



Approaches Used by Advanced Level Secondary Schools to Overcome Challenges of Fee-free Secondary Education Policy in Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study investigates the strategies employed by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania, to address challenges arising from the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. Despite the commendable aim of the policy to enhance educational access, schools encounter significant challenges, including resource limitations, infrastructural inadequacies, inadequate funding, administrative inadequacies, diminished teacher morale and shortages of teachers. Understanding various adaptive approaches utilized by these schools in mitigating these challenges will highlight successful practices that can be replicated in other regions or contexts. This can also lead to improved implementation of the policy nationwide. Moreover, understanding how schools navigate challenges can help ensure that this access translates into meaningful educational opportunities. The study was carried out in Dodoma City, Tanzania. Data were collected via Documentary reviews, observation and in-depth interviews with participants as the primary means of data collection. A purposive sampling method was employed to choose a group of 20 participants, consisting of education officers, SQAS, heads of schools, teachers, and parents who served as key informants. The thematic analysis technique was employed for data analysis. The findings revealed several strategies that are implemented by schools to overcome challenges that arise in the process of implementation of fee free education policy. These strategies encompass innovative practices, robust community engagement, collaboration with stakeholders, and strong government initiatives. While schools are making commendable efforts to implement the policy effectively, systemic issues still remain that require targeted support from government and educational stakeholders.*

Keywords: *Approaches used, Fee free, Policy, Advanced level schools, Secondary Education*

How to cite this work (APA):

Mwakisambwe, F. & Msoka, E. (2024). Approaches used by advanced level secondary schools to overcome challenges of fee-free secondary education policy in Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 8(4), 422 – 433. <https://doi.org/10.59765/phjt734k>.

1. Introduction

Fee-Free education denotes an educational framework wherein students are exempted from paying tuition fees or any associated expenses for school attendance (Marwa,

2019). The objective of a free education policy is to eradicate financial obstacles and guarantee that all

students possess equitable access to educational opportunities, irrespective of their socioeconomic status. This frequently entails the government or pertinent educational authority subsidizing the expenses of tuition, textbooks, and other necessary educational resources.

Free education is often seen as a mechanism to foster inclusivity, mitigate gaps in educational access, and improve overall educational attainment (Haidari, 2021).

The implementation of fee-free secondary education is a significant policy initiative aimed at increasing access to education for all students, particularly in developing regions. The number of sub-Saharan African countries with free secondary education (FSE) policies in place has increased quickly over the last two decades. As of March 2023, 22 of 47 countries (47%) offer fee-free education at the lower secondary level and 14 (30%) at the upper secondary level. Most countries that introduced FSE policies have done so quite recently. For example, Gambia announced free upper secondary education in 2015, Namibia in 2016, Ghana in 2017, Malawi and Sierra Leone in 2019, Togo in 2021, Zambia in 2022, and South Sudan in 2023. As a result, there appears to be a strong impetus towards free education at both the lower and upper secondary levels. (Ely and Jones, 2023). On November 27, 2015, the Tanzanian Government issued Circular 5, which implements the Education and Training Policy 2014 and guides public bodies to guarantee that secondary education is free for all children,” Luvanga and Mhagama (2022). Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, the late president, strongly fast-tracked the application of the fee-free secondary education policy by vowing to do so. In 2022, President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, through the Minister of Finance and Planning, announced in the parliament that from the government financial year started in July 2022, Tanzania offered free education for advanced levels too. This includes the removal of all forms of fees. The circular number five of 2022 reads: “Provision of free education means students was not pay any fee that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of the new circular.” The implementation of this circular started in July 2022 for all government secondary schools. “The circulars made clear that the government is financing textbooks, lab chemicals and equipment, furniture, sports equipment, repair of machines, construction and repair of school infrastructure, provision of meals in boarding schools, and subsidies to each student. Parents are required to pay for school uniforms, sports equipment, exercise books, medical and meal expenses for day students, travel charges, mattresses and bed covers, as well as personal hygiene properties for residential students of government schools.

