

**FEE-FREE EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON ACCESS TO
SECONDARY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
MOROGORO MUNICIPALITY, TANZANIA**

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2025

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned, certify that I have read and hereby recommended for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation entitled “**Fee Free Education Policy and its impact on access to secondary education in public secondary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania**”, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of degree of master of education in Administration, Planning and Policy studies (MED-APPS).

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Date

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DECLARATION

I, Richard D. Jumie, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution for any academic award. I have duly acknowledged all sources used in this study. I therefore present this dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education in Administration, Planning, and Policy Studies (MEd-APPS).

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Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, namely The Late Father Daniel Jumi, my mother Violeth Vumbagu, my sisters Elisi, Scholar, Penina, Agness, Maria, and Kaleme, and my brothers James and Fanuel. My family, including my wife, Olga Maduhu and my children, for offering their prayers and encouragement; and Mrs Shairose Karim Jivraj, who has been my forefront in helping me with my language skills and editing throughout my studies, without whom I would not have achieved all this. I would also like to thank my General Manager, Brigadier General S.A. Hamisi, for his permission to pursue my research.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy on access to secondary education in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. It was guided by three objectives: to evaluate the policy's effect on access to secondary education, to assess the resources used in its implementation, and to identify the challenges faced during implementation. The study employed a mixed research approach with a convergent design, involving 290 teachers and 6,000 students. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, using stratified, simple random, and purposive sampling techniques. Validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha for quantitative data and triangulation for qualitative data. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were used for quantitative analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that parental awareness of the fee-free education policy was modest, though the policy has significantly enhanced access to education and reduced illiteracy in Tanzania. However, limited budget allocations and low parental awareness hindered effective implementation. The study concluded that, despite its positive impact on promoting education, the policy's success remains constrained by financial and awareness challenges. It recommended that the government increase funding and improve school infrastructure, parents ensure regular school attendance, teachers fulfil their instructional roles, and students actively engage in learning to improve academic performance.

Keywords: *Fee-Free Education, Secondary Education, Public Secondary Schools, Schools.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the study by presenting the background to the problem and explaining the research context and rationale. It also states the problem, clearly identifying the main issue the study intends to address. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the study's objectives and the research questions that guided the investigation. It also discusses the study's significance, emphasising its potential contributions to policy, practice, and future research. Finally, the chapter describes the scope and delimitations of the study, specifying the boundaries within which the research was carried out, and presents the study's limitations.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Access to quality secondary education remains a global challenge, especially among marginalised communities. Across the world, education is increasingly recognised as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and sustainable development. To enhance access and equity, many governments have adopted fee-free education policies, particularly at the secondary level. However, while such policies are intended to remove financial barriers, their effectiveness in increasing access often varies depending on how they are implemented and supported.

In the United States, for instance, Lau (2020) reported that universal free community college significantly increased enrollment by 26% and degree completions by 20%. However, fiscally conservative models had a limited impact, especially on low-income students, underscoring the critical role of policy design in shaping

educational outcomes. This highlights the broader concern that while eliminating school fees may increase access, without adequate investment and planning, the gains may be uneven or unsustainable.

Similar complexities are observed in Asia. In India, Hoque and Mahanta (2020) found that, before educational reforms, the income elasticity of per-student expenditure was higher, indicating stronger government responsibility for financing education. However, household preferences varied inversely with state development levels, suggesting that even with free education, access may remain unequal unless resources are equitably distributed. This dynamic directly relates to the independent variable, fee-free education policy, and its effect on the dependent variable, access to secondary education, by showing how the policy implements measures that shape outcomes.

In North and West Africa, studies present mixed yet insightful outcomes. In Ghana, Duflo et al. (2017) found that removing financial barriers increased access and long-term socio-economic benefits, particularly for female students. Supporting this, Stenzel et al. (2023) observed a 14.9 percentage-point increase in overall completion rates and a 14 percentage-point increase among schoolgirls in districts with higher policy uptake. These findings underscore how fee-free policies can significantly enhance access when well-targeted and gender-responsive. However, Casely-Hayford et al. (2025) cautioned that while Ghana's policy improved access, it led to unintended consequences, such as an influx of underprepared students and overburdened school resources. Similarly, Igu et al. (2024) in Nigeria emphasised that while the policy aimed to remove cost barriers, infrastructural deficits persisted,

indicating that financial exemptions alone do not ensure adequate access.

These findings are echoed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the fee-free policy in Zambia, as shown by Mwelwa et al. (2024), increased enrollment and public funding but at the expense of quality due to strained resources such as classrooms, textbooks, and laboratories. This reinforces the importance of aligning policy with capacity ensuring that increased access does not compromise quality. Furthermore, Asante et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of strategic administrative planning in Ghana, contributing to more effective outcomes, again reinforcing the interplay between policy (independent variable) and access (dependent variable).

In East Africa, and particularly in Tanzania, the adoption of the fee-free secondary education policy since 2016 has sparked significant changes. Lyanga and Chen (2020) found that the policy led to increased enrollment and improved examination results, though a mismatch between infrastructure development and student growth accompanied these gains. James (2023) further supported these findings, reporting a high correlation ($r = 0.986$) between government funding and enrollment, with a temporary decline in dropout rates. However, issues such as fluctuating funding, overcrowded classrooms, and pressure on school resources persist. Sosthenes et al. (2022) noted that private schools experienced enrollment declines, affecting their financial sustainability.

Moreover, Lazaro and Matiku (2022) documented positive community involvement and increased student attendance, yet also acknowledged increased demand for materials and teaching staff. These observations highlight both the successes and the

systemic weaknesses in translating policy into equitable access. Nevertheless, weaknesses in implementation have also been recorded. Chacha and Kiwonde (2024) observed gaps in school financial management, including poor record-keeping and inadequate resource planning. Doriye et al. (2020) and Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) documented persistent shortages in essential physical resources and teaching materials, limiting the policy's effectiveness.

These findings suggest that while the policy aims to promote access to secondary education, inadequate funding, transparency, and resource distribution undermine its potential impact. At the local level, studies such as those by Mbeya and Mwila (2024) provide crucial insights into the specific challenges facing regions, such as Morogoro Municipality. Although their focus was on primary education, their findings are applicable and reveal acute shortages of infrastructure, delays in the disbursement of government funds, limited teacher training, and poor stakeholder coordination. Given the similarities in policy and context, these challenges are likely to affect secondary schools in Morogoro as well, further complicating access and undermining the benefits of the fee-free education policy.

In summary, while fee-free education policies are globally recognised for their potential to enhance access to secondary education, their impact is mediated by the extent to which they are implemented and supported. The evidence from different regions underscores the need for adequate infrastructure, strategic resource allocation, transparent financial management, and community involvement. In Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, understanding how these factors influence the relationship between the fee-free education policy (independent variable) and access

to secondary education (dependent variable) is essential. Without addressing systemic and contextual barriers, the policy's intended benefits may not fully materialise.

Despite Tanzania's fee-free education policy, which aims to improve access to secondary education, public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality continue to face challenges that limit their effectiveness. While the policy has increased student enrollment, inadequate infrastructure, shortages of teaching materials and qualified teachers, and strained school budgets hinder its successful implementation. Globally, research shows that the impact of fee-free education policies depends on effective implementation supported by sufficient resources, transparency, and community involvement. Therefore, understanding how these factors influence the relationship between the fee-free education policy and access to secondary education in Morogoro Municipality is essential, as failure to address these challenges may prevent the policy's intended goals of equitable and sustainable access to quality education from being achieved.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the Tanzanian government's implementation of the Fee-Free Education Policy in 2016, intended to increase equitable access to secondary education, many public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality continue to experience significant challenges. Studies such as those by Lyanga and Chen (2020) and James (2023) have documented sharp increases in student enrollment following the policy, yet this has not been matched with proportional growth in infrastructure, teaching staff, or learning materials. As a result, schools face issues such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient desks and books, and delays in the disbursement of

capitation grants (Katabazi & Kamugisha, 2022). Consequently, the quality of education remains compromised, especially for students from low-income households who rely solely on public schooling.

While various studies have examined the broader national implications of the fee-free policy, few have focused specifically on its localised impact in Morogoro Municipality, particularly on access to secondary education amid resource constraints. Research has highlighted increased enrollment (Lazaro & Matiku, 2022) but has not fully explored how these gains translate into actual access, defined not just by enrollment but by consistent attendance, retention, and transition to higher levels. This study addresses that gap by evaluating how the Fee-Free Education Policy has influenced access to secondary education in Morogoro Municipality. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate whether removing financial barriers has genuinely improved educational access or merely introduced new systemic strains that undermine policy effectiveness.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy on access to secondary education in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To evaluate the impact of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education.

- ii. To examine the resources used to implement the free education policy in secondary education
- iii. To identify the challenges of implementing fee-free education in secondary schools

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the level of access to secondary education in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality since the implementation of the fee-free education policy?
- ii. How has the fee-free education policy influenced student enrollment, attendance, and transition rates in public secondary schools?
- iii. What challenges are faced by public secondary schools in implementing the fee-free education policy in Morogoro Municipality?
- iv. What strategies can be employed to improve access to secondary education under the fee-free education policy in Morogoro Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in contributing to the existing body of knowledge regarding the relationship between education policies and access to secondary education in developing countries. By focusing on Morogoro Municipality, it provides a localised understanding of how national policies are experienced on the ground, highlighting specific factors that either facilitate or hinder access. The findings will deepen academic knowledge of the real-world impact of Tanzania's fee-free education policy and may inform future comparative studies in similar contexts.

From a practical perspective, the study is expected to guide education stakeholders—including school administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders—by identifying challenges and opportunities created by the policy. It will offer evidence-based suggestions to help schools manage increased enrollment while maintaining educational quality and ensuring equitable access for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

At the policy level, the study will provide helpful data to government authorities and policymakers in the education sector, including the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The insights gained will inform policy reviews, particularly regarding resource allocation, infrastructure planning, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the fee-free education policy meets its intended goals without compromising quality or sustainability. Finally, this research fills a crucial gap by focusing on a region that has received limited attention in the academic literature. While national-level studies exist, few have explored the unique implementation dynamics and challenges in Morogoro Municipality. Addressing this gap will not only enhance regional understanding but also contribute to more inclusive and equitable education policy development across Tanzania.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study was geographically limited to Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, focusing specifically on public secondary schools. It examined the impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy on access to secondary education, with particular attention to student enrollment, attendance, transition rates, and associated challenges. The target population included school heads, teachers, education officers, and students. The key

research variables were the fee-free education policy (independent variable) and access to secondary education (dependent variable).

The study did not cover private schools, as the policy's direct influence was on public institutions. Additionally, it excluded primary and higher education, focusing solely on ordinary-level secondary education (Forms I–IV). The research also excluded students and schools outside Morogoro Municipality and did not analyse data before 2016, as this period preceded the policy's implementation. Furthermore, the study did not assess academic performance outcomes or compare educational quality across regions, as its focus remained strictly on access under the fee-free framework.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

As is common in social science research, this study encountered limitations beyond the researcher's control. One major challenge was the difficulty accessing respondents, particularly school administrators and education officers, due to their tight schedules or unavailability during data collection. Some participants were also reluctant to express their views fully, likely due to fears of implicating their institutions or contradicting official narratives. To address these challenges, the researcher assured participants of strict confidentiality, emphasised the study's academic purpose and significance, and offered flexible interview and data-collection schedules. These measures helped improve participation and enhanced the quality and reliability of the collected data.

1.9 Organisation of the Dissertation

This research is organised into five main chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by presenting the background to the problem, the statement of the problem, the

research objectives and questions, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitations. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding the study's context and purpose. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature. It begins with definitions of key terms and continues with theoretical and empirical discussions that relate to the research topic. It also identifies the existing research gap and outlines the conceptual framework that guides the study.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology used. It describes the research philosophy and design, the area of study, the target population, the sample size, and sampling techniques. The chapter further details the data collection instruments, procedures for ensuring validity and reliability, methods of data analysis, and ethical considerations observed during the research. Chapter Four presents and discusses the research findings. It begins with respondents' demographic information and proceeds to analyse the data in line with the primary research objectives. The discussion covers the impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy on access to secondary education, the adequacy of resources for implementation, and the challenges experienced in public secondary schools. Chapter Five summarises the main findings, draws conclusions from the results, and offers practical recommendations. It also identifies potential areas for further research related to the implementation and outcomes of the Fee-Free Education Policy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and synthesises the relevant literature for the study. It outlines both the theoretical and empirical frameworks that guided the research. Specifically, the chapter covers the definition of key concepts used in the study, a review of relevant models and theories, an examination of empirical studies, identification of the research gap, and the presentation of the conceptual framework.

