

## **Recent policy reforms aimed to improve Primary education in Tanzania: Success and challenges.**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to present the recent educational/policy reforms aimed at improving primary education in Tanzania (PEDP) as among the key strategy towards realizing education for All (EFA) in Tanzania. Success and challenges of this policy will be carefully highlighted. The paper will conclude the discussion by providing the policy recommendations for further improvement.*

*Policy reforms in education in Tanzania are somewhat broad and complex dating far back soon after independence of the country in 9 December 1961. However, the most recent policy reforms is the establishment of primary education development plan (PEDP). Primary education development plan (PEDP) is the first sub sector plan under education sector development plan (ESDP) to be implemented with the prime aspiration of enhancing access to education and accordingly achieving EFA as a national priority. The primary education Development plan has four strategic priorities: enrolment expansion, quality improvement, capacity building and optimizing human, material and financial resources utilization.*

*Primary education has been implemented in five year phases from 2002-2006 and 2007 -2011. This paper ha purposely decided to focus on what has taken place between 2002-2006. By focusing on this period, this paper is therefore expected to enable all readers and education stakeholders to get awareness of what has been taking place in Tanzania in the context of its efforts to improve education as a move towards achieving EFA goals, their success and challenges.*

**Key word: Policy reforms, primary education, Success and Challenges**

### **Introduction.**

*“Capacity for planning, development and management of primary education programmes are fundamental for both making effective use of resources and for enabling other stakeholders including the community to contribute to education provision” (UNESCO).*

*”.....Education especially basic (primary and lower secondary helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor by reducing fertility and improving health and by keeping people with the skills they need to participate fully in the economy and society”( World Bank).*

*“Primary education must be Universal, ensuring that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied and take into account the culture, needs and opportunity of the community” (The world declaration on education for all).*

For quite sometimes, the policy making and decision making has been regarded as two terms conveying similar meanings. However the educational analysts have tried to draw the difference between the two. They argued that, policy is larger than decision and hence policy involves a series of more specific decisions. The policy involves a bundle of decisions and how they are put in practice (Harrop cited in Ngungat 2008). Anderson 1973 cited in (Ngungat, 2008) defined the policy as the purposive course of actions that have to be followed by a particular group or actors to address a particular problem or a matter of concern. This meaning cuts across all levels and in any discipline, but in as much as this paper focuses on educational policy mainly in the national context which is relatively formal, it can be added that ,the course of actions need to be agreed and approved by the people in the law making body (Parliament).

### **History and Rationale of the contemporary education policy in Tanzania**

Soon after independence 1961, Tanzania declared ignorance, poverty and diseases to be the great enemies of progress. Strategies were laid, plans were drawn and investments were made to expand investment in the country. Tanzania thus witnessed unprecedented development of primary and secondary schools and establishment of its first university. Primary education was made universal, schools were built in every village and adult education was supported to impart literacy to the many unfortunate citizens who had never seen the inside of the class room. The results were high enrolment in primary school and remarkable literacy rate in the country as well as increased number of professionals and technicians. Tanzania was hence one of the country with highest literacy rate in African reaching 98% by the mid 19980s (Sita<sup>1</sup>, undated).

However, the achievement was not that sustainable as a result of economic hardship fueled by oil price, high debt of oil servicing, hunger, draught and overall poor economic performance. In response to the implementation of structural adjustment programme, the government introduced cost sharing measures, froze recruitment of teachers and reduced overall spending on education. These measures led to the shortage of teaching and learning materials, non maintenance of school infrastructures, discontinued classroom construction as well as shortage of teachers. These effects resulted in low enrolment, high drop-outs, and poor performance in national examination, dilapidated school buildings and uncomfortable learning environment and decline in completion rate (Sita, Undated)

Therefore, it is indisputable fact that cost sharing had negative effects for educational system in the country especially for orphans, low-income families as well as vulnerable children such as street children who were not in position to pay school fees and other mandatory contributions. As a result, the net enrolment rate declined from 67% in 1985 to 57% in 2000(Sita, undated).

With the onset of structural economic reforms in 1980s, it became apparent that there was a need to review the entire education in the county and recommend ways to make further progress. It was in the light of this context that the education and training policy in Tanzania was formulated in 1995 to serve as frame work in implementing any recommended reforms. This is therefore the primary stage of education sector reforms in Tanzania (URT, 2005).The policy focused at improving access to education at all levels and providing quality and equitable education to boys and girls as well as improving management and financing in education.

