

## The implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy in Ukerewe district, Tanzania: Teachers' points of view on increased classroom workload

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### Abstract

*The implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy offers significant comprehension into teachers' points of view, particularly regarding workload challenges. Guided by Expectancy-Value Theory, this study explores teachers' points of view on the policy's implementation in the selected government secondary schools in Ukerewe District, Tanzania. A key focus is on whether the government sufficiently considered the increased teacher workload resulting from higher student enrolments. In this article, surveys, non-participant observations, and focus group discussions were utilised to collect first-hand information. This was complemented by documentary reviews for secondary data. Qualitative data were thematically analysed, while quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics. A five-point Likert scale was also designed to assess three hypothetical statements regarding teachers' points of view on the implementation of the policy. In this study, 90.63% of the teachers considered that their workload had significantly increased due to the surge in student numbers following the policy's implementation. The study concludes that the implementation process was flawed, as the government did not recruit additional teachers to meet the growing demand. The study recommends the government to invest in more educational resources and recruit additional teachers to better accommodate the expanding student population.*

**Keywords:** Fee-free, secondary education policy, Tanzania

### Introduction

The Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy (FFSEP) in Tanzania was introduced in 2016 as part of the government's broader commitment to providing inclusive and equitable education. The policy emerged from the government's education reform initiatives and aims to reduce barriers to education, particularly for children from low-income households, and to improve access to secondary education across the country (Lyanga & Chen, 2020). The government of Tanzania formulated Education Circulars No. 5 in 2015 and 3 in 2016 that provided guidelines for implementing the fee-free secondary education (Luvanga & Mhagama, 2022). Thus, Tanzania has put into action Education Circular No. 5 that works as a key organ for the implementation of fee-free education in government schools (Doriye et al., 2020). The circular reads, "Provision of free education means pupils or students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of the new circular". Fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 is associated with

provision of capitation grants with operational costs provided by the government to improve the learning environment that increases enrolments (Epstein, 2018; Lazaro & Matiku, 2022).

The implementation of fee-free education policies has been a global movement of educational reforms in many countries, aiming to promote equal access to education and alleviate financial barriers for students. For instance, in the United States of America, “education is usually provided by the public sector with funding from three levels of government which are; the federal government, state, and local” (Lyanga & Chen, 2020). The provision of fee-free education has also been expanded in developing countries and it has increased the number of enrolments in public institutions. For instance, in Kazakhstan fee-free education has increased by 87.1% enrolments in government universities (Shnarbekova, 2022). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, numerous countries have embraced a constitutional legal foundation to establish fee-free secondary education, employing policy change frameworks as the means to implement this shift (Härmä, 2019). In Ghana, fee-free education policy aims at providing “a quality education for students of all ages at all educational levels” by 2030 (Brion, 2020).

In Tanzania, the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy was preceded by significant educational reforms aimed at enhancing access to secondary education, which is recognized as a crucial element for national development and poverty alleviation (Shukia, 2020). These reforms have been guided by strategic policies, including the Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, which outlines the government's commitment to providing inclusive and equitable education at all levels (Kanyonga et al., 2019). Launched in 2015, the fee-free secondary education policy was designed to eliminate financial barriers to secondary education (Essuman, 2019). Additionally, the reforms focus on improving educational infrastructure, including the construction of new schools and classrooms to accommodate the growing student population through provision of capitation grants.

However, the amounts of capitation grants provided for secondary schools do not suffice to meet the need of having full-fledged learning facilities to accommodate the increased number of enrolments (Elisey et al., 2020; Tandika 2021; Katabazi & Kamugisha, 2022). Fee-free secondary education capitation grants are not enough for promoting provision of quality education in developing countries, because they often fail to address the broader systemic challenges that hinder effective educational outcomes. Since teachers are key stakeholders in promoting teaching, they need learning facilities to deliver quality education. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing the fee-free education policy. They are responsible for ensuring that students are enrolled, attend classes, and receive quality education without the burden of fees. Teachers may be involved in verifying eligibility, managing enrolment processes, and monitoring student attendances.