2.2 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

2.2.1 Fee-Free Education Policy: UNESCO (2015) defines a fee-free education policy as a government initiative that eliminates tuition and other mandatory fees to improve access to basic and secondary education. Lewin (2008) describes it as a reform mechanism intended to remove financial barriers for economically disadvantaged populations. In this study, a fee-free education policy is a government initiative that removes all mandatory financial contributions from students and their families for attending public secondary schools, thereby promoting equitable access to education.

2.2.2 Access to Education: Bray and Lillis (1988) define access to education as the opportunity and ability of individuals to enrol and participate in formal schooling. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) expand this definition to include the removal of socio-economic, gender, and cultural barriers that hinder participation. UNESCO (2017) emphasises that access encompasses the availability, affordability, and acceptability of education services. In this study, access to education refers to the

extent to which students, particularly those from low-income households, can enrol, attend, and remain in public secondary schools without being hindered by financial, social, or infrastructural barriers.

2.2.3 Secondary Education

The World Bank (2018) defines secondary education as the stage following primary education and preceding tertiary education, typically serving students aged 12–18. In Tanzania, secondary education is categorised into Ordinary Level (Forms I–IV) and Advanced Level (Forms V–VI) (MoEST, 2015). For this study, secondary education refers specifically to Ordinary Level (Forms I–IV) public education in Tanzania, which is directly affected by the fee-free education policy.

2.2.4 Public Secondary Schools

Sifuna (2007) defines public secondary schools as government-owned, funded, and operated institutions that provide equitable educational opportunities, particularly for underprivileged populations. In this study, public secondary schools refer to government-established and funded schools in Morogoro Municipality that are mandated to implement the fee-free education policy and provide accessible education to all eligible students.

2.3 Theoretical Literature Review

Theoretical frameworks are crucial in guiding research by providing lenses through which phenomena can be understood and interpreted. This study on the Fee-Free Education Policy and Its Impact on Access to Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, draws on two key theories:

Human Capital Theory and Social Exclusion Theory. These theories offer valuable perspectives on how educational policies influence access and equity in education, helping to frame the analysis of the fee-free education policy's effectiveness in Tanzania.

2.3.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, primarily developed by economist Gary Becker (1930–2014) in the 1960s, posits that education is an investment that enhances an individual's productivity and potential to earn income over a lifetime (Becker, 1964). Becker argued that by acquiring knowledge and skills, individuals increase their economic value both to themselves and to society at large. The theory holds that reducing barriers to education, such as tuition fees, encourages more people to invest in their human capital, thereby promoting economic growth and reducing poverty (Becker, 1993). Human Capital Theory views education not simply as a consumption good but as a productive investment with tangible economic returns for individuals and nations.

One strength of Human Capital Theory lies in its clear economic rationale, which appeals to policymakers aiming to promote economic development through education (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). It provides measurable justifications for interventions such as fee-free schooling by linking education directly to higher labour productivity and higher incomes. However, the theory also has limitations. Critics argue it focuses narrowly on economic outcomes and overlooks other important social and cultural roles of education, such as fostering citizenship or social cohesion (Biesta, 2010). Additionally, it assumes that individuals always make rational decisions about investing in education, which may not hold in contexts

where poverty and social constraints are significant (Apple, 2013).

Despite these limitations, Human Capital Theory is highly relevant to this study because it explains the rationale behind Tanzania's fee-free education policy. By eliminating tuition fees, the government aims to encourage greater investment in education, thus increasing access to secondary schooling in Morogoro Municipality (MoEST, 2015). The theory helps to analyse whether this policy successfully lowers financial barriers and enhances human capital development among youth. Furthermore, it provides a framework for understanding the potential long-term economic benefits of the policy's improved access to education (Lewin, 2008).

2.3.2 Social Exclusion Theory

Social Exclusion Theory, extensively developed by sociologist Peter Townsend (1928–2009), emphasises the multidimensional nature of deprivation that goes beyond income poverty to include exclusion from social, economic, and political participation (Townsend, 1979). Townsend introduced the concept in the 1970s to explain how systemic barriers prevent certain groups from fully engaging in society. In education, social exclusion manifests when factors such as poverty, gender, ethnicity, or geographic location limit access to learning opportunities (Levitas, 2006). The theory underscores that exclusion is not solely a financial issue but involves broader structural and social obstacles.

A significant strength of Social Exclusion Theory is its holistic approach to understanding access barriers, considering a wide range of social, cultural, and institutional factors that affect educational participation (Silver, 1994). This

perspective is valuable when evaluating policies like fee-free education, which may remove financial hurdles but leave other forms of exclusion intact (Sen, 2000). On the downside, the theory's broad and complex nature can make it challenging to apply concretely in research, as measuring and addressing all dimensions of exclusion can be difficult (Levitas et al., 2007). Moreover, it often identifies problems more than specific solutions.

The theory is highly relevant for this study because it highlights the complexity of educational access in Tanzania. While the fee-free policy addresses economic exclusion by removing school fees, other exclusionary factors, such as gender disparities and rural-urban inequalities, may still limit access to secondary education in Morogoro Municipality (Sifuna, 2007). Social Exclusion Theory enables a more comprehensive evaluation of whether the policy truly promotes inclusive education or if additional efforts are required to tackle non-financial barriers.

2.4 Empirical Literature

This section reviews existing studies examining the effects of fee-free education policies on access to secondary education. It focuses on empirical evidence from Tanzania and other comparable contexts to highlight the outcomes, challenges, and gaps in implementing such policies. The review aims to provide a foundation for understanding how the fee-free education policy has impacted public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

2.4.1 Impact on Access to Secondary Education

Duflo et al. (2017) investigated the impact of secondary school scholarships on educational outcomes in Ghana using a randomised controlled trial involving 2,064

youths and spanning 12 years of follow-up. The study aimed to determine the private and social benefits of making secondary education free. Through randomised assignment, the authors assessed how access to scholarships influenced long-term outcomes, including educational attainment, skills acquisition, and health behaviours, particularly noting reduced fertility among female recipients and improved job access, especially in the public sector.

These findings demonstrated that eliminating financial barriers led to increased access and long-term socio-economic benefits, particularly for females. This study was relevant to the current research as it highlighted the broader educational and social impacts of removing financial barriers to secondary education, offering insight into how Tanzania's fee-free education policy might similarly enhance educational access in Morogoro Municipality. However, the study was limited to a scholarship context rather than a national policy framework, and it lacked discussion on system-level implementation realities. This information indicated a research gap in understanding the structural and systemic effects of government-led fee-free education policies on public secondary school access.

Stenzel et al. (2023) investigated the impact of Ghana's Universal Fee-Free Secondary Education policy (FreeSHS) on educational attainment, with a particular focus on completion rates. The study applied a Difference-in-Differences (DiD) approach by analysing variations in treatment intensity across 261 districts in Ghana, distinguishing treatment and comparison groups based on changes in education uptake following the elimination of fees. The researchers utilised a comprehensive panel dataset that captured both demand and supply factors affecting access to

education. Their findings showed that overall completion rates increased by 14.9 percentage points, with a notable 14-percentage-point rise among schoolgirls in districts with high policy uptake.

The study concluded that absorbing education costs served as a strong incentive for financially constrained households, effectively improving access and completion, particularly for girls. This research is relevant to the current study as it offers empirical evidence on how the removal of school fees positively influenced access to secondary education, aligning directly with the first objective of evaluating the impact of Tanzania's fee-free education policy on secondary education access. However, while the study robustly demonstrated improved completion outcomes, it focused primarily on gender-based impacts without disaggregating other access indicators such as enrollment growth or regional disparities. This information indicates a research gap in evaluating broader access dimensions under fee-free policies within different socioeconomic contexts, such as Morogoro Municipality. Lau (2020) examined the effect of tuition-free community college policies on college access, student welfare, and academic outcomes in the United States. The study adopted a comparative policy approach, analysing how different forms of free tuition, including universal, last-dollar, and need-based programs, affected enrollment and degree completion rates.

Findings revealed that universal free community college increased enrollment by 26 per cent and degree completions by 20 per cent. In contrast, more fiscally conservative models yielded smaller gains, particularly disadvantaging low-income students in some cases. The study demonstrated that eliminating direct education

costs improved access to post-secondary education, especially for marginalised groups. This was relevant to the current study because it provided empirical evidence on how cost removal can significantly improve access to education, aligning directly with the first objective, which is to evaluate the impact of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education.

However, the study focused on higher education in a developed context and did not explore the impact on public secondary schools in low-income settings such as Tanzania. This identified a gap in understanding how similar policies affect access to secondary education in developing countries. Lyanga and Chen (2020) examined the impacts of the Fee-Free Education Policy in Junior Secondary Schools in Tanzania by utilising secondary data sourced from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA), the United Republic of Tanzania (URT), Buchosa District Education Officer (BDEO), and several non-governmental institutions. The study was guided by indicators including the number of classrooms, teachers, students enrolled, and students' pass rates. Findings revealed that the fee-free policy contributed to increased student enrollment, a noticeable improvement in national examination pass rates, and a modest rise in the number of teachers.

However, the study also found an imbalance between the number of classrooms and the rapidly increasing student population, suggesting infrastructural strain. This study was relevant to the present research, as it intended to evaluate the impact of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education, particularly by demonstrating increased enrollment and improved performance. Nonetheless, the

study focused primarily on junior secondary education and did not cover public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, thus presenting a contextual and geographical research gap. Additionally, it did not delve into stakeholder perspectives or broader resource implications, which limits its applicability for evaluating long-term access and equity outcomes.

James (2023) investigated the impact of implementing the fee-free education policy on the performance of public secondary schools in Chamwino District Council. The study employed a cross-sectional, mixed-methods design and involved a sample of 441 respondents from 8 public ordinary secondary schools. Participants included district education officials, school management, teachers, and students. The study collected both primary and secondary data, with the latter covering government financing, student enrollment, dropout rates, and academic performance. The researcher analysed quantitative data using SPSS and examined qualitative data through thematic analysis. The findings showed that student enrollment increased sharply from 2016 onwards, mainly due to the introduction of the fee-free education policy. The study also indicated a strong and significant correlation between government funding and student enrollment ($r = 0.986$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, the researcher observed that the dropout rate initially declined to 4.6% in 2016, but later fluctuated.

These findings were directly relevant to the current study's objective of evaluating the impact of the fee-free policy on access to secondary education, as increased enrollment is a key indicator of improved access. However, the study focused predominantly on performance metrics, such as pass rates and dropout trends. This

limited scope creates a gap for further research to examine how fee-free education policies influence diverse dimensions of access, particularly in urban contexts such as Morogoro Municipality.

Asante et al. (2024) examined the implementation of two fee-free education policies in Ghana, the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy and the Progressive Free Senior High School (PFSHS) policy, to assess their effectiveness in enhancing access to secondary education. Employing qualitative content analysis based on interviews and secondary data, the study was guided by Haddad and Demsky's rationality framework for education policymaking. The findings revealed that the FSHS policy was more successful in increasing access to education, particularly by addressing low transition rates from lower to upper secondary levels. The study demonstrated how policy design and centralised versus decentralised decision-making shaped the outcomes of fee-free initiatives. These insights are relevant to the current study, as they offer comparative evidence from a Sub-Saharan African context and reflect on the potential and limitations of fee-free education in expanding access. However, the study focused exclusively on Ghana, limiting its generalizability to the Tanzanian context. Moreover, it did not explore resource allocation or implementation challenges, thereby indicating a research gap in understanding how fee-free policies operate in decentralised education systems such as Tanzania's.

Dwomoh et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of Ghana's Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy, introduced in 2017/2018 to eliminate school fees, increase enrolment, and enhance the quality of education in public secondary schools. The

study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-post and comparative cross-sectional methodologies, combining both quantitative (ordinary least squares and quantile regression models) and qualitative approaches. The evaluation revealed that while enrolment increased following the policy's introduction, the overall quality of education significantly declined, particularly in double-track schools, where students underperformed in core subjects compared to those in traditional systems. The identified implementation challenges included financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, delayed provision of food and teaching materials, and reduced instructional time.

This study was relevant to the current research as it provided insight into how fee-free education policies affect access and educational quality, with particular attention to structural and logistical barriers. However, while the study effectively assessed outcomes and operational challenges, it focused more on educational quality than access metrics such as transition or retention rates. This highlighted a research gap in examining how fee-free education specifically influences access and participation in public secondary schools, particularly in contexts such as Morogoro Municipality.

