

HakiElimu

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Implementation of the Primary Education Development Plan: Voices from the Community

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The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) is perhaps the most ambitious attempt, after Universal Primary Education (UPE) drive in 1977, to affect primary education in Tanzania. PEDP goes beyond the aims of UPE, which was primarily concentrated on expanding access. PEDP is more comprehensive in its scope. In addition to addressing access, it includes an emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning, increasing funding available at the school level, and making institutional arrangements more democratic and transparent throughout the system. If implemented successfully PEDP can transform the nature of schooling in Tanzania and help ensure that every child is able to enjoy her and his right to quality primary education.

Initial reports indicate that the decision to abolish school fees and mandatory contributions has significantly increased enrolment in 2002. Enrolment in Standard 1 has reportedly increased from 1.1 million in 2001 to 1.6 million this year. While delayed, classroom construction is also being undertaken in all districts throughout the country. Communities clearly desire education and have responded positively by registering children and taking part in construction activities. NGOs are more engaged in the PEDP process, and donors appear to be willing to increase levels of support to primary education. These aspects provide grounds for optimism, and the Government deserves to be commended for its determination to revitalize primary education in Tanzania.

However, other aspects of PEDP implementation appear to be fraught with difficulties, delays and confusion. Some of these are inevitable start-up difficulties. But others could have been foreseen and avoided through better planning and management, and especially through more meaningful involvement of communities.

This report is based primarily on interviews with local government officials and ordinary people across Tanzania. In addition to ongoing documentation processes, it draws on the findings of independent journalist reports from visit six diverse regions of the country. The journalists spent about one week in each of the regions, visiting schools and interviewing a range of actors, including pupils, teachers and poor parents whose voices are often not heard in policy processes. This effort was coordinated by HakiElimu (Dar es Salaam) in partnership with other TEN/MET members as follows: ActionAid (in Kigoma), Save the Children (in Mtwara), Oxfam (Shinyanga), and Maarifa ni Ufunguo and regional networks (Arusha and Kilimanjaro). The full reports of the journalists have been shared with the Government and other stakeholders. This paper provides a summary of their key findings.

¹ An earlier draft of this paper was prepared by Professor Sumra for the Tanzania Education Network (TEN/MET) contribution to the PEDP 'Stocktaking Workshop' in July 2002.

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1. Enrolment: The government's call to register pupils has been received enthusiastically by many parents. Poor parents are especially appreciative of the decision to abolish schools fees and mandatory cash contributions. PEDP stock taking exercise estimates that the targeted enrolment figure of 1.5 million children in 2002 has been surpassed. This shows that the community enthusiasm for education is high and was partly constrained in the past by the requirement to pay fees. It is important that this enthusiasm at the community level is not thwarted by not having other components of PEDP in place. If parents see that their children are sitting in classrooms that are overcrowded, and schools do not have adequate number of teachers and other resources then it is likely that this will affect attendance and future enrolment.

2. Age of Enrolment The directive on mandatory enrolment of 7 years has openly been flouted. As in the past, some parents perceive that seven year olds are too young to go to school and in case would prioritise older children being enrolled before younger ones. Many argued that the age criteria for enrolment needs to be more flexible taking in to consideration the local environment and culture. In some areas, for example, the distance between school and home may be greater than what seven year old can cover.

Children older than 7/8 years are reportedly registered on a 'MEMKWA list', but it is not clear what is going to happen to them since most regions lack non-formal education facilities. Parents are therefore concerned that children over 8-9 years will miss out of education altogether. A head teacher in Kigoma said:

"...mimi nafikiri MEMKWA ikija itasiadia sana, lakini bado niko gizani, watoto wako 'stand-by', bata mtaanin nawakuta wananiuliza 'mwalimu MEMKWA vipi? Bado tu? Ningekuwa na darasa ningewachukua wakati wanasubiri muda wa MEMKWA'".

3. Availability of Teachers and Facilities: Enrolment levels have been extremely high, but classrooms, sanitation facilities and teacher recruitment have not kept up with the expansion. As a result there is extreme overcrowding, with class sizes up to 200 or more in some cases. Teachers are unable to cope with the numbers.

