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Review Article

Making Sense of Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania: Emerging Issues and Implications for Future Practice

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Abstract: This paper contains reflections on the basic education statistics in Tanzania with a view to highlighting the emerging issues by making sense of data. The paper adopts document review analysis methodological procedures to reflect on the data and examine key factors that constrain the provision of basic education in Tanzania. The paper further reveals a number of factors that emerge from basic education statistics, which include the prevalence of teachers with low qualification, shortage of teaching and learning resources, prevalence of children living in vulnerable environment and the prevalence of high dropout rates. Overall, this paper interrogates the existing dilemma between educational stakeholders on policy statements such as fee free education and the smooth implementation of these statements to create a common understanding. A shared vision in redefining basic education so as to meet both national and global priorities, seems to be a vital priority. On this basis, the paper recommends a collaborative partnership in investing in education, improvement in allocating adequate financial resources in the education sector, the need to improve the livelihood of people and creating awareness among educational stakeholders on effective strategies for a smooth transition from home to school among students.

Keywords: Basic Education, Individualized Instructions, Fee Free Education, Patriotism, Technology, Innovations

1. Introduction

Basic education is one of the key determinants which may favour the economic and social development of the country. Accessibility of basic education has been reflected in most international agendas that have been adopted in many countries in responding to various issues that include labour market, poverty, technology, just to mention a few. In September 2015, 193 United Nations Member States gathered at the institution's headquarters in New York and agreed to take transformative steps to shift the world onto a sustainable path, in which they adopted a new global agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This review takes on board the strategic objectives for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four on "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" [1]. Based on the Incheon Declaration, it is envisaged that by 2030, education systems will need to enroll hundreds of millions of

additional children and adolescents to achieve basic education which include pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education and provide equal access to upper secondary and post-secondary education opportunities for all [1]. Similarly, in the African agenda 2063, it is stressed that at least one out of every three children will be having access to kindergarten education with every child of secondary school age in school and seven out of ten of its graduates without access to tertiary education enrolled in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes [2].

In responding to SDGs and African Agenda 2063, Tanzania, like many other countries has taken logical steps to ensure that every child has an access to fee free basic education. This has been reflected in the Tanzania vision 2025 in which the government stresses the need to embrace universal primary education, the eradication of illiteracy by promoting creativity, innovativeness and a high level of quality education in order to respond to development challenges and effectively compete globally in different aspects [3]. In nurturing industrialization for economic transformation, the fifth phase government

within the motto of "Hapa Kazi Tu" (translated as a bedrock of working ethics) has initiated the National Five Years Development Plan II (NFYD II) in 2016 to ensure efficient delivery of public goods and searching for innovative solutions to address obstacles to business, promoting investments and growth as well as ensuring the development of the private sector [4]. In 2014, the Tanzanian government introduced education policy with the declaration of provision of free and compulsory basic education (primary and lower secondary) to all Tanzanians [5]. In line with this policy, the government in 2015 issued Circular no. 5 which directs the public bodies to ensure that secondary education is free for all children [6].

Although various global and national initiatives have been in place, still literature stress a number of limitations. According to United Nations (UN) [7], an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide- 58 per cent of that age group, are not achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics [7]. In the similar way, the basic education data of 2011 indicate that only about one quarter of schools in sub-Saharan Africa had electricity, less than half had access to drinking water, and only 69 per cent had toilets with many lacking separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys [8]. What does this imply as far as the provision of basic education is concerned? One would say there is a number of factors that limit the achievement on provision of basic education that need a critical discussion and possible forward looking thoughts. It is on this concern this paper brings forward a critical reflection on emerging issues on provision of basic education in Tanzania and their implications towards nurturing industrialized economy.

As one reads different literature, the needs of basic education have been reflected in national, regional and global frameworks in the provision of quality education. The starting point of the discussion is based on the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 in its article no 26 which states that everyone has the right to education. On this, education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages and shall be compulsory [9]. The right to education was also reiterated in the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education For All (EFA), which emphasized basic education, followed by the 2001 Dakar World Forum on EFA. One of the commitments was to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children who are in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality [10]. In the same way, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number two stresses the need to achieve universal primary education by ensuring that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education [9]. Furthermore, the Incheon Declaration adopts the SGD number four which stresses the need to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all [1]. It is on this basis, Tanzania establishes different policy documents and initiatives regarding the provision of basic

education aligning with the global agenda. The government commitment towards the provision of basic education is revealed in a number of ways. First, the government introduced the racial integration Act of 1962 which aimed at ensuring there was equity by abolishing racial discrimination in the provision of education. The initiative abolished school fees in public secondary school in 1964 and in primary schools in 1971 to ensure access of basic education to all children, regardless of their religion, tribe, race, colour and social status [11, 12]. Second, nationalization of educational institution; a marked change in the organization of the schools was the adoption of the 1969 educational Act No. 25 which nationalized the private and religious owned schools. The main aim of this Act was to ensure that all children had access to education without reference to their religion, gender or ethnicity [11]. In 1974 the government adopted the Musoma Resolution, which set the goal of achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 1987 and the implementation started in 1977. Among the successes were promoting of children from different socio-economic and geographical background to access education [12]. However, UPE faced a number of challenges including financial constraints in which the government reduced public expenditure and then in 1993 cost sharing was introduced which affected the provision of primary education since there was a dramatic drop in enrolment and an increase of dropout rate [12].