In the City of Dodoma, Tanzania, this policy has been met with both success and challenges. On one side, this strategy is commendable as it has helped to increase enrolment rate. The enrollment has been increasing yearly for advanced levels since the re-establishment of fee-free education. For instance, by 2021, the enrolment for Form 5 students was 66,606, while in 2023, it increased to

102,722 (BEST, 2021,2022 and 2023). Mbilinyi & Kihwele, (2021) found a significant increase in student enrollment rates in secondary schools’ post-implementation of the fee-free policy. Fee-free education has led to an increase in the number of students who acquire education, ultimately contributing to a decrease in ignorance. Despite the commendable achievement and a number of positive accomplishments made out of the execution of fee-free education, some available studies have shown that the implementation faces some significant constraints. For instance, studies by Pacaol (2021), Zakaria, Edward & Mohamed (2022), and Pretorius (2023) revealed that the teacher’s workload has increased due flowing increase in the enrolment ratio in public secondary schools. This has compelled the secondary school management in Tanzania to increase efforts into managing the teachers' workload, which has been increasing every year.

Studies by Doriye, Muneja and Ilo (2020) and Haidari (2021) have identified challenges such as shortage of classrooms, overcrowded classrooms, and the difficulty facing teachers in managing crowded classrooms. In the same line, Kindyamtima (2017) found out that the implementation of fee-free education led to an increase in students’ enrolment, which in turn increased teachers' workload. Further, studies by Luvanga (2022) and Mwakalukwa (2019) found that, the implementation of FFE has been linked to various challenges such as shortage of school physical infrastructure, a scarcity of teaching and learning materials, a dearth of teachers, a lack of motivation among teachers, inadequate and delayed disbursement of funds at the school level, and an upsurge in the student-to-textbook ratio. Chibunda & Mhando (2022) conducted a study on “Challenges of Implementing Fee-Free Secondary Education in Dodoma: A Case Study”. The study identified several key challenges, including inadequate classroom space, a shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient teaching materials.

Advanced-level secondary schools play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape, yet they often face obstacles that hinder the effective execution of this initiative. As schools strive to provide quality education without the burden of fees, it becomes essential to explore the strategies they adopt to navigate these difficulties. This study aims to investigate the innovative approaches employed by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, highlighting their resilience and adaptability in the face of systemic challenges. This objective associated with the research question stated what strategies are undertaken by advanced level secondary schools in the City of Dodoma to mitigate challenges encountered during the implementation of fee-free education policy?

By understanding these strategies, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into improving the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes for all students in the region.

2. Literature Review

Godha (2018) conducted a study on the implementation of fee-free secondary education (FSE) and the changing responsibilities of the public-school administrators in Tanzania, with focus on Singida Municipality. The study sought to assess the management capabilities of school leaders in executing the FSE policy. The research gathered data from 200 teachers, 10 school administrators, and 5 city secondary education officials using questionnaires and interviews, and utilized a descriptive survey and qualitative research methodology to guide the research. The results demonstrated that public school leaders in Singida possessed the necessary managerial capabilities to operate their institutions efficiently, despite various challenges they encountered. The hindrances included inadequate funding to satisfy all educational needs, parental misconceptions concerning the comprehensive coverage of expenses by the FSE policy, and a rapid rise in student enrolment. The research showed that school leaders used both formal and informal strategies, including community engagement and informal peer coaching, to address the impediments related with the implementation of the FSE policy.

Musungu et al. (2023) performed a study that rigorously studied school fee collection methodologies and financial accountability in public secondary schools within Khwisero Sub County, Kenya. The study investigated the challenges related to fees payment, as parents are the principal contributors, despite differing economic capacities. The research, informed by agency theory, employed a descriptive survey approach. The sample comprised 25 public secondary schools in Khwisero Sub County and 50 stakeholders, with the county school auditor supervising the research. Data were collected through standardized questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) as well as inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and simple linear regression). Data analysis was performed using SPSS, with results presented in tabular format. The results showed that school fee collection strategies significantly influenced financial openness, evidenced by a R^2 value of 0.504. The report recommended public secondary schools to integrate variables affecting financial accountability into their primary challenges for managing school money. It also recommended for

enhancing fee collection strategies to guarantee adequate financial flow.

Yohana, (2021) conducted a study on “The Impact of Fee-Free Secondary Education on Student Enrollment in Tanzania”. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing quantitative data from enrollment statistics and qualitative interviews with school administrators and teachers. The study found a significant increase in student enrollment rates in secondary schools’ post-implementation of the fee-free policy. However, disparities remained between urban and rural areas, with rural schools facing greater challenges in infrastructure and resources. The study recommended that while the policy has increased access to education, targeted interventions are necessary to address regional disparities and resource allocation is required.