Mwelwa et al. (2024) examined the effects of the Free Education Policy on learner enrollment, school infrastructure, financing, and the quality of teaching and learning in community primary and secondary public schools in Zambia. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, collecting quantitative data from teachers through structured questionnaires and qualitative data from District Education Board Secretaries, learners, and parents via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Participants were drawn from ten provinces using both probability and

non-probability sampling techniques. The findings revealed that implementing the policy significantly increased student enrollment and government funding for schools. However, this surge in enrollment exerted immense pressure on existing resources such as teachers, desks, textbooks, toilets, and laboratory facilities, ultimately compromising the quality of education delivered.

This study was particularly relevant to the current investigation as it illustrated how a fee-free education policy could influence access while simultaneously presenting operational and quality-related challenges in public secondary schools. Although the study addressed enrollment growth as an indicator of access, it did not sufficiently examine access dimensions such as retention, transition, and equity. This highlighted a research gap in assessing how fee-free policies affect not only initial access but also sustained participation in secondary education, especially in the context of Morogoro Municipality.

Lazaro and Matiku (2022) investigated the implementation of the free education policy in fee-free secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, focusing on how the policy was implemented, the challenges encountered, and strategies for improvement. The study utilised a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews, questionnaires, and documentary reviews. The findings showed that stakeholders, including parents, students, and community members, actively participated in the implementation process through sensitisation, encouraging school attendance, and ensuring the elimination of school fees. The introduction of the policy led to increased student enrolment, improved attendance, higher demands for teaching and learning materials, and enhanced opportunities for parents to engage in

economic activities due to reduced educational costs.

These outcomes demonstrated a positive correlation between the fee-free policy and improved access to secondary education. The study is highly relevant to the current research as it directly addressed the effects of fee-free education on school access in the exact geographical location, offering locally grounded insights. However, while the study effectively identified general improvements, it lacked quantitative rigour in measuring access and did not disaggregate data by school context. This highlights a research gap in evaluating specific access indicators and the sustainability of such policy impacts in public secondary schools.

Sosthenes et al. (2022) investigated the effects of the fee-free basic education policy on student enrolment rates in private secondary schools in Rombo District, Tanzania. Guided by Social Impact Theory, the study employed a mixed-methods convergent design and involved 52 purposively and randomly selected respondents, including teachers, school heads, and school board chairpersons. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, and analysed using both descriptive statistics and independent T-tests. The study revealed that the introduction of the fee-free education policy led to a significant decline in enrolment in private schools, resulting in financial strain and difficulty in implementing school projects due to reduced revenue from school fees.

Administrators also faced challenges in managing their schools effectively under these conditions. Although the study focused on private schools, its findings are relevant to understanding the broader impact of the fee-free education policy on

enrolment trends and educational access, including in public secondary schools such as those in Morogoro Municipality. However, the study narrowly focused on enrolment in private schools and did not examine changes in access or quality in public schools. This presents a research gap in evaluating how the policy influenced access to public secondary education, particularly in urban settings.

Casely-Hayford et al. (2025) examined the effects of Ghana's Free Senior High School (SHS) policy, introduced in 2017, on students, families, and schools. Using an in-depth qualitative approach, the researchers collected perspectives from students, parents, and school leaders to understand both the benefits and unintended consequences of the policy. The findings revealed that the policy significantly improved access to secondary education, particularly benefiting low-income and rural students. However, it also led to an influx of underprepared students and exacerbated existing issues related to limited school resources and declining educational quality.

Additionally, the policy was perceived as reducing student motivation and fostering a preference for boarding schools over day schooling. These findings are relevant to the current study as they highlight both the positive impact on enrolment and the systemic pressures that can arise from rapid policy implementation. While the study successfully captured stakeholder perceptions and access dynamics, it lacked quantitative analysis to measure the exact extent of enrolment shifts. Moreover, it did not explore how access may vary across different socio-political or regional contexts, such as urban public schools in Tanzania, underscoring the need for further research in similar but contextually distinct settings, such as Morogoro Municipality.

2.4.2 Resources for Policy Implementation

Chacha and Kiwonde (2024) investigated the capacity of school heads to manage fiscal resources allocated to implement the Fee-Free Education Policy (FFEP) in community secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, involving a sample of 190 respondents selected through stratified sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analysed using SPSS. The findings showed that while heads of schools monitored and supervised school expenditures in accordance with government directives and financial regulations, they often failed to provide accurate financial reports and lacked proper record-keeping related to staff planning and resource allocation.

This study was highly relevant to the current research, as it provided concrete insights into how financial resources were managed at the school level, a key component for understanding the operational effectiveness of the fee-free policy in public secondary schools. However, the study focused narrowly on administrative practices without examining how these financial management gaps impacted educational access or quality. This information revealed a research gap in connecting fiscal resource utilisation to broader educational outcomes, particularly in the context of secondary education delivery in regions such as Morogoro Municipality.

Asante, et al., (2022) investigated how decentralisation influenced the implementation of fee-free education by comparing two policies, the Free Senior High School (FSHS) and the Progressive Free Senior High School (PFSHS), at the high school level in Ghana. The study employed qualitative content analysis, drawing on interviews and secondary data, and used Haddad and Demsky's

rationality framework to assess how both policies addressed access to education. Although the primary focus was on access, the study implicitly highlighted variations in policy design and resource allocation between FSHS and PFSHS. Notably, FSHS demonstrated a more deliberate allocation of resources, including infrastructure, teacher support, and administrative capacity, which contributed to its greater effectiveness in increasing access. This indirectly highlighted the significance of how resources are mobilised and managed in the successful implementation of such policies.

The study is relevant to this objective because it sheds light on how different fee-free education implementations depend on resource planning and distribution. However, it lacked a detailed analysis of specific resources, such as textbooks, classrooms, and teacher deployment, that are critical to understanding resource sufficiency in secondary schools. This creates a gap in localised evidence on how educational resources are utilised under fee-free policy conditions in contexts such as Tanzania.

Hoque and Mahanta (2020) examined the determinants of financing free elementary education (FEE) across Indian states from 2005 to 2016, encompassing the period before and after the Right to Education Act (2009). The study integrated supply and demand aspects, analysing state-level per-student expenditure and its responsiveness to income growth using longitudinal data. Findings revealed that the income elasticity of per-student expenditure was higher before the reform, indicating stronger government accountability in financing education at that time.

The study also found that household preferences for education inversely correlated with states' development levels, influencing how governments allocated resources

across states and over time. This research is relevant to the current study because it highlights the economic and resource-allocation dynamics critical to implementing fee-free education policies. However, the study focused on elementary education in India. It did not address the specific types of educational resources or how they are utilised at the secondary school level in Tanzania. Therefore, a research gap exists regarding the detailed management of resources and their impact on the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy in Tanzanian public schools.

Doriye et al. (2020) investigated the resources required to implement the free education policy in selected public primary schools in Babati Town, Tanzania. Employing a descriptive research design and a quantitative approach, the study surveyed all 147 teachers across 13 schools using validated questionnaires. Data analysis using SPSS revealed significant shortages of physical resources, such as classrooms and teaching materials, which strained the effective delivery of free education. The study highlighted that inadequate infrastructure and learning materials posed considerable barriers to successful policy implementation. This research is relevant to the current study, as it provides insights into resource constraints that are likely to affect the implementation of fee-free education in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. Nonetheless, the focus on primary schools limits direct generalisation to secondary education, suggesting a need for targeted investigation into the specific resource requirements and utilisation in public secondary schools under Tanzania's fee-free education policy.

Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) evaluated the implementation of Tanzania's fee-free primary education policy, focusing on both its successes and challenges. The study

employed a mixed-methods case study design, utilising semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews for data collection. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, and qualitative data were analysed using FreeQDA. The findings indicated that although the policy led to increased enrollment and adherence to capitation grant guidelines, it faced significant resource constraints, including insufficient funding, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and a lack of transparency in the use of allocated funds.

This study is relevant because it provides insight into the types of resources mobilised and how they were managed during the implementation of fee-free education, which may mirror the situation in secondary schools. However, the study was limited to the primary education level and did not examine the specific resource structures or demands within secondary education institutions. This presents a gap that warrants further investigation to understand how resources are allocated and utilised in secondary schools under the same policy framework. Igu et al. (2024) investigated the implementation of the fee-free education policy in Nigeria's public primary education system, focusing on the quality of provision, enrolment rates, and infrastructural support. The study employed a descriptive survey design and used a stratified random sample of 600 head teachers from Ebonyi State. Data were collected through a 25-item validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings revealed that while the policy intended to remove cost barriers, it did not fully address the provision of key educational resources, particularly infrastructural facilities, which remained insufficient. This has implications for the practical

implementation of fee-free education policies, as financial exemption alone does not guarantee adequate resources. The study is relevant in showing how resource limitations can undermine policy goals, a concern also pertinent in Tanzanian secondary education under similar reforms. However, the research focused on the Nigerian primary context and did not delve into the specifics of financial allocation mechanisms or teaching and learning resources. This presents a research gap in understanding the scope and effectiveness of resource deployment in implementing fee-free education policies in Tanzanian public secondary schools.

2.4.3 Challenges in Implementation

Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) investigated the strategies advanced-level secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania, employed to manage challenges arising from the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. The study aimed to explore how schools adapted to resource and infrastructure constraints while maintaining educational access in line with the new policy mandate. A qualitative approach was adopted, with data collected through documentary reviews, direct observation, and in-depth interviews involving 20 purposively selected participants, including education officers, school heads, teachers, and parents. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data.

The findings revealed multiple implementation challenges, such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages, diminished morale, administrative inefficiencies, and limited infrastructure. In response, schools adopted context-specific strategies to mitigate these issues and sustain the policy's intent. This study was highly relevant to the present research, as it provided rich, localised insights into the operational

challenges of implementing fee-free education in Tanzanian public secondary schools. However, while the study identified practical school-level adaptations, it did not explore the long-term effectiveness of these strategies or their impact on educational quality. This indicates a need for further research on sustainable implementation mechanisms across diverse regions, including Morogoro Municipality.

Boniphace and Ngusa (2024) examined teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy in selected government secondary schools in Ukerewe District, Tanzania, with particular attention to workload implications. The study was guided by Expectancy-Value Theory and employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, non-participant observations, focus group discussions, and documentary reviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. A sample of teachers was surveyed using a five-point Likert scale to assess their views on the policy's implementation.

The findings revealed that 90.63% of teachers reported a significant increase in workload following the policy's introduction, driven by a surge in student enrolment. This study is relevant to the present research as it sheds light on practical challenges affecting policy execution, particularly from the perspective of key implementers' teachers. However, while the study provided important insights into teacher workload, it narrowly focused on a single challenge and did not explore administrative or resource-based constraints that also hinder implementation. This highlights the need for broader investigations into the multifaceted challenges surrounding fee-free education in public secondary schools.

Lazaro and Loisulie (2022) investigated stakeholders' perceptions of the Fee-Free Education policy in Ordinary Secondary Schools in Rombo District, Tanzania, employing a mixed research design that involved concurrent collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The study drew its sample from teachers, school heads, and parents—key actors in the day-to-day implementation of the policy. Findings revealed that government-allocated funds were insufficient to meet operational and learning needs, prompting a reliance on additional financial contributions from parents and the broader community. However, many parents reported financial strain and perceived the contributions as burdensome.

The study concluded with a recommendation for more inclusive, structured mechanisms to involve stakeholders in financing education. This study is relevant to the current research as it highlights resource constraints in implementing the fee-free policy, shedding light on financial gaps that can affect policy sustainability and educational equity. While the study effectively captured community and parental involvement, it did not delve into specific resource types such as teaching and learning materials or infrastructure. This leaves a research gap which the present study aims to address by examining a broader spectrum of resources in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

Tieng'o (2020) investigated the implications of community participation on the sustainability of fee-free basic education in rural public primary schools in Rorya District, Tanzania. The study adopted a mixed-method exploratory approach, guided by ecological systems theory. It utilised questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interviews to collect data from parents and School Management Committee

members. The research focused on stakeholders' perceptions regarding the value of public primary education, the benefits of the fee-free policy, and how these perceptions influenced participation in education-related projects. Findings revealed a positive correlation between parents' perceived value of education and their involvement in school support, although a large proportion of parents (64.3%) with only Grade 7 education held negative perceptions.

