

## Challenges of the Form One Orientation Programme in Tanzania: Experiences from Selected Community Secondary Schools in Moshi District Council

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### **Abstract**

*The study objective was to identify the specific challenges of the Form One Orientation Programme (FOP) in community secondary schools within Moshi District Council. A qualitative research approach with a case study design was adopted. Two secondary schools were selected, with a total of 5 participants, including 2 Heads of Schools (HOS), 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), and two 2 Schools Quality Assurers (SQA). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations. Findings show that the majority of schools struggle to implement the FOP due to institutional barriers such as transferring of Form One students while the FOP is in progress, managing overcrowded classrooms, late reporting of students, and a lack of training for heads of schools in supervising the FOP. The study recommended future studies that could adopt a quantitative or mixed approach, using larger samples to assess the challenges of the FOP, to generalise the findings and examine strategies for unlocking the barriers to successful FOP.*

**Keywords:** *Form One Orientation Programme, English language proficiency, and students.*

### **Introduction**

The Form One Orientation Programme (FOP) in education is a global practice. It plays a vital role in helping students adapt to their new academic environments and minimising the challenges associated with this transition. In Germany, the FOP is an important milestone to ensure students' successful transition from primary to secondary school, focusing on academic and social integration (Griebel & Berwanger, 2006). The FOP is not the same worldwide; its focus differs depending on the educational system of a given country.

In South Africa, the Form One Orientation Programme (FOP) offers psychological and motivational support to learners, helping them build

confidence in adapting to their new educational environment (De Wit et al., 2010). In Kenya, the orientation programme focuses on familiarising students with school rules and routines while guiding potential career pathways (Sigei, 2013). These variations display how different educational contexts influence the design and objectives of FOPs to address the unique needs of students in each country. This demonstrates that for each country, FOPs are modified based on specific cultures, backgrounds, and educational contexts.

In Tanzania, the FOP was launched to address the English language barrier faced by secondary school students. Designed explicitly for Form One students, the FOP aims to improve their English language proficiency, thereby ensuring that they can fully engage with the curriculum and resulting in better learning outcomes (TIE, 2014). The FOP is intended to offer intensive language training, familiarise students with academic English terms, and provide ongoing support to boost their confidence in English usage. This focus on language skills in form one class helps reduce learning difficulties and smooth the transition to secondary schooling.

According to the Education and Training Policy, the language of instruction in secondary schools is English (URT, 2024). As the FOP serves as a foundation to bridge the gap between primary and secondary education, significant challenges hinder its effectiveness in some schools (Murasi, 2013). This study aims to identify the specific challenges faced in secondary schools within Moshi District Council (DC). Understanding these challenges is crucial for improving the implementation of the FOP, ensuring that students make a successful transition to secondary schooling and maximise their learning potential.

The current study aims to identify the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the FOP in Moshi District Council and assess their impact on students' English language proficiency in secondary education. Without such a study, these challenges may remain unaddressed, potentially affecting students' academic achievement. Handling these issues is crucial for improving student outcomes in English-medium classrooms and ensuring students are better prepared for future academic success. An effective FOP should address the setbacks that may hinder its successful implementation and support students' adjustment throughout the transition.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura, which explores how individuals' behaviour is shaped by cognitive and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Central to SCT are the concepts of self-efficacy, self-regulation and observational learning, which

are crucial in the FOP context. The school leaders with high self-efficacy are more likely to feel confident in their ability to overcome challenges hindering the FOP. The self-regulation process is self-monitoring, ensuring that the programme is effectively delivered, even when faced with challenges.

The concept of observational learning could be realised particularly through collaboration and mentoring. Observing and learning from more experienced heads of schools can improve their strategies for supervising the FOP implementation. Additionally, environmental factors such as administrative support and available resources are critical to understanding how these elements either facilitate or hinder the FOP. Together, these components of SCT provide a comprehensive framework.