Chibunda & Mhando (2022) conducted a study on “Challenges of Implementing Fee-Free Secondary Education in Dodoma: A Case Study”. This qualitative study utilized case study methodology, conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with teachers, school leaders, and community members. The study identified several key challenges, including inadequate classroom space, a shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient teaching materials. The study highlighted innovative strategies schools used to overcome these issues, such as community engagement and resource-sharing initiatives.

A study by Ndunguru, & Nyakabwa, (2020) on Assessment of Teacher Preparedness in the Context of Fee-Free Secondary Education in Tanzania found that many teachers felt underprepared to adapt to the increased student numbers and diverse classroom needs following the policy's implementation. The study indicated that professional development was cited as a critical need for effective teaching. The findings indicate the urgent need for ongoing professional development and support for teachers, which is essential for maintaining educational quality amid increased enrollment.

Sanga & Kaseke, (2023) conducted a study on “Equity in Education: The Role of Fee-Free Secondary Education in Tanzania.” A mixed-methods approach was used, combining statistical analysis of enrollment data with qualitative interviews of students and parents. The study found out that while fee-free education has improved access, significant equity issues persist, particularly for girls and students with disabilities. The study emphasized that societal norms and economic barriers continue to restrict full participation. The study recommends targeted interventions, including scholarship programs and

community awareness campaigns, to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups.

James, (2023) conducted a study on Resource Allocation and Its Impact on the Quality of Fee-Free Secondary Education. The study utilized quantitative approach and it analyzed resource allocation patterns in a sample of secondary schools, supplemented by interviews with school administrators. The study indicated that insufficient resource allocation negatively impacts educational quality, leading to overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching materials. The also indicated that schools that implemented resource sharing strategies showed improved educational outcomes.

Sefue & Nkina (2023) conducted a study on “Parental Perceptions of Fee-Free Secondary Education in Tanzania. This was a qualitative study involving focus group discussions with parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds across multiple districts. The study found that parents generally view fee-free education positively but expressed concerns about the quality of education and the adequacy of school facilities. Many parents also reported additional costs, such as uniforms and materials, that remained burdensome. The findings highlighted the need for comprehensive support to mitigate hidden costs associated with secondary education and to ensure that the benefits of the fee-free policy are fully realized by all families.

Thinus and Dermine (2024) in her study found out that there was no proper internal auditing set up in schools and that government auditing, was irregular and therefore school funds could have been misappropriated. Internal audit is not itself enough to prevent scams by school personnel. Regular external auditing, either by the education authority or private auditors who are not employed by the school is also necessary.

Coleman’s (2021) study investigated the challenges encountered by school administrators in the execution of fee-free secondary education inside the Bahi District Council, Dodoma. This study aimed to discover administrative challenges, determine teaching and learning obstacles, and investigate the techniques utilized by school leaders to mitigate the ensued challenges. Utilizing systems and contingency theories, the study applied a descriptive survey approach, gathering data from 117 participants through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. It employed descriptive statistics for data analysis, consisting of frequencies and percentages. The results revealed that school leaders face several administrative challenges, including insufficient government funds, limited community awareness, high student enrolment,

and political intervention in education. Furthermore, there were significant shortages of educational resources, including books, tables, chairs, classrooms, and laboratory supplies. In response to these issues, school leaders introduced solutions including the establishment of revenue-generating activities for schools and the engagement of community and school committees. The report advised the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) to establish specialized designated programs for providing trainings to school leaders to enable them to be able efficiently address the issues linked to fee-free secondary education, ultimately improving students' academic performance.

Luvanga (2022) examined the difficulties of executing fee-free basic education in public secondary schools in Karatu District, Tanzania, by employing a mixed-methods methodology and a convergent parallel research design to achieve the objectives. The study randomly selected 97 students and 50 teachers from a population of 2,441 students and 102 teachers, in addition to 24 school board members, one district educational officer, and six heads of schools who participated in focus group discussions and interviews. The study identified multiple challenges that obstruct the successful implementation of the fee-free education policy, therefore limiting the achievement of governmental objectives. Principal challenges included insufficient budget appraisals, inadequate or absence of financial training, and insufficient responsibility among school leaders that is attributed to restricted financial management expertise. The report advocated for the Government to provide crucial financial management training to key stakeholders, especially school administrators, to address the challenges of implementing fee-free basic education in the Karatu District.