The study underscored the challenge of insufficient community engagement and the influence of low education levels on policy sustainability. Although the study was conducted at the primary level, its findings are relevant to the secondary school context, especially regarding community participation and perception-based challenges in implementing fee-free education. However, the study was limited in scope, as it did not focus on secondary education settings or explore institutional challenges, such as teacher shortages and infrastructure gaps. This presents a research gap that the current study seeks to address by investigating broader systemic challenges within public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

Mbeya and Mwila (2024) examined the implementation and impact of the fee-free education policy in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania, focusing on access, quality, and equity in primary education. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study gathered data from 201 participants, including teachers, parents, students, and head teachers. The findings revealed numerous implementation challenges, such as acute resource shortages, overcrowded classrooms, delayed government funding, limited teacher training, and weak collaboration among stakeholders. These obstacles were shown to hinder the effective delivery of education despite increased enrollment. Although the

study addressed primary education, its insights are relevant to the current study's third objective, which seeks to identify challenges in implementing fee-free education in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

The parallels in implementation hurdles, such as inadequate infrastructure, strained teaching capacity, and funding delays, are likely to be experienced at the secondary level as well. However, the study did not examine secondary education or provide region-specific data beyond Temeke, which limits the generalizability of its findings to other education levels and regions. This gap underscores the importance of the current study in addressing secondary school-specific challenges under the fee-free policy within Morogoro context. Lucumay and Matete (2024) investigated the challenges to implementing Fee-Free Education (FFE) in primary schools within Geita District Council, Tanzania. The study employed a qualitative case study design and involved 28 participants, including school committee members, headteachers, Ward Education Officers, and a District Education Officer.

Data collection methods included interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary reviews, with thematic and content analysis used for interpretation. The findings revealed that while FFE improved enrolment, retention, and attendance among pupils from low-income families, its implementation was hindered by a shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, such as classrooms and toilets, and a lack of in-service training for headteachers in financial management. These constraints reflected broader systemic limitations affecting policy execution. The study is relevant to the current investigation into challenges facing FFE implementation in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, as it highlights the

infrastructural, staffing, and administrative difficulties that often accompany education reforms. However, the study was limited to primary schools and did not account for the distinct operational and policy complexities of secondary education. This indicates a research gap in understanding how such challenges manifest specifically in secondary schools, necessitating targeted research like the present study.

Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) examined the internal impediments schools faced in implementing the fee-free education policy in Dodoma City, Tanzania. The study adopted a qualitative design and used purposive sampling to select 20 key informants, including education officers, school heads, teachers, and parents. In contrast, 64 students were selected through stratified random sampling for focused group discussions, bringing the total to 84 participants. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentary review, and analysed using thematic techniques.

The study revealed that schools faced significant internal challenges, including inadequate funding, limited teaching and learning resources, understaffing, overcrowded classrooms, weak administrative systems, and low teacher morale, all of which significantly undermined the effective implementation of the policy. These findings are highly relevant to the current study, which seeks to identify challenges in implementing fee-free education at the secondary level in Morogoro Municipality, as they reflect common systemic barriers that are likely to persist across educational tiers. However, the study did not distinguish the unique operational demands and policy dynamics specific to secondary education, nor did it address region-specific variations outside Dodoma. This highlights the need for further research focused specifically on secondary schools and localised contexts such as Morogoro

Municipality.

Luvanga and Mhagama (2022) investigated the challenges in implementing fee-free basic education in public secondary schools in Karatu District using a mixed-methods approach and a convergent parallel research design. From a total population of 2,441 students and 102 teachers, the study sampled 97 students and 50 teachers through simple random sampling. At the same time, additional data were obtained from 24 school board members, one District Education Officer, and six heads of schools through interviews and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that the fee-free education policy faced substantial implementation barriers, including poor budget review mechanisms, inadequate financial management training, and limited accountability among school heads due to their insufficient knowledge of school financial administration. These challenges directly impeded the government's ability to achieve its educational objectives, thereby undermining the policy's success in secondary education settings.

The study is particularly relevant to the present research as it sheds light on systemic and managerial constraints that may similarly affect secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. However, while it provided valuable insights into financial and administrative limitations, the study did not examine broader infrastructural or teaching resource constraints. This creates a research gap in understanding how the full spectrum of implementation challenges beyond financial literacy affects fee-free secondary education in different regional contexts. Magesa and Mtebe (2021) examined the challenges facing the implementation of fee-free education in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The study employed both convenience

and purposive sampling techniques to select a sample of 73 respondents, including 65 ordinary teachers, 4 heads of schools, 1 District Education Officer, and 3 Ward Education Officers.

Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews, with quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysed using content analysis. The study revealed several key challenges, including inadequate teaching and learning materials, a shortage of classrooms, and limited availability of latrines, which collectively hindered the smooth implementation of the policy. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study as they offer direct insights from the exact geographical location and context, highlighting infrastructural and resource-related barriers within public secondary schools. However, while the study provided valuable local context, it did not extend its analysis to the implications of these challenges on student learning outcomes or enrollment sustainability. This gap suggests the need for further investigation into how such limitations affect broader educational access and quality.

2.5 Research Gap

Several empirical studies have examined the impact of fee-free education policies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with a focus on improving access and equity. For example, Duflo et al. (2017) in Ghana found that removing financial barriers significantly improved school access and long-term socio-economic outcomes, especially for girls. Similarly, Stenzel et al. (2023) found a 14.9 percentage-point increase in completion rates, with a powerful effect for girls in districts with high policy uptake. These studies confirm that fee-free education policies can

positively influence access when implemented alongside adequate support mechanisms.

In the Tanzanian context, recent studies have started to explore the local impacts of the policy. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) identified key implementation challenges, including limited funding, teacher shortages, and infrastructure constraints. Additionally, Boniphace and Ngusa (2024) found that 90.63% of teachers experienced a significant increase in workload due to rising student numbers. While these studies highlight essential aspects of the policy's impact and challenges, they tend to focus either on general national trends or on operational issues from educators' perspectives.

What is still missing in the literature is a localised, in-depth investigation into how the fee-free education policy is affecting access to secondary education at the municipal level, particularly in regions such as Morogoro. There is limited empirical data on how students and communities experience access to education, and whether the policy has addressed structural inequalities in secondary education. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a detailed assessment of the policy's impact on access within public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, helping to inform more targeted and effective education interventions.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study “Fee-Free Education Policy and its Impacts on Access to Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania” illustrates the relationship between the fee-free education policy (independent variable) and access to secondary education (dependent variable),

with various contextual factors mediating this relationship. The independent variable represents government measures such as the elimination of tuition and examination fees, provision of basic learning materials, and allocation of capitation grants to schools. These interventions aim to reduce households' financial burden, thereby enhancing school participation, particularly among students from low-income families.

Access to secondary education, the dependent variable, is reflected in outcomes such as enrollment, attendance, transition rates, and gender parity. However, the effectiveness of the fee-free policy depends on several intervening variables, including the adequacy of infrastructure, availability of qualified teachers and learning materials, effective school management, and parental support. Thus, while the removal of fees is expected to improve access, the policy's actual impact is shaped by the presence or absence of these supporting conditions, underscoring that financial inputs alone are insufficient without systemic and administrative reinforcement.

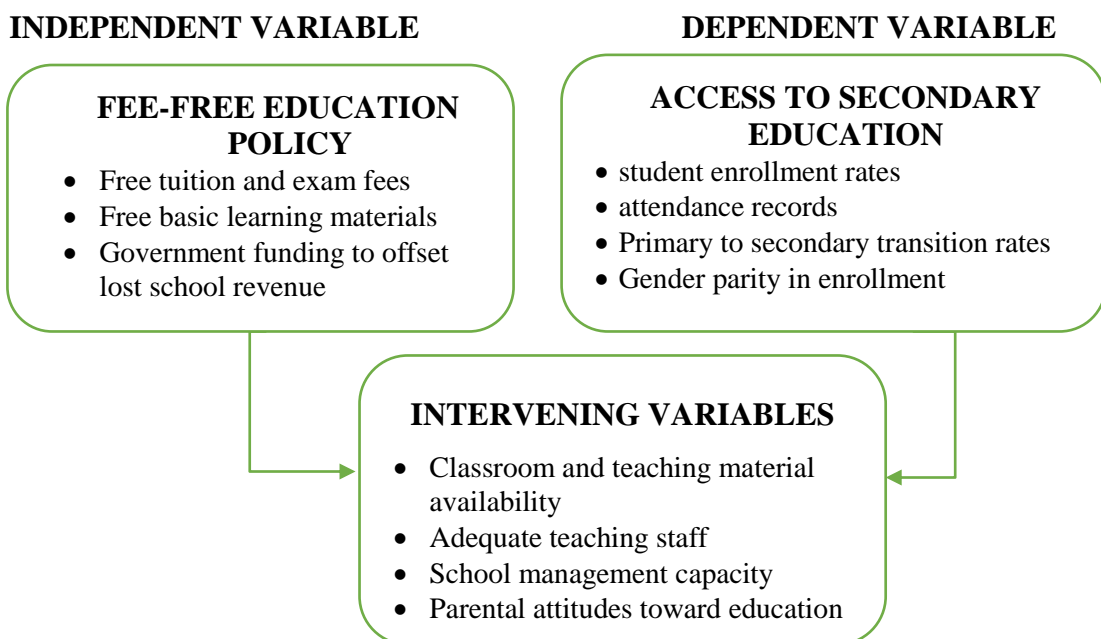


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework for the Study

Source: Researcher's construct from the Literature Review (2025)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted in the study titled "Fee-Free Education Policy and Its Impact on Access to Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania." The chapter presents the research strategies and procedures used to examine how the implementation of the fee-free education policy has influenced access to secondary education. It is organised into the following sub-sections: research philosophy, research approach, research design, area of the study, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, validity and reliability measures, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge that influence how research is conducted (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The study adopts a pragmatist research philosophy. Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that emphasises practical consequences and real-world solutions as the criteria for evaluating ideas and actions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This philosophy was preferred as it emphasises the use of mixed methods to assess both the effectiveness of leadership actions and their tangible outcomes in fostering innovation. Furthermore, it allows a researcher to focus on what works in practice, aligning leadership strategies with teachers' actual needs rather than adhering to rigid theoretical frameworks.

3.3 Research Approach

Research approach refers to the overall plan and procedures that guide a study, encompassing the broad assumptions to the specific methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), the mixed research approach enables researchers to draw on the strengths of both paradigms: quantitative methods for measuring and analysing variables numerically and qualitative methods for exploring participants' experiences and meanings in depth.

The choice of this approach was scientifically justified by the nature of the research problem, which required both quantitative evidence to determine the extent or magnitude of relationships among variables and qualitative insights to explain the underlying reasons and contextual factors influencing those relationships. Employing both approaches enhances the validity, reliability, and completeness of the findings through triangulation, in which data from different sources corroborate one another (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Furthermore, integrating numerical and narrative data allows the researcher to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon that neither approach alone would provide. Thus, the mixed-methods research approach was most appropriate for addressing the complex, multifaceted nature of the study's objectives.

3.4 Research Design

Research design refers to the blueprint or plan for conducting a research study, outlining the procedures for data collection, measurement, and analysis. It ensures

that the study effectively and efficiently addresses the research questions and objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study adopts a descriptive-explanatory research design. This study employed a convergent research design. The research design allowed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (Barner, 2017). It begins by describing the “what” of a situation, such as characteristics, patterns, or trends and then seeks to explain the “why” or “how” by exploring underlying causes or relationships. The design was preferred because it offers detailed insights into its characteristics, patterns, or trends, and then explains the “why” or “how” by exploring underlying causes, relationships, or mechanisms. Furthermore, this design establishes a foundational understanding of a subject before analysing its causal factors.

3.5 Area of the Study

The researcher conducted this study in selected public secondary schools within Morogoro Municipality, Morogoro Region, Tanzania. The researcher selected the area based on both theoretical and empirical considerations relevant to the study objectives. Morogoro Municipality represents a typical urban educational setting where the government has widely implemented the fee-free education policy, making it an ideal context for assessing the policy’s real-world impact. The area has experienced a notable rise in students’ enrollment since the introduction of the policy, as reported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, 2020).

The rapid increase in enrollment has created challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, shortages of learning resources, and limited school infrastructure,

creating a suitable environment for examining the policy's effects on educational access. Furthermore, the municipality's diverse socio-economic background and mix of both well-resourced and resource-constrained schools offered opportunities for comparative analysis. Thus, Morogoro Municipality provided a contextually relevant and data-rich setting for generating meaningful insights and drawing generalizable conclusions about the implementation and impact of the fee-free education policy in Tanzanian public secondary schools.

