

THE IMPACT OF FEE-FREE EDUCATION POLICY ON PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF NJOMBE TOWN COUNCIL

Mercy N. Mlade

Author name is currently pursuing masters degree program in University of Iringa, Tanzania,. E-mail: mercymlade@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of fee-free education policy on public secondary education in Tanzania, a case of Njombe Town Council, specifically; to examine the effect of fee-free education policy on enrolment rate in secondary schools, the number of teachers and students' performance in Njombe Town Council. The research employed a mixed research approach. A cross-sectional design was used to gather data to answer the research problem and summarize the results. 63 observations were used. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for the selection of respondents. The study finds that there is an increase in students' enrolment in secondary schools in Njombe Town Council due to the fee-free education policy, while there is a shortage of teachers and teaching materials especially books. Moreover, students strive hard to maintain their performance. Conclusively the study acknowledges the importance of the fee-free education policy on secondary education in Tanzania because it helps all children to get access to education especially vulnerable children and those whose parents cannot afford school fees. The study recommends that the government should continue to allocate funds for free education on secondary education in Tanzania because it helps all children to get access to secondary education. Also, the government should employ new teachers all over the country and especially in Njombe secondary schools to cover the gap of not overwhelmed teachers by teaching many students at once. In addition, the government should strive to increase teaching materials especially books to secondary students that help them to increase their performances.

INTRODUCTION

The development of education policy in developing countries is centrally the government practice. The countries have been launching national and international education policies and plans to promote the production and growth of the education sector and human capital. More than half of the countries in Africa introduced free primary education policies between 1994 and 2015, inspired in part by the commitment to Millennium Development Goal 2 to universal primary education (UNESCO, 2015). These policies have contributed to a rapid increase in access to education, with gross primary enrolment in the continent rising by more than 20 percentage points between 1994 and 2015 (World Bank, 2018). With the goal of universal primary education insight, attention has shifted to the secondary sector. Sustainable Development Goal 4 extends the target of universal education to the secondary level, requiring that all male and female children complete "free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education" by 2030 (Asim, Chugunov, & Gera, 2018).

Many countries in Africa including Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda among others have already abolished formal fees for secondary education, (Brudevold-Newman, 2017; World Bank, 2017a). A growing number of low-income countries are introducing free secondary education policies to reduce barriers to access to secondary education. While often highly effective at increasing access, such policies pose a significant financial burden on governments. Without planning and calibration of input models, this burden can lead to inconsistent and inequitable expansion, chronic shortages of inputs, lack of teachers and a decline in quality and learning hence reducing students' performance.

The simulation of the fiscal implications of the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy in Tanzania abolished lower fees for secondary education in 2015 (URT, 2017). Full implementation of the Policy, with the government, simultaneously expanding the secondary school system to accommodate increased enrolment and raising per-student finance to accommodate currently planned policies, has the potential to increase the annual cost of secondary education from 19 percent of the education budget in 2018 to 35 percent by 2024 (URT, 2017).

Moreover, with respect to the implementation of the 2014 Education Policy, the government on November 27, 2015, issued circu-

lar number 5, which provides directives to all public bodies to ensure that secondary education is free for all children, including the removal of all forms of fees and contributions. The Circular states: "Provision of free education means pupils or students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of a new circular" (URT, 2017). The issuance of this circular has made Tanzania go many miles even beyond its constitutional obligation of providing free quality education (URT, 2017).

In Tanzania, as in all countries, the government had taken many initiatives to ensure that every child has access to basic education free of charge. Still, there are an inadequate number of desks, textbooks, classrooms, and teachers to match with the expected increase in student enrolment (Doriye, Muneja, & Ilomo, 2020). This study, therefore, intended to assess the impact of fee-free education policy on public secondary education in Tanzania to provide suggestions on how effectively the policy can be implemented in a sustainable manner to avoid the possible pitfalls and ensuring that the policy delivers what it promises.

LITERATURE SURVEY

The Effect of Fee-Free Education Policy on Enrolment Rate in Secondary Schools

Adan and Orodho (2015) conducted a study on "Constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandera Web Sub-County, Mandera County, Kenya". A case study and descriptive statistics were used to analyze data also questionnaires were used to collect the information from 60 respondents. The study found that school fees for secondary schools were abolished to increase students' enrolment, reduce absenteeism and increase graduation rates. In addition, the study found that free education policy seems to have a positive impact due to an increase in enrolments especially for girls because, before the policy, parents tended to finance boys' education more than the girls'.