Mwakalukwa (2019) conducted a study on fee-free education in Tanzania, which delved on three specific objectives: exploring how street-level bureaucrats cope with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient funding, and scarcities of teaching and learning materials. A qualitative approach and a case study design were employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document’s reviews. The study’s sample consisted of 14 informants, including 7 headteachers and 7 academic teachers. Data were analysed through content analysis. The study revealed that, street-level bureaucrats in Morogoro Municipality exercised substantial discretion and autonomy in managing schools despite encountering several challenges associated to the implementation of the fee-free education policy, such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate funding, and scarcities of teaching materials. These bureaucrats adopted strategies such as actively engaging parents and the community, reducing the number of

assignments, sharing experiences, photocopying limited textbooks, and defining private goals to manage the challenges. The study concluded that the success of any public policy lies in providing clear guidance on how major issues within a country, including education, are to be addressed. It recommended that the Tanzanian government involve street-level bureaucrats in policy formulation to ensure that policies are practical and beneficial to all educational stakeholders through a participatory approach.

These studies provide valuable information on the challenges facing schools towards implementing fee free educational policy. However, most of these studies have failed to explore and analyze the strategies undertaken by advanced-level secondary schools in Tanzania, to mitigate the challenges encountered during the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. Therefore, this study intends to fill this knowledge gap by exploring and analyzing the strategies undertaken by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania, to mitigate the challenges encountered during the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. Specifically, the study seeks to: examine the innovative approaches and adaptive strategies employed by school administrators, teachers, and communities to address these challenges. The objective of the study was to provide valuable recommendations for policymakers and educational stakeholders to support the strategies implemented by schools to overcome the challenges brought via the implementation of fee-free secondary education in Dodoma and similar contexts. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of the practical implications of the fee-free education policy and to inform future efforts to improve educational outcomes in Tanzania.

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional research design was employed in this study to capture approaches used by advanced-level secondary schools to overcome challenges of fee-free secondary education policy. This design is suitable for assessing the status, prevalence, and interrelationships of the identified barriers (Lu, Xu, and Zhang (2021)). The study used a qualitative research approach which allowed the exploration of the strategies employed by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania, to address challenges arising from the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy and offers recommendations for policy improvement and implementation effectiveness. Sample size and sampling procedures are the key aspects to consider when doing research, they play a great role in ensuring validity and reliability of the

study findings (Rahman, 2023). Purposive sampling procedures were employed in this study to strategically select participants who possess specific and relevant insights into the strategies employed by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania, to address challenges arising from the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. The study involved 2 education officers, 2 SQAs, 4 parents, 4 heads of schools, and 8 teachers who selected purposively. Also, the study used stratified sampling technique to include 64 students who divided into 8 groups among 4 advanced secondary school in Dodoma city, therefore the study included a total of 84 respondents. By purposefully selecting participants based on their roles and responsibilities within the education system, the study aims to apprehend a complete understanding of the strategies from key participants who are directly involved in the policy implementation, (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young and Walker, 2020). The data was obtained by engaging in direct observation, documentary review, and in-depth interviews. The study involved conducting interviews with the education officers, SQAs, heads of schools, and parents, the study also included 8 groups of students who participated using FGD.

The gathered data was analyzed qualitatively applying thematic data analysis techniques. The thematic analysis focuses on categorizing and considering major themes and their relationship with qualitative data (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, and Ranfagni, 2023). To assist and endorse the safety of the respondents, the study complied with all relevant ethical standards as delegated by the St John's University of Tanzania. The researcher submitted a claim for ethical clearance, which was subsequently approved, resulting in the assurance of an ethical clearance certificate to confirm the research's adherence to ethical standards.

4. Results and Discussion

This section aims to analyse various measures undertaken by advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma City Council to mitigate the challenges that arise during the implementation of a fee-free education policy. Knowledge of such strategies is quite critical in establishing the wealth of experience in the processes used in an effort to improve education quality under the fee-free systems. The study identified seven subthemes: government involvement, school-based responses, community involvement, creation of solutions, organizational mobilization, and supervision and survey. Every subtheme not only focuses on concrete steps that schools and educational stakeholders took to address ensued challenges and improve educational performance, but how it integrates these steps into the framework as

challenges, presenting them in terms of Sobrtar's hierarchy. By analysing the aforementioned subthemes, the current section aims to provide practical knowledge and proposals for strengthening implementation of the fee-free education policies at Dodoma City Council.