Education stakeholders focus on increased enrolments through implementation of education circular No. 5 as an achievement; but the increased workload on teachers through implementation of the fee-free secondary education is

neglected. Provision of quality education requires positive points of view of teachers on the increased number of students (Edson & Shawa, 2021; Mbiti & Schipper, 2021). Teachers' points of view are very important for exploring implementation of fee-free secondary education as they are responsible for promoting learning in secondary schools (Mgaya & Onyango, 2022). Teachers' points of view help identify implementation challenges associated with the fee-free secondary education policy. They can highlight resource gaps, infrastructure limitations, inadequate support systems, or other barriers that hinder effective policy implementation in Tanzanian secondary schools (Braun, 2020). Therefore, these education reforms were grounded in the government's efforts to enhance the provision of fee-free education for all children.

This study was conducted in Ukerewe District, Tanzania, due to its distinct socio-economic challenges, particularly shortage of teachers in schools to accommodate the increasing number of students (Mazigo et al., 2024). As an island community, the district faces additional barriers such as transportation difficulties and limited access to educational resources (Tengecha et al., 2024). The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the fee-free secondary education policy in addressing resource scarcity, focusing on teachers' points of view regarding their increased workload due to a surge in student enrolments. Teachers' points of view are crucial, as they are directly involved in policy implementation and witnessing the effects of socio-economic challenges on student performance and engagement. Their insights provide valuable information that will help identify key areas requiring attention to enhance the provision of education, especially given the large student population in schools.

## **A Theoretical Review**

### **Expectancy-Value Theory in Relation to Teachers' Points of View**

This article adopted the Expectancy-Value Theory to discuss the points of view of teachers who are directly engaged in teaching the increased number of students. Expectancy-Value Theory, developed by a psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1970s (Allen et al., 2022). Ryan et al., 2021) provides a framework for understanding and predicting individuals' motivation and achievement in various domains. The theory emphasises on the beliefs of actors about the likelihood of success that is expectancy and the perceived value or the importance that they put on the task or goal that represents value (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). It was adopted in this article to explain teachers' points of view on the implementation of the fee-free secondary education circular No. 5 for providing quality education to students. The Expectancy-Value Theory of motivation is highly relevant for understanding and improving student learning as it emphasises the critical role of learners' beliefs and values in driving their motivation and subsequent academic performance (Rosenzweig et al., 2022). By considering learners' expectations of success and significance of the task or subject matter, educators can design instructional strategies and interventions that enhance motivation and engagement, thus leading to improved learning outcomes (Kumar et al., 2018).

Expectancy-Value Theory has assumptions that relate to the focus of the study on teachers' points of view as individuals who hold beliefs about their own

capabilities and expectancies for success in learning processes. These beliefs influence the motivation and efforts of educators (Boström & Palm, 2020). The theory suggests that individuals hold subjective values and beliefs about the importance, usefulness, and relevance of working tools, for instance, policies. The Expectancy-Value Theory proposes that individuals' motivation and behaviours are determined by the interaction between their expectancies and values that apply to teachers' points of view (Wu et al., 2020). The Expectancy-Value Theory recognizes that contextual factors, such as social norms, cultural beliefs, and environmental conditions, can influence individuals' motivation and values (Savolainen, 2018). For example, teacher expectations, parental support, policies and school environment can impact students' motivation and engagement in education.

The Expectancy-Value Theory has strength in offering a valuable framework for understanding motivation and behaviour in educational settings. The theory takes into account multiple factors that influence motivation, including individuals' beliefs about their own capabilities (expectancies), their subjective values and beliefs in education and pertinent policies (Meyer et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2021; Shang et al., 2023). By considering both expectancy and value, the theory provides a holistic understanding of motivation, going beyond a simple focus on one factor (Ranellucci et al., 2020; Nagle, 2021). The Expectancy-Value Theory can be applied to a wide range of educational contexts and domains as it has been applied in this study to explain the essence of teachers' points of view on implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy circular No. 5.

