

**Assessment of School Facilities and Resources in the Context of Fee Free Basic
Education in Tanzania**

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Abstract

The government of the United Republic of Tanzania is committed in the provision of fee free education. The provision of fee free basic education responds to international and local policy obligation. Following circulars issued by the government to guide on the implementation of fee basic education, the enrolment of students in primary and secondary schools has increased for about 5.1% in 2016. This is a significant record in the education sector in Tanzania. However, the increase in enrolment has not corresponded with the expansion and improvement of school facilities and resources. This has consequently posed a threat in the provision of quality education. Although the implementation of fee free basic education is informed by policies, the government's decision for this implementation has been untimely and defeats the aspect of quality education. Similarly, key education stakeholders have been inquisitive on the sustainability of the government's move given the constraints in resources and failures of previous attempts. It is therefore recommended the government to rethink on the mode of providing fee free basic education by involving wider community in the decision making process.

Key words: school facilities; school resources; fee free basic education; Tanzania

1. Background

The provision of educational opportunities, especially of basic education has been an objective of investment of many countries all over the world. At the national level, a constitutional commitment to education matters both symbolically and practically. Constitutions delineate a country's fundamental values and commitments as well as its economic and political organization. In Tanzania, the right to education is provided for in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 1977 Article 11 (1) (2) and (3) (URT, 1998). Since independence in 1961, Tanzania has made public education a national priority, prompting waves of related policy changes and investment strategies. Constitutional protections of education range from general aspirations toward universalizing primary school to unequivocal guarantees of free and equal access to education at all levels (Heymann, Raub & Cassola, 2014). The government of the United Republic of Tanzania is committed in the provision of basic education that encompasses pre-primary, primary and ordinary level secondary education, thus primary education and ordinary level secondary education have been made free and basic.

School fees represent one of the main obstacles to enrolment and persistence, especially for children from low income households. A wide body of evidence shows that the costs of schooling inhibit school enrolment. For example, parents in Indonesia, China, the Solomon Islands, and many African countries cite user fees as a major obstacle to enrolling their children in school (Saroso, 2005; Yardley, 2005). In the 1980s, the reduction of public expenditure on education and the introduction of school fees in many low- and middle-income countries as part of Structural Adjustment Programmes corresponded with decreased rates of primary and secondary school participation, particularly among children from the poorest households (Heymann, Raub & Cassola,

2014). While compulsory and free education are typically governed by policy, having these commitments entrenched constitutionally assigns clear responsibility to the state for their provision and gives citizens a tool to hold governments accountable (Heymann, Raub & Cassola, 2014). In 2001, parents and teachers in Tanzania said that non-payment of fees was the principal reason why children did not attend school (Oxfam, 2001). Zambia's Central Statistics Office estimated that at least 45 percent of children who drop out of school did so because they could not pay school fees (Tembo & Ndhlovu, 2005).

2. International and National Policy Frameworks on the Provision of Free Basic Education

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 has ten targets. Target 4.1 requires by 2030 to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes (Loewe & Rippin, 2015). Target 4.2 requires by 2030 to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (Loewe & Rippin, 2015). Tanzania is prepared to implement a five year Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016/2017-2017/2021 (MoEST, 2016b). The five year ESDP 2016/17-2020/21 responds to implementation of the key targets and indicators for education and capacity development; skills development; science, technology and innovation in the National Five Year Development Plan (NFYDP), 2016/17-2020/21 (URT, 2016b). Additionally, the plan takes on board key initiatives as stated in the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014. The Five-Year Development Plan and the Education and Training Policy form the overarching framework within which the ESDP is designed.

The Government issued Circular 5 on November 27, 2015 which implements the Education and Training Policy 2014 and directs public bodies to ensure that secondary education is free for all children. This includes the removal of all forms of fees and contributions. The Circular reads: *“Provision of free education means pupils or students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of new circular”*. However, whilst most fees are covered, including examination fees, some indirect costs will still remain. A Circular Number 3 of 2016 issued on 25th May 2016 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology states that the government shall offer free basic education from pre-primary to secondary education as part of the implementation of the Education and Training Policy 2014 (MoEST, 2016).

The Government further issued Circular No. 3 of the year 2016 for the purpose of providing guidance on how to implement fee free basic education. The Circular clarifies the responsibilities of stakeholders in the provision of fee free basic education (MoEST, 2016a). With this Circular, the government has gone beyond its Constitutional obligation to provide free, quality primary education and brings Tanzania in line with the target of Sustainable Development Goal 4 which requires States to ensure that everyone “completes free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education”. The directive now means that children in Tanzania will enjoy eleven years of free

schooling. The abolition of school fees at the secondary level is expected to increase enrolment and attendance, as occurred in 2002, when primary education was made free and the primary net enrolment rate jumped from 59% in 2000 to 94% in 2011¹.

