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Fostering Inclusive Practices: The Relationship between In-service Teachers' Self-efficacy and Beliefs about Inclusive Practices

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Abstract

Teachers' self-efficacy is a crucial element in fostering inclusive practices in school and classroom settings. Teachers' confidence about their ability and motivation to promote inclusive teaching practices in their classrooms is influenced by this important variable. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their beliefs about inclusive practices in Tanzania's primary schools. This study involved 254 in-service primary school teachers from 18 schools in Dodoma and Mwanza. This study employed a correlational study design. Findings indicate that levels of teacher self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusive practices exhibit a positive, but weak relationship. It was found that teachers' levels of self-efficacy are related to their beliefs about the effectiveness of inclusive education in teaching pupils with disabilities in general classrooms as compared with those who do not utilize inclusive education. In light of the findings of this study, it is suggested that measures be taken to improve teachers' personal variables in order to improve their competence and confidence in using inclusive instruction, building pupils' engagement, and managing classrooms in schools.

Keywords: Inclusive education, inclusive practices, pupils with disabilities, teacher self-efficacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education provision for pupils with disabilities (PWD) or special educational needs in Tanzania, like in many countries around the world is inclusive. This is a cardinal principle of inclusive education (IE) that requires all pupils to be placed in general classrooms and taught there regardless of their abilities and characteristics (Chao et al., 2016). As a philosophy and educational practice, IE aims to ensure equal

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opportunities for all pupils in school and classroom settings (Woodcock & Jones, 2020). Inclusion is based on a set of fundamental principles, such as social justice, equality, and education systems' responsiveness to addressing diversity. Inclusive practices are one of the components envisioned to eliminate structural and systemic barriers that inhibit learner participation in learning (Jordan, 2018; Nilholm, 2021). In the current study, inclusive practice is defined as teaching and support that recognises pupils' abilities, differences, and characteristics. This allows them to learn in regular classrooms. This is consistent with the Salamanca Statement on the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the Dakar World Education Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 2000), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006), which seek to address people with disabilities' educational rights and recognise individual differences and abilities (Woodcock & Jones, 2020). These global initiatives spearheaded changes in educational policies, the legal framework, classroom practices, and school culture (Nilholm, 2021) that seek to promote inclusive practices. However, hurdles to successful IE still persist across the world because of socio-economic and political differences (Chao et al., 2016; Nilholm, 2021).

Some of these hurdles include cultural norms, attitudes towards PWD, and variations in meanings and perspectives about inclusion (Ainscow, 2020; Krischler et al., 2019). Given that disability is usually socially and culturally constructed, these factors affect individuals' behaviour, knowledge and limited attitudes towards PWD (Kisanga & Richard, 2018). Consequently, cultural beliefs and perceptions about disability can determine family, community and government decisions about disabilities and PWD inclusion in the general education system (Stone-MacDonald, 2012). For example, parents' attitudes toward disability can determine a child's access to school or not, as they perceive their children cannot succeed, take care of themselves, or socialise with peers at school. This may affect educational planning and decision-making in the provision of appropriate special services for PWD. It also affects placement, early identification, pedagogical exclusion, and social relationships at school or in the classroom.

Similarly, the cultural shift towards understanding IE is believed to support and cultivate the culture of recognition of individual differences (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2014). Hence, the success of IE is viewed from the viewpoint of diversity not standardisation. In the same vein, variations in understanding and implementation of IE without structural and systemic changes in practices will lead to more exclusionary practices (Sharma, 2015), because PWD will not be able to participate in learning. This supports what Krischler et al. (2019) attest that teachers who understand IE well reported more positive attitudes and felt prepared to implement inclusive practices. Thus, the context of IE, policy frameworks, teaching strategies and social relationships in schools are socially-constructed and institutionalised leading to either inclusion or exclusion of pupils in general settings (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021).

Studies have shown that IE is more than the physical placement of pupils with disabilities (PWD) or special needs in general education classrooms (Nilholm, 2021), but rather a modification of classrooms and promotion of teacher-related factors that could make IE a reality (see Bulat et al., 2017). In fact, PWD are most at risk of marginalisation, stigmatisation, exclusion, and underachievement if they are not integrated as part of a diverse learning community in schools (Bulat et al., 2017). Teachers have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the IE principles and practices in terms of their teaching disposition and skills practices (Savolainen et al., 2020). One of the teacher factors is their attitude toward IE and PWD. Previous studies have established the predictive impact of teacher attitudes toward inclusion and PWD on their inclusive classroom practices (see Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Yada & Savolainen, 2017; You et al., 2019). These studies found that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and PWD influence their willingness to implement inclusion and use inclusive practices.