Scholars' debates on the theory do not discount the overall value and contribution of the Expectancy-Value Theory. However, they highlight the ongoing discussions and the need for further refinement and integration with other theories to enhance its explanatory power and practical relevance (Kaplan & Garner, 2020). The Expectancy-Value Theory gives valuable insights into motivation and learning, whereas its weaknesses is based on its limited consideration of contextual and social influences, neglect of non-cognitive factors, and its assumption of a linear relationship between beliefs, values, and behaviours (Peasland et al., 2021). The theory focuses primarily on individuals' beliefs about their capabilities and the subjective values they attach to tasks. It may oversimplify the complex nature of motivation, overlooking other important factors such as social, emotional, and contextual influences (Robinson, 2022). In education, the theory does not fully capture the intrinsic motivation or the role of emotions in shaping motivation and behaviours in learning processes (Jackson et al., 2019; Lee, 2019; Zepeda et al., 2020). Despite scholars' debates, the Expectancy-Value Theory is applicable in education as it builds in the limited consideration of educators, rules, regulations and policies that influence the quality of education. This study, informed by the Expectancy-Value Theory, examined teachers' points of view regarding the fee-free secondary education policy implementation in the selected government secondary schools within Ukerewe District.

## **Research Methods**

This study was conducted in Ukerewe District, which is one of the seven districts of the Mwanza Region in Tanzania. The geographical location of the district stands on Latitude: -2° 02' 60.00" S and Longitude: 33° 00' 60.00" E. The district is located in Ukerewe Island, Ukara, including other neighbouring islands within Lake Victoria. The largest settlement and the district's administrative capital is Nansio. The area was selected because educational supervision in ward secondary schools in Ukerewe District has not been effectively done; thereby facing inadequate number of teachers to accommodate the increased enrolments through the fee-free secondary education policy (Lyanga & Chen, 2020). The study was specifically conducted in the selected secondary schools that include: Mibungo in Mibungo Village, Muriti in Itira Village, Busangumungu in Busangumungu Village, and Nduruma in Makunu Village.

A cross-sectional research design was applied in this study to collect data from the sample at a specific point in time. Cross-sectional research design has the advantage that data collected during the study is easily measured and applied to provide results within a short-term timeframe (Spector, 2019). During this period, the sample was selected from a sampling frame of secondary school teachers from their respective schools. The list of secondary schools in the district was obtained from the Council in the Department of Education. The list of secondary schools was compiled, with a focus on those that had the highest number of students. Purposive sampling, as a non-probability technique, was applied because it allowed for the deliberate selection of the specific area of study. Simple random sampling was employed to select teachers from the designated secondary schools.

Given the limited number of teachers available at each school, nearly all teachers present during the study period were included in the sample based on the calculated size of 96. The sample size was determined using the formula developed by Cochran (1977). The study was conducted across four secondary schools, with 24 teachers selected from each school. The sample size was divided evenly among the schools, utilising the central limit theorem to ensure equal representation.

In addition, the study involved three key informants who were selected through purposive sampling. These key informants included one Head of School (HoS), one District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), and one District Planning Officer. The key informants were interviewed to gain unique insights that were not accessible through other data collection methods. Their input contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic, enhanced the validity of the findings, and informed the development of effective interventions or strategies.

The data collection methods applied in this study included surveys, non-participant observation, and focus group discussions for primary data, as well as documentary reviews for secondary data. The instruments used for data collection in this study included questionnaires, checklists, and various documents. Structured and semi-structured questions were developed and administered to teachers in each secondary school until the calculated sample size was reached. These teachers were given a list of questions to declare their points of view on the implementation of

fee-free secondary education policy Circular No. 5. They filled in the questionnaire, and all transcripts were collected, compiled, and used for data analysis. The responses from those who provided in-depth information were quoted to offer detailed results. A survey was used because it allowed the collection of data from a diverse population of secondary school teachers, thus providing a variety of points of view.