4.1 Government Initiatives

Government initiatives in education, as an analytical category, refer to the policies, programs, and actions implemented by the government to either support or enhance the educational system. The study conducted within the Dodoma City Council identified several government measures and strategies designed to addressing challenges associated with the fee-free education policy implemented in advanced secondary schools. These included increased allocations for physical facilities development, instructional resources provision, and new teachers hiring. This is substantiated by the following respondent who stated that:

The government has been providing funds for the construction of classrooms, restrooms, laboratories, and dormitories, among other facilities, as well as for the hiring of more teachers and the purchase of books, equipment, and computers for school teaching. However, the challenge has been the amount provided relative to the actual existing gaps. (Interview with Education Officer 1, on June 14, 2024).

Another participant said:

In response to the concerns of parents and students, the government has limited additional charges in schools to prevent parents and students from incurring further debt. Also, following to resistance from parents and students, the government has limited extra contributions in schools, aiming to maintain the cost of education without compromising the financial ability of families. (The information was obtained from interviews conducted with SQA 2 on June 14, 2024).

This statement can explain that the government has made some efforts geared towards meeting the requirements of school infrastructure and teachers and teaching aids such as books, apparatus, and computers in order to create conducive environments for learning. Moreover, through this policy the study found that, the government has minimized unnecessary expenses by limiting parents and students' contributions to schools, thereby reducing the financial burden on parents and students. The key informants expressed positive feedback about these strategies, highlighting their ability in

motivating students to begin their education and develop a variety of skills. The policy has positive impact since it contributes to closing the gaps in the availability of resources necessary for the provision of quality education and sustainable fee-free education.

These findings align with studies by Mukonyi and Onkware (2020), which reported that the Kenyan Government implemented subsidized secondary education as the primary intervention strategy to increase participation in secondary school education in Kenya. Likewise, Marwa (2019) asserted that the Government of Tanzania has implemented numerous initiatives to guarantee free access to basic education for every child. Recognizing that education is crucial for Tanzania's socio-economic development, the Government implemented several strategies to guarantee and expand the provision of quality education and declare it as a fundamental right for everyone. However, due to a lack of focus on advanced-level secondary education, the current study calls for more government investment and an active policy approach to deal with this education sector's current and future core problems.

4.2 School-level Solutions

The school-level solutions can be defined as the approaches and strategies developed to address the problems schools are facing in relation to education provision. The current study found that Dodoma City Council has implemented the following school-level strategies to overcome the obstacles associated with the implementation of fee-free education (FFE). Some of these solutions include engaging private teachers to address neglected areas, appealing to parents for more funding in specific areas, and extending the school year to include more learning hours. This is testified by one respondent who stated:

We do understand the importance of equipping our examination candidates with the knowledge needed for them to succeed. Therefore, offering additional lessons tailored to students has been instrumental in addressing feedback from the school's quality assurers. These specialized sessions facilitate the provision of a focused and supportive learning environment. (Interviews with Head of School 2, June 17, 2024).

Also, one of the teachers added:

Private teachers have been employed to help in addressing the challenges of shortage of teachers, particularly those in science. Likewise, students have been asked to bring essential equipment, such as dissecting kits, to address the

issue of inadequate laboratory facilities (The interview with teacher 6 took place on June 17, 2024).

These quotations highlight the significant efforts schools have been making, particularly in securing resources to ensure that students succeed in their examinations, despite their limited availability. Schools have also undertaken the construction and rehabilitation of structures and facilities, conducted meetings for students to voice their grievances, and instilled in them the virtue of stewardship towards their property. These efforts not only fulfill the immediate need but also contribute to the overall positive atmosphere in schools and everyone involved.

However, a study by Issa & Mhagama (2022) revealed that, school administrators may face difficulties in implementing school-level solutions. They discovered that secondary school heads struggle to oversee school resources due to the lack of adequate managerial skills, poor allocation of funds, managing overcrowded classes, and lack of cooperation among staff members. Additionally, the scholars suggest that policymakers should consider implementing a policy that requires school heads to undergo training in resources supervision. The study also proposed to acknowledge schools as the focal agents of change and provide them with sufficient support and guidance to enable them to come up with localized solutions on how to support fee-free education, thus improving policy efficiency and impact.