Similarly, studies have established that teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion improve their willingness to attend and support PWD in general education classrooms (Kuyini, Desai & Sharma, 2020; Krischler et al., 2019; Tungaraza, 2015). Moreover, literature has also found a relationship between teachers' attitudes about IE and their experiences in handling pupils with special needs (Jordan, 2018; Kisanga & Richard, 2018; Hofman & Kilimo, 2014). Thus, IE can be achieved if teachers are prepared to positively accept and support PWD in inclusive classrooms (Sanger, 2020). This requires teachers with a positive attitude to prepare a psychosocial and physical environment that would allow them to feel part of

the general learning community (Kisanga & Richard, 2018; Banks, 2014). In addition, teachers must modify their teaching methods, cultures and attitudes to respond to PWD and special needs in the classroom. For example, the use of differentiated or individualised instruction to allow learners task completion, and creating an accessible and accommodating emotional and psychological classroom environment (Banks, 2014).

According to Hillier (2011) in the context of an inclusive classroom, four cardinal principles of differentiated instruction must be considered. These include the teacher's manipulation of the complexity of learning activities, changing expectations of learners, linking assessment and instruction, and collaboration between the teacher and the learners. All these seek to ensure that PWD benefit from differentiated instruction and additional services in the adapted classroom to fit varied learners with differing abilities, learning styles and interests (Decristan et al., 2017; Dillon, 2020). Moreover, teachers are required to respond to pupils' individual needs because of the heterogeneity of the classroom. Teachers, as key actors in inclusive practices, are expected to enable pupils with diverse needs and characteristics to participate, collaborate, interact, and learn together. In the context of inclusive education, teachers are agents of change in and outside classrooms (Bandura, 1997), facilitating and managing classroom learning environments. In this regard, teachers are required to adopt inclusive teaching practices in order to meet the needs of all students (Azorin & Ainscow, 2020). The reality, however, is that what is expected of teachers to foster inclusive practices is not what is taking place in schools to some extent. While teachers are taught and oriented about the importance of value differences and pedagogical strategies in responding to diversity in the classroom, if they lack positive attitudes and the will power to do so, it is unlikely they will be able to implement them. Possibly, because they possess low self-efficacy and beliefs about the inclusion of learners with disabilities in general settings (Sharma, & Jacobs, 2016). In fact, teachers with negative attitudes and low self-efficacy are likely to be frustrated and lack the confidence to foster inclusive practices (Subban, Round, & Sharma, 2021). Hence, it is essential that teachers have sufficient self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusivity in order to successfully implement inclusive teaching practices (Saloviita, 2020).

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was adopted as framework for analysing the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and inclusive practices. The theory focuses on the centrality of a human's cognitive and affective factors in motivating and predicting behaviour. Bandura (1977) posits that human behaviour is the result of the triadic reciprocal interplay of personal factors (self-efficacy) and behaviour (teaching behaviours) as well as the classroom environment. Teachers' effectiveness in inclusive practice is influenced by variations in context and personal beliefs as described in the theory. The Social Cognitive Theory explains how human agency influences human behaviour. Impliedly, efficacy beliefs are one of the core human agencies that determine one's intentions, choices, and efforts toward a task's performance (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 1977). The theory guided the research on how teachers as agents of change can intentionally act on and foster inclusive practices in the classroom with PWD.

Bandura defined self-efficacy (SE) as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Self-efficacy is the main regulator of human behavioural change and choices. It regulates individuals' efforts to perform a particular behaviour as well as their effective reactions to environmental factors. For example, during adversity, the efficacious spirit can direct an individual's tenacity to succeed (Bandura, 1997). Teachers' beliefs and actions are embedded in the complex and ever-changing context of classrooms and schools once developed (Fives & Buehl, 2016). This implies that SE beliefs are "context-specific, resilient, and resistant to change" (Woodcock & Jones, 2020). SE is a motivational construct derived from Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977). It is an explicitly self-perception and self-referential construct directed toward perceived competence for specific tasks. From this point-of-view, a teacher's own beliefs can create disharmony to facilitate or deter their attitudes towards inclusive practices.

It has been identified that teacher self-efficacy (TSE) is an important motivational factor for implementing IE in schools around the world (Bandura, 1997). TSE also determines pupils' learning and teacher competence (Krischler et al., 2019). TSE influences teachers' observable actions, decisions, and classroom success (Sharma & Sokal, 2016). For instance, teachers with a high sense of SE are more likely to be effective and competent in adjusting and differentiating pedagogical strategies (Kisanga & Richard,

2018; Sarfo et al., 2015; Woodcock & Jones, 2020) than their counterparts with low SE. This is particularly true when the classroom environment is too demanding, overwhelming, and stressful (Özokcu, 2018; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Consequently, fostering inclusive practices that recognise pupils' individual needs and abilities is one of the key pedagogical challenges faced by schools around the world. This multifaceted educational practice is influenced in part or entirely by a country's political, social, and economic environments; school- and pupil-related factors; and teachers' personal and demographic factors.

From theoretical and empirical evidence, there is a relationship between TSE, inclusion, and various educational innovations, reforms, and practices (Sharma & George, 2016; Savolainen et al., 2020). These beliefs do impact teachers' perceptions of inclusion and effectiveness in modifying instruction and the environment to accommodate learners' learning needs. Chao et al. (2016) found that teachers who reported a high sense of efficacy were confident in teaching PWD in general classrooms. In particular, teachers with a high sense of efficacy are reported to be hardworking, well-motivated, and engage pupils in learning, despite their differences and difficulties (Sarfo et al., 2015). Furthermore, teachers with high efficacy are more effective at teaching all pupils and creating classroom environments with successful learning styles than those with low SE (Jordan, 2018; Woodcock & Jones, 2020).