3.6 Target Population

The target population is a group of individuals or organisations that share common characteristics relevant to the focus of a study (Creswell, 2012). The target population for this study comprises teachers and school heads from public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. Morogoro Municipality hosts many public secondary schools with varying characteristics, including day and boarding schools and single-sex and co-educational institutions. This diversity in school types and structures offers a broad perspective for examining the impact of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education within the municipality.

3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

3.7.1 Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of items selected from the target population to constitute a sample (Kothari, 2004). The sample size for teachers from 5 selected secondary schools was computed using proportional allocation, a method outlined by Kish (1965). This method ensures that each stratum is represented in the sample in proportion to its population proportion.

The formula used for calculating the sample size from each stratum is:

$$n_h = [N_h / N] \times n$$

Where: n_h = Sample size from stratum h

N_h = Population size of stratum h

N = Total population size (sum of all teachers in all schools)

n = Total sample size (desired number of teachers to be included in the sample)

Table 3.1 presents the determination of sample size for teachers by focusing on the computation steps for each part of the formula.

Table 3.1: Steps of Computing Sample Size

Name of Secondary Schools	Total Number of Teachers (N_h)	Proportion ($P_h = N_h / N$)	Sample Size ($n_h = P_h \times n$)
SUA	25	$25 / 131 = 0.19$	$0.19 \times 65 = 12$
Uwanja wa Taifa	28	$28 / 131 = 0.21$	$0.21 \times 65 = 14$
Kihonda	30	$30 / 131 = 0.23$	$0.23 \times 65 = 15$
Sumaye	22	$22 / 131 = 0.17$	$0.17 \times 65 = 11$
Kola Hill	26	$26 / 131 = 0.20$	$0.20 \times 65 = 13$
Total	131	1.00	65

Source: Researcher (2024)

For the case of heads of schools from selected public secondary schools within the jurisdiction of Morogoro Municipality, all respondents were used as the sample size.

The distribution of the sample size is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Distribution of Sample Size

S/No.	Respondents	Frequency
1.	Heads of Schools	5
2.	Teachers	65
	Total	70

Source: Researcher (2024).

3.7.2 Sampling Techniques

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample or representative part of a population to determine the parameters or characteristics of the whole population. In this study, stratified random and purposive sampling were used.

3.7.2.1 Stratified Random Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of the diversity of school types and the distribution of teachers across Morogoro Municipality. The process began with the selection of five wards from the total of twenty-nine in Morogoro Municipality, aiming to capture broad geographic and institutional diversity. The researcher purposively included one public secondary school from each selected ward in the study.

The researcher selected these schools to reflect a mix of school types, including day schools, boarding schools, and day-and-boarding institutions. The researcher then applied proportional stratified sampling within each selected school to determine the number of teachers to involve, based on each school's total teaching staff. This approach ensured that the sample size accurately reflected the distribution of teachers across the schools. This sampling method enabled the study to obtain a representative sample of both teaching and leadership staff, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how the fee-free education policy has impacted access to secondary education in public schools within Morogoro Municipality (Karunarathna et al., 2024).

3.7.2.2 Purposive Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method in which researchers deliberately select participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the study's objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select the school heads from the five public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The researcher chose this technique because it is particularly effective for studies that focus on specific policies or phenomena, such as the fee-free education policy. It ensured the inclusion of the heads of schools, who possess rich, relevant, and insightful knowledge of the policy's implementation and its impact on access to secondary education (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.8 Data Collection Methods

The researcher used two data collection instruments: a questionnaire and an interview method. These methods helped the researcher collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.8.1 Structured Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire is a standardised research instrument consisting of predetermined questions designed to elicit specific information from respondents for data collection and analysis (Oppenheim, 2000). In this study, structured questionnaires were administered to teachers in selected public secondary schools to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data captured measurable variables, including teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the fee-free education policy, student enrollment levels, and the availability of teaching and

learning resources. At the same time, a few open-ended questions generated qualitative insights into teachers' experiences and opinions regarding the policy's implementation. The researcher chose this method because it enables the systematic, efficient, and cost-effective collection of comparable data from a large number of respondents within a short period, allows the researcher to perform statistical analysis of numerical information, and supports thematic interpretation of narrative responses, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the study's findings (Dillman et al., 2014).

3.8.2 Semi-Structured Interview Guides

An interview is a qualitative research method involving direct, face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participants to obtain detailed information, opinions, and insights on specific topics (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with school heads, lasting 20-45 minutes depending on the complexity of the topic. The researcher conducted interviews to collect qualitative data, including participants' views on the implementation of the fee-free education policy, the challenges they faced in managing increased enrollment, the strategies they adopted to enhance access, and their overall experiences in executing the policy.

Before each session, the researcher obtained informed consent and assured participants of confidentiality and data security. The researcher chose this method because it ensures consistency while allowing deeper probing into emerging themes, thereby generating rich, contextually grounded data essential for understanding complex educational dynamics.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments

To ensure the quality and accuracy of data collected in this study, both the validity and reliability of the research instruments were carefully considered and addressed.

3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure and accurately captures the concepts under investigation (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher ensured content validity by consulting academic supervisors and experienced education researchers. The researcher developed the questionnaire and interview guides based on the study objectives and research questions and reviewed them to ensure that the items adequately represented all aspects of the research problem. A pilot test was also conducted in one public secondary school outside the selected sample to refine the instruments and identify any ambiguities or irrelevant items. Feedback from the pilot test helped to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions, thus enhancing the overall validity of the instruments.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the research instruments when used repeatedly under similar conditions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). To establish reliability, the internal consistency of the structured questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a score of 0.7 or above considered acceptable. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.919, indicating internal consistency in the findings. Additionally, the researcher followed uniform procedures during

questionnaire and interview administration to minimise potential bias and ensure consistent responses. The researcher trained interviewers to use the semi-structured interview guide and applied the same interview format for all participants. These steps allowed the researcher to collect data that were both consistent and dependable for analysis.

3.10 Description of Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process in this study was conducted systematically to ensure the accuracy, ethical compliance, and completeness of the data obtained. Before the commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the relevant academic institution and secured research clearance and permission from Morogoro Municipality and the respective school administrations. Data collection began with the administration of structured questionnaires to teachers in the selected secondary schools.

The researcher visited each school and, with the assistance of school management, distributed the questionnaires to the sampled teachers. The researcher provided respondents with clear instructions and assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher gave participants ample time to complete the questionnaires and remained on-site to address any queries and collect the completed forms. After distributing the questionnaires, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with school heads. The researcher scheduled these interviews in advance at times convenient for each participant and conducted them in quiet, private settings within the school premises. Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes, depending on the depth of discussion required.

Before each session, the researcher obtained informed consent and sought permission to record the conversation for later transcription and analysis. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher strictly observed ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and data security. The researcher securely stored all collected data and used it solely for this study. By following this systematic approach, the researcher ensured a smooth data collection process and obtained high-quality, reliable, and valid data for analysis.

3.11 Data Analysis

3.11.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected in the study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, one of the widely used software packages for statistical analysis in social science research (IBM Corp., 2017). SPSS was used to calculate descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for each objective, thereby enabling practical analysis and interpretation of quantitative data to inform decision-making based on the research findings.

3.11.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and reviewed the transcripts to identify recurring patterns and themes. The researcher applied coding to group similar responses and conducted thematic analysis to interpret the data in alignment with the study's objectives. This approach allowed the researcher to generate rich insights into participants'

perspectives on leadership practices and their influence on teaching.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential for ensuring the integrity of the research process and protecting participants' rights, dignity, and well-being (Bryman, 2016). In this study, the researcher strictly observed several ethical principles throughout the planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages to conduct the research responsibly and respectfully. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the academic institution and secured official permission to conduct the study from the Director of Morogoro Municipality and the Director of Postgraduate Studies at The Open University of Tanzania. The researcher used an introductory letter from the university as evidence of academic intent to gain access to the study sites. The researcher ensured that participation was entirely voluntary and obtained informed consent from all participants before their involvement. For questionnaire respondents, the researcher included a written consent statement at the beginning of the form. At the same time, interview participants signed a consent form after the researcher explained the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The researcher upheld the principles of confidentiality and anonymity by assigning unique codes to respondents instead of using names or other identifying information. The researcher securely stored all collected data and restricted access to themselves only. The researcher used audio recordings and interview transcripts exclusively for research purposes and kept them in password-protected files. The researcher also assured participants that their responses would be used strictly for academic

purposes and that the findings would be presented in a way that prevented individual identification. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained ethical standards relating to data security, privacy, and respect for participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the study's findings and discussion in relation to its research objectives. The researcher analysed data from both questionnaires and interviews to examine the effects of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education in Morogoro Municipality. The analysis focuses on addressing the three specific objectives that guided the study: (i) to evaluate the impacts of the fee-free education policy on access to secondary education, (ii) to examine the resources utilised in the implementation of the policy in secondary schools, and (iii) to identify the challenges encountered in the implementation of the fee-free education policy.

4.2 Demographic Information

This section presents and discusses the demographic characteristics of the teacher respondents who participated in the study. Understanding their background is crucial, as it provides context for the perceptions, experiences, and insights they shared about the implementation and impact of the fee-free education policy in public secondary schools. Key demographic variables examined include gender, age, education level, and working experience.

Table 4.1: Demographic Information (n = 65)

S/No.	Demographic Information	Frequency	Per cent (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	43	66.2
	Female	22	33.8
2.	Age		
	18-26 years	9	13.8
	27-35 years	30	46.2
	36-44 years	17	26.2
	45-60years	9	13.8
3.	Education Level		
	Certificate/Diploma	33	50.8
	Bachelor Degree	25	38.5
	Master Degree	7	10.8
4.	Working Experience		
	Less than 1 year	1	1.5
	1-3 years	23	35.4
	4-6 years	20	30.8
	7-10 years	9	13.8
	More than 10 years	12	18.5

Source: Field Data (2024).

4.2.1 Gender

Out of 65 respondents, 66.2 per cent were male, while 33.8 per cent were female. This data indicates a male-dominated teaching workforce in the sampled public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The gender disparity could affect how education policies are perceived and implemented, particularly in terms of access and equity. In contexts where male teachers outnumber females, gender perspectives in educational access and student engagement might be less balanced. Moreover, it reflects broader structural dynamics in teacher recruitment and retention that may also influence policy effectiveness at the school level.

4.2.2 Age

The age distribution shows that the most significant proportion of respondents (46.2 per cent) falls within the 27–35-year age bracket, followed by 26.2 per cent aged 36–

44 years. Respondents aged 18–26 and 45–60 each accounted for 13.8 per cent. This data suggests that the majority of teachers are in their early and mid-career stages, like active contributors to classroom instruction and policy implementation. A workforce concentrated in this age group is likely to be dynamic, adaptable, and open to educational reforms such as fee-free policies. However, the relatively minor proportions of both younger and older age groups may influence institutional memory and continuity in policy feedback and evaluation.

4.2.3 Education Level

Analysis of education levels shows that 50.8 per cent of teachers hold a certificate or diploma, 38.5 per cent hold a bachelor's degree, and only 10.8 per cent hold a master's degree. This distribution points to a workforce where the majority have mid-level qualifications, which aligns with national requirements for teaching in secondary schools. The relatively small percentage of teachers with postgraduate qualifications could limit the depth of pedagogical innovation and policy critique within schools. Nevertheless, the presence of a substantial number of degree holders also indicates a reasonably qualified teaching cohort capable of interpreting and applying educational policies such as the fee-free initiative.

4.2.4 Working Experience

Regarding teaching experience, 35.4 per cent of respondents had 1–3 years, followed by 30.8 per cent with 4–6 years. Those with more than 10 years accounted for 18.5 per cent, while those with 7–10 years accounted for 13.8 per cent. Only 1.5 per cent had less than 1 year of experience. This distribution highlights that most teachers are relatively new or mid-career professionals. The implications are twofold: first, newer

teachers may be more receptive to policy changes and less encumbered by traditional practices; second, the moderate proportion of highly experienced teachers could serve as mentors and institutional anchors in policy continuity. Variations in experience levels may lead to differing interpretations of how fee-free education affects access and instructional delivery.

