

## **ASSESSMENT OF FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY ON QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TANZANIA**

### **A CASE STUDY OF MERU DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this research was to assess effects of FSE on quality of secondary education in Tanzania, a case study of Meru District Council and eventually suggest leadership and governance solutions that can help improve quality of education. It is a descriptive research designed to adopt the survey method using questionnaires and interviews. The study covered a sample of 162 respondents. The collected data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings of this study discovered that; student's enrolment increased which led to overcrowded classrooms, shortage of teachers, insufficient teaching and learning materials. But also, allocation of funds has revealed inadequacy. Furthermore, poor engagement of parents in the education of their children due to lack of clear education to parents and guardians concerning FFE provision which in turn affects student's academic success and achievement. The recommendation of this study is that the government should develop a strategic plan to overcome the declining quality indicators as well as revise the amount disbursed per student often. Also, parents and the community at large should become more actively involved in running of schools to ensure accountability and transparency of school management.*

**Keywords:** *Free education, Quality of education, Subsidy, Secondary education*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Many countries have been investing a lot in education sector particularly in primary and secondary education. Primary and secondary education is regarded as basic education and a right that every country should guarantee to her citizens (Abagi, 2008). Worldwide, secondary education was for a long time the privilege of a few and its role in economic development was mainly to train a limited number of primary school graduates to meet the manpower needs of the economy (Brieseid, Calloids, Lugaz, & Martin, 2004).

Today, many middle and high-income countries have transformed secondary education from an elite system to a mass system that offers opportunities for further learning to all primary school graduates. In many such countries basic education, which includes lower secondary education is free and compulsory; and free (but not compulsory) in upper secondary.

Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are now concerned that many children from poor households who successfully complete free primary education won't be able to continue to secondary education because their parents are unable to afford the costs of this level of education. As a consequence, some governments in SSA have recently introduced free secondary education as a strategy to expand access to education for the poor.

Uganda, for instance, abolished lower secondary education fees in 2007 with the aim of shifting education access patterns from limited elites to the majority of children in the country (Ohba, 2009).

Tanzania has been striving to expand secondary education since independence in 1961 to date, guided with differences policy stances over time. However, the expansion strategies have been coupled with various education problems and challenges for planning. Expansion and quality are linked but it appears there to be little agreement about how this link operates and even how it can be strengthened. This complex relationship between expansion and quality has become somewhat oversimplified as it has looked only in increased secondary education enrolment rate.

The government initially put more emphasis on the primary compared to secondary level of education. This was perhaps motivated by a desire to achieve universal primary education. With time the places at the primary level were a lot more than those in secondary level and this contributed to low transition rates between the two levels. Low transition rates into secondary education may have adverse consequences for primary completion rates, as students lose hope of joining secondary school (Onsomu, 2006). Lessons from the region have shown that the implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda, the equivalent of Free Primary Education in Tanzania, resulted in more than doubling of primary school enrollment. However, upon completion of primary school, many children dropped off to look for casual jobs or get married as they could not afford fees in secondary schools. The transition rate was about twenty percent of those that qualified to join secondary schools. This was the rationale for the introduction of free secondary education in Uganda (Nawaguna, 2008).

The introduction of the FSE assumed that there was adequate physical infrastructure for secondary education that can accommodate more students and that tuition fees constituted a significant proportion of the total secondary school education and that its 'waiver' would be a reprieve to parents, guardians and sponsors. Although this public policy and the government commitments are commendable, not much is known about its implication at the school levels and how leadership and governance can play part in making it successful.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Tanzania introduced fee free for basic education policy in 2016 for the purpose of reducing household burden so that many children from poor communities can get equal opportunities to learning. Implementation of that policy came as a result of a good motive and promise of the president, Dr. John Pombe Magufuli to his citizens in which, 2016 the government disbursed 18b every month for both primary and secondary schools, 2017 it disbursed 22b monthly and in 2018 it disbursed 23b. However, the amount of 23b is still head-knocking because of increased expenditure to meet the reality situation of increased students' enrolments. In 2016, students who were selected to join Form 1 were 503,914, in 2017 selected candidates 555,291 while in 2018 selected students were 661,059 (The Citizen, 09<sup>th</sup> March 2018).