The implementation education programmes within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals is consonant with the FYDP objectives which recognise that an educated populace is a prerequisite for becoming a Middle Income Country, to which that plan aspires (MoEVT, 2014). The government's ongoing investment in basic education implies that is responsible for 95.2% of pre-primary, 96.6% of primary, 82.2% of O-Level and 70.4% of A-Level secondary enrolment. The pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target as set by the ESDP (2008-2017), of 50%, has been reached. Data indicates that the total enrolment of pupils in primary schools has increased by 5.1% from 8,222,667 pupils in year 2014 to 8,639,202 pupils in year 2016. This has been contributed by an increase of Standard I pupils enrolment as a result of fee free education policy (MoEST, 2016).

In many countries, recent efforts to reduce or abolish school fees are, in fact, second attempts. The first efforts were initiated many decades earlier but were abandoned or reversed under pressure of economic crises. In Ghana, for instance, primary school fees were first abolished in 1961; while in Kenya and Tanzania, fee abolition policies were introduced in 1974. These policies had a significant impact on enrolment and resulted in rapid gains toward the goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Over time, however, the policies were largely abandoned, and many of the early gains reversed. Many countries have reintroduced fee abolition policies during the past decade as part of the renewed international effort to achieve UPE by 2015 (World Bank, 2009).

Tanzania showed a GER in primary education of only 31% at independence in 1961 and remained as low as 35 percent in 1970. Following a decision in 1974 to introduce free universal primary education by 1977 (advancing an earlier target date for 1989 set in the Third Five-Year Plan), the standard I apparent intake rate increased from 56 percent in 1974 to 98 percent in 1975, 110 percent in 1976, 111 percent in 1977, and 168 percent in 1978. It then declined to 97 percent in 1979, 83 percent in 1980, and 82 percent in 1982. The rate continued to decline to 75 percent in 1991 and 74 percent in 1999. This downward trend reflects Tanzania's economic stagnation and decline during most of this period. The sharp increase between 1974 and 1978 resulted in the GER reaching a peak of approximately 100 percent in 1981. The one-year enrolment increase between 1977 and 1978 was 32 percent for total primary school enrolment and 59 percent for standard I enrolment (World Bank, 2009). The United Republic of Tanzania has introduced since January 2016, the Free Basic Education Policy. The Free Basic Education Policy was one of the 2015 Election Manifesto. Findings of Education Sector Analysis (ESA) report (2014-2016) indicated that, in 2013, general formal education represented over 90% of all enrolments, despite a significant slow-down in the

¹ <http://www.right-to-education.org/news/tanzania-implements-free-education-policy-secondary-education>.
Downloaded on 21st December 2016 at 4:56 P.M.

overall rate of growth, from an average annual rate of 5.7% over the 2005-2009 period, to a 0.8% over the 2009-2013 period. This reduction in the rate of expansion is noted for all subsectors, from pre-primary to higher education. The downward trend in primary enrolment noted over 2009-2014 has been reversed. The enrolment dropped from 8,441,553 in 2009 to 8,222,627 in 2014, a decrease of 2.7%; and has risen to 8,639,202 in 2016 which is an increase of 5.1%. With the significant increase in enrolment following the introduction of free primary education, additional pressure has been put on existing school facilities and resources including human resources.

3. State of School Facilities and Resources in Tanzania

The main determinants of quality education include provision of adequate textbooks and teaching staff, a conducive learning environment (including water and sanitation facilities and classrooms), as well as a broad-based curriculum that is implemented through child-centred interactive teaching methodologies. School facilities are one of the basic educational requirements that must be maintained in terms of safety and quality. According to Syakima, Sapri and Shahril (2011) there are five types of facilities provided in government schools namely: administration spaces, academic spaces, support facilities, laboratories and open spaces. The provision of public facilities must be planned based equally distributed, accessible, safe, provide interaction and must be properly designed. All these school facilities must be adequately provided for and managed (Ibrahim, Osman, Bachok, & Mohamed, 2016). In the context of this paper, educational facilities and resources are defined as all the physical properties of a school, consisting of the grounds, buildings, and the various facilities within the school grounds and inside the school buildings and the human resources. Also known as the school plant or the physical facilities of a school; thus, the terms educational school facilities, school plant, and physical facilities may be used interchangeably.

Physical facilities like classrooms, desks, chairs, libraries and toilets are an important factor in both attendance and achievement. It is generally agreed that the facilities have a direct bearing on good performance among students in developing countries (Ayoo, 2000). Lack of adequate facilities and a shortage of permanent classrooms particularly in poor districts, poor state of existing school infrastructure due to lack of investment, poor construction standards and inadequate maintenance, limited number of primary schools serving poor population in isolated rural areas and the huge discrepancies in needs have been major talking points. Eshiwani (1983) found that schools that had the best facilities like libraries, laboratories and playing fields were among the high achieving schools. Nguru (1986) observed that crowding of classes interferes with learners' sitting positions and make it difficult for children to write, while teachers find it difficult to move around to help needy children or mark students work while the lesson is going on.