4.3 Impact on Access to Secondary Education

This section analyses the impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy on access to secondary education in public schools within Morogoro Municipality. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates Strongly Agree and 5 indicates Strongly Disagree. Lower mean scores reflect stronger agreement. The analysis focuses on enrollment trends, dropout rates, gender parity, and inclusion of marginalised groups, highlighting key implications for educational access.

Table 4.2: Impact on Access to Secondary Education

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
The introduction of fee-free education has increased student enrollment in this school.	65	1	5	2.23	1.296
More students from low-income families are now able to attend secondary school.	65	1	5	2.26	1.094
The policy has helped reduce student dropout rates.	65	1	5	2.57	1.060
The school receives more students than its facilities can handle.	65	1	5	1.98	.927
There is greater gender parity in student enrollment due to the fee-free policy.	65	1	5	2.49	1.174
Students now have more opportunities to complete their secondary education.	65	1	5	2.65	1.110
The fee-free policy has enhanced access to education for students with disabilities.	65	1	5	2.31	1.211
Valid N (listwise)	65				

NB: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Data (2024)

4.3.1 Increase in Student Enrollment

The data reveal a significant positive impact of the fee-free education policy on secondary school enrollment. With a mean score of 2.23, the majority of teachers agreed that the policy has led to increased enrollment. At the same time, a standard deviation of 1.296 indicates moderate variability in responses, not enough to weaken the overall trend. This pattern demonstrates that removing school fees has successfully reduced financial barriers, enabling more students, particularly those from low-income households, to access secondary education. From the researcher's perspective, this finding underscores the policy's effectiveness in promoting inclusivity and educational equity, aligning with the national goal of universal access to education.

Qualitative evidence from interviews further reinforces this interpretation. One head of school remarked, *“Before the policy, many parents could not afford school fees, but now we have more students than ever. It has truly opened doors.”*

Another added, *“We used to receive fewer than 100 Form One students a year. We are now enrolling more than 200. It's overwhelming but encouraging.”*

These narratives illustrate the tangible transformation in school enrollment patterns, showing that fee abolition has directly influenced parents' decisions to send their children to school, even though it has simultaneously increased pressure on existing school resources.

This finding is consistent with previous research. For instance, James (2023) reported a similar surge in enrollment following the introduction of the fee-free

education policy, linking it to increased government support. Likewise, Lyanga and Chen (2020) observed that while enrollment expanded significantly, it was accompanied by infrastructural challenges. Lazaro and Matiku (2022) also confirmed that fee elimination improved both enrollment and attendance rates by removing financial constraints on families. Taken together, these findings and the current study suggest that the fee-free education policy has been instrumental in broadening educational access. However, its sustainability depends on the government's ability to address emerging issues related to infrastructure, staffing, and learning resources.

4.3.2 Attendance of Students from Low-Income Families

A mean score of 2.26 reflects agreement among teachers that more students from low-income families are now able to attend secondary school. This relatively low average indicates that financial accessibility has improved, affirming that the fee-free policy has opened doors for economically disadvantaged students. The reduced financial burden means more families can afford to send their children to school, a vital step toward achieving educational equity. This increased inclusivity contributes to broader social mobility and supports national goals of educational fairness.

Research by Casely-Hayford et al. (2025) corroborates this finding, showing that the policy significantly benefited low-income and rural students by removing cost barriers. Similarly, Duflo et al. (2017) demonstrated that eliminating financial constraints led to long-term socio-economic benefits, particularly for marginalised groups. Additionally, Lau (2020) found that universal free education models were more effective in supporting low-income students than partial subsidies, reinforcing

the importance of complete fee elimination in promoting equitable access. These studies highlight the policy's success in levelling the playing field for economically disadvantaged learners.

4.3.3 Reduction in Dropout Rates

The analysis of teachers' responses indicates that the fee-free education policy has had a moderate positive impact on reducing student dropout rates. With a mean score of 2.57, most teachers agreed that the policy has contributed to retaining more students in school. This data suggests that by removing financial obligations, the government has alleviated one of the significant causes of student withdrawal unpaid school fees. From the researcher's perspective, this finding implies that the policy has enhanced retention and continuity in education, especially among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the moderate level of agreement compared to other indicators, such as enrollment, suggests that while financial access has improved, other non-financial factors continue to influence dropout rates. These may include issues related to school environment, family responsibilities, early pregnancies, or the perceived value of education.

The qualitative data from interviews with school heads support this interpretation.

One head explained,

"We used to lose students mid-year due to unpaid fees. Now they stay, but we face other challenges in keeping them engaged." Another added, "There are fewer dropouts due to money issues, but other factors like early pregnancies and lack of parental support still affect retention."

These statements highlight that while fee elimination has reduced financial-related dropouts, retention now depends on addressing broader socio-economic and

psychosocial barriers that affect students' ability to complete their education.

This observation aligns with findings from previous studies. Stenzel et al. (2023) reported that absorbing education costs increased completion rates by 14.9 percentage points, particularly among girls, underscoring the importance of financial relief in promoting retention. Conversely, Dwomoh et al. (2022) cautioned that, despite gains in enrollment, persistent challenges, such as inadequate resources and reduced instructional time, limited the policy's effectiveness in sustaining long-term attendance and learning outcomes. These comparative findings reinforce the interpretation that the fee-free education policy is a crucial but insufficient condition for reducing dropout rates. For meaningful and sustainable retention, the policy must be complemented by interventions that improve school quality, learner support systems, and community engagement.

4.3.4 Overcrowding and Inadequate Facilities

The findings reveal a mean score of 1.98 for the statement about schools receiving more students than their facilities can accommodate, indicating strong consensus among teachers that infrastructure is under considerable strain. The low mean and slight standard deviation (0.927) indicate that this concern is widely shared, reflecting a common experience across schools in Morogoro Municipality. From the researcher's perspective, this finding underscores one of the critical unintended consequences of the fee-free education policy. While it has expanded access, it has also placed significant pressure on the existing physical and instructional infrastructure. A proportional increase in classrooms, desks, laboratories, or sanitation facilities has not accompanied the surge in student enrollment.

Consequently, overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching materials, and inadequate facilities have emerged as serious challenges, potentially compromising the quality of learning despite the policy's success in improving access. This interpretation is consistent with findings from previous studies. Lyanga and Chen (2020) and Mwelwa et al. (2024) observed that enrollment growth following the introduction of fee-free education policies in Tanzania exceeded the expansion of available resources, leading to shortages of classrooms, furniture, and textbooks. Similarly, Dwomoh et al. (2022) reported that some schools resorted to double-track systems to cope with overcrowding, thereby inadvertently reducing instructional time and negatively affecting learning outcomes. These findings collectively affirm that while the fee-free education policy has advanced equity in access, it has simultaneously exposed systemic weaknesses in educational planning and infrastructure development.

From the researcher's analytical standpoint, these findings suggest a trade-off between access and quality, as enrollment expansion has come at the expense of adequate learning conditions. To sustain the policy's long-term success, the government and other stakeholders must invest strategically in school infrastructure, recruit more teachers, and ensure the consistent provision of learning materials. Without such complementary measures, stakeholders risk undermining the policy's achievements in expanding access by allowing declines in educational quality and student performance.

4.3.5 Gender Parity in Enrollment

The data shows a mean score of 2.49 for the statement on gender parity, indicating moderate agreement that the policy has promoted gender-balanced enrollment.

While the score is not strongly positive, it suggests a general perception that financial equality contributes to greater gender equity in educational access. By eliminating fees, the policy may have reduced the tendency of families to prioritise boys' education over girls', especially in low-income households. However, the middling score may also reflect the continued existence of other cultural or social barriers to girls' education, which require targeted interventions.

Duflo et al. (2017) and Stenzel et al. (2023) both found that fee-free policies disproportionately benefited girls, with the latter reporting a 14-percentage-point rise in female completion rates. Asante et al. (2024) similarly noted improved transition rates for marginalised groups, including girls. However, the persistence of cultural biases evident in the moderate mean score suggests that financial interventions alone may not fully dismantle gender disparities, calling for supplementary measures such as community sensitisation and scholarships for girls.

4.3.6 Completion of Secondary Education

The study found that the statement on increased opportunities for students to complete secondary education had a mean score of 2.65, indicating moderate agreement among teachers that the fee-free education policy has improved students' chances of completing secondary education. Teachers and school heads generally viewed the policy as a positive step toward educational continuity, particularly by reducing financial barriers that had previously led to dropouts. As one Head of School noted, *"We see more students completing Form Four now, thanks to the fee-free policy."* However, both teachers and administrators emphasised that the policy's success depends on additional support, including adequate learning materials,

infrastructure, and academic guidance. Without these, higher enrollment may not guarantee improved outcomes.

These findings align with Stenzel et al. (2023) and Lau (2020), who reported that eliminating school fees boosts completion rates, though Dwomoh et al. (2022) cautioned that resource shortages can limit these gains. Another Head of School highlighted this challenge, saying, *“The policy has helped students stay in school, but we still struggle with overcrowded classrooms and limited materials.”*

4.3.7 Access for Students with Disabilities

This finding suggests that although the fee-free education initiative has helped remove financial barriers, the government and schools have not provided adequate inclusive infrastructure, appropriate learning materials, or specialised personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities fully.

One Head of School noted this:

“We now admit students with disabilities, but the lack of special teachers and facilities is a big challenge.”

Another confirmed:

“The policy helps bring them to school, but the environment is not fully prepared to support them.”

The implication is that policy alone is not enough; inclusive planning and additional resources tailored to students with disabilities are needed to realise the full promise of equitable access. Casely-Hayford et al. (2025) observed that while the policy improved access for marginalised groups, underprepared students and those with disabilities often faced unmet needs due to resource gaps. Mwelwa et al. (2024) also

noted that rapid enrollment increases strained facilities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable learners. These findings emphasise the need for targeted investments, such as assistive technologies and teacher training, to ensure that fee-free policies translate into meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities.

4.4 Resources for Policy Implementation

This section analyses the availability and adequacy of resources supporting the Fee-Free Education Policy in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates Strongly Agree and 5 indicates Strongly Disagree. Lower mean scores reflect stronger agreement. The discussion highlights issues related to capitation grants, infrastructure, staffing, and teaching materials, and their implications for access and education quality.

Table 4.3: Resources for Policy Implementation

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
The government provides adequate capitation grants to support the fee-free policy.	65	1	5	2.18	1.333
Basic teaching and learning materials are sufficiently supplied.	65	1	4	1.68	.793
The number of classrooms is sufficient for the current student population.	65	1	4	1.75	.791
The school has received support for desks, chairs, and textbooks.	65	1	5	2.42	1.211
The number of teachers has increased to accommodate the rising student enrollment.	65	1	4	1.71	.785
Training or orientation has been provided to teachers on implementing the policy.	65	1	4	1.65	.759
Government funds are released on time to support teaching activities.	65	1	5	2.03	1.075
Valid N (listwise)	65				

NB: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Data (2024).

4.4.1 Government Provision of Capitation Grants to Support Fee-Free Policy

The findings reveal that the mean score for government provision of adequate capitation grants is 2.18 with a standard deviation of 1.333. This data indicates that respondents generally disagreed with the statement, suggesting that the government's financial support under the fee-free education policy was inadequate. The high standard deviation further implies a wide variation in experiences or perceptions across different schools. Limited capitation grants can hinder schools from meeting operational needs, compromising the quality of service delivery and threatening the sustainability of the policy. This shortfall may particularly affect the procurement of learning materials, maintenance of facilities, and support for co-curricular activities, ultimately impeding equitable access to quality education.

One Head of School remarked:

“We are grateful for the policy, but the money we receive is not enough to run the school. Sometimes, we have to ask parents for help with small things like exam papers or chalk.”

This finding aligns with studies highlighting systemic challenges in funding allocation under fee-free education policies. Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) found that, despite adherence to capitation grant guidelines in Tanzania, schools faced insufficient funding and a lack of transparency in the utilisation of funds, leading to operational constraints. Similarly, Chacha and Kiwonde (2024) noted that while school heads followed financial regulations, poor record-keeping and inaccurate financial reporting weakened accountability in resource allocation. These studies collectively suggest that without adequate and well-managed capitation grants, the policy's financial sustainability remains at risk, reinforcing the need for

more consistent and transparent funding mechanisms.