4.3 Community Engagement

Community engagement in education involves the active participation of parents, community leaders, and other societal stakeholders in enhancing the educational system. The current study conducted in the Dodoma City Council has revealed that increased community involvement could effectively help in addressing several challenges encountered in implementing fee-free education. Among the initiatives taken by the schools the study found include engaging parents and community members in various ways, such as through fundraising efforts and participation in schools' activities. One of the respondents commented:

As the headteacher, our school has adopted the 'Participatory and Collaboration approach with the Community in Academic Issues' as a strategy to address resource constraints during the implementation of fee-free education. "We have been actively involving the community as partners, and together we have achieved significant improvements despite financial limitations we have encountered (Interviews with Head of School 3, June 18, 2024).

A teacher further added that:

Community involvement has been crucial. Parents have been involved make small contributions to support school activities. By fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration, we've been able to mobilize community support and volunteer efforts, which significantly enhances our capacity to provide quality education. We also hold school barazas in order to give feedback to parents and encourage parents to support school activities (Interviews with teacher 2, June 18, 2024).

These remarks illustrate that schools have been proactive in engaging parents and community members in helping to address educational needs and challenges encountered. This involvement not only helps in mobilizing financial support but also promote a sense of ownership and accountability among members of the community. For example, the study observed that, members from one of the local communities surrounding the school contributes 50 shillings per bucket to access the school's water services. Additionally, the leadership of the Bihawana Seminary has contributed 2,000,000 shillings to repair a water pump system, showcasing how collective efforts can help addressing challenges faced by the schools (SQA report, 2022).

Community participation plays a vital role in producing additional resources and solidifying the bond between the school and the community. Shukia (2020) suggest that misunderstandings about the fee-free education policy have caused confusion and led to a decline in community involvement, ultimately jeopardizing the unbiased and quality delivery of education. Similarly, Mukonyi and Onkware (2020) recommend for economically empowering the local communities by creating jobs and providing suitable environment for income-generating activities that can support local educational institutions.

Overall, the study discovered that, there is a need to continue engaging and re-engage parents and community members, since their involvement has proven effective in raising awareness about the importance of education, promoting school attendance, and reducing dropout rates. The positive effects of community support are far-reaching, as it strengthens the support structures for schools, fosters cooperation, and enhances the connection between schools and the community. This study strongly emphasizes the importance of establishing long-lasting partnerships between communities and schools to ensure the sustainable implementation of fee-free education across the region and the whole country.

4.4 Innovative Practices

Innovations practices in education can therefore be defined as the new strategies used by schools to address existing issues with the aim of enhancing education. In Dodoma City Council, the study established the following techniques that were being practiced by schools to mitigate the challenges that accompanied free fees policy. Some of these practices are the availing of instructional and assessing options, the efficient utilisation of resources and consultations with outside partners. One participant highlighted:

The school has extended working hours to cover up the problem of few lessons. Parents are encouraged to pay extra contributions to fund academic activities where teachers are paid for extra lessons. (Interviews with teacher 4, June 18, 2024)

One SQA added in response to this

Many schools adopt innovative strategies to overcome challenges associated with fee free education, even in resource-constrained settings. They engage the local community in academic matters, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This engagement involves regular meetings and encourages parental participation in governance, fostering open communication. (SQA1, June 18, 2024)

This quote illustrates how schools have adapted their schedules and financial strategies to enhance learning opportunities for students. Also, strategies like hiring part-time teachers, usage of teaching technologies, and collaboration with NGOs together with other private and public entities have also been adopted by schools in their quest to enhance their existing educational practices. In this case SQA report documented following strategies; -

1. Use different teaching and learning techniques such as brainstorming, think pair share, role play and group discussions for student to participate fully in learning.
2. Provide the missing textbooks to maximize students' ability to develop independent learning.
3. Prepare Whole School Development Plan and Action Plan for long- and short-term plans for development of the school (SQA report, 2024)

Thus, the innovative practices do not only respond to the current problems but also contribute to gradually building more effective improvements of the educational system. The conclusions derived from the principles of change are potentially far-reaching as they empower schools to optimize resources, enhance processes of instruction and learning, as well as promote the culture of learning improvement.