Another initiative is the introduction of Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 1995. This ETP emphasizes on ensuring that all citizens have access to primary and adult basic education as per their rights. Its major objectives are enrolment, equitable access, quality improvement, expansion and optimization of facilities and operational efficiency throughout the system [13]. In collaboration with the donor community and international financial institutions, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was established in 2000. According to Mbilinyi and Nyoni [14] the strategy highlighted a number of targets such as:

i. Achieve universal primary education
ii. Expand secondary education by strengthening existing Government secondary schools and construct new schools. The target is to have at least one secondary school in each ward;
iii. Raise the number of people who can read and write to 90 per cent of all Tanzanians taking into account gender considerations
iv. Expand and strengthen primary and technical education in order to enhance the ability of individuals' advancement.

In achieving the targets, the government introduced the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) in 2002 in which all school fees and direct financial contributions to primary schools were abolished [12]. Other strategies include National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) in 2005 which sought to achieve UPE as a means to empower people to fight against poverty, ignorance and disease [12]. Again, Tanzania National Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (TNGPRS-II) was introduced in 2010

with the aim to support the provision of quality education and equal access to educational resources to all, including out of school girls. The focus was to expand and improve education infrastructure, including ensuring effective use of schools and other institutions for basic and continuing education for out-of-school children youth and adults, especially in rural areas so as to reduce illiteracy rate [15].

In 2008 the government introduced the five years Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) with the aim to ensure equitable access to quality education at all levels; ensuring skills development and universal literacy for all men and women. In the same way, in 2016 the five-year ESDP of 2016/17-2020/21 responds to implementation of the key targets of SDGs, more specifically goal number four, "*Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*". Among other objectives, it addresses the need for capacity development; skills development; science, technology and innovation as a way to achieve the NFYDP-2016/17-2020/21 [4]. Again, the ESDP of 2016/17-2020/21 aligns with the Tanzania Education Training Policy of 2014 and vision 2025 in which it stresses the need to ensure increased accessibility and affordability to early and basic education by the public, irrespective of gender and disability [16]. Along these initiatives, the Government issued Circular number 5 in November, 2015 which directs the public bodies to ensure that secondary education is free for all children. This includes the removal of all forms of fees and contributions. The Circular reads: "*Provision of free education means pupils or students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of new circular*" [6]. It is on this basis, one would say that Tanzania has been struggling to ensure that basic education is the right for all, although there are constraints that limit the implementations. This paper therefore, addresses emerging issues that emanate from basic education statistics with the purpose to inform the best practices in the provision of basic education for national development.

2. Methodological Procedures

This paper employed a document analysis on the data published by the government on Basic education statistics as means to address emerging issues and inform the future practices. Writing on the document analysis strategy, Bowen [17] stresses that documents analysis provides a means of understanding the sociocultural, political, and economic context in which a particular social phenomenon may be addressed. It is on this basis, the method was employed to analyse the government basic education statistics and recommend the future practices in the provision of basic education.

3. Making Sense of Data on Emerging Issues on Free Basic Education

This section brings forward emerging issues that appear to be of critical importance when reflecting on the provision of free basic education. The review is based on the government basic education statistics of 2018 in which a number of issues emerge as one reflects on the data. This discussion therefore, focuses on some critical issues that include teachers' qualification, shortage of teaching and learning resources, prevalence of children in a vulnerable environment, status on dropout rate and prevalence of digital divide as described next.

3.1. Teachers' Qualification

The question of teacher training and competence has been a global concern. According to the United Nations statistics in 2016, an estimated 85 per cent of primary school teachers worldwide were trained; the proportion was only 71 per cent in Southern Asia and 61 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa [7]. The data raise the concern regarding teacher qualifications which would form the basis of quality provision of basic education. While the teachers appear to be the moral agents for learners, still there have been low initiatives to improve their working conditions and professional skills in many sub-Saharan countries. It has been reported that in 15 of 38 sub-Saharan African countries, more than one in three teachers were not considered "qualified" according to national standards [18].

Reflecting on the basic education statistics in Tanzania, teacher qualification is still a problem that needs to be addressed so as to improve the quality of teaching. Consider an example of pre-primary education teacher qualifications in which there is a total of 8,298 teachers out of 10,945 (75.8%) who are qualified teachers giving a PQTR of 1:171 against the standard norm of 1:25 in government and non-government pre-primary schools [19]. When, thinking of 24.8% teachers with no required qualification, but they are working in inclusive classrooms where learners need a diverse knowledge and create the bedrock of working competences, one would ask: how these teachers teach without the required standards? What could be the implication of the learning needs of the country? The situation is not even convincing in primary education where, out of all 199,705 Primary school teachers, 153,374 (76.8%) have Grade A (Certificate of Teacher Education). Qualified teachers to teach government and non-government primary schools are 195,973 (98.0%). The overall Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is 1:51 compared to the standard 1:45 [19]. While the teacher qualification appears to be better in primary education if compared with pre-primary education, still, pupils-teacher ratio is high. It is possible to ask: is the PTR high because of the increased enrolment after the abolition of school fees? Is the teachers' recruitment too low? Probably, to allow teachers to work in such condition may limit teachers' creativity to devote attention to pupils for individualized instruction. The ideal PTR is likely to allow teachers devote greater attention for individual learners. Writing on individualized instruction, Suprayogi, Valcke and Godwin [20] stress that an individualized instruction is an instructional approach that accommodates the diversity of students by:
  i. coping with student diversity;
  ii. adopting specific teaching strategies;

iii. invoking a variety in learning activities;
iv. monitoring individual student needs, and
v. pursuing optimal learning outcomes.