Furthermore, researchers have reported that high TSE teachers motivate pupils, create a learning atmosphere, are open and exchange ideas with pupils, accept mistakes, encourage and support pupils (Banks, 2014; Sarfo et al., 2015), take responsibility, are flexible, and believe PWD can overcome learning barriers (Jordan, 2018); and when they are engaged with them, they are not easily irritated by their pupils' problem behaviours. On the other hand, teachers with high SE are reported to be effective in creating a good learning environment that engages their students in understanding clear routines and structures (Banks, 2014; Bulat et al., 2017). Additionally, they have positive relationships with at-risk pupils as a means of promoting positive behavioral changes in order to meet the diverse learning and social needs of students (Krischler et al., 2019).

Inclusive practices must be hypothesised along with teachers' personal efficacy that impacts their resilience, commitment, and confidence in professional practices in various contexts. Teachers have struggled with personal issues (for example, beliefs) about their adequacy to teach PWD in inclusive settings all along. Therefore, IE must be understood through the prism of what teachers do and believe about all pupils' abilities, needs, and characteristics, regardless of the inherent difficulties and environment in which they work.

Inclusive Education in the Tanzanian Context

Significant milestones in the promotion of IE have been witnessed in Tanzania's adoption of the Salamanca Statement on Special Education (UNESCO, 1994) and the endorsement and signing of the UNCRPD on November 10th 2009 (United Nations, 2009). The Persons with Disabilities Act No. was also passed in 2010. In order to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities to access education in inclusive settings at all levels of education, the first and second National Inclusive Education Strategies were enacted, 2009–2017 and 2018–2021, respectively (MOEST, 2017). As part of the new National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2018–2021), equity in education and learning opportunities will be improved for all, including vulnerable groups such as adolescents and youth, by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to transform the nation. The aforementioned initiatives are positive signs of progress towards the commitment to international principles of IE, especially in the area of accessibility and rights to education.

Accordingly, the framework for IE that embraces diversity and the education of people with disabilities and special needs has evolved over the years in Tanzania. Segregated special schools, integration, and IE are all geared toward educating learners with disabilities and special needs (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; Possi & Milinga, 2017). On the contrary, there are still schools dedicated to serving pupils with severe disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, visual impairment, and autism, because they require specific pedagogies, facilities, and services (Kisanga & Richard, 2018).

Currently, the inclusion of PWD in regular schools in the Tanzanian context is guided by two major approaches, as indicated by Possi and Milinga (2017). Under the first inclusion approach, PWD can attend inclusive schools. In these schools, they are assigned to separate classrooms, units, or facilities known as

"*vitengo*" in Kiswahili, meaning *specific units* in general schools. These are integrated classrooms set up in general schools to serve learners with special needs or disabilities. This approach seeks to minimise the shortcomings inherent in the special education system while also expanding accessibility and reducing special schools' running costs. Further, it allows PWD to attend nearby regular schools, participate in learning in special classrooms or services, and interact socially with non-disabled peers (Possi & Milinga, 2017b). Pupils with special needs are categorised, with additional support provided where necessary. Special classrooms (*Vitengo*) within regular schools are considered separate with their own special teachers. Qu (2015) contends that some pupils, such as those with severe learning disabilities, require special school provision with appropriate pedagogical expertise, resources, and a flexible curriculum.

In the second approach to inclusion, the Tanzanian government embraces *inclusive education* to cater for the challenges inherent in both special schools and integration approaches. Consequently, IE is positioned as being among the strategies to address learners' diversity in the country by placing and teaching PWD in general classrooms. Additionally, the government has emphasized the need to modify the general classrooms to cater for diverse learners' needs with additional support and services from specialists (Dillon, 2020). One of the strategies to achieve this is through involving specialists, schools and families in the early identification, assessment and support of learners with special needs (MOEST, 2017). The government is also developing special education staff to improve their pedagogical skills. In addition, it is promoting the use of sign language and Braille.

Over the period from 2013 to 2020, data show that the number of inclusive primary schools has increased from 377 to 776, with 21 self-contained primary schools (MOEVT, 2013; PO-RALG, 2020). This is evidenced by a 34% increase in PWD enrollment in primary schools over the same period, from 31,488 to 55,758 pupils (PO-RALG, 2020). The steady increase shows that while the enrolment of pupils is increasing in schools nationwide, inclusive practices remain a challenging task, especially for teachers. Ideally, all approaches to inclusion are difficult to achieve at their fullest level in different countries due to a myriad of factors such as physical and financial resources as well as teacher factors (beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and culture). As a result of these internal teacher factors, inclusive education is promoted, as they are moderated by an interaction of other teacher demographic factors like experience, training and age (You et al., 2019), which a country needs to address to bring positive change towards inclusion, decision-making, willingness and pedagogical competence. Since the pilot project study titled "Special Needs in the Classrooms," sponsored by UNESCO (Westbrook & Croft, 2015), launched in 1998, Tanzania has witnessed a robust move towards addressing the learning needs of PWD with a range of support and opportunities in general schools (Possi & Milinga, 2017; Tungaraza, 2015).