Kapinga, (2017) studied "Assessment of school facilities and resources in the context of fee-free basic education in Tanzania". A cross-sectional design was employed whereby 75 respondents were involved. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied in this study. The study found that after the introduction of fee free education in Tanzania, enrolment tripled in primary and secondary schools leading to massive challenges in accommodating them. This is caused by government subsidies school fees to all children, more pupils have access to secondary education as compared to the previous year's whereby some parents failed to pay tuition fees for their children education.

The Ratio of Teachers and Students in the Era of Fee-Free Secondary Education Provision

Adeyami (2018) studied on "Teacher shortages and surpluses in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria". Study was Cross-sectional and data were collected from 150 academic staff members sampled from the seven fully-fledged public schools in Nigeria. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data that was collected using questionnaires. The study found that teachers' workload affects the academic performance of students in schools. This implies that if teachers are not enough in our schools, the quality of teaching and learning, as well as students' performance, will be jeopardized.

Lugongo (2019) conducted a study on "Free education sparks new crisis in Dar es Salaam". The study employed a survey design and applied a purposive sampling technique to obtain a sample size of 80 respondents. It was found out that free education has led to a shortage of teachers especially in secondary schools, especially those teaching science subjects, thus necessitating them to hire temporary teachers most of whom are form six leavers and fresh university graduates. As a result, parents were required to contribute some money between Tsh. 150,000/= and 200,000/= as salaries for those temporary teachers. After the banning of all kinds of contributions from parents, school administrators do not hire these teachers anymore since they cannot pay them.

The Contribution of Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy on Students' academic Performances

Gatheru (2019) studied "Challenges facing head-teachers in the implementation of free education in Narok District, Kenya". The study used a cross-section design and applied a convenience sampling technique to obtain a sample size of 63 respondents. The study reveals that the challenges related to the implementation of free education result from the rising number of students enrolled in schools leading to teachers being overwhelmed because sometimes one teacher has to teach all streams of form 1 to form 4, especially in mathematics subjects. Moreover, teachers cannot give the required attention to large numbers of students and thus lead to a decline in the academic performance of students in schools.

Kafui, (2020) conducted a study on "Causes of low academic performance report of primary and secondary school students in Ghana". The study employed a cross-sectional design and primary data was collected from 75 respondents. The study found that the massive number of students has caused us to look for other alternatives to run the school due to the lack of teachers and learning materials. Students in schools share teachers and books with neighboring schools. Other schools in Ghana sometimes share the printed test and the ream papers whenever they run a shortage of them. They also borrow chalk and pens in stationeries around schools with the promise of paying the money when they receive capitation grants.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Njombe Region specifically to the selected secondary schools Njombe Region namely; Mpechi, Mbeyela and Mabatini secondary schools whereby the study targeted secondary teachers of those schools, where a sample size of 63 individuals as 62 secondary teachers and one education officer was drawn. Quantitative and qualitative method was applied to get accurate data for the problem conclusion. The data adopted purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics through SPSS Version 20 and the qualitative data through content analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Effect of Fee-Free Education Policy on Enrolment Rate in Secondary Schools

The study intended to examine the effect of fee-free education policy on enrolment rate in secondary schools. To answer this objective of the study, four statements were given to the respondents to rate using the Likert scale of agreement. The response to these statements is indicated in Table 1

Table 1: Effect of Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy on Enrolment Rate in Secondary Schools

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
Increases number of students	2	3.2	1	1.6			16	25.8	43	69.4	62
Influences parents to send their students in my school	4	6.5	1	1.6	3	4.8	29	46.8	25	40.3	62
Influences students to join my school	4	6.5	2	3.2	12	19.4	26	41.9	18	29.0	62
The quality of services has been steady in my school	7	11.3	13	21.0	11	17.7	20	32.3	11	17.7	62

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 1 shows that out of 62 respondents, 59 (95.2%) of the respondents agreed that in my school, the fee-free education policy increases the number of students, while 3 (4.8%) disagreed with the statement. Fifty-four (87.1%) of respondents agreed that fee-free education policy influences parents to send their students to my school, 5 (8.1%) disagreed with the statement while 3 (4.8%) remained neutral. Forty-four (70.9%) agreed with the statement that, fee-free education policy influences students to join my school, while 12 (19.4%) remained neutral and 6 (9.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Thirty-one (50%) of respondents agreed with the statement that, regardless of fee-free education policy, the quality of services have been steady in my school, 20 (32.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, the remaining 11 (17.7%) were neutral to the statement.

