
The Extent to Which Fee Free Basic Education Policy Has Affected the Enrollment Rate of Students in Private Secondary Schools in Rombo District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT: *The researcher intended to investigate the effects of fee free basic education policy on students' enrolment rate in private secondary schools in Rombo district, Tanzania. The Social Impact Theory developed by latene (1981) guided the study. Mixed methods approach under convergent design was adopted. Target population were 139 teachers, 10 head of schools and 10 school board chair persons. Purposive, Simple random and stratified random sampling technique were used to obtain 52 respondents whereby 40 are teachers, 4 are head of schools and 4 are School Board Chairpersons. Instruments of data collection were questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis schedule. Validity of the research instruments was refined through the comments from experts in research, researchers' supervisors and researcher's fellow students while reliability of questionnaire for teachers was measured by Cronbach Alpha and for the reliability of qualitative data triangulation will be used. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, means whereas patterns and themes were developed for the analysis of qualitative data and then independent T – test was used to test the null hypothesis. The study found that FFE policy had caused decrease in students' enrolment in private secondary schools hence shortage of funds the results of which were hindering the implementation of various school projects. Also, the school administrators were having hard time in solving various challenges facing their schools due to insufficient funds received from school fees due to decrease in the number of students. This study concludes that the FFE policy has negatively affected the enrolment rates in private secondary schools in Rombo district which in turn has affected day to day schools' operations. Consequently, this study put forward the following recommendations for immediate effect and for further studies, management in Private Secondary schools should come up with practical survival strategies to ensure effectiveness in education delivery and the government should provide subsidies to the private secondary schools in order to cut for high running costs.*

KEY WORDS: Fee Free Education policy, financial stability, students' enrolment rate

INTRODUCTION

Formal education in Tanzania started being offered during the colonial period. Though colonial education has contributed to the awakening of Tanzanians, by equipping them with knowledge and skills on matters related to time management, proper agriculture methods and trading skills. Such education was characterized by high levels of segregation aimed at serving the needs of colonialists (Mashalla, 2019; Kaligilwa, 2018). Therefore, soon after independence, deliberate efforts were undertaken by the Government of Tanzania (Tanganyika by then) to reform the education system.

Like in other African countries, the education reform in Tanzania was geared at preparing competent professionals who could foster national development (Matasci, et al, 2020). One of the policy reforms evidenced in Tanzania was to allow private sectors to participate in the provision of education in 1980's.

However, from the year 2016, the Government of Tanzania started implementing fee free basic education in public secondary schools. One of the notable improvements reported is the increase in the enrollment rates in public schools (URT, 2016, 2019, 2020). There is little information on how the introduction of fee free basic education policy has affected the general and financial stability of private schools in particular. The government has also been putting pressure on private schools over the fees they charge (Rajab, 2017). A circular (no. 6) was issued requiring all private school operators to submit by December 16th their proposed fees for 2016 for review and approval by government. The schools have also been barred from any fee increases in 2016. (Rajab, 2017).

Additionally, studies conducted outside Tanzania show that parents are motivated to send their children to schools which do not charge fees (Mousumi and Kusakabe, 2019). This may be one of the reasons for the experienced increase in the enrollment rates of students in public schools. Though school fees have been subsidized in public schools in most of African countries, the cost of education is still high in private schools (Akaguri, 2013). As long as the private schools still charge fees for their survival, it is important to conduct a study to determine whether the introduction of fee free education policy in public schools has affected the financial stability in private schools.

The involvement of private sector in the provision of quality education has led to the establishment of private schools in 1980's. For the case of Kilimanjaro region, there are 115 private secondary schools which are under private ownership, of which ten are found in Rombo district (URT, 2019). All these schools charge fees for their survival and stability. Money collected from fees is used to pay teachers, buy books; procure chemicals and running all the school activities, which need the presence of cash. Therefore, the presence of a good number of students in these schools is important for the running of the school.