According to the 2016/2017 report of the Controller and Auditor General, it has revealed several challenges concerning the implementation of the policy. In spite of applauding governments' initiative, it was observed that the funds disbursed to schools doesn't match with the number of students which keeps changing from time to time. Also, number of classrooms needed were 24,797, existing ones were 12,001 classrooms so there was a deficit of 12,796 classrooms which is the same as 52%. Likewise, student's toilet vents needed were 33,652, existing ones were 15,913 so there was a deficit of 17,739 toilet vents which is the same as 53% (NAOT, 2017).

Concerns about quality, lack of facilities at schools, busier teachers; what do these trends spell for the quality of education in Tanzania secondary institutions? Indications are that many public secondary schools are already struggling to perform well in national examinations, a situation that could be worsened by student entering institutions that are ill-equipped to receive them (RISE, 2017). Also, According to HakiElimu (2017), 51.3% of parents believe that fee free education excludes them from all costs of raising education of their children in public schools. Only 23% and 32% had a feeling that parents should contribute part of their children’s education total costs.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was descriptive. According to Saunders (2007) descriptive research design allowed description that was detailed of the status of the variables plus an explanation between the variables under the study. The descriptive survey was appropriate for this study because it assisted the respondents in describing the situation as it was. The study covered a target population of 330 drawn from three strata namely the heads of schools, teachers and District secondary education officer. Simple random sampling was used to select 13 schools (45%) from the 29 public secondary schools in the district. This agrees with Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) recommendation of 20-50% sample size. The head teachers that were included in the sample were from those 13 selected schools and 10 teachers from each of the selected schools. Questionnaires and interviews were research instruments used to collect data from heads of schools, teachers and District secondary education officer. Data collected was analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

**4. RESEARCH FINDINGS & PRESENTATION**

**4.1. Increase of Student’s Enrollment and the Quality of Education**

*Table 1: Trend in yearly enrollment before and after FSE policy*

<i>No.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated</i>	<i>Actual enrollment</i>	<i>Exceeding %</i>
1.	2013	3,290	4,794	46%
2.	2014	4,478	6,483	45%
3.	2015	5,584	7,606	36%
4.	2016	9,575	14,123	47%
5.	2017	17,197	20,343	18%
6.	2018	10,790	20,917	94%

The results indicated that in Meru District alone, a total of 74,266 student have been enrolled in a period of six years from the year 2013 to 2018. Out of which 75% (55,383) of the student have been enrolled the year 2016 to 2018 which is three times larger than the number of student (18,883) enrolled in the previous three years; before the introduction of the FSE policy.

**4.1.1 Increase in student enrolment and quality of education**

When determining the quality of education found in secondary schools, we observe things like the teacher student ratio, the infrastructure present, the teaching and learning materials available as well as the attitudes of

the respondents in the study area. The respondents were asked whether the increase in enrollment of student has led to an increase in the quality of education provided the results are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Increase in Student Enrollment and Quality of Education

<i>No.</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Yes	76	46.9
2.	No	86	53.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the responses shown in Table 2, 53.1% of the respondents said that the increase in enrollment of the student has affected the quality of education provided in a negative manner. As stated earlier, the abolition of school fees at secondary school level appears to have increased the enrolment of students. As a result, teaching and learning have been compromised by large classes and a shortage of teachers. In this study, there was alarming classroom congestion in the visited schools which would seem to adversely affect the teaching and learning process for both teachers and students.

#### 4.1.2 Increase of students’ enrolment and Availability of Text books

The Head teachers were asked to give the ratio of textbooks to students in their schools. Results showed that many schools are yet to achieve a ratio of 1 textbook to 2 students which is the accepted ideal. None of the schools had a textbook to student ratio of 1:1 Out of 13 schools, 5 had a ratio of 1:3 in lower Forms and 8 had a ratio of 1:4 in upper Forms. Research showed that the situation is worse in lower Forms compared to upper Forms because of high enrolment.