In order to achieve the tasks embedded on individualized instruction, the teacher needs conducive teaching and learning environment. The basic education statistics in Tanzania reveal a need to improve a number of issues. Consider the situation of the availability of classrooms and latrines in primary schools. Data indicate that the average Pupils Latrine Ratio (PLR) for male pupils in 2018 was 1:54 against the Standard of 1:25; and that of females was 1:51 against the standard of 1:20 while the Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR) was 1:76 against the Standard of 1:45 [19]. The similar situation prevails in secondary schools. The statistics indicate that there is an average male Pit Latrine Ratio of 1:34 against a standard of 1:25 and that of females is 1:32 against the standard of 1:20 while the Average Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR) is 1:45 [19]. One would say, the average PCR is somehow reasonable, but the analysis across regions indicate some variations. For example, in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza regions, there is high PCR of 1:61 and 1:63 respectively. This signifies that teachers are working in the hard environment which may need deliberate measures. While in Tanzania the PCR appears to range in 1:76 in primary schools, the situation is different in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries where the PCR in primary school does not exceed 1:35 [21]. Consider the data in Figure 1 next:
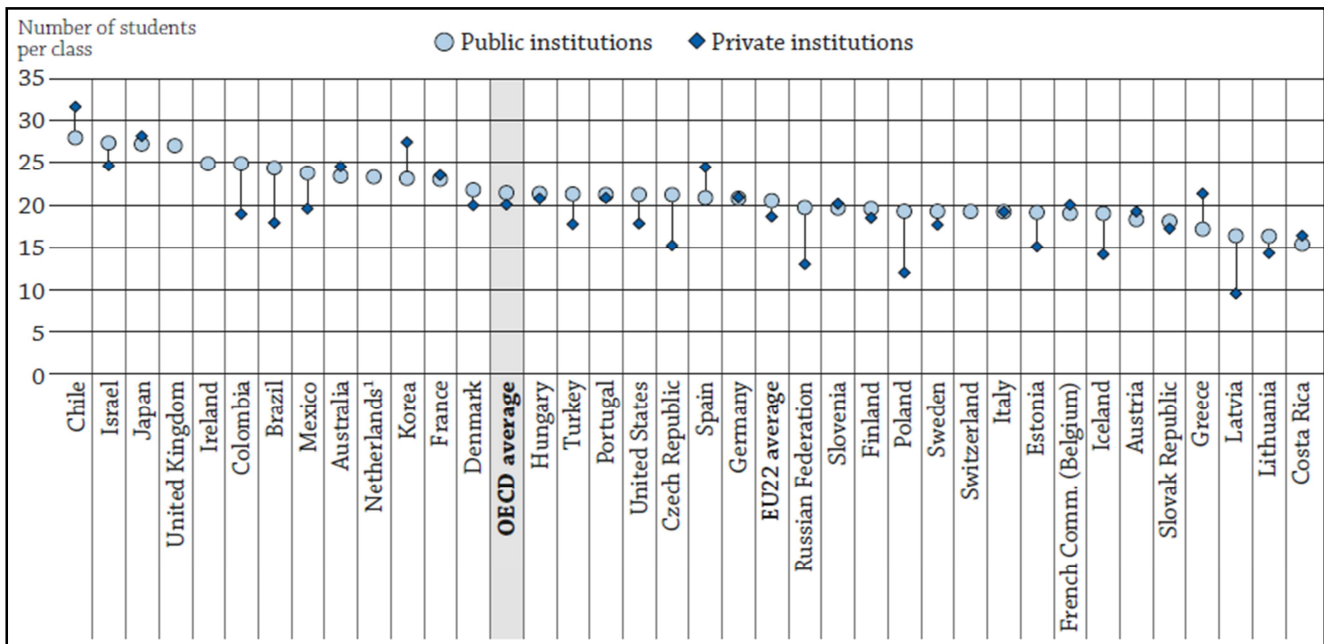
Source: OECD [21]

Figure 1. *Average class size in primary education, by type of institutions (2016).*

Reflecting on the data in Figure 1, it is possible to conclude that pupils' learning is influenced by the class size. According to Mustapha *et al* [22], in the large class a single teacher is not able to dedicate time to all the students. It is possible that the students who need help from the teacher would probably not receive it due to the number of students in the classroom [22]. In this respect, students with special needs may not benefit a lot from teachers learning instructions as compared to a small class and this may lead to low performance. Researching on the influence of PTR, Mulei *et al* [23] found that PTR significantly influences performance of pupils in national examinations of which high PTR affected classroom interactions because teachers found it difficult to give personalized attention to all pupils, give adequate assignments, often mark pupil's assignments and take full control of the classes. Kambuga [24] found that the quality of teaching and learning process was affected negatively by the class size and overcrowding of pupils in a single class. The study conducted in Nigeria by Eboatu and Ehirim [25] revealed that teachers perceived the presence of students in small classes display less disruptive behaviour and teachers spend less time on discipline; students are much more likely to interact with their teachers rather than to listen passively. This suggests that a number of strategies of teaching could be applied by teachers if the classroom is manageable. Evidence show that low achievers in a small class are likely to improve their performance as they have an opportunity to be exposed to differentiated instructions in which they are engaged in learning activities according to their varied abilities. Researching on the idea of differentiated instruction, Charles and Luard [26] report that, it results to rich lessons and positive learning outcomes among students as teachers have time to know their students. They further conclude that innovative planning among school leaders is necessary to ensure teachers devote time to be engaged in planning appropriately for the diverse student population. It makes sense to conclude that effective teaching and learning needs an environment which is conducive to attract the learner to

concentrate on the learning instructions. In this respect, the government initiatives to increase enrolment need to align fairly with the availability of classes and teachers as well.