Despite the fact that the government has made concerted efforts to offer schooling options for persons with disabilities and special needs there are still some gaps that still require additional improvement to facilitate successful inclusive practices. This is due to the fact that the pace and conditions for fully inclusive practices for PWD in general classrooms have not yet been effectively achieved in the country. Exclusion of people with disabilities continues in the form of special schools and classrooms, as well as pedagogical practices (Kisanga & Richard, 2018; Tungaraza, 2015). Even if there is inclusion in general classrooms, little has been done in classroom settings (Opini & Onditi, 2016; Possi & Milinga, 2017). With these structural frailties, the extent to which inclusive practices are actualised and realised is subject to school, classroom, and teacher factors. In this regard, teachers' role in the implementation of inclusive practices is crucial (Chao et al., 2016).

Tacitly, little effort has been made to modify inclusive classrooms to accommodate PWD and their needs (Opini & Onditi, 2016; Tungaraza, 2015) apart from the contextual challenges experienced in inclusive primary schools in Tanzania. As established in these studies, teachers may negatively feel pressured or unprepared because of the perceived additional roles of handling PWD and adapting and modifying instruction, pupil engagement, and classroom management in inclusive classrooms (Francisco, Hartman & Wang, 2020). This is among the hurdles to IE in Tanzania. This means that PWD exclusion still exists in inclusive schools and classrooms. Moreover, little has been done in classroom settings in terms of teaching and learning materials, attitudinal and pedagogical challenges, and curricular challenges (Kisanga & Richard, 2018; Opini & Onditi, 2016). With these structural frailties, the extent to which inclusive

practices are actualised and realised is subject to school, classroom, and teacher factors. In this regard, teachers' role in the implementation of inclusive practices is crucial (Chao et al., 2016; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

Teachers' pedagogical practices in the inclusive classroom tend to increase with the inclusion of PWD and learners with special needs (Jordan, 2018; Westbrook & Croft, 2015). This presents two problems. One, due to the fact that the majority of teachers in inclusive schools were educated in the general education system, their methods of instruction are based on traditional instructional practices or classrooms. Secondly, in-service teachers still doubt their effectiveness in inclusive classrooms, just as they doubt their own personal and teaching efficacy (see Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Tugaraza, 2015).

Previous research has found that TSE, teaching environments, teachers' commitment to inclusion principles, and readiness to implement inclusive practices all have a significant impact and influence on their attitudes and beliefs about teaching PWD and special needs in inclusive settings (Sharma, & Jacobs, 2016; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). According to Yada and Savolainen (2017) Japanese in-service teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion as they can likely manage pupils' behaviour and collaborate in implementing inclusive practices. Other studies have been conducted to investigate the structural barriers to full acceptance and implementation of inclusion principles and inclusive practices (Jordan, 2018; Sharma & Sokal, 2016).

According to According to Van Steen and Wilson's (2020) meta-analysis has revealed that teachers may have positive attitudes toward inclusion but may not necessarily agree with the principles of inclusion and its teaching practices because of teacher demographic-related variables (e.g., education, training) and learner-related variables (e.g., the nature and severity of disabilities), and school and classroom factors (e.g., infrastructure, support services and facilities). Similarly, Sharma et al. (2016) posit that the necessity of inclusive policies is not sufficient to realise full inclusion. They suggested that community, cultural, and family support and ownership of inclusive principles, along with policy and legislative frameworks, provide a decisive precedent for the realisation of full inclusion worldwide. This means inclusive attitudes are realised through the provision of resources that allow both the teacher and pupils to foster learning processes both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, Sharma and Sokal (2016) contend that teachers with fewer concerns and more positive attitudes are more likely to have highly inclusive practices. On the other hand, studies on teacher attitudes toward inclusive practices have widely attracted international researchers (for example, Ghana; Kuyini et al., 2020; Turkey; Özokcu, 2018; Hong Kong; Chao et al., 2016; Finland; Savolainen et al., 2020; and Tanzania; Tugaraza, 2015), which have also come up with some conflicting results because of cultural variations. For example, Savolainen et al., (2020) showed that an increase in teacher efficacy for inclusive practices is likely to change due to differences in attitudes toward inclusion. It is also notable that levels of teachers' attitudes and SE have been found to be significant predictors of teachers' inclusive practices (Kuyini et al., 2020; You et al., 2019).

Similarly, Özokcu (2018) found that teachers in Turkey held positive attitudes and SE, which primarily impacted their inclusive practices. Additionally, past research has usually concentrated on attitudes towards inclusion based on specific categories of pupils' needs, such as disabilities. For example, Chao et al. (2016) identified nine categories of teacher interactions with PWD centred on learning, intellectual, and physical disabilities. Noteworthy is that the researchers' findings on the spectrum of disabilities mask measures of attitudes toward inclusive practices among specific categories of students rather than inclusion of all students regardless of disability type (Woodcock & Jones, 2020).