Non-participant observation was used to observe the infrastructure and seating arrangements in classrooms in the selected secondary schools. A checklist of the classroom layout was provided, including the arrangement of desks (e.g., rows, clusters, circles), the space between desks for movement, and the accessibility of different parts of the classroom (e.g., the board, teacher's desk) for students. This layout was observed to capture how teachers manage students in the classrooms. Non-participant observation was chosen because it offered an opportunity to collect data in a naturalistic setting, thus providing an objective and unbiased view of the behaviours and interactions between teachers and students in the classroom.

Focus group discussions were conducted by engaging participants to interact with one another and share their points of view on how the fee-free secondary education policy was implemented. A discussion guide was prepared to facilitate the discussions. Four groups, each comprising six participants, were formed, making a total of 24 participants. A single focus group discussion was held in each selected secondary school. Participants were purposively selected based on their understanding of the fee-free secondary education policy, which was identified during the survey.

Documentary reviews were conducted to collect information from the fee-free secondary education policy and Circular No. 5. Additionally, the reviewed documents included district-specific fee-free secondary education guidelines, which outlined the local adaptations and operational details of the policy within Ukerewe District. Reports on the implementation and impact of the fee-free education policy were also examined, thus giving insights into its effectiveness, challenges, and outcomes.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. This process included reviewing and comparing codes to identify patterns and connections. Themes were identified to ensure they accurately captured the data and were internally coherent. These themes were defined and named to provide clear descriptions and definitions, hence, ensuring they captured the essence of the data they represented.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and describe the data collected from the field. A five-point Likert scale was developed to test hypothetical statements and determine teachers' points of view on how the implementation of fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 has influenced the provision of education. The five-point Likert scale consisted of the following points: 1 Strongly Agree, 2 Agree, 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 Disagree, and 5 Strongly Disagree. Three Likert scale statements were tested in this study. The first statement was: "Fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 has significantly increased access to

education in our government secondary schools.” The second statement was: “The resources provided to support fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 are adequate for effective implementation of the policy.” The third statement was: “The workload on teachers has increased due to the implementation of fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5.”

## Findings and Discussion

### Teachers’ Points of View on Fee-Free Secondary Education Implementation

Respondents revealed that the implementation of fee-free secondary education has significantly benefited middle- and low-income households. During the focus group discussions, it was discovered that this policy has proven instrumental in enabling individuals who were unable to continue their educational journeys due to financial constraints to re-join the education system. This was detailed by Participant B, who perceived fee-free education as a policy that provides equal opportunities and empowers all children to pursue their academic aspirations without the burden of financial constraints. He described:

Generally, implementing a fee-free secondary education policy, as stipulated in Circular No. 5, can have a transformative impact on individuals, communities, and nations by promoting equal opportunities, reducing inequality, and fostering economic and social development. It enhances access to education, thus leading to notable increases in enrolment and completion rates. By removing financial barriers that previously hindered students from pursuing secondary education, this policy ensures that educational opportunities are more accessible and equitable for all individuals, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Participant B., 17/05/2023).

However, there are negative points of view regarding the implementation of the fee-free education policy in Circular No. 5, as Participant G declared.

This policy solely eliminated tuition fees, but it did not exempt students from other contributions. Teachers perceive donations and the purchase of school supplies as a burden on parents and guardians. These donations include a monthly payment of 1,500 TZS to compensate science teachers for additional teaching hours. Parents and guardians often face confusion when they are reminded to make these payments, as they believe that education is entirely free and no financial contributions are required (Participant B., 17/05/2023).

The removal of school fees has led to an inadequacy of funds, as Participant K explained.

The removal of tuition fees leads to a decrease in funding for schools, which can affect the overall quality of education and hinder teachers' ability to provide effective instructions to students (Participant K., 15/05/2023).