4.4.2 Supply of Basic Teaching and Learning Materials

The mean score of 1.68 and the relatively low standard deviation of 0.793 indicate strong and consistent disagreement among respondents regarding the adequacy of basic teaching and learning materials. This finding shows that schools face widespread shortages of essential resources, including textbooks, chalk, and laboratory equipment. Such deficiencies hinder effective classroom instruction and restrict students' engagement with the curriculum. Moreover, the lack of materials increases teachers' workload, forcing them to improvise and consequently risking burnout and reduced instructional quality. Addressing this challenge is crucial to ensuring that the fee-free education policy enhances access while maintaining educational standards.

Existing research supports these concerns, demonstrating that resource shortages persist despite policy intentions. Doriye et al. (2020) found significant shortages in teaching materials in Tanzanian schools, which strained the delivery of free education. Similarly, Igu et al. (2024) noted that Nigeria's fee-free policy failed to ensure sufficient infrastructure and learning resources, highlighting a gap between the financial exemption and the actual provision of resources. These findings suggest that without deliberate investment in teaching materials, the policy's benefits may be undermined by poor learning conditions, reinforcing the need for resource allocation.

4.4.3 Availability of Classrooms for the Current Student Population

With a mean of 1.75 and a standard deviation of 0.791, the data suggest that most

respondents disagreed with the sufficiency of classroom space to accommodate the increased student population. The relatively low standard deviation signals a common experience of overcrowding. This condition is a direct consequence of the policy's success in increasing enrollment without corresponding infrastructure expansion. Overcrowded classrooms negatively affect teaching effectiveness, student participation, and discipline. Furthermore, they limit opportunities for individual attention, especially for struggling students, thereby widening the learning gap. Therefore, infrastructure development must keep pace with enrollment growth to ensure equitable learning environments.

A Head of School illustrated the situation: *"We have more than 80 students in one room. Even walking between rows is difficult, let alone giving individual attention."*

Another remarked: *"We use dining halls and staff rooms as classrooms now. It's chaotic."*

The literature corroborates these findings, emphasising the infrastructural strain caused by rapid enrollment surges. Doriye et al. (2020) reported severe classroom shortages in Tanzanian schools under fee-free education, leading to overcrowding. Similarly, Igu et al. (2024) found that Nigerian schools struggled with inadequate facilities despite increased access, negatively impacting learning conditions. These studies highlight a critical policy implementation gap: expanding enrollment without expanding infrastructure risks deteriorating educational quality, necessitating urgent investment in school construction and renovation.

4.4.4 Receipt of Support in Desks, Chairs, and Textbooks

The mean score of 2.42 and a standard deviation of 1.211 reflect a slightly more neutral to disagreeing stance regarding the adequacy of furniture and textbooks. While some respondents may acknowledge receipt of such support, the overall low mean suggests that many schools still face shortages.

As one head of school noted: *“We received a donation of desks last year, but they were too few for our population.”*

The high standard deviation reveals considerable disparity in resource distribution, indicating that while a few schools may be relatively well-equipped, others are significantly under-resourced. Uneven distribution of essential resources affects student comfort, focus, and learning engagement, especially in larger classes where furniture and textbook shortages are most acute. Equitable resource allocation is crucial for realising the policy’s inclusive goals.

Research supports these findings, showing that uneven resource distribution is a recurring challenge. Asante et al. (2022) noted that Ghana’s policy succeeded in part due to more deliberate allocation of infrastructure and learning materials, suggesting that strategic resource management is key to policy effectiveness. Conversely, Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) found that Tanzanian schools struggled with an inconsistent supply of desks and textbooks, exacerbating inequalities between well-funded and underfunded institutions. These studies underscore that without equitable distribution mechanisms, fee-free policies risk perpetuating disparities rather than eliminating them, highlighting the need for standardised, needs-based resource

allocation.

4.4.5 Increase in Number of Teachers to Match Enrollment Growth

The mean score of 1.71, with a standard deviation of 0.785, suggests widespread disagreement with the statement that the number of teachers has increased sufficiently to keep pace with rising student enrollment. These findings point to a critical challenge in human resource capacity. Teacher shortages can lead to increased pupil-teacher ratios, reduced contact hours, and overburdened staff. This condition affects not only the quality of instruction but also schools' ability to implement learner-centred teaching approaches. Unless addressed, the shortage of teaching personnel risks undermining the intended benefits of the fee-free policy, particularly the goal of improving learning outcomes and reducing educational inequality.

This finding aligns with multiple studies highlighting the mismatch between enrollment growth and teacher recruitment. Doriye et al. (2020) found that Tanzania's fee-free policy led to severe shortages in teaching staff, exacerbating overcrowding and straining instructional quality. Similarly, Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) observed that while enrollment surged under the policy, teacher numbers remained stagnant, leading to unsustainable pupil-teacher ratios. Asante et al. (2022) further emphasised that successful policy implementation requires deliberate teacher recruitment and support, which are often overlooked in favour of expanding access alone. These studies collectively underscore the need for synchronised teacher hiring and training to sustain educational quality amid rising enrollment.

4.4.6 Provision of Training or Orientation for Teachers on Policy Implementation

Respondents strongly disagreed with the adequacy of training or orientation regarding the policy, with a mean of 1.65 and a standard deviation of 0.759. These results reflect a lack of systematic efforts to build teacher capacity to manage the changes associated with the fee-free policy. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to implement new curriculum guidelines, manage larger classrooms, and meet policy objectives. Professional development is essential not only for instructional effectiveness but also for aligning school-level practices with national education goals. The lack of training also impacts teacher morale and job satisfaction, potentially affecting retention and performance.

Existing literature supports this concern, revealing gaps in teacher preparedness under fee-free education reforms. Chacha and Kiwonde (2024) found that Tanzanian school administrators often lacked structured training in financial and policy management, resulting in inconsistent implementation. Hoque and Mahanta (2020) noted that in India, insufficient teacher orientation contributed to inefficiencies in resource allocation, weakening policy outcomes. Additionally, Igu et al. (2024) reported that Nigerian teachers struggled with larger class sizes due to inadequate training on differentiated instruction. These studies highlight the critical need for continuous professional development to ensure teachers can effectively adapt to policy-driven changes in the classroom.

4.4.7 Timeliness of Government Fund Release to Support Teaching Activities

The mean score of 2.03 and the standard deviation of 1.075 indicate general disagreement among respondents regarding the timing of fund releases. Delayed

disbursements disrupt school operations, compelling administrators to postpone or cancel essential teaching activities, procure materials on credit, or defer necessary maintenance. Such financial delays undermine the effective implementation of the fee-free education policy and compromise the smooth functioning of schools. This situation creates uncertainty and affects the smooth running of schools. Timely financial support is critical to implement planned activities and maintain trust among stakeholders efficiently. Delayed funding also hinders school responsiveness to emergent challenges, limiting the policy's effectiveness in ensuring uninterrupted access and quality education for all students.

One Head of School explained: *“Sometimes the funds come so late that we’ve already cancelled the activities we planned. It’s hard to keep running a school like this.”*

Research corroborates these findings, emphasising the detrimental effects of delayed funding on policy success. Katabazi and Kamugisha (2022) found that Tanzanian schools frequently faced cash flow problems due to late capitation grants, forcing them to defer necessary expenditures. Chacha and Kiwonde (2024) further noted that financial reporting inefficiencies exacerbated delays, as schools struggled to track and justify expenditures. Similarly, Hoque and Mahanta (2020) observed that in India, inconsistent fund releases weakened accountability and led to suboptimal resource utilisation. These studies collectively underscore the importance of streamlined financial mechanisms to ensure timely disbursements and effective policy implementation.

4.5 Challenges in Implementation

This section analyses key challenges in implementing the fee-free education policy in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, based on teacher responses. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates Strongly Agree and 5 indicates Strongly Disagree. Lower mean scores reflect stronger agreement with the stated challenges. The findings highlight operational, financial, and instructional issues affecting policy effectiveness.

Table 4.4: Challenges in Implementation

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overcrowded classrooms negatively affect teaching quality.	65	1	3	1.58	.583
Shortage of teaching and learning materials is a common issue.	65	1	5	1.71	.879
Funds allocated under the policy are insufficient to meet school needs.	65	1	4	1.65	.759
Delays in the disbursement of government funds affect school operations.	65	1	5	2.34	1.065
Increased workload due to high enrollment affects teacher performance.	65	1	5	2.65	1.110
There is inadequate parental support under the fee-free policy.	65	1	5	2.49	1.174
Some students lack seriousness in their studies because education is now free.	65	1	5	2.26	1.094
Valid N (listwise)	65				

NB: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree
Source: Field Data (2024).

4.5.1 Overcrowded Classrooms Negatively Affect Teaching Quality

With a mean score of 1.58 and a standard deviation of 0.583, the results indicate a strong consensus among teachers that overcrowded classrooms are a serious issue

affecting teaching quality. The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, suggesting that the corresponding increases have not kept pace with the influx of students under the fee-free policy in infrastructure or staffing. Overcrowded learning environments limit teacher-student interaction, reduce classroom management effectiveness, and diminish opportunities for individualised instruction. This challenge threatens both the quality of education and teachers' capacity to deliver lessons effectively, potentially leading to poorer learning outcomes.

One Head of School shared:

"There are 100 students in one room. I can't even remember their names, let alone help each of them."

Another added:

"When I ask a question, only the front rows respond. The rest are too far to see or hear properly."

This finding aligns with multiple studies that highlight the strain of overcrowding on educational quality. Mbeya and Mwila (2024) found that rapid enrollment increases led to acute classroom shortages, forcing schools to operate beyond capacity. Similarly, Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) reported that overcrowding was a significant challenge, exacerbating teacher workload and reducing instructional effectiveness. Lucumay and Matete (2024) also noted that inadequate infrastructure, including insufficient classrooms, directly hindered policy implementation, reinforcing the need for expanded facilities to match student intake. These studies collectively confirm that without proportional infrastructure development, overcrowding will continue to undermine teaching quality despite increased access.

4.5.2 Shortage of Teaching and Learning Materials as a Common Issue

The mean response of 1.71 and a standard deviation of 0.879 suggest strong agreement among teachers that the shortage of teaching and learning materials is a persistent problem.

One Head of School noted:

"We're teaching science with theory only. No labs, no materials, chalk and talk."

These materials are essential for implementing the curriculum and supporting student understanding. When schools lack crucial resources such as textbooks, laboratory supplies, and visual aids, teachers are forced to improvise or deliver lessons without adequate instructional support, ultimately hindering effective teaching and learning. This finding directly undermines the quality of education. It limits students' ability to engage. The shortage effectively reflects systemic planning and budgetary constraints and points to the need for targeted resource allocation under the fee-free education policy.

Existing literature supports these concerns. Magesa and Mtebe (2021) found that inadequate teaching materials were a key barrier to policy success, forcing educators to rely on outdated or insufficient resources. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) similarly noted that limited learning materials strained classroom instruction, particularly in science and mathematics. Lazaro and Loisulie (2022) further emphasised that insufficient government funding led schools to depend on parental contributions, which were often unreliable. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that without consistent and adequate provision of learning materials, the policy's gains in expanding access may be undermined by a decline in educational quality.

4.5.3 Insufficiency of Funds Allocated Under the Policy

A mean score of 1.65 and a standard deviation of 0.759 indicate that teachers widely perceive the government-provided funds as inadequate to meet school operational needs. This insufficiency impairs schools' ability to maintain facilities, procure essential resources, and support co-curricular activities. When funding fails to keep pace with increased enrollment, school administrators are left with limited options, often resulting in the degradation of learning environments. This issue raises questions about the sustainability of the fee-free policy unless financial allocations are significantly increased or supplemented through other means.

A school head commented: *"We can't even cover the basics, let alone support extracurriculars or repairs."*

Research corroborates these financial challenges. Luvanga and Mhagama (2022) found that poor budget review mechanisms and financial mismanagement left schools struggling to cover basic needs. Lazaro and Loisulie (2022) reported that government allocations were insufficient, forcing schools to seek alternative funding from already financially strained parents. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) further highlighted that inadequate funding led to understaffing and resource shortages, undermining policy effectiveness. These findings suggest that unless funding structures are revised to match real costs, schools will continue to face operational crises despite the policy's enrollment successes.

4.5.4 Delay in Disbursement of Government Funds and Its Effect on School Operations

The mean of 2.34 and the standard deviation of 1.065 indicate that delays in fund

disbursement are a moderate but noticeable challenge. While not as strongly agreed upon as other issues, the data still reflect a majority concern. When authorities delay fund disbursement, schools struggle to implement their planned activities, including purchasing materials, paying utilities, and scheduling maintenance work. These interruptions hinder smooth operation and place additional stress on school leadership. Delays can also result in temporary suspension of some learning activities, undermining both morale and academic progress.