Within the aforesaid attention of previous studies, impediments to inclusion for specific pupils with disabilities have also been associated with teacher demographic variables such as professional development and training necessary for accommodating diverse needs (You et al., 2019). However, previous studies that focused on pupils' differences, or rather their deficits (Chao et al., 2016), failed to capture fully the concept of inclusion. As a result, the current study sought to broaden the horizons of fostering inclusive practices with all pupils included, regardless of differences. Consequently, the effective implementation of inclusive practices has to be fostered for the sake of making all pupils participate fully in learning. It is also pertinent to note that teachers' beliefs towards inclusive practices are flexible and can change depending on the teaching environment (cf. inclusive classrooms) and other teacher variables. Due to people's experience

and belief that effective inclusive practice is a complex, dynamic, and mutually reinforcing relationship between teacher personal factors and teaching performance (Bandura, 1986; 1997), the current study sought to investigate the relationship between levels of TSE and beliefs about inclusive practices. This study was guided by two research questions, namely: Are there any differences in the impact of teacher self-efficacy on their beliefs about inclusive practice? What is the relationship between levels of teacher self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusive practices?

2. METHODS

This quantitative study adopted a correlational survey design to investigate the relationship between TSE and their beliefs about inclusive practices. The purpose was to discover relationships between teacher self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusive practices, not to manipulate these variables. The design is ideal for collecting and quantifying data from a large sample of in-service teachers about their beliefs in their natural settings (inclusive schools).

Participants in this study included 254 primary school teachers teaching in 18 out of 31 inclusive primary schools in the Dodoma and Mwanza administrative regions of Tanzania. These 18 primary schools were purposely selected out of 31 inclusive schools. However, participants from 18 primary schools were randomly selected from 746 teachers teaching in 31 inclusive primary schools in these regions (PO-RALG, 2017). Of the 254 participants, 69.3% (n=176) were female teachers and 30.7% (n=78) were male teachers, reflecting the unequal distribution of male and female teachers in Tanzanian schools (PO-RALG, 2017). Moreover, of the 254 participants, the mean age was 38.92 years, ranging from 25 to 58 years old. Regarding the educational level, 172 (67.7%) in-service teachers in this study had a certificate in teacher education; 48 (18.9%) had a diploma, while 29 (11.4%) and 5 (5%) held bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively. On the basis of teaching experience, of the 254 in-service teachers in this study, 37 (14.6%) had been teaching in primary schools for less than 5 years; 62 (24.4%) had been teaching for 6–10 years; 74 (29.1%) had been teaching for 11–15 years; 32 (12.6%) had been teaching for 16–20 years; and 49 (19.3%) had been teaching for over 20 years. Moreover, of the 254 teachers in this study, 103 (40.6%) had attended professional training in special needs education, compared to 151 (59.4%) participants who had not attended professional training. Similarly, regarding participants' experience in teaching PWD, 239 (94.1%) participants had experience in teaching PWD ranging from 1 to 20 years, with only 15 (5.9 %) indicating that they had never had such experience.

This study adapted the Teacher's Sense of Self-Efficacy (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIPS) (Park et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2012). TSES was used to measure teachers' perceived efficacy in inclusive practices. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) constructed and validated the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) to measure teaching tasks in various classroom contexts. The scale contained three domains of teacher efficacy, with items representing teacher efficacy for IS, teacher efficacy for CM, and teacher efficacy for PE. For instance, efficacy for instructional practices measures teachers' ability to identify, adjust, and implement differentiated teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners' needs in the classroom; responding to pupils' challenges; and teachers' use of differentiated assessment strategies (Woodcock & Jones, 2020). Additionally, classroom management efficacy measures how teachers manage behaviours, sitting arrangements, routines, and pupil-pupil and teacher interaction in the classroom. Teachers' ability to motivate and support pupils' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional aspects is called teacher efficacy in pupil engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk & Hoy, 2001). From these domains, TSE has been conceived as a multi-dimensional construct that depends on teachers' skills, knowledge, teaching context, and environment (Sharma & George, 2016).

The Likert-scale for measuring TSE included 9-points ranging from 1 (nothing) to 9 (a great deal), which represents the degree of the TSES continuum. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they believe in and evaluate their abilities to accomplish each item on the scale. One example of a question was, "How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual pupils?" This means

that the higher the TSES score, the more effective the teachers were. The TSES has three factorised sub-scales obtained through principal component extraction and varimax rotation analysis. These sub-scales include questions on TSE in instructional strategies (IS), for example, "How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?"), pupil engagement (PE) (for example, "How much can you do to motivate pupils who show low interest in schoolwork?"); and classroom management (CM) ("How much can you do to calm a pupil who is disruptive or noisy?"). The current study's internal reliability analyses were within an acceptable range ($>.7$) as follows: overall TSE score ($\alpha=.94$), IS ($\alpha=.79$), PE ($\alpha=.77$), and CM ($\alpha=.77$). These Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores are consistent with previous studies (see Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001; Özokcu, 2018; Woodcock & Jones, 2020).