Despite progress and achievements in previous years as well as introduction of free education in 2016 there are still some challenges that the Ministry needs to quickly and urgently address. Data show that Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTR) have improved at both primary (from 55:1 in 2009 to 43:1 in 2016) and secondary levels (from 43:1 to 17:1 in 2009 to 2016 respectively, to well within the

SEDP target of 30:1 due to increased recruitment of teachers. This has led to an increase of a number of teachers by 32% in primary and 220% at secondary schools (MoEST, 2016).

It is also reported that, in primary schools, there is less attractive school and classroom environment which contribute to Out of School Children (OOSC). This is observed, among other things, by the shortage of classrooms, estimated at 45%. However, there is Government initiatives to solve the problem of desks shortage in primary schools and have shown a big success (MoEST, 2016). The national secondary pupil-classroom ratio stands at 42:1. Regional ratios range from 33:1 in Lindi to 61:1 in Dar es Salaam and the overall classroom shortage is at an average of 37% (MoEST, 2016).

In 2016, at pre-primary level, a total of 11,920 teachers out of 14,598 (79.7%) are qualified teachers giving a Pupil Qualified Teacher Ratio (PQTR) of 1:131 against the standard norm of 1:25. The situation is worse in government streams where PQTR is 1:169 compared to 1:24 for Non-Government Schools. In 2016, Qualified primary school teachers (Grade A teachers and above) was 99.2% of all teachers. The PQTR is 1:42 in 2016 while the norm is 1:40. Total number of primary schools has increased by 1.6% while the number of Government primary schools has increased by 0.9%, Non-Government Schools has increased by 14.1%.

In 2013, only a quarter of science laboratory needs were fulfilled (3,300 for biology, chemistry and physics). The shortage of agriculture and geography facilities reached 94%, and that of computer rooms, 85%. A total of 3,500 schools, over three-quarters of all the secondary schools, lack a library. Furthermore, the average male Pit Latrine Ratio (PLR) is 1:53 against the Standard of 1:25; and that of females is 1:52 against the standard of 1:20. Also, Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR) is 1:73 against the Standard of 1:45. The adequacy of latrines and classrooms is still a major challenge in primary schools with notable variations among regions (MoEST, 2016).

Data further show that there is an acute shortage of 10,943 (83.4%) school administration blocks, 186,008 (81.1%) teachers' houses, 15,342 (88%) libraries and 16,290 (93.9%) first aid rooms. The pupil desk ratio in primary schools is 1:5 against the recommended average of 1:3² (MoEST, 2016). In terms of electricity supply for supporting the teaching of Teknolojia ya Habari na Mawasiliano (TEHAMA)³, out of 17174 Primary Schools, only 3,818 (22.2%) have been connected to the national grid electric power. This halts the implementation of school curriculum and defeats the notion of information and communication technology in teaching and learning (MoEST, 2016). The Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) has made review of curriculum for primary education and TEHAMA is no longer on offer in primary schools.

The pupil desk ratio in primary schools is 1:5 against the recommended average of 1:3 MoEST, 2016). The Region with high demand of desks is Mwanza followed by Geita and Dar es Salaam

²Desks are normally three seater but may vary from one to three seater desks in some schools.

³ Stands for Information and Communication Technology translated from Kiswahili.

(MoEST, 2016). In addition, the Pupil Latrine Ratio (PLR) is high in Geita Region (1:39) followed by Mwanza Region (1:33) while Iringa Region had low PLR of 1:17. The Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR) in secondary schools is high in Mwanza Region (1:53) followed Geita Region (1:48) while Dodoma and Iringa have low PCR of 1:34 each (MoEST, 2016). Moreover, teacher absenteeism recorded highly in 2014 ranging from 58% in Singida to 17% in Manyara and Ruvuma regions (Uwezo, 2015). As per MoEST (2016), the leading regions for teacher absenteeism are Mwanza, Dar es Salaam and Kigoma with 42%, 36% and 33% respectively.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The provision of quality education is a delicate commitment which should be carefully planned and implemented. Experiences and voices presented herein have implications on informing institutional policies and practices. This paper acknowledges the efforts of the government in provision of free basic education in Tanzania. It similarly acknowledges the role of the private sector in supporting government's effort. While acknowledging the developments and expansion in primary and secondary education, there are still is little agreement on the fundamental characteristics of quality in education in the country as shown by proxy indicators such as pupil-teacher ratios (TPR) or pupil-book ratios (PBR). The provision of quality basic education must be coupled with conducive teaching and learning environment. Findings from different studies have revealed a correlation between school learning environment and students' academic achievement, school attendance and students' drop out. For example, Ileoye (2015) revealed that pupils derive more satisfaction with schooling with the availability of functional toilets and urinals, flowers planted at specific locations in the school premises, good play ground and so many other attractive facilities for teaching and learning. Although the government is committed to providing free education, key education stakeholders including parents and community must be actively involved in the endeavour. It is therefore recommended that government effort should go consonant with community involvement and participation. Moreover, decision making on educational issues must involve key stakeholders, informed by policies and plans, should not be driven by political ambitions, and should take a bottom up approach.

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