Schools are overwhelmed by the situation. It is important for the government to take stock of the situation and act. In education it makes no sense to address the situation in piecemeal. By focusing the efforts on enrolment, though commendable, has created problems at other levels. Issues of classrooms, teachers, and learning materials are inter-related. Addressing one without others can create problems at the level of schools. Enrolling pupils without having classrooms for them creates problem of overcrowding in classrooms, which in turn affects the quality of teaching. Hiring of additional teachers may result in lowering of teaching load of teachers. PEDP, many argued, needs to be implemented in a more systematic way if it is not going to create more problems than already are at the school level.

One head teacher in Shinyanga had this to say:

"Uandikishaji wa wanafunzi umefanikishwa kwa kiasi kikubwa, lakini kufanikiwa huko kumekuja na mlolongo wa matatizoambayo hadi hii leo yamebaki kuwa ni mzigo kwetu walimu na kamati za shule huku serikali ikisema mpango umefanikiwa. Mimi kwa mfano nimeandikisha watoto 405 na hadi leonaendelea kuandikisha. Sina vyumba vya

kuwaweka watoto hawa. Wanakaa chini ya miti na katika chumba kimoja kilichochakaa, ambacho kimejengwa kwa udongo. Hii ni hatari kwa usalama wao na usalama wa walimu wao, hivyo naakikisha hawakai humo wakati wa mvua kubofia kuta kuanguka na kusababisha kifo. Shule hii ina uwezo wa kuchukua wanafunzi si chini ya 700 lakini ina wanafunzi 1682. nina walimu 24 tu.”

4. Quality: The quality of education continues to be poor, and a major concern of pupils, parents and teachers. At the community level key stakeholders have seen no evidence of efforts to improve quality, and the rapid expansion is in some places making matters worse. The lack of adequate action on disbursing the full \$10 capitation grant is a major concern in this regard.

In particular, many argued that improvement in teaching and learning needs to be the current PEDP priority. One of the objectives of quality improvement in PEDP is “to enable teachers to acquire and develop appropriate pedagogical skills that are academically sound, child friendly, and gender-sensitive”. This is an important component of PEDP that could revolutionise provision of primary education. However, doing so is a massive exercise, requiring not only the skills and knowledge of teachers but also changing how teachers view themselves in relation to their pupils. Development of relevant in-service programmes is crucial and this needs to be addressed without delay.

5. Teachers Motivation: Many teachers feel demoralized. Teachers report having to shoulder much of the responsibility of the PEDP, including having to deal with enormous numbers of pupils and longer working hours, without additional compensation. They also complain about having little opportunity to participate in key decisions regarding plan implementation.

6. Knowledge of PEDP: The objectives of PEDP are not well understood, especially at the community level. Many people do not know what PEDP is and what it is trying to achieve. The evidence from the DBSPE Mainstreaming Report, (July 2002) and other newspapers reports also corroborate this finding. It appears that PEDP has not been adequately “marketed”. The sensitisation of the stakeholders to have been done through a concerted information, education and communication (IEC) campaign appears not to have been very successful. The material generally fails to provide adequate practical information or provide answers to the concrete questions being asked by many in the community. Moreover, in many areas the IEC material has neither reached the school level nor used effectively. In order for people to get information this material needs to be explained and discussed. School Committees and ward education supervisors (WES) who are to play such an important part in the implementation of PEDP have not received the necessary support to enable them to provide the leadership at the ‘ mtaa’ and village levels. Ordinary people are especially affected. A pupil in Dar es Salaam had this to say:

“.. kwamba serikali inatoa kiasi gani kwetu sisi hatujui na kwamba zinatutumikaje sisi hatujui. Hakuna kikao hata kimoja ambacho sisi tunashirikishwa.”

7. Capacity Building: The PEDP document spells out the role various people have to play – from the national to the school level. The urgent need to build the capacity of these actors to implement PEDP has been recognized. However, while PEDP

implementation has forged ahead, capacity building activities have not been carried out on the ground. The \$500 per school earmarked for school committee capacity building appears not to have been forthcoming. There is an urgent need for the capacity building to take place as soon as possible. School Committee members, Head teachers and Ward Education Supervisors (WES) are among those who urgently need training.