Another instrument adopted in this study was the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Scale (TEIPS): This scale was developed by Sharma, Loreman and Forlin (2012) and further validated and modified by Park, Dimitrov, Das and Gichuru (2016) to measure teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices. The 18-item TEIP scale was previously categorised into three sub-scales in previous studies (Park et al., 2016; Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). These include: "*Efficacy to use inclusive instructions*," "*Efficacy in managing behaviour*," and "*Efficacy in collaboration*." The TEIP scale involved 6-Likert-point items ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." In the current study, participants responded using a 5-Likert Likert scale ranging from "very often" (1) to "almost never" (5) and reduced from 6 to have a neutral point. For example, "I am always engaging pupils in active discussion about issues related to real-world applications." Factor analysis using principal component extraction and varimax rotation factorised the modified 23-item TEIPS, resulting in three sub-scales: "Efficacy to use inclusive instructional strategies," "Efficacy in classroom management," and "Efficacy in pupil engagement." The sub-scale "*efficacy in collaboration*" items were replaced with "*efficacy in pupil engagement*" (see Sarfo et al., 2015) because teachers' collaboration with pupils, staff, and parents in various domains of pupils' learning seems to be similar to pupil engagement, motivation, and support. The TEIPS in the current study had acceptable reliability (0.86). This corroborates previous studies' reliability results (see Yada & Savolainen, 2017; Sharma et al., 2012). Participants' scores on the modified TEIPS indicate their higher efficacy beliefs in implementing inclusive practices (Yada & Savolainen, 2017).

The IBM SPSS (Version 23) software was used to analyse the data. The analysis of the mean, and standard deviation was used to examine in-service teachers' levels of TSE. Additionally, one-way ANOVA test statistics were used to examine differences in the impact of three levels of TSE on teacher beliefs towards inclusive practices. Similarly, the Spearman *Rho* correlation test was used to determine significant relationship between levels of TSE and beliefs about inclusive practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, means, standard deviations, one-way ANOVA, and Spearman correlation-analysis were used to examine in-service teachers' levels of TSE and their efficacy about fostering inclusive practices. The first variable, TSE, consists of three subscales: instructional strategies, pupil engagement, and classroom management. The second variable is teacher beliefs about inclusive practice (dependent variable).

Overall teacher self-efficacy and beliefs about inclusive practices

Means and standard deviations for the two instruments (TSES and TEIPS) for the overall sample were presented in Table 1. Three subscales of TSES and TEIPS are divided into three levels, namely low scores (<2), moderate (2.1 to 3.9), and high (4.0 to 5.0).

Table 1 shows the mean scores of overall teacher self-efficacy towards inclusive practices and their sub-scales (i.e., TSE towards executing effective inclusive practices, TSE in engaging all pupils, and TSE in managing and controlling behaviour in the classroom). In comparison, the highest level of TSE held by Tanzanian primary teachers was for effective IS ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.80$), EP ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.83$), and CM ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .81$). In fact, responses were clustered around the TSES mean score ($M = 4.04$), which was

lower than perceived levels of SE in carrying out IS ($M = 4.09$). Furthermore, data show that the low level of TSE held by teachers was due to their efforts to engage all pupils in the classroom. This is because TSE towards engaging pupils in inclusive schools is lower than their self-efficacy towards effective instructional strategies.

Table 1: Overall, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Beliefs towards Inclusive Practices and their Sub-Scales

Variable	Mean	SD
Teacher Self-efficacy (TSES)	4.04	0.81
Self-efficacy in Instructional Strategies (IS)	4.09	0.8
Self-efficacy in Pupil Engagement (PE)	4.02	0.83
Self-efficacy in Classroom Management (CM)	4	0.81
Teacher beliefs towards Inclusive Practices (TEIPS)	3.95	0.83
Teacher beliefs towards Instructional Strategies (IS)	3.93	0.83
Teacher beliefs towards Pupil Engagement (PE)	3.91	0.82
Teacher beliefs towards Classroom Management (CM)	3.99	0.85

Data in Table 1 show that teachers reported moderate beliefs towards teaching in an inclusive classroom ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.83$), and as the best way of teaching PWD. There were also moderate teacher beliefs about inclusive practice sub-scores such as carrying out IS ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.83$), PE ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.82$), and CM ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.85$). Implicitly, teachers' efficacy in three subscales of the TEIPS was moderate, with their efficacy in classroom management and interaction attracting high scores. In-service teachers reported higher TSE in instructional practice scores compared to efficacy in pupil engagement and classroom management. Findings related to TSES and sub-scale mean scores indicated that teachers' beliefs towards efficacy for inclusive practices were found to be at a moderate level.