3.2. Teaching and Learning Resources

The government introduced the education policy in 2014 with the aim to improve teaching and learning facilities, including the availability of textbooks, laboratories and technological devices such as computers [5]. In achieving this objective, the Tanzanian government has ensured that one third of the required books are available in primary schools [16]. There has been an increase in enrolment since the declaration of fee free basic education without a clear correspondence to the availability of the textbooks. In the most recent statistics, primary school enrolment of pupils in Standard I-VII has increased by 8.5% from 9,317,791 pupils in the year 2017 to pupils 10,111,671 in the year 2018. In 2017 the average Pupils Book Ratio (PBR) ranged from 1: 5 and 1:6 while in 2018 there was a critical shortage of textbooks for history 1:6, 'Najifunza Afya na mazingira' 1:5 and 'Najifunza Kuendeleza Sanaa na Michezo' 1:5, [19]. It is possible to conclude that the prevalence of high PBR is attributed to the introduction of the fee free education policy. On the other hand, it is possible to agree that the PBR is affected by an increase of pupils' enrolment but there has been a concern from educational stakeholders on the quality of the text-books. The major concern is on the textbooks whose content lack proper connection with the curriculum [27]. It is noted with concerns that the language used in English primary school textbooks is complex, in the sense that the majority of pupils could not read [28]. One would say, although there must be a significant PBR, still the need to maintain quality is inevitable.

Reflecting on the SDG number four, it states that by 2030, member states should build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. In the same way, the commitment is on strengthening science, technology and innovation. It has been emphasized that Information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision [1]. Again, the NFYDP II of 2016/17 – 2020/21 states that Tanzania aspires to have transformed the nation into a middle income and semi industrialized nation by 2025, characterized by (i) high quality and sustainable livelihoods (ii) peace, stability and unity (iii) good governance and the rule of law (iv) an educated and learning society and (v) a strong and competitive economy [4]. Key aspects of creating an educated and learning society need strong investment and harnessing of technology. While harnessing technology would be significant in improving education, including the accessibility of learning resources, the accessibility of e-resources remains a challenge in Tanzanian context. In this digital age one would expect relevant technological systems that enable pupils in primary schools to access digital books, but this has not been the case. When going through the basic education statistics, there is no

any evidence indicating the availability of e-books which call the need to rethink on whether technology has been harnessed to improve the teaching and learning. Disparities in accessibility of teaching and learning resources is still high in Tanzania schools which require more investments in education infrastructure. Consider an example of the primary schools with electricity, statistics show that out of 17,562 government and non-government primary schools, only 7,322 (41.7%) have at least source of power while in secondary schools out of 4,846 only 3,032 (63%) being connected to the national grid as a source of power [19]. These statistics would imply the need of more emphasis on critical reflection regarding the priorities on resources that may nurture the industrialization for economic transformation and human development in Tanzania.

Although, Tanzania is in struggle to invest in education and other sectors, still a lot is to be done to achieve the SDGs and FYDP II. However, the challenges have been prevailing in other Less Developed Countries (LDCs) as the UN [7] reports that in 2016, only 34 per cent of primary schools in LDCs had electricity and less than 40 per cent were equipped with basic hand washing facilities. Data for 2011 indicate that only about one quarter of schools in sub-Saharan Africa had electricity, less than half had access to drinking water, and only 69 per cent had toilets with many lacking separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys [8]. Many schools in Sub-Saharan Africa are facing the challenge of insufficient teaching and learning resources. The study carried out in Rwanda by Bizimana and Orodho [29] revealed low level of teaching and learning resources availability in Huye District which appeared to compromise the quality and effectiveness of teaching. They also found that there was a significant and positive relationship between teaching and learning resource availability and teacher effective classroom management and content delivery. The similar study in Kenya by Okongo, et al. [30] revealed inadequate teaching and learning resources at pre-school centers in Nyamira North sub-county to support inclusive education. They conclude that the availability of teaching and learning materials enhances curriculum delivery, meets the needs of learners with special needs and enhance pupils' enrolment and retention in pre-schools centres. While inclusive education appears to be the most important global agenda, the statistics regarding the availability of learning resources like Braille slates, large prints, audiotapes and loudspeakers, wheel chairs, crutches and sandpaper letters are hardly seen. In Tanzania for example, the total enrolment of stage I-III pupils with disabilities is 21,406 where Boys are 12,545 and Girls 8,861 [19]. Still, the basic education statistics hardly mention the availability of these facilities in schools. One would think that the learning facilities are not available at schools because of insufficient funds allocated. What does this imply as far as the provision of quality education is concerned? Perhaps, unavailability of proper statistics regarding the learning resources for children with disability, may lead to inappropriate allocation of resources to accommodate the needs. If we are to achieve quality basic education in Tanzania, proper statistics regarding children

with disability should be in place so as to open an avenue for proper decision in specific area that need strong investment. A collaborative partnership on investing in education should be a shared responsibility that involves a number of stakeholders, including parents and non-governmental organisations. The author recommends improving school working conditions as critical elements for improving quality basic education, which can be achieved through a shared cost investment in specific areas such as inclusive education which may need much funds to purchase the learning facilities.