Studies confirm that delayed funding disrupts school functionality. Mbeya and Mwila (2024) identified late disbursements as a key obstacle, forcing schools to defer essential purchases and maintenance. Luvanga and Mhagama (2022) attributed delays to bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak financial accountability, which stalled school projects. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) also noted that inconsistent funding flows created uncertainty, making long-term planning difficult for administrators. These findings underscore the need for streamlined financial processes to ensure timely fund releases, allowing schools to operate without unnecessary disruptions.

4.5.5 Increased Workload Due to High Enrollment and Its Effect on Teacher Performance

The challenge of increased teacher workload is highlighted by a mean score of 2.65 and a relatively high standard deviation of 1.110. This spread suggests varied experiences among teachers, but overall concern remains evident. The sharp rise in student numbers has led to larger class sizes and heavier teaching schedules without a proportional increase in staff numbers. Such conditions contribute to teacher

fatigue, reduced instructional effectiveness, and a decline in the quality of student engagement. Long-term exposure to such situations can also increase turnover rates and burnout among teaching staff, jeopardising the stability and continuity of educational delivery.

This finding is strongly supported by existing literature. Boniphace and Ngusa (2024) found that 90.63% of teachers reported significantly increased workloads due to enrollment surges, leading to exhaustion and diminished teaching quality. Similarly, Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) identified teacher shortages and administrative inefficiencies as key contributors to workload strain, ultimately lowering morale. Lucumay and Matete (2024) also noted that understaffing forced teachers to manage overcrowded classrooms, reducing their ability to provide individualised attention. These studies collectively emphasise that without additional hiring or workload redistribution, teacher performance will continue to suffer under the policy's enrollment pressures.

4.5.6 Inadequate Support from Parents under the Fee-Free Policy

With a mean of 2.49 and a standard deviation of 1.174, responses indicate a general agreement that parental involvement has declined under the new policy. The removal of school fees may have led some parents to perceive that all educational responsibilities now fall to the government. As a result, their engagement in school activities, support for home learning, and participation in decision-making processes may have diminished. The lack of parental support negatively affects student motivation, behaviour, and performance. Strengthening community involvement is essential for the holistic development of learners and the success of any education

policy.

One teacher shared: *"I teach 48 periods a week—how can I even prepare properly?"*

Another reported: *"We don't get extra staff, yet the number of students has doubled. We're exhausted."*

Research corroborates this trend. Lazaro and Loisulie (2022) found that, relieved of fee obligations, parents often disengaged from school contributions, viewing education as solely the government's responsibility. Tieng'o (2020) revealed that parents with lower levels of education (64.3% with only Grade 7) held particularly negative perceptions of their role in schooling, further reducing their involvement. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) also noted weak stakeholder collaboration as a systemic challenge that exacerbates the disconnect between schools and communities. These findings suggest that the policy must incorporate awareness campaigns and structured platforms for parental participation to prevent declining engagement from undermining student success.

4.5.7 Lack of Seriousness in Studies Among Some Students Due to Free Education

A mean score of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 1.094 suggest that teachers are moderately concerned about a perceived decline in student motivation and seriousness toward learning. The removal of fees may have reduced the perceived value of education for some students, especially in the absence of parental reinforcement. When students do not see the cost associated with their schooling, they may lack commitment, leading to increased absenteeism, reduced effort, and a

casual approach to academic responsibilities. This psychological and behavioural shift poses a significant risk to educational standards and may offset the policy's intended benefits if not addressed through appropriate counselling and awareness programs.

A head of school shared: *"We've had to increase discipline measures. Motivation is lower than before."*

This phenomenon aligns with several studies. Mbeya and Mwila (2024) observed that free education policies, while improving access, sometimes led to complacency among students who no longer saw schooling as a personal investment. Luvanga and Mhagama (2022) noted similar trends, linking diminished student effort to the absence of financial accountability mechanisms. Mwakisambwe and Msoka (2024) further highlighted that without complementary motivational strategies—such as mentorship or performance incentives—the policy risked fostering passive learning attitudes. These insights underscore the need for targeted interventions to reinforce the intrinsic value of education and counteract entitlement mindsets.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study of the fee-free education policy and its impact on access to secondary education in Morogoro Municipality. The findings reflect the voices of teachers and administrators, offering insight into both the achievements and the challenges of implementing the policy.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study found that the Fee-Free education policy in Morogoro Municipality has moderately improved access, retention, and completion rates in public secondary schools by reducing financial barriers that previously caused student dropouts. Teachers and school heads acknowledged that more students, including those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds, are now staying and completing their studies.

However, the policy's impact remains uneven, as non-financial challenges such as early pregnancies, family responsibilities, and inadequate support for students with disabilities continue to limit full participation. While gender parity has improved modestly, deep-rooted socio-cultural factors still constrain girls' education. Overall, the findings suggest that while the policy has achieved significant gains in access and continuity, its success in ensuring equitable and quality education depends on addressing broader systemic and social challenges.

Despite its benefits, the study revealed that implementation of the fee-free education policy faces primary resource and operational constraints. Overcrowded classrooms, shortages of teachers and teaching materials, delayed and inadequate funding, and limited training for educators have strained schools' capacity to deliver quality education. Teachers reported heavy workloads, reduced instructional effectiveness, and low morale, while parental involvement has declined under the assumption that education is solely the government's responsibility. The findings highlight a trade-off between expanded access and declining quality, underscoring the need for increased investment in infrastructure, timely disbursement of funds, teacher recruitment and training, and stronger community engagement. Without these complementary measures, the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the fee-free education policy remain at risk.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the fee-free education policy in Morogoro Municipality has significantly enhanced educational access and retention by removing financial barriers. Yet, persistent non-financial and resource-related challenges constrain its overall effectiveness. While the policy has opened opportunities for many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, issues such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and limited parental involvement continue to undermine educational quality. Therefore, for the policy to achieve its intended goal of equitable and sustainable quality education, it must be reinforced through adequate resource allocation, infrastructure expansion, teacher capacity development, and stronger community participation.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Policy and Governmental Recommendations

The government should increase capitation grants and promptly disburse them to ensure schools operate effectively without financial delays. At the same time, investment in educational infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and sanitation facilities, must be prioritised to reduce overcrowding and improve the learning environment. Regular recruitment and professional development of teachers are essential to balance the pupil-to-teacher ratio and enhance instructional quality. Furthermore, establishing strong monitoring and evaluation systems would promote transparency, accountability, and equitable allocation of resources across schools and municipalities.

5.4.2 School Level Recommendations

At the school level, institutions should strengthen parental and community involvement through active parent-teacher associations and local participation in school improvement initiatives. Heads of schools are encouraged to utilise locally available resources and build partnerships with NGOs, private donors, and community groups to supplement government support. Schools should also introduce motivation programs such as mentorship, career guidance, and rewards to inspire students' commitment to learning. In addition, efforts should be made to improve support for students with disabilities by providing inclusive facilities, specialised materials, and teacher training to foster equal learning opportunities for all learners.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should focus on assessing the long-term impact of the fee-free

education policy on students' academic performance and overall learning outcomes. Studies should also examine the influence of community participation and local government involvement in sustaining the policy's effectiveness. Moreover, comparative research between urban and rural schools is needed to uncover regional disparities in implementation and to guide equitable education policy adjustments in Tanzania.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS

Dear Respondent,

I kindly request your participation in this study, which aims to examine the *“Fee Free Education Policy and Its Impact on Access to Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania”*.

The study intended to fulfil the requirements for the award of a Master of Education in Administration, Planning and Policy Studies (MEd APPS) from The Open University of Tanzania. I would be grateful if you could spare the time to assist with this study by answering this questionnaire. The researcher did not use the information for any other purpose and kept it strictly confidential.

PART A: Demographic Background

1. Gender:

a) Male []

b) Female []

2. Your age is between:

a) 18-26 years []

b) 27-35 years []

c) 36-44 years []

d) 45-60years []

3. Your Highest Education Level:

a) Certificate/Diploma []

b) Bachelor's Degree []

c) Master's Degree []

4. Working Experience

- a) 1-3 year []
- b) 4-6 year []
- c) 7-10 years []
- d) 10+ years []

Section B: Impact of Fee-Free Education Policy on Access to Secondary Education

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

No.	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The introduction of fee-free education has increased student enrollment in this school.					
2	More students from low-income families are now able to attend secondary school.					
3	The policy has helped reduce student dropout rates.					
4	The school receives more students than its facilities can handle.					
5	There is greater gender parity in student enrollment due to the fee-free policy.					
6	Students now have more opportunities to complete their secondary education.					
7	The fee-free policy has enhanced access to education for students with disabilities.					

Section C: Resources Used to Implement Fee-Free Education Policy

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

No.	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The government provides adequate capitation grants to support the fee-free policy.					
2	Basic teaching and learning materials are sufficiently supplied.					
3	The number of classrooms is sufficient for the current student population.					
4	The school has received support for desks, chairs, and textbooks.					
5	The number of teachers has increased to accommodate the rising student enrollment.					
6	Training or orientation has been provided to teachers on implementing the policy.					
7	Government funds are released on time to support teaching activities.					

Section D: Challenges of Implementing Fee-Free Education Policy

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

No.	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Overcrowded classrooms negatively affect teaching quality.					
2	Shortage of teaching and learning materials is a common issue.					
3	Funds allocated under the policy are insufficient to meet school needs.					
4	Delays in the disbursement of government funds affect school operations.					
5	Increased workload due to high enrollment affects teacher performance.					
6	There is inadequate parental support under the fee-free policy.					
7	Some students lack seriousness in their studies because education is now free.					

THANK YOU

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD OF SCHOOL

This interview guide is designed to gather qualitative insights from Heads of Schools regarding the implementation and impact of the Fee-Free Education Policy. The focus is on access, resource adequacy, and challenges in public secondary schools.

1. How has the Fee-Free Education Policy influenced student enrollment trends in your school since its implementation?
2. What challenges have your school faced in providing adequate teaching and learning materials under the fee-free policy?
3. In your experience, how sufficient and timely are the government funds provided to support school operations under this policy?
4. How has the policy affected classroom conditions, such as student-teacher ratios and overcrowding?
5. To what extent have parents and the community remained involved in supporting school development after the abolition of school fees?
6. What recommendations would you give to improve the effectiveness of the Fee-Free Education Policy in enhancing access and quality in your school?

APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

I. Impact on Access to Secondary Education

1. How has the Fee-Free Education Policy affected student enrollment and attendance?
2. Have you noticed any changes in dropout rates or gender balance since the policy started?

II. Availability and Adequacy of Resources

1. Are teaching materials and facilities sufficient to support the increased number of students?
2. How timely and adequate is the funding provided under the policy?

III. Challenges in Policy Implementation

1. What are the main challenges faced in delivering quality education under the fee-free policy?
2. How has the policy influenced your workload and classroom management?

THANK YOU

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11th December 2020

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MOROGORO.

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE

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In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820. We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Magreth Bushesha

Prof. Magreth Bushesha
DIRECTOR OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES.

Paul
A.A.Y. MKUU WA SHULE
SHULE YA SEKOLA
S.L.P. SEKOLA
MOROGORO

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DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

P.O. Box 23409
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
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ext.2101
Fax: 255-22-2668759
E-mail: dpgs@out.ac.tz

Our Ref: PG201801556

11th December 2020

Municipal Director,

Morogoro Municipal Council,

P.O.Box 166,

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THE HEADMASTER
KIHONDA SECONDARY SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 1351
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K.N.Y. MKUU WACHULE
SHULE YASEKONDARI SUMAYA
S.L.P. 1831
MOROGORO

Samaya SS
16/12/2020

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SUA SECONDARY SCHOOL
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UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MOROGORO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



In reference, please quote:

Ref. No: R.10/MMC-24/38

Date: 29th December, 2020

Mr. Jumie Richard,
The Open University of Tanzania,
P.O. Box 23409,
DAR ES SALAAM.

RE: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH CLEARANCE

Kindly refer to the heading above.

The research clearance is granted for your to conduct a research titled '**Contribution of Free Secondary Education on Academic Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality**'. The collection of data you need will be from 14 to 30 December, 2020 to the listed Secondary Schools as per your request.

Wishing you all the best. Have a nice and successful project.


Dr. Janeth F. Barongo (PhD)
For: **MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR**
MOROGORO

Copy to:- Heads of Schools,
Kihonda, U/Taifa, Kola Hill, SUA
and Sumaye Secondary School,
MOROGORO.

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