Arguably, it is evident that TSE in instructional practices affects two other dimensions of SE as teachers engage and organise classrooms. This confirms previous studies which had established teachers' efficacy in instructional practices is characteristically the highest rated sub-scale of the TSE compared to others (Ma & Cavanagh, 2018). However, this finding contrasts with those of Woodcock and Jones (2020) who established that TSE in CM was relatively higher than their efficacy in IS and PE. This supports findings from previous studies (Jordan, 2018; Park et al., 2016), which have found that TSE can be an important predictor of teacher beliefs and their effectiveness in inclusive practices.

According to the findings, the higher the reported level of TSE, the more positive the beliefs toward inclusive practices that teachers may have about teaching in an inclusive classroom with learners of diverse needs. One possible explanation is that, since TSE is developed through mastery of experiences (Bandura, 1997), teachers with higher TSE had reliable feedback related to their ability to succeed in supporting and teaching all learners. Similarly, teachers with higher SE are more confident in using inclusive and universal instructional design to support all learners (Evmenova, 2018), flexible in teaching strategies and responsive to respond to learners' individual needs (Woodcock et al., 2022).

Comparison of levels of teacher self-efficacy and beliefs towards inclusive practice

A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the impact of in-service TSE on their beliefs towards inclusive practices as well as to find out whether or not they believe that all pupils with disabilities should be taught in inclusive classrooms. This statistical test is appropriate because the researchers were interested in an independent variable (TSE), which is divided into three levels, and a dependent continuous variable (beliefs toward inclusive practices). Table 2 presents summary results.

Table 2 shows that the p-value is statistically significant. This means that there is a different level between teachers who believed that PWD could be taught in inclusive classrooms at the $p < .05$ level in TSES scores for the three levels [$F(2, 251) = 17.435$, $p = .00$]. Teachers with higher levels of SE in instructional strategies believed that inclusive practice with PWD and special needs was possible ($M = 2.30$, $SD = .77$) than teachers with low belief in inclusive practices ($M = 1.64$, $SD = .79$). This implies that teachers

with higher SE hold a more positive belief in inclusive practices than teachers with lower efficacy. This was evident across all three dimensions of TSE (i.e., IS, PE, CM).

Table 2. Comparison of mean of Teacher self-efficacy levels among in-service teachers

	N	Mean	SD	ANOVA
Low TSE	85	1.61	.788	[F (2, 251) =17.435, p =.000].
Moderate TSE	83	2.07	.777	
High TSE	86	2.30	.768	
Total	254	2.00	.827	

The results lead the researchers to believe that teachers who scored low, medium or high in self-reported SE may also score low, medium or high in their efficacy beliefs towards inclusive practices. The question to ask ourselves is, "why are these differences appearing in efficacy beliefs about including and teaching PWD in inclusive settings?" One possible reason for the differences in teachers' perceived efficacy and the extent to which they impact their beliefs towards inclusiveness in their classroom practices may be that teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to be more flexible, try new techniques, persevere, and accept challenges than those with low self-efficacy. This supports previous studies by Woodcock et al. (2022) and Sharma et al. (2021), who found that teachers with higher self-efficacy levels believed that IE was an effective way to teach all pupils.

The present study argues that despite the formalization of IE in Tanzania and across the world, its implementation still presents structural and systemic challenges. It argues that key implementers still feel uncomfortable with full accommodation and teaching of PWD and special needs in general classrooms (Chao et al., 2016; Tungaraza, 2015; Woodcock & Jones, 2020). In-service teachers with lower TSE in inclusive schools may feel less effective because of their feelings of unpreparedness. This may consequently lower their beliefs about the necessity of inclusive classroom as an ideal place to teach all pupils despite their characteristics. This corroborates research findings by Vaz et al. (2015), and Woodcock and Jones (2020), who reported that teachers with low levels of TSE tend to exhibit support for PWD and a less positive attitude towards inclusive practices. Similarly, teachers' beliefs about inclusive practices match their self-efficacy. This means teachers with higher TSE have a greater chance to implement inclusive practices (Savolainen et al., 2020; Woodcock et al., 2022) than those with lower levels of TSE because of their concerns, discomfort, or unfamiliarity with their role, status, and responsibilities in inclusive practices (Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Woodcock & Jones, 2020).

Despite the difference in levels of TSE and beliefs, teachers with positive SE and beliefs are resilient and strive despite classroom and school conditions. In contrast, teachers with negative attributes struggle with instructional practices. The findings of the present study underscore the importance of teachers' resilience and commitment to promoting their performance, and, eventually, pupils' learning. The findings of this present study are consistent with those of previous researchers (Bandura, 1997; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018; Woodcock & Jones, 2020). As previous research has revealed about the difficult nature of inclusive classrooms (Ma & Cavanagh, 2018), this study contends that resilient, confident, and persistent teachers can endure and overcome challenges and use the resources available to teach pupils with diverse needs, regardless of their abilities. Therefore, when there is a difference in both personal and general teaching efficacy, acceptance and implementation of IE will vary depending on teacher, school, and classroom factors. Bandura (1986) opines that in triadic reciprocal causation, individual behavioural responses depend on personal characteristics and the classroom environment.