3.3. Prevalence of Children Living in Vulnerable Environment

The basic education statistics indicate a significant number of children living in vulnerable environment which might have implications in the provision of quality education for all. Data indicate that the total number of pupils living in vulnerable environment in Government and Non-Government schools in 2018 is 9.2% of 10,111,671, which is the total number of enrolled primary school pupils [19]. There are variations on the causes of vulnerability in which poverty is the leading one as reflected in Figure 2 next.
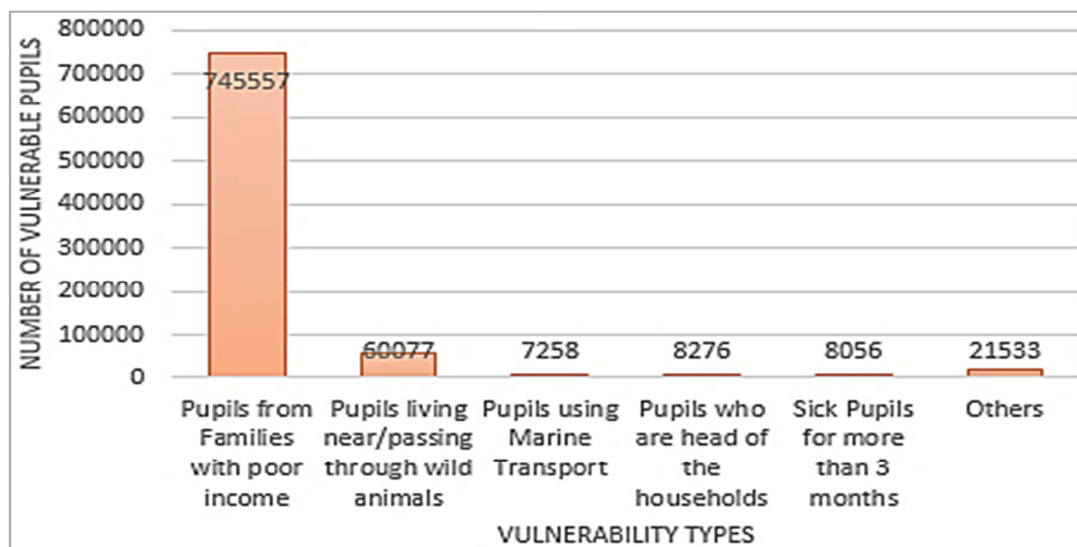
Source: URT [19]

Figure 2. Number of Pupils in Government and Non-Government Schools/Classes Living in Vulnerable Environment, 2018.

From Figure 2 it appears that poor income (poverty) which affects a number families has been a big challenge towards the provision of basic education. Poverty creates low morale and lack of motivation for pupils to go to school because of lack of basic facilities such as school uniform, shoes, exercise books and textbooks. Although the government declared basic education to be free from fee, still, parents from low income families cannot afford basic school needs. Although there is the decline of Basic Needs poverty from 34.4 percent (2007) to 28.2 percent (2012) and food poverty from 11.7 per cent to 9.7 percent respectively, still the Human Development Index (HDI) value for Tanzania has no significant improvement in which a slight increase from 0.466 (2011) to 0.521 (2014) could be noted [4]. This HDI value may have an impact on the quality of education and literacy level. Although many countries have already implemented free universal primary education, still most children living in vulnerable environment have insufficient access to quality education. A qualitative study in Ethiopia by Abashula, et al. [31] revealed that vulnerable children have little/no access to essential social services such as health, education and housing. The study suggests strengthening families' and guardian's economic capacity through income generating activities, social and emotional inclusive support programs, inter-organizational

coordination and launching institutional care/ promoting local adoption for the abandoned and orphans. In the similar way, the study in Uganda by Olanrewaju et al. [32] revealed that despite the implementation of free universal primary education, there is high prevalence of children living in vulnerable environment with high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, prolonged conflict (particularly, in the northern region) and extreme poverty. Based on SDGs, accessing basic education has been identified as one of the crucial factors to ensure child social protection [33]. The accessibility of quality education and other services such as food and health services can help children to realize their full potential, breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability, and realizing their rights to social security [33]. While the global agenda needs UN member states to translate SDGs into achievable plans, still many countries have a number of children living in vulnerable environments due to a number of factors. From a human rights perspective, all boys and girls need learning environments and schools that are committed to ensure they acquire basic life skills, entrepreneurial skills and basic literacy.

In light of the preceding discussion, some fundamental questions may arise: what kind of school do we need in order to create a well-educated and learning society? How can

educational stakeholders organize the formal or informal learning programme to suit the needs? It is the author's view that, the starting point could be the Mobile School. This could be organised as a flexible platform to reach vulnerable children in marginalised areas in which a school moves to the pupils. It may be in the form of a centre or a mobile bus with teachers, teaching and learning resources, and whenever possible may be equipped with mobile technologies. While the FYDP II recognizes science, technology and innovation as an important enabler of economic and social development [4], still one could notice unsatisfactory progress in education sector, especially for children in vulnerable environment. In this digital era, it is possible to harness the possibilities of

having Mobile Digital Schools (MDS) as strategy to challenge the existing ways of education for children in vulnerable environment. Transforming Tanzania into a semi-industrialized nation by 2025, needs improved technological literacy and innovations, and improving the provision of basic education for all could be the best start.