Participant D explained concerns about the challenges in student discipline due to the failure to monitor the increased numbers, as she narrated.

With increased enrolments, teachers may encounter difficulties in maintaining discipline and managing behaviours in classrooms, as

larger class sizes and limited resources can make it more challenging to provide individual attention and support to students (Participant D., 12/05/2023).

Autonomy can also be reduced, as Participant W stated.

In some cases, the removal of fees has resulted in increased regulations and oversight from educational authorities, hence limiting teachers' autonomy in decision-making and curriculum development (Participant W., 16/05/2023).

The study noted the negative points of view of teachers towards the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy in Circular No. 5. These negative points of view might vary depending on the specific context, policies, and implementation strategies surrounding the removal of educational fees.

Elimination of tuition fees through the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy has effectively removed the critical financial barrier that previously prevented many children from pursuing their educational aspirations. This transformative change enabled a greater number of students to engage in the education system, therefore allowing them to develop their skills and knowledge without financial constraints. The increased enrolment rates that have accompanied this policy not only promote individual development but also contribute to broader societal benefits, including improved economic prospects and reduced inequality. However, while the policy has successfully opened educational opportunities, it has inadvertently introduced challenges for schools in securing essential funding for development projects and resources that are not covered by government grants. With the removal of tuition fees, schools often find themselves facing financial shortfalls, as they can no longer rely on the contributions from families to support various school initiatives. Donations that were once a significant source of funding for extracurricular activities, infrastructure improvements, and other essential resources, are now more difficult to obtain. This situation poses a dilemma for educational institutions, as they strive to maintain and enhance the quality of education provided to students.

### **Expansion of Educational Access for Students**

To determine whether the removal of fees has promoted access to education, a five-point Likert scale was used to capture the respondents' points of view. The statement probed was: "The implementation of the fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 has significantly increased access to education in our government secondary schools." The responses to the statement were as follows: 79.17% strongly agreed, 6.25% agreed, 10.42% neither agree nor disagree, 2.08% disagreed, and 2.08% strongly disagreed (Table 2). Since the majority (79.17%) strongly agreed, it is concluded that the implementation of the fee-free secondary education circular has increased access to education for students by removing the obstacle of fees.

**Table 2: Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy on Access to Education**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Strongly agree	76	79.17
Agree	6	6.25
Neither agree nor disagree	10	10.42
Disagree	2	2.08
Strongly disagree	2	2.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Participant D regarded the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy as essential for the government to increase enrolments, as quoted below:

In the past, households with low incomes faced significant challenges when their children reached school age. Households with more than four children often postponed enrolling their children in school, opting instead to teach them fishing, especially boys as a means of avoiding education costs. However, following the removal of fees, these households have accelerated the enrolments of their children in schools (Participant D, 15/05/2023).

Participant P also emphasised the importance of removing fees, which has greatly assisted parents and guardians.

In the past, children often approached their studies with a lack of motivation, resulting in some students dropping out in lower classes. Many would begin their education but, as they grew older and became able to work, they would leave school to seek for casual labours. Additionally, girls frequently dropped out of schools to take on household responsibilities, as the costs associated with education were often unaffordable for low-income households (Participant P, 15/05/2023).

The findings related to the fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 underscore its significant impact on educational access within government secondary schools. The overwhelming support among respondents reflects a strong consensus regarding the policy's effectiveness in tackling one of the most critical barriers to education—financial constraints. By eliminating fees, this policy has not only eased the financial burden on households but also fostered a more inclusive entrance where students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds can pursue their education. This transformative approach promotes equal opportunities, thus enabling more children to attend secondary schools, thereby enhancing educational equity.

### **Teachers' Points of View on Resources Provided to Implement the Policy**

The study discovered teachers' points of view regarding the resources provided to implement the fee-free secondary education policy. Participant F explained that:

I perceive that the resources allocated by the government to public secondary schools fall short of accommodating the increased number of

students. In other words, the programme has enabled students to pursue their studies without the burden of tuition fees, but the quality and quantity of resources have not improved (Participant F, 12/05/2023).

