

# **An analysis of fee-free education policy implementation and its implications to the quality of secondary education in Tunduru district in Tanzania**

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This study intended to analyse the fee-free education policy implementation to draw its implications on the quality of education in four selected public secondary schools in Tunduru district, in Ruvuma region in Tanzania. The objectives of the study were: To assess the extent to which fee-free education policy implementation affects school financial management process; To examine the effects of fee-free education policy implementation on teaching and learning process and; To identify the contribution of the fee-free education policy on teachers' and students' involvement in school financial decision making. The study was guided by eclectic model of policy analysis. The target population for the study was district secondary education officer, ward education officers, heads of schools, teachers and students. A sample of 65 participants was employed and purposive and criterion sampling techniques were used in sample selection. The study used qualitative approach and case study design. Interview, observation, focus group discussions and documentary reviews were employed as methods of data collection. Data were also analysed using content and thematic methods. The findings revealed that fee-free education policy was associated with some changes which positively and negatively affected school financial management process. The positive effects included good financial control system and elimination of conflicts and disturbances that existed because of school fees and contribution collection between school management and students or parents or guardians. Whereas the negative effects include: crippling the school heads' authority and autonomy over the use of funds because of top-down approach to financial management and; challenges on school financial resources' distribution due to insufficient funds allocated to schools by the government among others. Furthermore, the findings depicted that FFEP negatively affected teaching and learning process due to insufficient teaching and learning materials and because of increased enrollment caused by the policy decision of eliminating school fees and all forms of contributions, a number of challenges were experienced including difficulties in class size management and difficulties in providing feedback to learners. Also, findings depicted that teachers were involved in schools' financial decision making whereas students were not involved. The study concluded that FFEP is very significant for accessibility of children's

schooling, but it requires effective planning and adequate preparation before its implementation as well as high investment, in order to ensure quality education provision. It also recommends a number of issues including a need of: reviewing FFE budget to take into account the changing enrollment in the course of the year and the inflation aspect to ensure sufficient allocation of school funds.