Relationship between levels of teacher self-efficacy and teacher beliefs towards inclusive practices

The total scores in TSES and TEIPS are correlated to measure the extent to which TSE affects their beliefs about including and teaching PWD in general education classrooms. Thus, Spearman's *rho* (rs) coefficient was used to test the strength of the relationship between three levels of TSE and three levels of teacher beliefs towards inclusive practices. Findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation between teacher self-efficacy and beliefs towards inclusive practice levels

			TSES score	TEICPS score
Spearman's <i>rho</i>	Total TSES Score	Correlation	1	.343**
		Sig.		.000
	Total TEICPS Score	Correlation	.343**	1
		Sig.	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows that the p-value is statistically significant. This indicates there were positive but weak relationships among the three levels of TSE (low, medium, and high) when related to the three levels of teacher beliefs about inclusive practices. In other words, increases in TSE levels determine increases in inclusive practices efficacy. This means that their levels of TSE correlate with their levels of belief in inclusive practices. Accordingly, teachers who scored low, medium, or high in TSES also scored low, medium, or high in TEIPS. These results can be interpreted in several ways. First, teachers' perceived self-confidence might prompt them to be less or more accommodating in their classroom practices because they can be less or more confident in both their personal sense of efficacy and their general teaching efficacy (Woodcock et al., 2022). Second, teachers with high self-efficacy might be comfortable and positive enough to involve pupils with and without disabilities. This is because their personal beliefs match their teaching abilities, even when their classroom has pupils with diverse abilities. These findings are consistent with previous research studies (Woodcock et al., 2023; Sharma & Sokal, 2016). For example, Woodcock et al.'s (2023) study revealed that teachers who believed in IE effectiveness had higher levels of teacher self-efficacy, a prerequisite variable to foster inclusive practices.

The results of the present study suggest that levels of in-service teachers' perceived efficacy to execute effective inclusive IS, PE, and CM are statistically related to their beliefs about inclusive practices' efficacy. Teachers who reported higher levels of TSE believe that a general classroom is a better place to teach all pupils than teachers who reported lower TSE. Overall TSE is related to teachers' overall beliefs about inclusive practices, which reflect IE as an educational philosophy and approach in Tanzania. This finding implies that in-service teacher training and other forms of professional development should consider fostering inclusive practices through enhancement of teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive instructional practices, pupil engagement and classroom management, as well as positive beliefs about IE as a philosophy and educational approach (Sharma, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to rethink inclusive teaching practices at the primary school level. This is to unravel what it means for teachers to effectively include and teach PWD in general classrooms in the Tanzanian context.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the relationship between TSE levels and teachers' beliefs about including and teaching PWD in regular education classrooms. The findings showed that levels of teachers' self-efficacy related to their beliefs about inclusive practices, especially teachers' efficacy in instructional practices and pupil engagement in inclusive classrooms. The findings of this study contributed to a better understanding of how self-efficacy influences other teacher personal factors, such as their beliefs about inclusive practices.

Based on the findings, TSE levels are likely to impact their inclusive practices. Teachers with higher self-efficacy levels can more effectively align their beliefs and practices to assist PWD in general education settings than those with lower TSE. The findings also indicate that differences in self-efficacy do not necessarily indicate a lack of understanding of IE principles and philosophy. Instead, they may reflect differences in their levels of inclusive practices or how well they translate IE principles into classroom practice. However, how these differences in TSE among in-service teachers are determined by other teacher factors like level of education, training, school-related factors and policy remains open for further study.

Based on the results of this study, it is evident that it is necessary to find a way to improve the efficacy of teachers in inclusive practices.

Given the significant challenges IE faces in Tanzania, these findings may shed light on how to pursue successful inclusive practices. It will boost teachers' confidence and effectiveness in handling and teaching in inclusive classrooms. This study provides evidence and insight into how we can foster inclusive practices through in-service teacher training, with an emphasis on enhancing teachers' competence and confidence. Based on the findings of the present study, some training and pedagogical implications are recommended for practice. The study recommends that pre-service and in-service training should be extended to improve teachers' competence in IS, PE, and CM. Inclusive education can be improved by tailoring teachers' competencies, positive beliefs, structural support and changes in classrooms in a way that promotes students' learning in inclusive settings. More importantly, these competencies are modeled and learned. For example, mastery of experience can be improved through professional development while verbal persuasion can be improved through collaborative teaching between special education and general education teachers in primary schools.

Despite significant empirical evidence, this study has some limitations. First, the sample of the present study was drawn from 18 primary schools with PWD, which may not necessarily be generalised to all schools in Tanzania due to contextual variations in understandings and interpretations of inclusive practices. Second, the present study relied on self-reported TSE, which may have been influenced by response bias as a result of social desirability. Consequently, the accuracy of the data obtained from the TSES and TEIPS instruments might be limited because they depended on teachers to provide honest responses affecting the findings. In order to identify teachers' subjective and hands-on realities within classrooms and schools, a mixed-methods study with interviews and classroom observations may be the most effective approach.

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