This was also explained by the District Education Officer, as he stated:

While fee-free secondary education for children is beneficial, upon inspecting schools, it becomes evident that inadequate infrastructure, teaching methodologies, and the number of teachers pose significant challenges. These obstacles make it difficult for educators to effectively utilise their teaching abilities (DEO, 12/05/2023).

Observations also indicated that students were overcrowded in classrooms, thus making it difficult for teachers to move around while teaching. Moreover, a five-point Likert scale was used to determine teachers' points of view on the resources provided. The statement posed was, "The resources provided to support fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5 are adequate for the effective implementation of the policy."

The findings present a clear picture of respondents' points of view regarding the adequacy of resources provided to support the fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5. A very small portion 2.08% of the respondents strongly agreed that the resources were adequate. Similarly, a slight portion, that is, 4.17% of the respondents agreed with the statement, thus indicating that a minimal number of the group believed that the resources were adequate. A small portion, that is, 3.13% of the respondents neither agree nor disagreed, thus reflecting ambivalence or uncertainty about the adequacy of resources. Again, 4.17% of the respondents disagreed with the adequacy of resources. A significant majority, 86.45% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, hence indicating a strong consensus that the resources provided for the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy were inadequate (Table 3).

Moreover, Participant J eloquently elucidated the scarcity of resources that posed significant challenges in the effective implementation of the fee-free policy. With great clarity, he highlighted the pressing need for adequate funding, infrastructure, and educational materials to ensure the seamless execution of the policy and to guarantee that students truly benefit from the intended educational opportunities, as he declared.

While fee-free secondary education is undoubtedly a positive development, it has inadvertently put an increased workload on teachers. The influx of students into the classrooms necessitates a corresponding increase in the availability of resources and equipment to accommodate the larger numbers. It was expected that the removal of school fees would be accompanied with a proportional enhancement in the provision of necessary equipment and resources to ensure a conducive learning environment (Participant J., 10/05/2023).

**Table 3: Resources Provided to Implement the Fee-Free Secondary Education Policy**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Strongly agree	2	2.08
Agree	4	4.17
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3.13
Disagree	4	4.17
Strongly disagree	83	86.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Despite the introduction of fee-free secondary education, which allows students to attend schools without incurring tuition costs, significant challenges remain regarding the availability of adequate educational resources. One of the most pressing issues is the insufficient provision of essential equipment needed for effective teaching and learning. Teachers are facing considerable difficulties in delivering quality instruction to large classes with limited resources. The absence of adequate equipment not only hampers the teaching process but also affects students' learning experiences. For instance, when teachers are forced to share limited resources among a large group of students, it diminishes the opportunity for individual engagement and tailored support, which are critical for fostering a conducive learning environment. Moreover, the lack of sufficient equipment can lead to increased frustration for educators, who strive to provide the best possible education under challenging circumstances. This situation not only impacts teachers' ability to effectively manage their classrooms but also potentially hinders students' academic performance and overall educational outcomes.

#### **Status of Teachers' Workload**

From the teachers' points of view, the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy Circular No. 5 often leads to an increased workload due to additional administrative tasks, larger class sizes, and the need for more individualised attention to meet the diverse needs of students. Evidence was obtained from the five-point Likert scale on the statement: "The workload on teachers has increased due to the implementation of fee-free secondary education Circular No. 5."

The results indicate a solid consensus among respondents regarding the impact of the fee-free secondary education policy on teachers' workloads. An overwhelming majority, representing approximately 90.63%, strongly agreed that the implementation of the policy has led to an increased workload for teachers. In contrast, a small percentage, about 2.08%, disagreed with the statement, indicating a slight acknowledgment of increased workload but not as emphatically as those who strongly agreed. A minimal proportion of the respondents, approximately 1.04%, neither agree nor disagree, thus reflecting a neutral stance or uncertainty regarding the workload implications of the policy. On the other hand, 4.17% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, and another 2.08% strongly disagreed, suggesting that

a small segment of the teachers did not believe that the fee-free secondary education policy had resulted in an increased workload (Table 4).