In this study also it was found for some problems are to be addressed internally innovative practices should be taken into account. Previous scholars like Marwa, Salhi and Jarboui (2019) and Mwakalukwa (2019) who emphasizes additional lessons for examination candidates are tailored to address feedback-related concerns and boost pupils' confidence in specific subjects. Therefore, the present research underscores the need to promote innovation in learning institutions and facilitate the ways that will enable these initiatives to yield the intended results.

4.5 Stakeholders' Collaboration

Educational stakeholders comprise governmental ministries and departments, local and central government authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and community members who work together to support and improve educational programs. The current study conducted in Dodoma City Council has verified that good collaboration with stakeholders is quite essential for overcoming the problems related to the implementation of fee-free education. This study found that, stakeholders were engaged by investigated schools that participated in the study and have played a critical role in supplying financial support, materials, and other essential resources to schools they collaborate with.

This is validated by a respondent who stated that:

We do acknowledge the importance of stakeholder collaboration, consisting of parents, community leaders, and diverse public and private organizations in the implementation of fee-free education. As such the school administrators have been actively engaging parents via meetings and activities organized at schools (Interviews with head of school 4, June 19, 2024).

A different headteacher remarked:

As the headmaster, our school has implemented the 'Participation and Collaboration with the Community in Academic Issues' strategy in order to mitigate resource limitations during the implementation of fee-free education. We engage

the community as partners, and together, we have attained considerable improvements despite fiscal constraints we face (Interviews with head of school 3, June 19, 2024).

This collaborative strategy is further substantiated by evidence from Tanzanian public primary schools, where administrators engage closely with local communities to mitigate resource limitations. By promoting collective accountability for educational enhancement, schools have been able to somehow leverage financial resources, instructional materials, and infrastructural advancement. This strategy seeks to augment school budgets and address the resource-related recommendations outlined in Quality School Assurance (QSA) feedback.

Stakeholders, including the government, are shown as both resource suppliers and responsible agents accountable for the efficiency and efficacy of the fee-free education program. Collaborative efforts have been undertaken to facilitate the construction of schools, supply essential teaching resources, and training teachers. The partnership among stakeholders has produced substantial advantages, such as improved resource allocation, accomplishment of educational objectives, collective accountability, and better management of complicated tasks.

Leo, Matete and Seni, (2024) advised that, educational stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, should emphasize the strengthening of the School Quality Assurance department, which oversees the delivery of quality teaching and learning. This study's findings underline the necessity of fostering harmonious relationships among all stakeholders to ensure the sustainable implementation of the fee-free education policy and its linked programs.

4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in education involves the systematic collection, analysis, and use of information to analyse, evaluate, and acquire insights from the effects of educational interventions. This research indicated that within Dodoma City Council, effective and relevant monitoring and evaluation procedures are acknowledged as essential for assessing the effectiveness of the fee-free education policy and pinpointing areas requiring improvement. The invested schools were found to have implemented diverse monitoring and evaluation systems, by exploiting examinations, feedback, and reports as instruments for sampling and evaluating performance and achievement. The District Education Officer (DEO) stressed the significance of consistent follow-up, by asserting that:

Consistent follow-up is an quite essential administrative strategy. Since, it enables us to accurately observe the implementation of action plans by schools. Our visits provide us with a chance to gauge the effectiveness of executed plans and deliver necessary assistance. This proactive participation guarantees that schools remain dedicated to the feedback implementation process, irrespective of problems or resources limitations (Education Officer 1, June 19, 2024).

Another person remarked:

The government has established monitoring and evaluation systems to analyse the progress and effectiveness of the fee-free education program, including SQA assessments and reports (Interviews with teacher 8, June 19, 2024).

A school leader remarked:

The government has introduced the monitoring and assessment of the fee-free education program at the advanced level. This demonstrates the government's commitment to attaining improved results from this strategy. (The interview with the head of School 1 occurred on June 19, 2024).

These results underline the obligation of proactive follow-up and monitoring systems in facilitating effective policy implementation. The research has shown that proficient monitoring and evaluation techniques have permitted schools to identify areas of necessity, including infrastructure, resources, and the quality of teaching staff, hence facilitating prompt interventions. Robust monitoring and evaluation processes are quite essential for continuing improvement, fostering accountability, and providing empirical evidences to inform policy development and execution.