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<sup>1</sup> Former Minister of Education and Vocational training in Tanzania

**Education policy formation and role in Tanzania.**

The main role of education policy in Tanzania is to set the policy for the educational development of the country. In addition the country is answerable for the improvement of the educational standards of the country. The implementation of the educational policy is done at the district level. The ministry also sets the indicators to monitor the performance of the key sector objectives. The school inspectorate is under the ministry of education. The influence of the community in education in Tanzania is not that bad, for example since the formation of the education policy in 1995, the community has had a much stronger influence in education especially secondary schools. The community built the school and the government will support the completion stage. Ngungat argues that, today about 90% of the schools are community owned secondary schools. Though the ministry of education has the mandate to formulate the education policy, but in a way that it is politically influenced to suit the ideology of the government in power (ibid).

**The current Tanzania education and training policy**

The education policy adopted in 1995 provides the framework for the whole education sector in Tanzania. The Tanzania education policy provides a road map for any educational reforms to be undertaken in the country (Ngungat, 2008). It is in the light of this reality that this paper highlights the current education and training policy reforms in Tanzania

**Education and training policy mission.**

The ministry of education and training in Tanzania in this regard has been the realization of universal primary education (UPE). The eradication of illiteracy and attainment of tertiary education and training which will be in tune with production of high quality human resources capable of taking serious actions on development challenges facing the nation (URT, 2005)

**Education and training policy vision**

The entire education sector has the vision for Tanzania to be a Nation that could create quality and quantity of the educated citizen satisfactorily equipped with relevant knowledge capable of solving the societies' problems in order to promote social, political and economic development (URT, 2005)

**The education and training policy general goal**

The ministry of education and training main goal has been to ensure the equitable access to primary and secondary education for boys and girls, universal literacy among men and women and expansion of higher education and vocational education (URT, 2005)

**Education system of Tanzania**

Having discussed the education and training policy in Tanzania, the paper will now give the education system of Tanzania that is commensurate with the Tanzania education and training policy as highlighted above.

Currently the education structure in Tanzania is 2:7:4:2:3+. (Two years of pre primary education, seven years of primary education, four years of secondary ordinary level, and two years of secondary Advanced level and minimum of three years of university education) (URT, 2005).

Pre-primary education is however offered to very few children as it was recently formalized. It is intended ultimately that each primary school will have a pre - primary school attached to it. On the

other hand although theoretically primary education is said to be free, yet it is not equitably accessed for all as it was declared before, various studies have shown that still people have to pay for their children which has been presently a matter of concern for many poor parents.

### **Policy reforms for Primary education development**

In 1947, the government introduced the education sector development plan (SEDEP) to translate policy intentions into feasible and coherent development frame work .It called for pooling human, financial and material resources through the involvement of all stake holders in educational planning, implementation monitoring and evaluation. As it is clear that the development of the entire education sector was not feasible, the government started with development of primary education and gradually to secondary and higher levels. This led to the establishment of primary education development plan PEDP. This is the major reform targeted towards improving primary education in the country (URT, 2005)

### **Primary education Development plan (PEDP)**

Primary education development plan (PEDP) is the first sub sector plan under ESDP to be implemented with the prime aspiration of enhancing access to education and accordingly achieving EFA<sup>2</sup> as a national priority. The primary education plan has four strategic priorities: enrolment expansion, quality improvement, capacity building and optimizing human, material and financial resources utilization.

As it is clear that, the development of the entire education sector within a short period of time is surely not feasible, It is with this in mind that the Government decided to focus on primary education and gradually to secondary and higher level of education. The plan has been implemented in five year phases the from 2002-2006 which is the focus of this paper to show what has taken place. On the other hand, the second phase, 2007 and 2011 which is still implementation stage will not be highlighted in this paper. The highest priority of primary education is to increase enrolment of girls and boys. This will be done through:

- Increasing enrolment rate of all groups of children
- Teacher recruitment and deployment
- Construction of enough classrooms, sanitary facilities and teacher houses
- Expanding complimentary education programmes for out of school children and youth( URT, 2001)

Regarding the quality aspect, the PEDP intends to improve the quality of education. The PEDP thinks that the achievement of quality education will be met by enhancing professional development courses to in-service teachers attending these courses; teachers are expected to improve their teaching styles and methods in the classrooms, ensuring the availability of adequate and quality learning and teaching materials; and ensuring the necessary support for maintaining educational values (URT, 2001a).