### **Literature Review**

Studies highlight several challenges in implementing the FOP in secondary schools. One key issue is the variation in the timing and duration of the FOP across schools. Additionally, schools face challenges such as inadequate materials, overcrowded classrooms, teachers' limited skills in teaching the FOP, and difficulties managing the programme due to high student enrollment (Murasi, 2013).

Lyimo & Mapunda (2016) further emphasise that the absence of teacher guidebooks contributes to these challenges. Teachers, especially those who are novice or inexperienced, need these resources to facilitate FOP lessons confidently. Moreover, the varying language backgrounds of both learners and teachers, coupled with the lack of teacher training on how to implement the FOP effectively, create additional barriers. The challenge of teaching English as a second language remains significant, as many teachers struggle to teach in English.

Johanes (2017) underscores the impact of limited English competence among teachers on the success of the FOP. Teachers often resort to poor teaching strategies such as code-switching and code-mixing, which hinder students' language development. Johanes argues that these practices lead to students' failure to learn English, lower their confidence in speaking the language, reduce practice opportunities, and ultimately impede their ability to master English. Overall, the short duration allocated for the FOP is insufficient for students to achieve the desired language proficiency, compounding these challenges.

Studies also highlight a mismatch between the FOP's objectives and available resources in many schools. Murasi (2013) points out that insufficient funding, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of materials like

textbooks and teacher guidebooks limit the programme's effectiveness. Overcrowded classrooms compound these challenges by reducing the individual attention teachers can give students, especially those struggling with English. These issues hinder the successful implementation of the FOP and its ability to support students' transition to English-medium education, emphasising the need for better resource allocation and targeted interventions.

In their study, Yohana and Mwila (2022) pointed out that students in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania, encounter several challenges during the FOP, such as struggling with limited English language proficiency, which affects their comprehension of course content and restricts their participation in discussions. Approximately 61% of students reported feeling uncomfortable using English in class, leading to passive involvement. The lack of confidence in speaking English is coupled with negative attitudes toward the language and the FOP. These challenges create barriers that would undermine the effectiveness of the FOP in enhancing students' English language proficiency.

While studies such as Murasi (2013) in Dodoma have explored the challenges of implementing the Form One Orientation Programme (FOP) in secondary schools, there remains a significant gap in research focusing on the specific challenges faced by schools in Moshi, Tanzania. The dynamics of FOP implementation in Moshi may differ due to local factors such as student demographics, administrative support, school management, and varying levels of resource allocation. These context-specific challenges could further hinder the FOP's success in the district, highlighting the need for research on Moshi's unique educational setting.

Although previous studies in Tanzania identified challenges of the FOP, they might manifest differently in Moshi due to regional variations. The specific contexts of Moshi could result in unique barriers and experiences which may not be present in other places. The need to understand these differences was a crucial motive for undertaking the study in Moshi.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case study design. The research was conducted in Moshi District Council, in Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania. A total of 5 participants in the study, including 2 Heads of Schools, 2 School Quality Assurance Officers, and 1 District Education Officer. Semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations were used in data collection, which yielded in-depth insights into the challenges of the FOP. The interview responses were complemented by observations conducted

in naturalistic settings, enhancing the validity of findings through triangulation. Observations specifically focused on classroom infrastructure and the interactions between teachers and pupils during FOP. Data were thematically analysed, which involved coding and identifying key themes to uncover patterns related to the challenges of the FOP. The study ensured ethical adherence through asking for permission from authorities, participants' informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants directly involved in monitoring and supervising the implementation of FOP in secondary schools. Kombo and Tromp (2006) suggest selecting individuals who could provide detailed and relevant information based on their experiences in the supervision of the FOP. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise the importance of ensuring the sample contains relevant data, permits the transferability of results, and considers the potential for effective analysis. A small sample was selected from two low-performing schools to allow for a deep and detailed exploration of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative studies typically use small samples due to constraints related to time and resources (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Patton (1990) argues that in qualitative research, the number of respondents is less important than the quality of the selected participants. He further suggests that even a single informant can provide sufficient and reliable data to generate valid findings.