3.4. Prevalence of High Dropout Rate

Despite progress and achievements in enrolment rates in the previous years, there are still high rate of pupils' dropout. Data show that there is a high rate of dropout in lower grades as indicated in Figure 3.
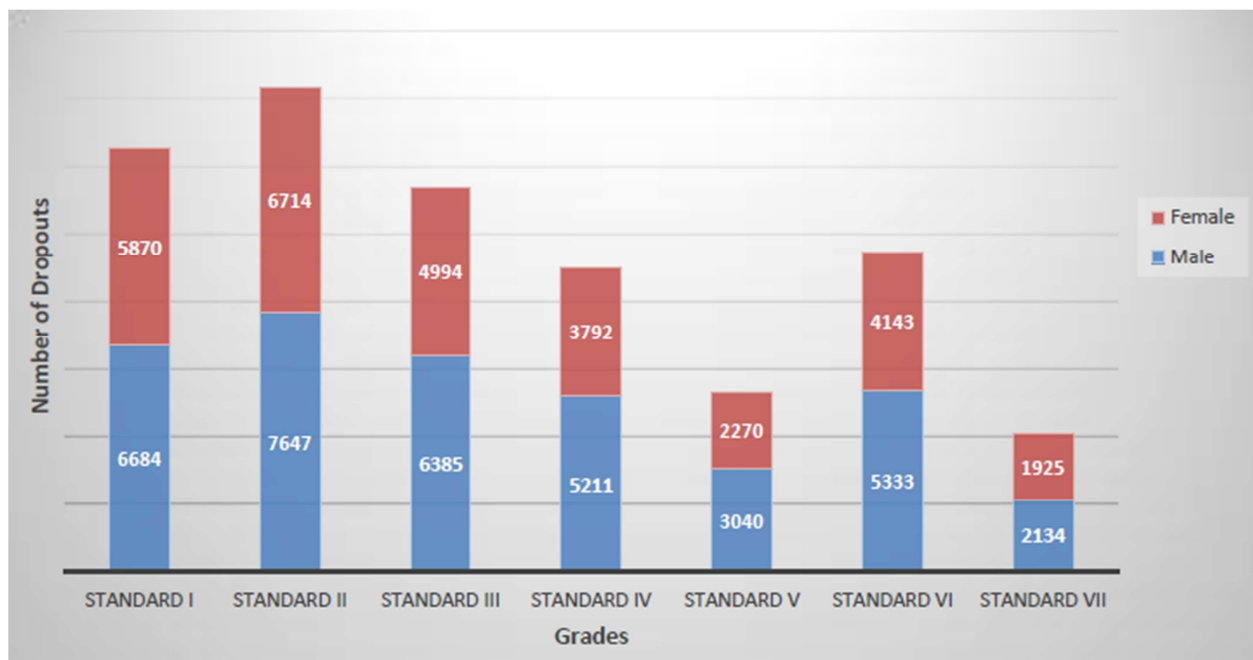

Source: URT [19]

Figure 3. Number of Dropouts in Government and Non-Government Schools by Grade, 2017.

Data in Figure 3 bring out the concern of high rate of dropout in early grades from Grade I to III with highest rate in standard II. A number of questions may arise: Why the problem is too alarming in early grades? Is it because of poor transition strategies from home to school? Is it because of the school challenges? Possibly these questions are important in making sense of the basic education statistics to draw lessons to improve the practices. Researching on challenges facing early grade classes, Tandika [34] concludes that, learning in Grade I and II is impaired by overcrowded classrooms, lack of sufficient and developmentally appropriate chairs and desks, the inability of parents or caregivers to provide pupils with essential writing materials, and the teachers' low motivation to improvise ICT equipment. He further recommends the promotion of appropriate and supportive learning environments, overall teacher competency, and parental readiness to encourage pupils to attend schools as strategies to improve learning. It is possible to associate the mentioned factors with the high dropout rate in early grade classes. Some

parents send their children to school as the common myth without a proper understanding and encouragement among their children. Chikwiri and Musiyiwa [35] noted transition challenges in Zimbabwe. Their study revealed that lack of qualified teachers and expertise, lack of resources (material) were some of the challenges which affect successful transitions. The discussion triggers the author to include the assumption that the high dropout rate in early grade classes is the result of multiple factors. There have been some cases on the nature of the school environment that a child finds it difficult to cope and on the other side lack of commitment among parents in helping a child to have a smooth transition to school. This includes the parents' support such as provision of school uniform, exercise books and other learning facilities. Again, teachers need sufficient skills and knowledge on how to promote a smooth transition from home to school among children. Apart from transition factors, there are other major factors as Figure 4 next stipulates:

URT [19]
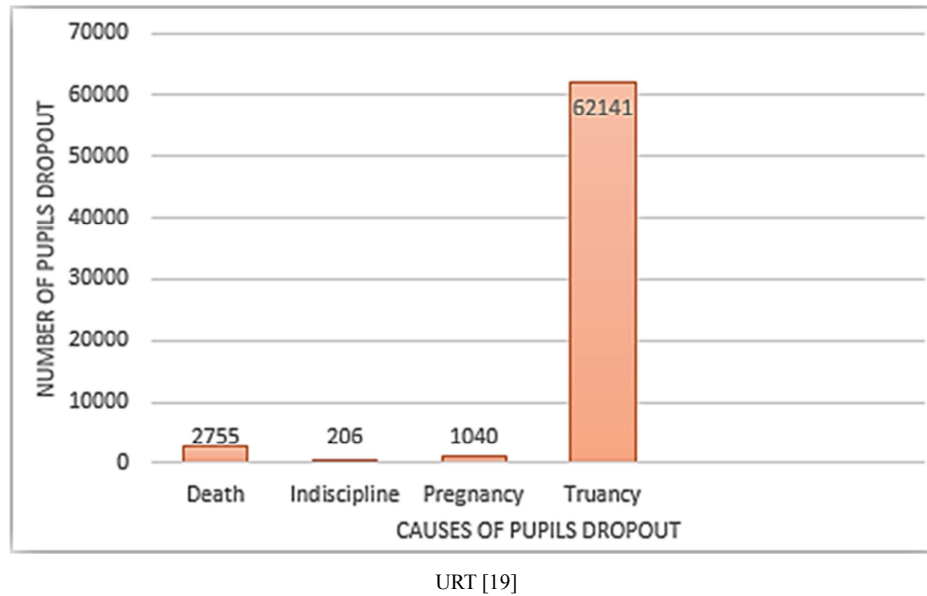
Figure 4. Number of Dropouts in Government and Non-Government Schools by Reason, 2017.