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<sup>2</sup> Education for All (EFA) is an international initiative first launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 to bring the benefits of education to “every citizen in every society.”

On the other hand, pre-service training will be restructured(timing) and improved in order to increase its capacity to produce the large number which will be demanded by the enrolment expansion as well as to improve the quality and relevance of the training that new teachers undertake.

Capacity building is another education strategy outlined in PEDP for improving the provision of primary education in the country. In a broader sense, this is related to government policies of achieving greater efficiency, reforming the civil service and delegating power to the local government in the provision of public service. All staffs and stakeholders with direct responsibility for PEDP management are to be given training to ensure that they have skills for participatory, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and contribution to policy analysis and formulation. Financial authority for improving quality of education at the school level will be transferred to the school level. Thus, all schools will open bank accounts.

The PEDP will introduce three funding mechanisms that will directly assist schools; a) capitation grant, this grant is intended to provide resources for improving the quality of education , b) the investment grant-to provide resources for new building construction; c) the capacity building fund will provide resources for school committee training(URT, 2001 a).

The PEDP fourth strategic priority for primary education is to optimize the use of human, materials and financial resources within the existing institutions in the education sector. According to PEDP, this objective will be realized by extending the roles and responsibilities of local government bodies in ensuring the delivery of primary education.

At the village level, the government aims at broadening democratic participation and accountability by increasing involvement of men, women, and children from the communities. Thus partnership between teachers, schools and communities will be developed in order to strengthen school management. At the school level, there is a school committee which is accountable for village council (URT 2001a: 16).

With regards to district level, the local government authority will resume full responsibility for the management and delivery of all primary school services within its boundaries. Given the above task, planning, management and monitoring will be strengthened at the council level.

At the regional level, the commissioner will assist local government authority by creating an enabling environment for the implementation of PEDP .In addition to this; the regional secretaries will provide technical support and advisory services to the district to enable the implementation of PEDP (URT, 2001: 18)

At the national level, two ministries manage and coordinate primary education, namely: The ministry of education and vocational training (MoEVT) and the ministry of regional administration and local government (Mo-RALG). The role of MoEVT include: collaborative planning, monitoring and evaluation, determination of policy, regulations and quality assurance standards (URT, 2001:18).

The role of Mo-RALG on the other hand is to supervise the decentralization of government functions to local levels, including the delivery of primary education by district authorities. It also provides technical support and guidance to the Regional secretariats and local

government authorities .At the national level, it monitors, evaluates and co-ordinates regional education development plans in collaboration with MoEVT (URT, 2001: 19)

### **The success of PEDP implementation**

#### **Massive enrolment**

The PEDP has had a successful story to the large extent. This is due to the fact that percentage of new entrants who aged 7 have leapt from 27.8% in 2001 to 59.4% in 2002 and then 63.6% in 2003. Father more, the enrolment in primary schools has continued to rise from 67.70% in 2004 to 70.22% in 2005. In addition to this, enrolment of primary school aged pupils(7-13) is increasing from 77.71% to 81.78%, 84.05%, 85.20% and 86.19% in the recent years between 2001 and 2005 (URT\$ 0005b:16&22).

#### **Non-formal Education**

In an effort to put more pupils in the schools, the PEDP has also initiated non formal education approaches so as to encourage out of school children and enroll in the formal education proqramle. This is through t`e programme called complimentary Basic education in Tanzania (COBET). This programme was iftroduced in Tanzania as an induction of out of school children into the mainstreams ,(aged 11-13) formal provision and (14-18) provision of basic education life skills (PEDP review report, 2003).

#### **Teacher Recruitment and Training**

Training and Recruitment of teachers, is another achievement that is associated with PEDP. The plan has to large extent addressed the shortage of teachers in the country. With respect to teachers recruitment and training, the government agreed to assist Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to recruit and train adequate numbers of primary school teachers .The objective of this was to achieve a pupil- teacher ratio of 1:45 and to ensure equitable and gender balanced distribution of trained teachers.(URT,2001a). The table below shows what has been done.