While during the interview, the question: To what extent does free secondary education in Tanzania affect enrolment rate in Njombe Town Council?

One said:

"Fee-free education policy increases the number of secondary students in Njombe Town Council by 104% more than the targets, and there are no any challenges for the increased number of students in Njombe Town Council secondary schools" (Education officer).

The study revealed that in Njombe Town Council secondary schools, there is a high number of students who joined secondary education after the fee-free education policy. Perhaps the implementation of the free education policy and the increase of enrolment rate, still the services in secondary schools have been provided well. On the other hand, a fee-free education policy led parents to send more children to school because the education is free provided.

Therefore, the impact of the free education policy has led to an increase in the enrolment rate for secondary school students in Njombe Town Council. Regardless of the higher increase in enrolment (104%), still, the education service has been provided in secondary schools in Njombe Town Council.

The results are in line with Adan and Orodho (2015), who found that school fees for secondary schools were abolished in order to increase students' Enrolment, reduce absenteeism and increase graduation rates. In addition, the study found that free education policy seems to have a positive impact due to an increase in enrolments especially for girls because, before the policy, parents tended to finance boys' education more than the girls'.

Ratio of Teachers and Students in the Era of Fee-Free Secondary Provision

The study wanted to determine the ratio of teachers and students in the era of fee-free education policy. To answer this objective, four statements were given to the respondents to rate using the Likert scale of agreement. The response to these statements is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Ratio of Teachers and Students in the Era of Fee-Free Secondary Provision

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
Teachers manage to teach all students under minimum working hours	15	24.2	21	33.9	7	11.3	13	21.0	6	9.7	62
The number of students in my school motivates teachers to work hard	15	24.2	26	41.9	6	9.7	10	16.1	5	8.1	62
The working condition for teachers is conducive	17	27.4	17	27.4	17	27.4	10	16.1	1	1.6	62
I have enough teaching materials for teaching students	15	24.2	21	33.9	13	21.0	11	17.7	2	3.2	62

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 2 shows that out of the 62 respondents, 36 (58.2%) of respondents disagreed that regardless of fee-free education policy, still, I manage to teach all students under minimum working hours", while 19 (30.7%) agreed and 7 (11.3%) were neutral. The second statement was, "Number of students in my school motivates teachers to work hard with respect to fee-free education policy", 41 (66.1%) of respondents disagreed with this statement while 15 (24.2%) agreed and 6 (9.7%) were neutral. The third statement was, "With fee-free education policy, the working condition for teachers is conducive in my school", 34 (54.8%) of respondents disagreed, 17 (27.4%) were neutral and 11 (17.7%) agreed to the statement. On the fourth statement; "With fee-free education policy, I have enough teaching materials for teaching students in my school", 36 (58%) of respondents disagreed with this statement while 13 (21%) agreed with this statement and 13 (21%) were neutral.

While during the interview, the question: What are the teachers and students' ratios in the era/period of fee-free secondary education? One said:

"Increase in the number of students in secondary schools led teachers to unable managing all students at once due to their large number; this affects teachers' performance as motivations among teachers have been low. Moreover, assessments conducted by teachers to students have been difficult to practice because of a large number of students. In addition, the working environment of teachers is not satisfactory especially on accommodation issues" (Education officer).

The study revealed that the impact of free education policy affects teachers on job performance because of the high increase in the number of students. This affects teachers' job performance as it is difficult to manage a large number of students in one class and the conduction of assessment to students is also difficult. So, teachers in Njombe secondary schools have been doing their job in difficult conditions due to the higher number of students enrolled in secondary schools.

Generally, the study observed that teachers working environment is not satisfactory, and it does not motivate them to do their work efficiently, regardless of that, there is lack of teaching materials to cover all number of students because there are so many. Moreover, does not work on their minimum working hours due to the higher number of students enrolled in their secondary schools.

This is in line with a study conducted by Adeyami (2018), who found that teachers' workload affects the academic performance of students in schools. This implies that if teachers are not enough in our schools, the quality of teaching and learning, as well as students' performance, will be jeopardized.