Table 3: Textbook to student ratio in sampled schools

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number of textbooks</i>	<i>Form 1 &amp; 2</i>	<i>Form 3 &amp; 4</i>
English	1	4	3
Kiswahili	1	4	4
Mathematics	1	3	3
Chemistry	1	4	3

Textbooks are an important and indispensable teaching and learning material. Research findings shows that several students were found to be crowding around one textbook as they struggled to do assignments. This made it hard for them to comprehend the information. This situation was in schools with a ratio of 1 textbook to 4 students and more. However, Head teachers were positive that if the Government continued to give support to schools to acquire teaching and learning materials, the situation in public schools would improve tremendously and in the long run, 1 textbook to 1 student ratio would be attained. Most schools had over enrolled more than 45 students per stream which is against the ministry of Education policy making it hard for required ratio to be achieved.

#### 4.1.4 Increase of students’ enrolment and teacher’s motivation

The respondents were asked whether the teachers were happy with the current working conditions and the responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers Work spirit after introduction of FFE policy

No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Increase	19	11.7
2.	Decrease	108	66.7
3	Neutral	35	21.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 shows clearly that the 66.7 % of the respondents feel that the work spirit of the teachers has decreased to a large extent. The teachers complained that teaching has become very difficult in recent years due to the increased enrolment leading to a huge number of students in the classrooms.

There is general consensus in the literature that small classes are likely to provide effective teaching (see for example, Bourke, 1996; Blatchford & Martin, 1998; Goldstein & Blatchford, 1998; Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Martin, 2003). The study by Blatchford *et al* (2003) on the class size differences related to student’ educational progress and classroom indicates that in small classes, students are more likely to interact with their teachers on a one-to-one basis. A student is also more likely to be the main focus of the teacher’s attention and student experience more teaching, unlike in the large classes where there is a more like procedural talks. Blatchford and his associates also found that in smaller classes there is more likelihood of teacher support for learning and teacher task time with student. Teachers know their student and tend to be more sensitive to individual students’ learning needs. It was also indicated that teachers found it easier to manage and control the classroom.

#### 4.2 Assess How the Fund Allocation has influenced the Quality of education

##### 4.2.1 Allocation of Funds in a Timely Manner

The study wanted to determine whether the funds allocated to the school are provided in a timely manner the results are as follows 60(37.0%) said very often, 80 (49.4%) said often, 22(13.6%) said rarely while all the respondent admitted that funds have never failed to arrive at the schools. Table 5 presents the responses.

Table 5: Allocation of Funds in a Timely Manner

No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very Often	60	37.0
2.	Often	80	49.4
3.	Rarely	22	13.6
4.	Not at all	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked further during the interview they said that the funds did arrive in a timely manner but it was never the full amount required to effectively run the schools. The results were in consistence with what observed by Kiprono *et al.* (2015) in Kenya that 45.3% of the school management committees (SMCs) strongly agreed that delays in disbursement of Free Basic Education (FBE) funds was a challenge they faced. Likewise, some earlier studies had similar results (Eweniyi, 2012; Msabila and Dossa, 2012; Mwinjuma and Baki, 2012; Nampota and Chiwaula, 2013).

This situation can be interpreted as caused by the allocation of the funds based on the number of students without considering other socio-economic factors. Komba (2012) asserts that the formula might have exacerbated the inequality in educational opportunities across Tanzania. In addition, the strategy of the second phase of PEDP to disburse the funds on per capita basis, which still continues in the third phase of PEDP, has an effect on the funds that are available to GPSs (URT, 2012). As a result, with escalating prices of educational materials and the dissimilarities in school needs, it becomes a problem with schools having a small number of students.

#### 4.2.2 Running of the Schools Before and After Fee Free Education

The respondents were asked in their own opinion to compare the running of the school before and after the implementation of the fee free education in their schools the results were that none of the respondents were of the view the education had improved, 13(8.0%) said it was good, 65(40.1%) said it as fair while 84(51.9%) said it was poor. Table 6 shows these results.

Table 6: Running of Schools Before and After Fee Free Education

No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	0	0
2.	Very Good	0	0
3.	Good	13	8.0
4.	Fair	65	40.1
5.	Poor	84	51.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the above results it seems that the majority 51.9% of the respondents are of the opinion that the fee free education has not improved the running of the school rather it has caused the school to be administered poorly. According to the respondents the reason for having poor administrative performance after the introduction of FSE is that the money was not enough to cater for what their schools needed.