**Table 1: The number of teachers recruited 2002-2004**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>9,047</b>	<b>7,030</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>11,651</b>	<b>10,872</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>10,563</b>	<b>14,423</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,261</b>	<b>32,325</b>

(Source: URT, 2004b: 29)

#### **Class room construction**

The increase in the number of pupil always demands an increase in physical infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets, etc in schools. In order to accommodate the number of pupils, the PEDP initiated construction program especially classrooms, sanitary facilities and teachers' houses. This was made feasible through investment grant which was a special mechanism for funding



construction of physical facilities under PEDP in order to improve the quality of infrastructures in primary schools. However the numbers of classrooms constructed in the first three years of the PEDP implementation have fallen short of the target (Haki- Elimu, 2005.) The table below sheds light on the classroom construction programme achieved.

**Table 2. The overviews of the classroom constructed 2002-2004**

Year	Target	Actual	%
2001/2002	13,868	8,817	63.5%
2002/2003	13,396	10,771	80.0
2003/2004	14,204	10,334	72.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,467</b>	<b>29,922</b>	<b>72.2</b>

Source: (URT: 2004b: 27)

The table above shows that, despite the fact that a large number of classrooms were constructed 2002-2004, but the construction did not match with requirements of 41,467 classrooms instead only 29, 92,922(72.2%) classrooms were constructed. According to PEDP targets of 2002-2004 there were shortage of 11, 545 classrooms.

### **Text books, teaching and learning materials**

With regards to quality improvement, PEDP has prioritized the provision of quality primary education. One of the strategies used in order to achieve this goal, is to ensure the availability of good quality learning and teaching materials. The mechanisms for acquiring text books and other teaching materials were through capitation grants. The objective was to provide sufficient and relevant instructional materials as well as reducing the pupil-teacher ratio of 3:1 in 2002 to 1: 1 in 2006. This is justified by the study made by (Rose 2007). When one of her respondent put this in this way;

*“I appreciate PEDP because, now I am provided with pens, manila cards, lesson plan books, and exercise books for lesson notes. Prior to this, I was supposed to buy these facilities on my own. Likewise, pupils, are also provided with pens, pencils and exercise books”*(Teacher interviewed by Rose 2006)

### **Community involvement**

The government has identified the importance of broadening demographic participation and accountability at all levels in the society and which is more reflected in the provision of education. The goal is to increase involvement and empower communities around the school to meaningfully and effectively implement decisions in order to strengthen school management. As such, with the introduction of capitation grants, community participated on the construction of teachers' houses, classrooms and purchase of teaching and learning materials.

## **The major challenges of implementing PEDP and education for all (EFA) as a whole in Tanzania**

Despite of the major success that have been highlighted above, still the implementation of PEDD in Tanzania encountered various barriers especially those pertaining to quality aspects of education. These are discussed as follow:

### **Large class size**

Class size is the number of pupils for whom a teacher has responsibility in the classroom. Class size has a very close relationship with the effective and efficient delivery of education. It has been noted that the smaller the class size the greater the effect in the instructional process as well as on pupils' achievement. This is due to the fact that with smaller class, teachers have more time to attend the individual students concern, teacher get an opportunity to monitor students work as well as offer encouragement (Glass, et al., 1982). This paper has found that the massive enrolment has led to congested classroom which hinder proper delivery of education in Tanzania.

### **Recruitment and deployment of teachers**

PEDP has set a target of having standard teacher ratio to be 1:45 by 2006. This continues to be a bottleneck in the progress of the plan. To cope with the enrolment expansion, the PEDP states that:

*School capacity in term of teachers 'supply and classroom space will be ensured through the increased use of teachers and classrooms for double shifts and multi grade teaching as a limited and interim measures (URT, 2001:5).*

From the documents reviewed, the paper has noted that since the inception of PEDP, the teacher pupil ration has increased .Teacher –pupil ration has risen from 1: 46 in 2001 to 1: 59 in 2004 (URT, 2004b).this means that rate of enrolments is not keeping in pace with the rate of teachers recruitment and deployment of teachers.

### **Shortages of Teachers houses**

Teaching profession like any other profession needs motivation so as to encourage teachers as implementers of the recommended changes. Among other incentives, housing is the significant one especially in rural areas where the shortage of teachers is more acute and which is directly linked to housing problems. The importance of constructing teachers' houses was recognized by the government due to the increase number of pupils and the need to attract more teachers as a deployment incentive. Regarding teachers house, PEDP document (2001: a 8) stipulates:

*Allocation of funds for teachers housing will give priority to rural areas. Detailed criteria for investment grant allocation will be developed as the basis for including housing construction needs in the annual local Government Authority educational plan.*

According to the documents reviewed, it has been observed that teachers were and still not impressed to go and work in rural areas due to the shortage of houses and other remunerations.