**Table 4: Status of Teachers' Workload**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Strongly agree	87	90.63
Agree	2	2.08
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.04
Disagree	4	4.17
Strongly disagree	2	2.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The planning officer also explained how teachers were struggling to teach a large number of students.

While the fee-free education programme is beneficial as it has enabled low-income students to study, the biggest challenge remains the shortage of teachers, which forces the few available educators to take on extra work (District Planning Officer, 16/05/2023).

The Head of Mibungo Secondary School also explained:

As the number of students increased, we had to introduce additional streams in the early years. However, as the years go by and students advance to higher classes, we need more teachers available to manage them. Despite this, the teachers continue to work diligently to ensure that all students receive the support they need (Head of School, 16/05/2023).

The study discovered that the increased workload on teachers in classrooms can have negative consequences for instructional quality, teachers' well-being, student support, and professional development opportunities. This underscores the importance of addressing workload concerns to maintain a conducive teaching and learning environment.

The findings demonstrate a strong consensus among respondents regarding the effects of the fee-free secondary education policy on teachers' workloads. A significant majority strongly agreed that the implementation of this policy has resulted in an increased workload for educators. This indicates a widespread recognition among teachers that the policy has imposed additional demands, likely due to larger class sizes and more administrative responsibilities that come with accommodating increased student enrollment.

## **Conclusion**

The study clearly indicates that teachers perceive the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy as insufficient. The findings provide valuable points of view from teachers who are responsible to offer education to the increased number of students. A significant majority of teachers strongly agreed that the circular has effectively increased educational access by eliminating the financial barrier of fees. Suggesting that the policy has successfully met its goal of promoting equal access to education for students. However, in contrast to this positive outlook

on access, a considerable number of teachers strongly disagreed with the adequacy of the resources provided for the effective implementation of the policy. This underscores significant concerns regarding the sufficiency of essential resources such as funding, infrastructure, teaching materials, and personnel, which are vital for delivering quality education under the fee-free initiative. Additionally, teachers noted that the influx of students had led to an overwhelming increase in their workload, further complicating their ability to deliver effective instructions. Furthermore, the findings align with the Expectancy-Value Theory, which reveals that teachers have heightened expectations regarding the need to improve the educational environment to effectively accommodate the increasing number of students in government secondary schools. The Expectancy-Value Theory posits that individuals' motivation and behaviours are influenced by their expectations of success and the perceived value of the tasks at hand. In this context, teachers expect that by enhancing the educational environment—through better resources, infrastructure, and support—they can more effectively meet the needs of their expanding student population. This anticipation is rooted in their commitment to providing quality education, thus reinforcing the importance of addressing the challenges posed by the influx of students within the framework of the fee-free secondary education policy. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring that the fee-free secondary education policy fulfils its intended purpose while maintaining a high standard of education.

## **Recommendations**

The government should prioritise and allocate sufficient funds to ensure that schools have adequate resources to support the implementation of the fee-free secondary education policy. This includes investing in infrastructure development (constructing new classrooms, expanding existing facilities, and enhancing the overall learning environment), providing teaching and learning materials, and maintaining an appropriate student-teacher ratio to uphold instructional quality.

The government should make efforts to support teachers in managing the increased workload resulting from the policy's implementation. This can be achieved by providing professional development opportunities, mentoring programmes, and hiring additional teaching personnel to alleviate the burden on individual teachers.

Collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and other stakeholders is essential. Engaging all relevant parties—including teachers, students, parents, guardians and community members—in decision-making processes and policy formulation can lead to a more effective and sustainable implementation of fee-free education policy.

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