However, literature shows there is a huge increase in the enrollment rates of students in public schools after the introduction of the fee free basic education policy. This raises a concern on whether private schools still attract more students who will pay fees needed for running the school activities. Nevertheless, literature has not given much information on whether the introduction of fee free basic education policy in public schools has affected students' enrolment in private schools. Consequently, the current study was conducted to investigate whether the introduction of fee free education has affected students' enrolment rate in private secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Tanzanian Government has undertaken a number of initiatives to reform the education sector inherited from the colonialists (Mashalla, 2019; Kaligilwa, 2018). One of them was the involvement of private sectors in the provision of education (Paul, 2018). Such initiative has resulted into the establishment of private secondary schools in every region of the country (URT, 2019). In Tanzania context the government introduced fee free basic education policy in public schools, which started to be implemented in 2016. Implementation of the policy has resulted into an increase in the enrollment rates of students and employment of teachers in public secondary schools (Lyanga& Chen, 2020). The effects of this increase in enrollment in public secondary schools is still unknown

to the counterpart private secondary schools. Studies by (Morgan 2016, Mashalla 2019, Mulenga 2018, Kivenule 2015) emphasize much on enrolment rate, impact of implementation of fee free basic education, sustainability and accessibility of private schools and comparative between private and public secondary schools in academic performance respectively. However, no study has been conducted to find out whether the introduction of fees free basic education policy has affected the financial stability in private schools, which receive no financial aid from the government, hence depend mostly on schools' fees to run most of their activities. Therefore, the current study was conducted to investigate the effects of fee free basic education policy on students' enrolment rate in private secondary schools in Tanzania by taking Rombo district as the study area.

Research Question and Hypothesis

This study was guided by the following research question and hypothesis.

R.Q: To what extent has fees free basic education policy affected the enrollment rate of students in private secondary schools?

H_i: There is a significant difference between the enrolment mean scores in private secondary schools before and after FFE policy of 2014.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Social Impact Theory developed by Latene (1981). Latene described social impact as a phenomenon in which people or organizations affect each other in social situations. According to the theory, the daily running and operations of one organization can affect the operation and running of another organization. In this study assumed that the change in the organization and operations of public secondary schools can have effects on the financial stability of private secondary schools.

The social impact theory upholds that the greater the intensity of the change in one factor or organization, the greater the impact to be observed in the second factor or organization. This implies that the greater the change the higher the impact would be on the other factor or organization. Based on the current study, the Government of Tanzania started implementing the fee free basic education policy in 2016 while private schools continued with their normal routine of charging school fees and other contributions up to the moment. Therefore, based on the social impact theory, the introduction and implementation of fee free basic education in public secondary schools was expected to have effects on the students' enrolment rates of private secondary schools.

The strength of the theory is that it shows how changes in one organization or variable can lead to changes in the others. Therefore, the theory helped the researcher to determine the effects of introduction of fee free basic education in public secondary schools on the financial stability in private secondary schools in Rombo district. The researcher therefore, assessed the extent to which the introduction of fee free basic education policy in public secondary schools has affected the enrollment rates in private secondary schools.

The limitation of the theory is that it is too experimental that requires the control of extraneous variables that may affect the changes on the dependent variable. For example, there may be other factors apart from the implementation of fee free basic education that might affect financial stability in private secondary schools. All these factors need to be controlled for the researcher to effectively

assess the effects. However, it may not be possible to control the variables as suggested by the theory and therefore ending at descriptive data and not inferential.

Despite the limitations of the theory, the researcher used it in assessing the effects of fee free basic education policy on the operations of private secondary schools in Rombo district. The theory helped the researcher to determine the extent to which the introduction of this policy has affected the enrollment rates and financial stability in private secondary schools in Rombo district.

Review of Empirical Studies

A comparative study by the Government of Mauritius conducted by Morgan (2016) found that the enrolment rate in secondary schools in the year 2016 had decreased to 111,152 from 114,311 in 2015. The study, moreover shows that 56 percent of the students were enrolled in private secondary schools and the remaining 44 percent in the state schools. This finding shows that more students in Mauritius are enrolled in private schools than those in public schools. It was important then for a study to be conducted in Tanzania to find how the introduction of fee free education policy in public secondary schools has affected/ not affected the enrolment rate of students in private schools. This will be done by comparing the enrolment rates in private schools before and after the introduction of the fee free basic education policy, then find out the reasons.

Katsuki (2018) conducted a study on informal fee charge and school choice under the fee free primary education policy in Uganda. The study adopted the analytical framework method. Where the study found that there is a strong negative effect of high fees on public school attendance of children from poor households. The study also found a limited role of private schools absorbing the children from poor households who left public school due to high fees. However, the study remained silent on the effects of fee free basic education policy in general and its financial effects to private secondary schools in particular. Therefore, there was a need for the current study to be conducted fill the knowledge gap.