Teachers are still arguing that there are a lot to be done by the government to attract more teachers especially in rural areas.

### **Quality challenges**

It is the delivery of education where the challenges of EFA implementation in Tanzania are more pronounced. Certainly, this is not only limited to Tanzania; rather it is also addressed in other countries as stated in general conclusion of the 2005-Global monitoring Report. The report has among other things emphasized that education for all cannot be achieved without improving quality. Quality is at the heart of education that it influences what people learn, what how well they learn and what benefit they draw from education. In this case any policy aimed at expanding enrolment must also ensure that pupils achieve decent learning outcomes and acquire values and skills that help them play a positive role in their societies (UNESCO, 2005). In Tanzania context, it is proclaimed in all important long term and short term development policies of the country such as development vision of 2025 and MKUKUTA. The development Vision (URT, 1999) for example states that:

*Education should be treated as strategic agent for mindset transformation and for creation of well educated nation, sufficiently equipped with the knowledge needed to completely and competitively solve the development challenges which face the nation .In this light, the education system should be restructured and transformed qualitatively with a focus on promoting creativity and problem solving (URT, 1999,)*

On its parts, MKUKUTA, (URT, 2005a) which is the current medium-term development strategy of the country, has succinctly asserted that:

*In order to make a dent on poverty reduction... it requires the provision of quality education from early childhood to higher levels and research activities that are tailored to the local environment (URT, 2005b).*

Besides all these commitments, various past studies that have been reviewed by this paper, have suggested that the quality of education is yet to be attained in Tanzania primary schools. Many factors contribute to this problem, these include;

Poor availability of teaching and learning materials, uncoordinated professional development programmes and irrelevant curriculum for instance insufficient preparation of vocational skills subject teachers in the schools which eventually make the subject less desirable.

### **Lack o Teachers' involvement in decision making**

It is believed that for any education plan or reforms to have an enormous impact and meet the desired goals, the involvement of teachers would be of great importance (UNESCO, 2005) holds that among the issue having a direct impact on whether reforms designed to improve quality will make a difference, the three things deserve a specific attention: forming a partnership with teachers and other stakeholders, strengthening accountability and combating corruption. On the contrary, various studies and documents researched on this issue found that, teachers are not made an

important section of the discussion, what is more common for them, is when it comes to the implementation stage, at that particular point in time, they are regarded as important stakeholders, because the teachers do not have a knowledge of what they implement, the programme normally fail to achieve the intended results.

### **Insufficient and poor planning**

By and large, the entire policy is characterized with insufficient and poor planning. The policy reform of this nature, was among other things meant to achieve Universal primary education (UPE). It is evident though that, the plan had led to the tremendous increase in the enrollment of primary school age children to start the school, shockingly the enrollment had never gone with the provision of necessary infrastructures, teachers, decent classrooms, desks, toilets and the like. In rural areas for instance, situation is even more dismal, shortage of teachers has been so serious that many qualified teachers are no longer willing to work in those schools. This becomes the prime factor for poor educational equity in the country which has a serious implication in the context of achieving Education for all.

### **Recommendations and key Policy messages**

This paper has tried to explain the policy reforms that have been put in place towards improving primary Education in Tanzania, challenges and success. With regards to various challenges explored by the author of this paper, the following recommendations can be assistive as the way forward to improve the situation for the upcoming programs targeted to improve quality primary education:

Teachers are the main implementers of any educational reforms employed in the country. Considering the financial constraints facing the nation, unqualified teachers have been always a bottleneck towards achieving quality education in Tanzania. The country has always seen difficult to develop a huge number of teachers to become effective in their job, with this in mind, this paper proposes that the country should adopt the school based teacher professional development program as to update the teacher's potential in the effective fulfillment of the reforms. For instance teaching research group, peer observation, are the common school- based teacher development models proved to have been successful in China and thus can be also used in Tanzania context.

With respect to the quality crisis which remains to be the focus of any education reforms, the author suggests that, there should be an establishment of quality supervisory offices in every school across the country. This office can bear the responsibilities of monitoring the quality of education provided. This will help out the decision makers in the school concerned to make an informed decision regarding the advancement of the quality of education. In this regard, this office will play a great role in making sure that the education provided to the children is of sustainable high quality.

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