The issue of dropout in Tanzania has been prevailing for a long time due to a number of factors. The dropout from formal education has been in place because of cultural activities, early marriage, household activities, long distance from home to school, lack of provision of school equipment and poverty [36]. When reflecting on the argument and the statistics, one would say that girls are more vulnerable to the problem under discussion. It is evident that most parents in pastoralist communities force their girls to withdraw from school and retain them at their homes to assist them in household chores [37]. Basic Education statistics indicate that in 2015, about 2,386 girls dropped out from primary schools because of grazing in pastoral communities and 251 girls because of early pregnancy [38]. The number of girls who dropout from primary schools is increasing in Tanzania. About 36,008 girls dropped from primary schools because of several reasons, which include animal grazing, domestic works, non-friendly learning environment, farm work, lack of basic needs, and taking care of sick parents [38]. The current statistics indicate that male dropout outnumber girls in which 36,434 are male and 29,708 are female [19]. The mentioned major reason is truancy. It is possible to link the truancy problem with other factors such as low level of family income, vulnerable living environment and social problems. The study conducted in Babati Town council by Ketija [39] concludes that at the marginalized schools, there is a high level of drop out and at the more privileged schools, no dropouts occur. The study further reveals factors which play a major role in the existing difference which include children's and parents' commitment to school, family structure and background, family's socio-economic status, relationships in the family and the quality of the school. Adam et al. [40] in Ghana identified other factors for dropouts. They revealed that poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancy and distance to school are the major causes of dropout in the Asunafo South District. It was also found that teacher's attitude, corporal punishment, death and

sickness of parents lead to dropouts in schools. The mentioned factors in basic education statistics in Tanzania and other researchers reflect the findings in Kenya by Adan and Orodho [41] who report that a number of socioeconomic factors were leading to school dropouts during the implementation of Free Secondary Education (FSE) since 2008. The study mentions with concern that the introduction of FSE increased the enrolment rate but many girls are still dropping out of school due to pregnancies with no proper mechanisms on their follow up after delivery [41]. The problem of dropout appears to affect many countries, while the global agenda seems to pay little attention about it [42]. The emphasis has been on the accessibility and enrolment in which most member states have achieved significant results while the question of retention remains silent.

Despite considerable gains in primary school enrolment between 2000 and 2014, 9 per cent of primary-school-aged children worldwide were out of school in 2014, with little progress since 2008 [8]. There is a doubt that the implementation of SDGs poses a significant improvement in basic education as one of the targets states that by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations [1]. Developing countries, including Tanzania have the responsibility to set National SDGs achievement priorities which reflects the critical challenges of education in the state. Reflecting on the FYDP II objectives, the document mentions ensuring global and regional agreements (e.g. Africa Agenda 2063 and SDGs) are adequately mainstreamed into national development planning and implementation frameworks for the benefit of the country [4]. Still, the specific strategies to improve the quality of education are not featured well in the plan. What one sees is just an emphasis and strategies in other sectors such as agriculture and tourism. It is possible to

minimize educational challenges if the national priorities offer the room to take advantage of new opportunities related to new technological innovation in which different social groups can benefit. It has been acknowledged that, Tanzania makes low usage of advanced and modern technologies, primarily due to high costs of sourcing and updating to modern technology; restrictive patent rights acquisition, and limited knowledge on new technologies [4]. If limited knowledge of the new technologies appears to hamper the technological adoption, one would expect to see deliberate strategies to invest in technological innovations in basic education so that pupils develop inquiry and creative mind in which discovery and exploration of new ideas should be their mission.

3.5. Emerging Issues and Implication for the Future Practice

The statistics presented in this paper about the provision of basic education in Tanzania raise a number of concerns about quality and sustainability of fee free basic education strategies. As it has been reflected in the Tanzania Vision 2025, the government is envisioned to create a well-educated and learning society. With all government initiatives, including the declaration of fee free basic education, still, one can notice a number of challenges that limit equal accessibility of basic education. There have been some evidences on the discontinuity from primary school to secondary schools. Consider the following statistics in Table 1 next:

Table 1. *Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) Results, 2013 – 2017.*

Year	Candidate Sat	Candidate Passed	Percentage Passed
2013	844,938	427,606	50.6
2014	792,122	451,392	57.0
2015	763,606	518,034	67.8
2016	789,479	555,365	70.3
2017	909,950	662,035	72.8

Source: URT [19]

Data in Table 1 indicate that there is a big number of students who fail in the standard seven final exams to qualify to join secondary education. What does this imply? It is possible to assert that this group of pupils join the group of dropouts since they fail to join secondary education as one of the components of basic education. These might have difficulties in securing the job, and sometimes there is a likelihood to engage in crimes and other social vices, like armed robbery and drug abuse. Literature indicates that there is a substantial body of evidence which links unemployment and non-employment to crime [43]. Further research may be conducted to find out the association between dropout and discontinuity from basic education with the prevalence of crime in the community.