The SQA report stipulates that:

The head of the school must guarantee the proper completion of subject logbooks, the organization of question banks by subject, the inclusion of internal exam marking schemes, and the preparation of proposed NECTA marking schemes (SQA report, 2022).

A study by Eremugo and Okoche (2021) highlight the importance of developing thorough monitoring and evaluation machineries to facilitate the continued implementation and effectiveness of fee-free education initiatives. This study largely assessed the monitoring and evaluation information through SQA reports.

Besides, Makiya (2022) disclosed that the monitoring and evaluation method encompassed systematic school visits,

rapid follow-up, timely dissemination of SQA feedback, utilization of supportive language, encouragement of professional development, and engagement of teachers in SQA strategies, all of which enhanced learning outcomes. Nonetheless, the study revealed that SQA reports were occasionally ineffectual in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning due to inadequate communication skills, insufficient human resources, poor implementation of feedback, and a lack of adequate funding for activities related to the delivery of quality education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the successful implementation of the fee-free advance level secondary education policy relies heavily on a multifaceted approach. The study has highlighted several strategies implemented by school to overcome challenges that arise during the implementation of fee free education policy. This initiative encompasses innovative practices, robust community engagement, collaboration with stakeholders, and strong government initiatives. This study highlights the resourcefulness and determination of these schools as they develop and employ various strategies to navigate obstacles such as limited resources, infrastructure deficits, overcrowding of students and staffing shortages. The findings indicate that while significant efforts have been made, gaps still exist and more initiative need to be made in order to address systemic challenges and ensure the policy's long-term success. This study provides additional recommendations that can be implemented by school to overcome challenges that arise during the implementation of fee free education policy

5.2 Recommendations

1. Community engagement

The finding of the study show that community involvement has been very crucial. The finding show that school have been engaging parents via requiring them to contribute funding to the schools. This study recommends that parents and local leaders need to be engaged in discussions about resource allocation and school needs. This effort will foster a sense of ownership and collaboration. Parents and local leaders bring unique insights and experiences that can help identify specific challenges and opportunities within the school community. Their input can lead to more informed decision-making. Open discussions about resource allocation can promote transparency in how funds are used and decisions are made. This can build trust between the school administration and the community.

2. Collaboration with stakeholders

This study found that, education stakeholders were engaged to support school activities and they have played a critical role in supplying financial support, materials, and other essential resources to schools they collaborate with. This study recommends that schools need to organize regular community forums and workshops to discuss the fee-free policy and its implications. This collaborative approach helps us identify challenges more effectively and develop solutions that are responsive to the needs of our school community. Additionally, a stakeholder advisory committee that includes parents, teachers, and local business leaders need to be established. This committee has to meet regularly to provide input on school policies and initiatives, fostering a sense of shared responsibility

3. Funding challenge

One of the primary challenges has been ensuring adequate funding and resources to maintain quality education without fees. The study found that school have been largely depending on government for funding. This study recommends that schools have to form partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to secure additional resources. Schools can initiate fundraising campaigns or grant applications to supplement government funding, ensuring that they provide necessary materials and support.

4. Overcrowding challenge

This study recommends that schools should adapt their teaching methods considering increased enrollment. To manage larger class sizes, schools have to implement team teaching and peer tutoring programs. Schools must integrate technology to facilitate blended learning, allowing for more personalized instruction and helping students stay engaged despite the challenges of a larger classroom setting.

5. Innovative practices

The study found out that schools are using different teaching and learning techniques such as brainstorming, think pair share, role play and group discussions for student to participate fully in learning. Those are commendable, however, since we are in a digital age more innovative initiative need to be done. This study recommends that several innovative practices need to be adopted, such as utilizing blended learning models that combine traditional teaching with online resources. This approach will allow schools to provide personalized learning experiences while accommodating the increased number of students without requiring additional physical space. Further, schools must introduce e-learning

platforms that will allow students to access course materials and assignments remotely. This not only helps manage classroom sizes but also encourages self-directed learning. Additionally, schools need to provide training for teachers to effectively integrate technology into their teaching methods.

6. School level

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- At the school level, schools have to establish a resource allocation committee that regularly assesses school needs and prioritizes spending to ensure essential services and materials are funded effectively. This committee will allow schools to make informed decisions about where to allocate limited resources.
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