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PRIMARY EDUCATION
SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF
THE PRIMARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A Perception of Positive Change

The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) was introduced in July 2001. The plan includes the abolition of school fees, increased teacher recruitment, investment grants for new buildings, as well as community mobilisation and empowerment of school committees. The reform has been well received. A recent citizens' survey reveals that primary education is the service that people in Tanzania are most satisfied with overall. Of the total sample of 1,260 respondents in six councils, 70 % are satisfied with primary education. In contrast, other services like health and garbage collection have a satisfaction rate between 7 % and 38 %. However, when asked what aspects of primary education they are satisfied with, it is revealed that the citizens' relatively high level of satisfaction with primary education is a result of the recent investments in buildings and the abolition of fees, while they are less satisfied with the quality of education. This project brief is concerned with the challenges that primary education faces in the years to come.

But the Quality of Education is Slow to Improve

Qualifications of teachers, primary school pass rates, as well as the number of pupils per teacher/classroom/desk/textbook, are factors that indicate the quality of primary education. As a move to make the quality of education keep track with the increased enrolment of pupils, the PEDP introduced investment grants - mainly for infrastructure, and capitation grants - US\$ 10 per pupil, for textbooks etc.. Despite these investments, several of the case councils have experienced a deterioration over the last three years in the above-mentioned indicators and there are large variations between councils. This is clear from the table below. The poorest results are marked with a dark shade, the best results with a lighter shade. Moshi District Council stands out as having the overall best results, while Bagamoyo DC scores lowest. It

Table 1. Indicators of Change for the Six Councils 2000 – 2003

	<i>Teacher Grade A/B Ratio</i>	<i>Teacher/Pupil Ratio</i>	<i>Classroom/Pupil Ratio</i>	<i>Desk/Pupil Ratio</i>	<i>Textbook/Pupil Ratio</i>	<i>Primary School Pass Rate</i>
<i>Bagamoyo</i>	Deteriorated 1:4 - 1:5	Improved 1:49 - 1:46	Deteriorated 1:80 – 1:98	Deteriorated 1:4 – 1:6	Improved 1:8 – 1:5	Deteriorated 36 - 32%
<i>Ilala MC</i>	Improved 2:1 - 3:1	Deteriorated 1:43 - 1:51	Improved 1:95 – 1:70	Improved 1:7 – 1:5	Improved 1:9 – 1:5	Not available
<i>Iringa DC</i>	Improved 1:1 - 2.6:1	Improved 1:63 – 1:56	Improved 1:66 – 1:54	Stable 1:4 – 1:4	Improved 1:5 – 1:4	Improved 11 – 22%
<i>Kilosa DC</i>	Stable 1:1.5 - 1:1	Deteriorated 1:39 – 1:54	Stable 1:73 – 1:74	Deteriorated 1:3 – 1:4	Deteriorated 1:3 – 1:4	Improved 11 – 40%
<i>Moshi DC</i>	Deteriorated 2.3:1 - 1:1	Improved 1:50 – 1:43	Improved 1:57 – 1:49	Improved 1:4 – 1:2	Improved 1:6 – 1:3	Improved 23 – 42%
<i>Mwanza CC</i>	Improved 2:1 - 3:1	Deteriorated 1:48 – 1:60	Deteriorated 1:45 – 1:60	Deteriorated 1:3 – 1:4	Improved 1:12 -1:7	Improved 48 – 54%

should be no surprise then, that Bagamoyo DC also scores lowest in our citizen survey on overall satisfaction with primary education (61 %). During the last fifteen years one of the rural primary schools in the Bagamoyo area had not had any pupil selected for a government owned secondary school.

There is no close correspondence between the quality indicators and the citizens' perceptions of change within the education sector. 80 % of our respondents have seen improvements in the number and/or quality of school buildings. This is true also for Bagamoyo and Mwanza, councils where the figures show that the classroom/pupil ratio has actually deteriorated. The citizens' survey reflects that people appreciate the very visible improvements that have taken place when it comes to building new classrooms, even if the increased number of pupils makes the ratio worse than it was before. Even where indicators show improvements such as in the textbook/pupil ratio only 27 % of the respondents say that they have seen any improvement in this regard. As long as the pupils still have to share books, it may be hard for the (adult) respondents to notice any improvement.

The Mwanza City Council has poor results on teacher/pupil and textbook/pupil ratios, but still has the highest pass rate in the sample. This could indicate that the competence of the teachers is important, since this council has the highest percentage of Grade A teachers in the sample. However, the opposite result was found in a recent study by A.V.Y. Mbelle (UDSM), on primary schools in Dar es Salaam. According to his findings, the qualifications of the teachers do not have any significant effect on pass rates at the selected schools. Availability of schoolbooks and low student-teacher ratios, on the other hand, were significant factors for pass rates in that study. The diverging results of our studies prove that it is important to do detailed field studies before making conclusions that may have policy implications.

A Need to Focus on Teachers' Absenteeism

Iringa DC and Kilosa DC stand out as councils where more than half of the respondents have seen an improvement with respect to teachers' performance (53 %). In the case of Iringa Rural, this can perhaps be explained by a tougher stance on non-performing teachers. In this council, four teachers were dismissed in the year 2003. If one is to improve the quality of primary education, this may be the way to go. Unmotivated teachers left unsanctioned for too long have a negative affect on pupils and newly educated teachers who are interested in doing a good job. On the other hand, absenteeism among teachers due to illness is a more complicated issue. The

PEDP takes note of the serious effects that HIV/AIDS have on the human capacity to run the education sector. The objective is to increase general recruitment, but so far the large majority of schools are understaffed and there does not appear to be a policy in place that can handle prolonged absence due to illness. At some of the schools visited, teachers had been away from work for three to six months without any replacement, forcing existing teachers to take on the extra workload and pupils to move into combined larger classes. Statistics seldom reflect this situation, since the teachers in question are still formally employed. The proper institution to address this problem should be the Basic Education Development Committee which includes representatives from both Ministry of Education and Culture, President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government, NGOs, donors, and the teachers' trade union.

A Need to Evaluate the Role of School Committees

The PEDP emphasises the role of school committees both to anchor the schools in the local communities and to improve accountability. According to the plan, the committees have the following duties: prepare budgets and school development plans (together with the head teacher), manage the funds, as well as prepare financial reports to the village council/mtaa committee and the local government authorities. These duties demand financial and managerial skills. To enable the committees to perform their duties, the PEDP provides each school with a fund equal to US\$ 500 for training the school committee. However, only half of the committees interviewed had received the promised training, and some complained that they had not been involved in the budgeting process. Moreover, one of the committees had witnessed embezzlement of building material by the head teacher and felt that they were powerless to sanction this. We do not have enough information to judge the overall functioning of school committees and their relationship with local authorities. Since school committees are envisaged to have a very central role in the management of primary education, an evaluation should be done to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the new system so far, and the capacity building that is needed. Regarding conflicts over funds, one possibility is to institutionalise a system where the elected councillor in charge of education plays a mediating role between dissatisfied school committees and the head teachers/council employees in charge of distributing the funds.

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