It is also important that under PEDP parents are provided with opportunities for genuine involvement in their children's education. Although it can be argued that this is done through the establishment of school committees, the composition of school committees, the knowledge on educational matters of school committee members, the powers of the school committee are issues that need to be addressed if school committees are to be made a genuine attempt at involving communities in running of schools. For example, currently school committees have little or no power to discipline teachers who are not performing, either by not attending classes regularly or not teaching well.

8. Confusion about Grants: There is confusion about the amounts of money that will be available at the school level, and its disbursement schedule and modalities. Many schools have reportedly only received Tshs 2,000/- per student (based on the lower 2001 enrolment), which does not make up for the loss of revenue from school fees and contributions, and is much less than the \$6 or Tshs 6,000/- capitation grant. PEDP stocktaking exercise reveals several discrepancies that existed between what was disbursed to some districts and what was actually received by the districts. A similar exercise needs to be done to find what districts say was disbursed to schools and what is actually received by the schools. It is also not clear how the money is used at the school level and who is making decision on its use. Finally, the modalities for using the \$4 or Tshs 4,000/- per pupil for books and learning materials is not known to those interviewed in this exercise.

A head teacher in a Kigoma primary school said:

“tunajua bajeti yetu ya kiasi tu ambacho kinakuwa kimeingizwa katika akaunti ya shule. Hatujui tunastabili kupata kiasis gani hivyo tunapata ugumu sana kupanga bajeti yetu.”

9. Confusion about Contributions: There is enormous confusion about which types of contributions are still required from parents, and how schools may or may not use the funds made available from the government. At the school level it is often not clear as to what has been abolished and what has not been. Parents are confused on one hand to hear on the radio President saying that parents have no longer to pay fees but at the same time schools require them to make cash contributions for various activities.

One grandfather in Shinyanga complained:

“Mimi watoto wangu wote wamemaliza shule na sasa wanasomesha wajukuu wangu. Sasa nasikia eti mtaa huu tunatakiwa kila kaya itoes shilling 2,000 kwa ajili ya ujenzi wa madarasa ya shule yetu. Hivi hii mchango si imesitishwa? Na kwanza ni kwa nini ni lazima, si tuliambiwa michango ya lazima bakuma tena?”

Others complained about being told how to spend the funds released to them. Many would prefer the school management to decide on how to use the budget, rather than have it decided at a Central level.

10. Hunger: In some areas hunger reduces pupil's attendance, concentration and performance. A report by the Save the Children in Mtwara states:

“The nutritional status of children in Mtwara is far below the acceptable norm. This then actually means children's level and pace of development is delayed. One of the key challenges of facing the development of education in rural Tanzania is the provision of basic need for children within a child rights framework. One such basic need is proper nutrition for children especially in their formative years of development”.

Stakeholders in those areas feel that PEDP should address school nutrition, without which education cannot be improved. This is poverty issue, affecting millions of children in the country. Although through education poverty can be affected, poverty affects the ability of children from poor families to benefit fully from education.

Conclusion

PEDP has succeeded in increasing enrolment, in building classrooms and in recruiting new teachers into the system. These are important achievements. However, many of the other critical components of PEDP appear not to have been achieved, and lack of success in this area can jeopardize the objectives of PEDP as a whole. Aspects of quality, adequate financing and governance at the school level are especially important. One observer put it succinctly: “What is the point of enrolling children and stuffing them in classrooms if there is no worthwhile learning taking place?”

From the perspective of NGOs, the aspect of community involvement is especially critical. At the end of the day PEDP will only succeed if pupils, teachers and parents throughout Tanzania, supported by informed and responsive government officials, are provided with clear information and can channel their views and concerns into the education system. This requires the Government to both dramatically improve the level, substance and methods of information provided to communities, and strengthen the institutions of governance, such as the school committee and pupil's councils, to enable ordinary people to speak up and be heard.