A study by Hakielimu (2017) on the impact of fee free education policy on Basic Education in Tanzania, which collected both qualitative and quantitative data from seven districts in Tanzania main land found that Form One enrolment in public schools has increased from 372,719 in 2015 to 538,826 in 2016. This shows that there is an increase of 44 percent in student's enrolment in the public secondary schools. The study by Hakielimu (2017), however did not indicate the difference in enrolment rate between public and private secondary schools. Therefore, the study findings could not adequately be used to explain how fee free basic education policy has affected private secondary schools. Thus the researcher analyzed the enrolment rates in private schools before and after the introduction of fee free basic education policy, to see whether this policy has affected the schools or not.

Ogawaa, M. (2021), conducted a study to understand the role of private secondary schools in rural Kenya under the Free Secondary Education Policy. Data were collected from four private schools over two months in 2018 and 2019. All the schools had experienced instability due to low enrolment, particularly after the policy was implemented in 2018. The decline in the schools' income also affected the quality of education. However, the results suggest that some students prefer to complete their education at private schools as low-expense-boarders or as beneficiaries of fee discounts. Other students choose private schools to avoid overcrowded classrooms and travel far,

especially when excluded from public schools. This study argues that despite limited learning resources, private secondary schools in rural Kenya have an important place in the public education system outside of the academic pyramid of public schools. However, the study was silent about the methodology used and the sample size employed in the study. Therefore, there was a need for the current study to be conducted to fill the gap.

Waweru, R. (2011), conducted a study sought to establish the effect of free primary education on enrollment in private schools in Kiambu Municipality District. The study employed an exploratory descriptive survey design. The study was based on the systems theory. The target population included 25 heads of private primary schools and 20 heads of public schools in Kiambu Municipality District. The study employed simple random sampling technique. In total the researcher sampled 4 private primary schools out of 25 in the whole district and 4 public schools out of 20 in the whole District; this represents a 20% sample size of the target population. In data collection, questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis were used. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in accordance with the research questions. In addition, Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings of the study were: The enrollments increased in public primary schools due to the introduction of free primary education which resulted to decreased enrollments in private schools, with poor performances and congestions in public schools, enrollments increased in private schools as noted in the year 2007,. Recommendations are: the study recommends for government's intervention to insulate the poor from such high costs, to reduce the unit cost of education, the private schools should increase enrollments to optimal levels. This study based on primary schools which is provide basic education. There is a need to conduct a study in private schools in order to understand the effects of FFE policy on enrolments.

Demonstration of Knowledge gap

From both related theories and studies, most of the scholars have explained the quality education in private schools and earn more students' enrollment higher than public secondary schools regardless of charging high amount of school fees. But due to the introduction of fee free basic education policy in Tanzania, the scholars do not explain how the private schools are affected financially. Some studies have been done on the outcome of fee free basic education in the areas of quality of education, shortage of infrastructure and change of teaching methodology to accommodate large classrooms (Mashala, 2019, Mwangota, 2019, Kigobe, 2017). None of the reviewed literature has addressed the extent to which FFE policy has affected students enrolment rates in private schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted mixed methods approach and employ convergent design to obtain information from informants. The study targeted 10 private secondary schools, 139 teachers, 10 heads of schools and 10 School Board chair persons of all the 10 private secondary schools in Rombo district. Therefore, the total target population was 159 respondents. The sample of the study consisted 4 private secondary schools out of 10, 40 teachers out of 139, 4 heads of schools out of 10 and 4 school board chairperson out of 10 making a total of 52 subjects. The study employed interview guide, questionnaires and document analysis guide to collect the required information and data from the schools and the study respondents.

In the current study reliability of questionnaire for teachers was measured by Cronbach Alpha or internal consistency of the Likert type items. Creswell & Creswell, (2018) proposed that reliability coefficient is considered reliable and ranges from 0.7 – 0.9. Validation of the instruments was assured in terms of content and face validity. Research supervisors, fellow students and experts in the Faculty of Education at MWECAU were requested to review the instrument for content coverage and face appropriateness. Their suggestions were then used to improve the validity of the instruments.

The researcher organized and categorized the data into means, frequency and percentage for ease interpretation. This was done by the help of computer software (SPSS) version 22 and the information was presented using tables and charts. The comparison was done at 95 percent confidence level and the significance level of 0.05, which are acceptable in social sciences. Ethical issues such as privacy, confidentiality, honesty, sensitivity to cultural differences gender and anonymity were put into consideration so as to ensure that there was no negative effect to anyone. The data collected were only to be used for the purpose of this study only.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to find out the effects of fee free basic education policy on students' enrolments in private secondary schools. Teachers filled questionnaires while heads of schools and school board chairpersons were interviewed. An interview guide to tap views about the effects of fee free basic education policy in financial stability in private secondary schools. Furthermore, the researcher formulated document analysis guide to confirm whether the heads of schools' comments and teachers' responses in questionnaire reflect reality is in schools. Teachers filled questionnaires to indicate the effect of fee free basic education policy on the enrolment rates in private secondary schools. The data were summarized in table 1.

