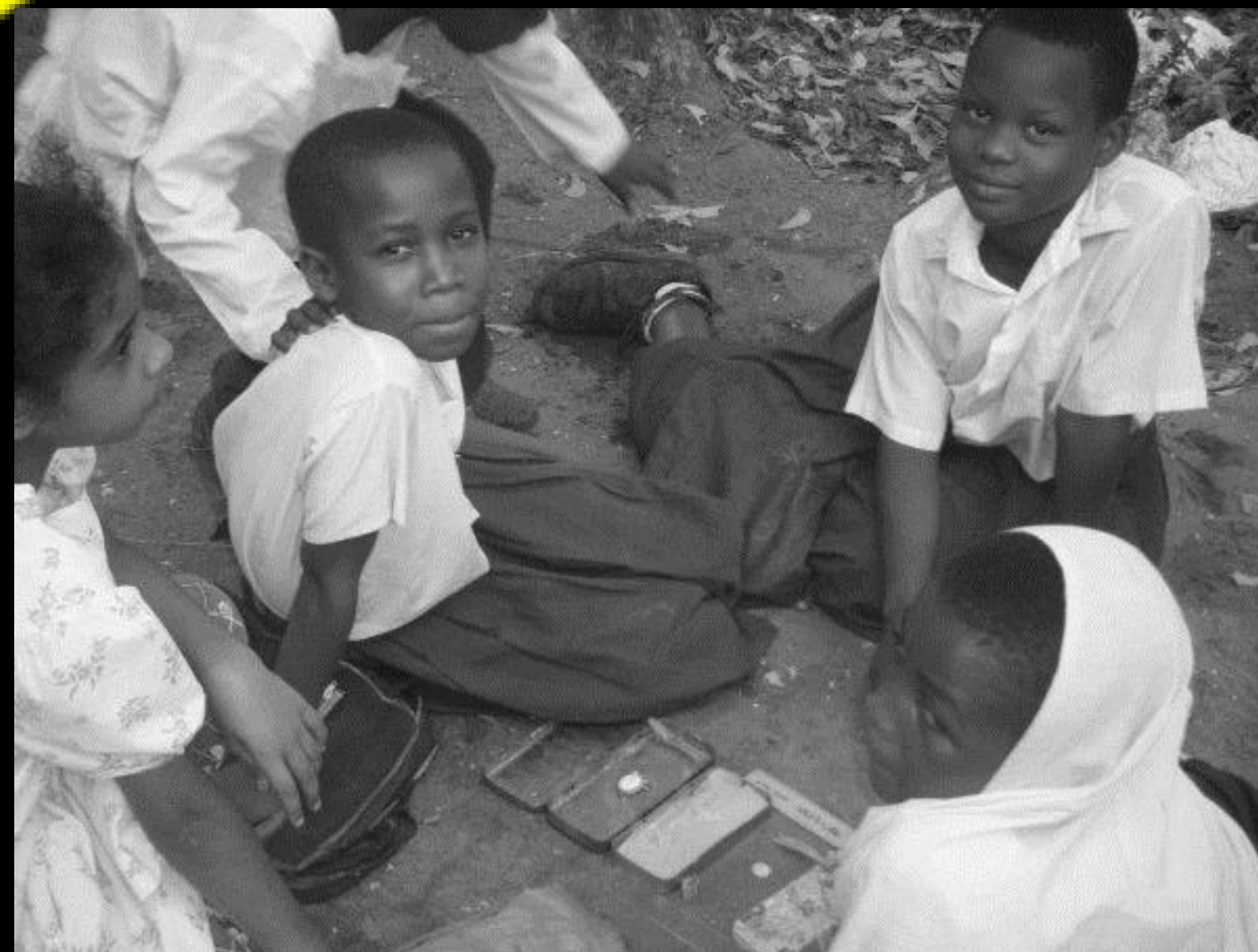
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the perceptions and constructions of 'inclusion', and especially the 'inclusion' of girls and girls with disabilities, held by a sample of teacher's in selected case examples of Tanzanian schools?

The main question is then broken down into the following categories:

How do these perceptions and constructs potentially mediate the success of inclusive educational practices towards girls and girls with disabilities?

How do these perceptions and constructs potentially act as barriers to the success of inclusive educational practices towards girls and girls with disabilities?



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RESEARCH METHODS

DATA COLLECTION

To engage dialogue for the analysis of teacher's perceptions and constructions of inclusion focus groups with teachers from participating schools will be run. During the focus groups Photo elicitation will be employed as an action research method for engaging collaborative discussions. Prior to the commencement of the focus group, subjects will be given cameras and asked to take photos (with the digital cameras provided) which have significance for them with regards to the theme of inclusion, girls and girls with disabilities. These photos will then be presented during the focus group (on I pads).

Photo elicitation, used in this way, provides a means for people on the ground to stimulate discussion without being led in a particular direction by the preconceived notions of the researcher. In addition, photos can elicit experiences and emotions that might not have arisen if the photo had not been used (Gold, 2004; Twine, 2006).

SAMPLE

Focus group size will be kept to a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 participants as it is felt that these sizes will aid ease and focus of discussion with any less or any more being a hindrance. 1 Primary school and 1 Secondary school have been recruited.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data will be analysed using a discourse analysis methodology. Discourse analysis is an interpretivist method rooted in social construction theory. It seeks to investigate how people use language to construct meaning and make sense of phenomena.

SUMMARY

- Girls and girls with disabilities are considered the most at risk of exclusion.
- The research aims to expand current knowledge about the inclusion of girls and girls with disability by utilising a qualitative approach to research.
- Teachers in two focus schools will be interviewed using focus groups and photo elicitation.