In such a situation schools were required to find other sources to address their problems. The respondents said that schools suffered two consequences and those are, insufficient funds provided and the delayed disbursement of grants. This affected the ability of schools to implement plans such as purchasing equipment for teaching and learning. Price fluctuations from time to time which negatively affected the schools purchasing capacity. In some cases, schools could only afford to buy a limited number of construction materials because of the price fluctuations. They added that when prices went up the purchasing capacity went down. In such cases, some construction projects such as classrooms and teachers' houses could not be completed on time necessitating

financial support elsewhere. Furthermore, it was found that, the majority (65%) of heads of schools reported that they did not raise any funds to supplement the inadequate amount received from the government. Only 35% of the heads of schools revealed to have raised funds through school income generating activities, contributions from individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and community members.

### 4.3 Level of Parental Involvement and its effect on Quality of Education

#### 4.3.1. Level of Parental involvement after introduction of FSE

The study wanted to determine whether the level of parental involvement since the introduction of FFE has increased. According to the respondents 106(65.4%) said no while 56(34.6%) said yes. Table 9 looks at this more closely.

Table 9 Increasing Parental Involvement During FFE

No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	56	34.6
2.	No	106	65.4
	Total	162	100.0

From the above results the majority of the respondents feel that parents are not involved in the learning process of their children. According to one of the respondents the level is decreasing as parents feel that the government has taken all the burden of educating the children.

The findings also support the report by Hakielimu (2017:) that some parents had misconception that “fee free basic education policy” did not require them to contribute anything towards education of their children. Though in reality Education Circular No. 6 of 2015 (URT, 2015) [58] stated costs such stationery and medical expenses should be incurred by parents.

#### 4.3.2 Parents Involvement in FSE

According to the study there are a number of ways in which parents are involved in the following according to table 10 as shown below. 102(62%) said building of classes, 65(40.1%) said planning school budget, 162(100%) said through attending parents’ meetings, 162(100%) through paying for uniforms, stationery and paying bus fare 82(50.6%) said contributing money towards remedial classes.

Table 10: Parents Involvement in FSE

No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Manual labor	102	62.9
2.	Planning school budget	65	40.1
3.	Paying for stationery and bus fare and uniforms	162	100.0
4.	Remedial classes	82	50.6
5.	Attending parent meeting	162	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Parents are involved in a number of ways towards their children's education. The most prominent way in which the parents are involved is through paying for their uniforms, providing stationery and bus fare for their children.

Briefly, the findings discovered challenges in the implementation of FSE policy include; lack of awareness of the parents and community regarding FSE, shortage of teachers, insufficient funds allocation in schools, poor engagement of parents for the education of their children, and government delays of capitation grants to schools. The findings corroborate with what the previous studies discussed about the existence of informal school fees (Kattan, 2006), significant contributions of parents for their children (Daven, 2008), and lack of preparedness for innovations (HakiElimu, 2017) impose challenges to FSE provision.

## 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study discussed findings related to the knowledge of respondents on Fee Secondary Education (FSE), their involvement in the provision of FSE, the changes due to policy implementation, and challenges during policy implementation as well as leadership and governance recommendations in improving the quality of education in Meru District.

Findings discovered that following the implementation of FSE in the area; students enrolment increased which led to overcrowded classrooms, shortage of teachers, insufficient teaching and learning materials. But also, allocation of funds has revealed inadequacy because most schools could not meet ends given the constrained amount disbursed. Furthermore, poor engagement of parents in the education of their children due to lack of clear education to parents and guardians concerning FSE provision which in turn affects student's academic success and achievement.

This study concludes that; increase of students' enrolment as a result of FSE has hampered quality of education due to increasing teachers' workload, crowded classrooms and limited books, also funds allocated have proved to be inadequate in administration of schools and therefore affect the teaching and learning processes inversely, furthermore level of parental involvement has reduced as a result of FSE implementation, this poses a threat to running of schools and family support which is necessary in enhancing quality of education. Generally, FSE as a public policy introduced by a profound government leader has showed that it lacked proper preparations in terms of human and capital resources.

The research recommends that the government should ensure that capitation grants reach all schools in time with adequate amounts as per "fee-free" policy and it should also develop a strategic plan to overcome quality indicator problems which have arisen as a result of introduction of FSE. The study also recommends that the communities should play crucial roles in furthering and sustaining effective and quality schools.

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