Contribution of Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy on Students' academic Performance

The study wanted to ascertain the contribution of fee-free secondary education policy on students' academic performances. To answer this objective of the study, five statements were given to the respondents to rate using the Likert scale of agreement. The response to these statements is indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Contribution of Fee-Free Secondary Education on Students' academic Performance

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total F
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I work enough to ensure my students are competent in their studies	5	8.1	7	11.3	8	12.9	28	45.2	14	22.6	62
Students have access to books	13	21.0	19	30.6	17	27.4	11	17.7	2	3.2	62
The majority of students are knowledgeable in their studies	3	4.8	19	30.6	22	35.5	18	29.0			62
Many students are capable in their studies	7	11.3	24	38.7	10	16.1	17	27.4	4	6.5	62
Students have access to teaching information	10	16.1	19	30.6	13	21.0	19	30.6	1	1.6	62

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 3 shows that out of the 62 respondents, 42 (67.8%) of the respondents agreed that despite fee-free education policy, I work enough to ensure my students are competent in their studies, 12 (19.4%) of respondents disagreed, and the remaining 8 (12.9%) of respondent were neutral on the statement. In the second statement the 32 (51.6%) of respondents disagreed with the statement that fee-free education policy in my school leads students to have access to books in my school, 17 (27.4%) agreed and 13 (20.9%) were neutral.

Twenty-two (35.5%) of respondents disagreed with the statement that with fee-free education policy in my school, the majority of students are knowledgeable in their studies, 22 (35.5%) respondents were neutral and 18 (29.0%) of the respondents agreed with the statement. Thirty-one (50%) of respondents disagreed that a fee-free education policy leads many students to be capable in their studies, 21 (35.9%) of respondents agreed and 10 (16.1%) of respondents were neutral with the statement. Twenty-nine (46.7%) of respondents disagreed that a fee-free education policy in my school leads students to have access to teaching information in my school, while 20 (32.2%) agreed and 13 (21%) of respondents were neutral with the statement.

During the interview, the question: To what extent do fee-free secondary education in Tanzania contributes to the students' academic performance?

One said:

"Regardless of the increase in enrolment rate due to fee-free education policy, the performance rate of students is high. This is because of the availability of excess time for studying to students' especially for form two and form four students. Moreover, availability of hostel and meal for students who live in the school has led to an increase on students' performance in secondary schools" (Education Officer).

The study revealed that in Njombe secondary schools there is lack of access to books by the students, moreover, the majority of students are not knowledgeable in their studies because they lack sources of information such as books, so there are now well capable in their studies although the education officer commented that student's performance is still high in Njombe regardless the increase in the number of students due to implementation of free education policy in Tanzania.

Therefore, teachers point out that students face a hard time in their education journey especially on the access of teaching materials such as books because they are many while the number of books is too small compared to students. But this has not failed the students to perform well in their studies, they work hard in excess time to ensure that they cover their syllabus and ensuring they perform well in their examination.

The findings of the study are inconsistent with the study done by Gatheru (2019) studied on "Challenges facing head-teachers in the implementation of free education in Narok District, Kenya" because of geographical location, the sample size used and education

policies differ from country to country. The study reveals that the challenges related to the implementation of free education result from the rising number of students enrolled in schools leading to teachers being overwhelmed because sometimes one teacher has to teach all streams of form 1 to form 4, especially in mathematics subjects. Moreover, teachers cannot give the required attention to large numbers of students and thus lead to a decline in the academic performance of students in schools.

CONCLUSION

The study acknowledges the importance of a fee-free education policy on secondary education in Tanzania because it helps all children to get access to education especially vulnerable children and those whose parents cannot afford school fees. Fee-free education policy on secondary education in Tanzania has led to an increasing number of students in secondary schools while the number of teachers has been left out by the government, this will affect teachers working performances due to unable of managing all students at once while there is lack of teaching materials, therefore, student's performances will be jeopardized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Action

The findings indicate that due to the fee-free education policy on secondary education in Tanzania, the number of enrolled students had been increased; therefore, the government should continue to allocate funds for fee-free education policy on secondary education in Tanzania because it helps all children to get access to secondary education.

Moreover, the findings indicate that there is lack of teachers in Njombe Town Council secondary schools compare to the number of students; therefore, the study recommends that the government should employ new teachers all over the country and especially in Njombe secondary schools in order to cover the gap of not overwhelmed teachers by teaching many students at once.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that there is lack of access to teaching materials such as books to students which jeopardize students' performance; therefore, the study recommends that the government should strive to increase teaching materials especially books to secondary students so as to give them access to information and help them to increase their performances.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Qualitative study studies should be done to examine the impact of the implementation of free education policy on primary education in Tanzania, especially in rural areas.

Further studies should be conducted to examine why the government is not employing many teachers so as to cover the problem of shortage of teachers in both primary and secondary schools, and what will be the consequences of this problem if not solved within 5 years to come.

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