## **Results and Discussion**

The present study's following themes provide a detailed discussion of these findings.

### ***Form One Students' Transfers to Other Schools***

The study found that many students could not fully attend the Form One Orientation Programme (FOP) in its entirety due to the complex process of transferring to other schools. Due to the geographical challenges and administrative issues surrounding school placement, parents often request transfers to schools closer to their homes. These transfer requests are sometimes made before the FOP concludes, resulting in students missing out on the entire programme. In an interview, SQA1 explained this situation:

...reallocation of students causes disturbance and difficulties in implementing the FOP... selection of students should be based on the distance from home... (SQA 1).

Explaining this challenge, the DEO said:

All students have to attend the FOP. Nevertheless, parents have the right to choose schools for their children; hence, they are allowed to transfer their children if they think that joining the school will cause them a lot of inconvenience... (DEO).

The finding above discloses that the authorities responsible for the placement of students in different secondary schools did not consider geographical distance. Considering the geographical location of students would reduce the need for transfers while the FOP is progressing. This, in turn, would prevent students from missing out on the entire duration of the FOP.

### ***Overcrowding Classrooms***

Through the interview and observation, the study revealed that overcrowded classrooms were a hurdle to implementing the FOP. Overcrowded classes in schools A and B showed a challenge to the implementation of the FOP. The classroom environments were not friendly enough to facilitate interaction between teachers and students. Expressing the challenge of classroom congestion in secondary schools, the SQA 2 said in the interview:

...lack of sufficient classrooms is a big problem for many schools. This results in overcrowded classes and consequently, poor teaching of the FOP... (SQA 2).

The findings from classroom observations in Schools A and B showed overcrowded conditions. The challenge of inadequate infrastructure made approximately four students share a desk. Students in the classrooms were closely packed together, leaving little space for teachers to move or interact. The overcrowding caused discomfort for both students and teachers, making running the FOP difficult as teachers struggled to manage the large number of students. The conditions observed establish that overcrowded classrooms in both schools challenge the effectiveness of the FOP. Thus, a lack of sufficient classroom space creates difficulty for the FOP to be taught successfully.

These findings correspond with Maganga's (2016) study, which found that many schools in the Ilala Municipality experienced classroom congestion, creating challenges for teaching and learning. In such an environment, it is unrealistic to expect effective learning, as both teacher-student and student-student interactions are limited. Additionally, Murasi (2013) highlighted that overcrowded classrooms were a barrier to implementing the FOP. The researcher found that classes were too large for teachers to manage effectively. Overcrowding results in reduced interaction between teachers and students, making it difficult to facilitate the FOP. Additionally, SCT acknowledge that environmental factors such as administrative support and

other resources can address the overcrowded classroom that impairs FOP (Bandura, 1986).

### ***Late Reporting of Students***

The study observed that some students reported late, either in the middle of or after the FOP had started. In some cases, students did not report until the FOP six-week period had ended, while it must be conducted soon after the school calendar begins. Some of these students missed the FOP or were only able to participate partially in the FOP. This created challenges for implementing the FOP, as student selection and posting were not managed within the school's administrative boundaries. Students who partially participated or missed the FOP entirely experienced inconsistencies in acquiring English language proficiency. As HoS B explained:

...some students report late. The time for the FOP is to be extended to three months, or the selection of students is made early. There must be a time limit for students to report. Sanctions to latecomers can help... (HoS B).

The above statement shows that students who joined the FOP mid-way or after it had started would be deprived of the opportunity to acquire English proficiency within the intended period. It requires students to complete the FOP for six weeks of attendance. Regarding the reporting time, HoS A said:

Student reporting times vary considerably. Some arrive in the morning, others in the afternoon. While some are punctual, many are late, with some arriving as much as two weeks after the school's opening date (HoS A).