Table.1: Teachers Responses on the extent to which fee free basic education policy has affected the enrolment rates in private schools

	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean
	f (%)					
FFE policy has led to the decrease in the number of students in private schools.	16 (45.7)	12 (34.3)	4 (11.4)	1 (2.9)	2 (5.7)	4.1
Selection criteria of students is very strict compared to the period before FFE policy	4 (11.4)	4 (11.4)	12 (34.3)	8 (22.9)	7 (20.0)	2.7
Classrooms are crowded	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)	10 (28.6)	10 (28.6)	2.6
Overall school academic performance is high for nation examinations results.	6 (17.1)	9 (25.7)	8 (22.9)	5 (14.3)	6 (17.1)	3.3
Most of students enrolled are low achievers who need remedial classes.	8 (22.9)	11 (31.4)	9 (25.7)	4 (11.4)	2 (5.2)	3.7
Boarding students have been changed their status to day scholars by the demand of their parents.	4 (11.4)	8 (22.9)	10 (28.6)	7 (20.0)	5 (14.3)	3.1
Private schools experience students drop out	12 (34.3)	5 (14.3)	8 (22.9)	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)	3.4
There is high rate of shifting of students from your school to another	3 (8.6)	4 (11.4)	13 (37.1)	5 (14.3)	10 (28.6)	2.6
Financial resources are used for searching students	8 (22.9)	14 (40.0)	7 (20.0)	2 (5.7)	4 (11.4)	3.6

Enrollment forms are returned on time	4 (11.4)	4 (11.4)	11 (31.4)	7 (20.0)	8 (22.9)	2.9
Grand Mean score						3.2

Source: Field Data, 2022

Key: VLE = Very Low Extent, HE = Low Extent, ME = Moderate Extent, LE = Large Extent, VLE = Very Large Extent, M=Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The figures in Table 1 display a generally positive agreement of the respondents to all the items on the issue of enrolment and fee free education policy in private secondary schools. The table shows a mean range between 2.6 and 4.1 for all the items, implying that the respondents highly agreed with most of the statements. Thus, the respondents are generally of the view that fee free basic education policy has negatively affected students' enrolments in private secondary schools. Notably, the item on FFE policy has led to the decrease in the number of students in private schools, was ranked highest.

The researcher conducted an interview through interview guide to supplement findings obtained from teachers' responses. One head of school from school "C" stated the following during interview:

'Running of school is expensive and it has not been easy under the policy of fee free basic education. The funds received monthly by school from school fees are very small as it does not help to cut for fixed costs. This has caused many challenges in our school but also some activities have stopped because there is no money to implement them' (12, July 2022). In addition, school heads were asked to give the total number of students enrolled before the implementation of fee free basic education and after the implementation of FFE policy (Table 2). It was found that there was a huge difference on enrolment before 2015 and after 2015.

Table 2. Number of students enrolled before and after implementation of FFE policy

School	No. of Students enrolled before 2015	No. of Students enrolled after 2015	School Capacity
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
A	684 (95.0)	425 (59.0)	720 (100)
B	649 (86.5)	277 (36.9)	750 (100)
C	550 (76.4)	160 (22.2)	720 (100)
D	549 (76.3)	169 (23.5)	720 (100)

Field data (2022)

Data in Table 2, indicate that, students enrolments have drastically decreased from school A to D when comparison was done between two periods that is the period before and the period after the introduction of fee free education policy in 2015. Thus in school 'A' students' enrolment decreased

from 684 (95.0%) to 425 (59.0%), school 'B' 649 (86.5%) to 277 (36.9%). School 'C' 550 (76.4) to 160 (22.2%) and school 'D' 549 (76.3%) to 169 (23.5%). Since private schools depend much on students' school fees as main source of their revenues, the decrease of students enrolment rate in these schools affected financial resources to a large extent. This in turn affected teaching and learning process in private secondary schools.