The shortage of teachers and qualification is another cause for the concern. As it has been indicated in the preceding discussion, the trend is not actually convincing in improving the provision of quality basic education. Teachers with the qualification above Grade A are expected to be in primary schools. However, this is not the case as presently there is a number of teachers with grade B/C in primary schools. Reflecting on the statistics, about 3,055 teachers have a Grade B/C meaning that; they do not qualify to teach in primary schools [19]. Grade B/C teachers are the ones who have no secondary education, of which they need upgrading. These teachers may lack substantial knowledge in terms of subject matter knowledge and teaching skills as they had an opportunity to attend teacher education programmes while they had no secondary education. There is a need to rethink on how these teachers can be exposed to further professional development programmes and secondary education so as to qualify for the position they hold in teaching. Even some teachers who are qualified, are not performing their duties with diligence. Based on the survey by Bold *et al.* [44], it was found that 14% of teachers were absent from school, and 47% were absent from the classroom. It is on this basis this paper, suggests a clear teacher professional framework that will rationalize teachers' professional practices.

Lack of sufficient teaching and learning resources has been another emerging concern that needs deliberate measures. The quality of basic education depends heavily on the availability of resources at schools which in turn improves the quality of learning. Writing on the assessment of school facilities and resources in the context of fee free basic education in Tanzania, Kapinga [45] stresses that the increase in enrolment in schools has not corresponded with the expansion and improvement of school facilities and resources. The similar findings were noted by Mulinya and Orodho [46] that the implementation of free primary education policy in Kenya had led to an exponential increase in enrolment in primary schools which had over stretched the available human and physical resource base to cope with the numbers. The implementation resulted into poor teaching strategies and poor academic performance at the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) Examinations. The availability of sufficient resources and students' performance are critical in evaluating the quality of free basic education offered in any given country. If the success of free basic education is evaluated in terms of total enrolment alone, someone might be wrong. There is a need to make sure that the enrolment do not exceed the school resources. It is on this basis, this paper recommends a critical investment in educational resources to ensure that correspond to students' learning needs. Improving the availability of teaching and learning resources and facilities such as toilets, classrooms, computers and books would attract the retention of qualified teachers and pupils learning would take place easily.

The prevalence of children living in vulnerable

environment is another concern that needs to be addressed. The review reveals that family poor income as a leading factor for vulnerability. There could be a mechanism to establish a framework to ensure that children from vulnerable environment get access to free basic education. This might include abolition not only direct costs (school fee) but also indirect costs such as (uniform costs, exam fee, remedial class fee and learning materials amongst others. The government may ensure that the education budget covers all these costs to children in vulnerable environment so as to increase the accessibility of quality basic education.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In order to build a strong foundation for transforming Tanzania into a semi-industrialized nation by 2025, collaborative priorities in improving basic education are necessary. The basic education implications discussed in this paper call for a vital attention to redefine the phenomenon so as to meet both national and global priorities. A number of factors constraining the provision of quality of basic education brought forward in this paper, generally need proper intervention. It is therefore expected that, the concerns raised in this paper shall be keenly looked into by the education stakeholders with a view that basic education is a foundation and best start to orient students basic scientific and theoretical knowledge expected to be acquired from other levels of education in the country.

To this point, it makes sense to draw some recommendations highlighted in the preceding discussion that may improve the practice in the provision of basic education in Tanzania in the future. While free basic education is typically governed by policy, still there is a need of having a baseline data that initiates the practice. Sometimes it is too hard to find a clear statistics that initiated fee free basic education in Tanzania in 2015 which might have some implications in varied commitments and understanding during the implementation. Although the government initiatives to ensure the provision of quality education should not be undermined, still, the need to involve stakeholders in the policy pronouncements is necessary to create a common understanding to the implementers. Sometime parents are in a dilemma on what should or not be contributed as indirect costs. Further consideration in improving the future practices includes the following:

First, there is a need to create a collaborative partnership in investing in education. This may involve a technological innovation revolution in education where teachers can be equipped with ICT based pedagogical skills to enhance learning. Again, deliberate efforts to invest in digital content, learning management systems and hardware such as computers and tablets for learners may be a good start.

Second, improve financing of education which could facilitate the improvement of working conditions for teacher by ensuring that teachers have access to good houses. This may include the establishment of a clear guideline on redistribution of capitation grants to schools. In fact, the

complications that exist today in schools where heads of schools have varied perceptions towards fee free basic education, may explain the lack of manuals and guideline of policy implementation. It is on this basis, the author is of the view that, provision of manuals to the public would facilitate smooth monitoring of grants and would help stakeholders understand fairly the concept of fee free basic education.

Third, the need to improve livelihood and income. As it has been stated clearly in the FYDP II through the motto of *"Hapa Kazi Tu",* the government is envisioned to nurture industrialization for economic transformation and human development. The purpose brings hope to the citizen, including a marginalized group who need to access quality basic education. However, the need to instil a culture of patriotism by establishing effective mechanisms to reform the curriculum that reflect the current needs appear to be emphasized in the FYDP II. It is therefore recommended that deliberate strategies to reform the curriculum to reflect fully the economic transformation and human development should be in place.

Fourth, there is a need to create awareness among stakeholders, including parents and teachers on how to promote skills and knowledge for a smooth transition from home to school among children, which may reduce the dropout rate among early grade pupils. While the smooth transition may be considered as an effective strategy to improve accessibility of basic education, this paper draws attention to a holistic approaches that may include collaboration and partnership among educational stakeholders. The paper makes sense of basic education statistics with a major focus on primary education and less focus on secondary education and pre-primary education. On this basis, one could be interested to review what actually the data inform for the improvement in pre-primary and secondary education as some components of basic education in Tanzania.

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