Therefore, it would be beneficial if the concerned authorities selected Form One students earlier. They should also set a clear deadline for all students to report, for instance, a few days before the school term, to ensure that all students attend the FOP on time. The study found that the late reporting of students was caused, among other factors, by the transfer of students from one school to another. Many students preferred to study in schools closer to their homes, but were selected to attend more distant schools. As a result, parents spend a considerable time arranging transfers for their children.

### ***Lack of Heads of Schools and Teacher Training***

The study found that teachers lacked experience in teaching and managing the FOP, which suggests that both teachers and Hos need training to effectively implement the programme. When asked about the challenges in supervising the FOP's implementation, the head of Secondary School B responded:

... HOS need to be oriented; first on how to monitor the FOP and secondly, on coaching teachers who are the main implementers of the FOP ... (HoS B).

Based on the above findings, it is evident that school heads must be properly oriented to effectively guide the teachers they supervise, ensuring better practices rather than relying on the traditional, routine approach to running the FOP. Previous studies have highlighted the need for teacher training in implementing the FOP in Tanzania (Faustin, 2014; Murasi, 2013). The district SQA also confirmed that training is a professional requirement. In response to the interview question about the challenges encountered in supervising the FOP in secondary schools, SQA 1 stated:

...Many schools conduct the FOP based on experience, but almost everything has changed today. Therefore, HOS should adopt new practices in implementing the FOP. This can be achieved by organising training for their teachers... (SQA 1).

Based on the view above, both teachers and school heads require regular training to update and broaden their understanding. Running the FOP is not solely a matter of experience, as students' needs and learning methods evolve. Training helps HoS and teachers update their skills and equips them with the necessary tools to facilitate students' learning effectively. A study conducted by Murasi (2013) in Dodoma, Tanzania, supports these findings, stressing challenges in FOP, including limited teacher facilitation skills. While insufficient English proficiency contributes to ineffective teaching strategies (Lyimo & Mapunda, 2016; Johaness, 2017).

Nevertheless, the SCT suggest that HoS and other administrators should learn from other schools to ensure that FOP challenges are solved. Learning from more experienced and successful HoS can improve their strategies in running the FOP (Bandura, 1986). For example, establishing internal staff updating training, experienced staff collaborating to mentor inexperienced staff, might work well.

The study by Yohana and Mwila (2022) highlights that the lack of seminars and training on proper FOP implementation has been identified as a significant challenge. Additionally, these challenges extend to teachers and students' negative attitudes toward the programme. If these challenges are not addressed, the FOP's intended objectives will unlikely be achieved. Studies suggest pre-service and in-service teachers should be oriented to the challenges associated with the language of instruction in secondary schools (Lyimo & Mapunda, 2016).



Apart from fore-identified challenges, the study by Yohana and Mwila (2022) identified key strategies in the FOP that can be used to enhance English language proficiency among students, including peer tutoring, which fostered collaboration and confidence, and positive teacher-student interactions that encouraged active participation. Additionally, student support through extra resources helped address individual learning challenges. These strategies emphasise the importance of collaboration in effective language acquisition during the FOP.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that challenges in running the FOP in secondary schools in Moshi, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teachers' training, late student reporting and frequent transfers while the FOP was in progress, deprived some students of fully participating in the FOP. The study further concluded that certain challenges, such as late student reporting and frequent transfers to other schools that disrupted the smooth implementation of the FOP, stemmed from factors outside the administrative control of schools.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study lead to two recommendations. Initially, future research could adopt a quantitative or mixed-methods approach to assess the challenges of the FOP in different regions for a broader generalisation of findings. Furthermore, it is recommended that studies be conducted, examining strategies for unlocking the barriers to successful FOP to ensure that it is given due importance as an essential element of students' academic development in Tanzania's unique secondary schooling. Finally, the study suggests establishing a policy on form one students' transfer timelines, mandating FOP-specific in-service teacher training and infrastructure investment guidelines to reduce overcrowding.

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