Furthermore, heads of schools were asked if they were getting funds from other sources apart from the school fees they charge; Out of four schools only two school admitted to have activities through which they were generating income from those activities. On this regard, the head of school from school "B" said:

'Through self-reliance activities such as canteen project at the school compound and Necta private candidate center, they were able to generate income that was used to address some small money challenges that the school was facing like hiring part time science teachers '(14, July 2022).

Generally, it was indicated that FFE had caused shortage of funds the results of which were hindering the implementation of various school projects. Also the school administrators were having hard time in solving various challenges facing their schools due to insufficient funds received from school fees.

Hypothesis Testing

The researcher sought to test if there is a significance difference between the mean enrolment in private secondary schools before and after FFE policy. The researcher also tested the null hypothesis using an independent sample t-test. T-test assumptions were:

- i. The assumption for a t-test is that the scale of measurement applied to the data collected follows a continuous or ordinal scale
- ii. The second assumption made is that of a simple random sample, that the data is collected from a representative, randomly selected portion of the total population.
- iii. Homogeneous, or equal, variance exists when the standard deviations of samples were approximately equal.

Stated Null Hypothesis

H_0 : there is no significance difference between the enrolment mean in private secondary schools before and after FFE policy of 2014.

Decision rule: In this study the researcher has chosen a significance level of 0.05 to test the null hypothesis. Based on the significance level, rejection criteria were as follow:

- The null Hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected whenever the p – value is less than 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$), for the case researcher will reject the null Hypothesis (H_0).
- The researcher will fail to reject the null Hypothesis (H_0), whenever p – value observed to be greater than 0.05 ($p \geq 0.05$)
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Table 3. Independent T-test results on the difference between the mean enrolment in private secondary schools before and after FFE policy of 2014

Table 3. Hypothesis testing

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
STUDENTS	Equal variances assumed	1.249	.307	4.950	6	.003
ENROLMENT	Equal variances not assumed			4.950	4.708	.005

Data in Table 3 indicate the Calculated p – value was 0.003, which was observed to be less than the significance value 0.05. Hence based on the decision rule researcher had sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, hence the researcher concluded that based on independent T-test result, there is a significance different between the enrolment mean scores in private secondary schools before and after FFE policy of 2014. The findings revealed that implementation of FFE policy has to a large or high extent affected students enrolment negatively in private schools hence low financial stability due to the fact that revenue of private secondary schools depend much number of students enrolled and the amount of school fees collected from students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the major findings of the study, the FFE policy in private secondary education has negatively affected the students enrolments to a large extent. Although the policy has brought some positive effects to public secondary schools, the negative effects of implementing the policy seem to outweigh the positive ones in private secondary schools. As it was indicated by the study, one of the positive effects of the policy was the increase in students' enrolment in public secondary schools. But most of the challenges of implementing the policy have been indicated to be caused by low enrolment rate of students in private secondary schools. Perhaps, the shortage of funds due to low number of students in private secondary schools has affected teaching and learning process among students and in turn may produce poor graduates who will be a burden to the government and the nation at large. Therefore, the study concludes that the policy could only work effectively and successfully be implemented without interfering with the provision of quality education if all the mentioned challenges are addressed properly. The challenges may be overcome if all stakeholders are involved and take part in education matters by working hand in hand with the government to help private schools financially. Also, enrolment of students in private secondary could increase if the government subsidizes the private secondary schools so that the amount of school fees charged can be reduced to attract many parents to enroll their children to private schools. Furthermore, the education sector should not be interfered with politics. By doing so the policy itself will be successful and quality education not only in private secondary schools but also in public secondary schools.

Recommendations for Actions

Management in Private Secondary schools should come together, discuss and reach consensus on practical survival strategies to ensure effectiveness in education delivery in the context of FFE policy. The government should be consulted and requested to provide subsidies to the private secondary schools in order to cut down the high running costs. This is because private secondary schools supplement the government efforts in providing educational services. The government should ensure trainings of teachers (Both private and government) through workshops and seminars to enhance their knowledge and skills to improve effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several issues required further investigation emerged from this research study. Hence, they therefore require further investigation. This study was based in Rombo district and employed mixed research approach. Consequently, it was difficult to generalize the findings to other areas because the sample was drawn from Rombo district and from four schools only. Therefore, another study should be conducted with comparison approach to uncover the effects of FFE policy in private secondary schools using wider area and sample than what was used in this study.

- Since the study was conducted in private secondary schools only, it is recommended that, a similar study to be conducted on the same topic while comparing effects of FFE policy in teaching and learning in public and in private secondary schools as well.

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