

Education in Reverse: Is PEDP II Undoing the Progress of PEDP I?

Recent analyses of the implementation progress of the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) II have revealed disturbing trends. This brief covers a few of these trends that carry the most implications for the education sector and how to fix them.

All of us want our children to succeed in school. Schools are expected to be places where our children can go to learn, acquire skills and knowledge, and be able to become creative, smart, and self-sufficient so that they may take care of themselves and their own future families.

The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) is perhaps the single most important plan for determining the quality of our schools and the future of our nation's education. It encompasses such critical aspects as enrolment expansion, teacher recruitment, school infrastructure development (e.g., classrooms, teacher housing, latrines), and school inspections. In the plan, many of these facets are outlined in terms of annual goals and the budget required to meet said goals. For example, it dictates that 17,864 latrines need to be built nationwide in 2008, and Tsh 12.505 billion is needed to do so. Thus PEDP creates an entire development plan and budget for primary education.

PEDP has been designed and carried out in two five-year phases. PEDP I ran from 2002-2006; PEDP II, 2007-2011, is currently in its fourth year. The latest implementation reports concern the second year of PEDP II, 2007/08, and HakiElimu has just published a review of these government reports.

Despite the successes that are discussed in the review, there are some very serious trends that need to be specifically highlighted, namely in the areas of classroom construction, teacher housing, and teacher recruitment. Though both phases of PEDP deal with similar matters, there are many signs indicating that PEDP II merely exists on paper, offering no real development to the education sector.

Tighter Classrooms

Unlike its predecessor, PEDP II has utterly failed to provide a noteworthy amount of new classrooms. While PEDP I saw the construction of 4,000-10,000 new

classrooms per year, meeting 76.2% of its overall five-year goal, only 1,263 classrooms, or 11.7%, were built in 2008 when PEDP II called for 10,753 to be constructed. That's like if professional planners determine that your neighborhood or village needs 100 water spigots, but only 12 are built—it's simply not enough to meet the needs of the people. Chart 1 demonstrates the difference between the PEDP target versus what was actually achieved over PEDP I and PEDP II. As can be seen, PEDP targets are rarely met, but they are far more grossly unmet in PEDP II thus far. The period of PEDP I had results that demonstrate an attempt to achieve the targets, while now, during PEDP II, actual classroom construction is almost nothing compared to the planned targets.

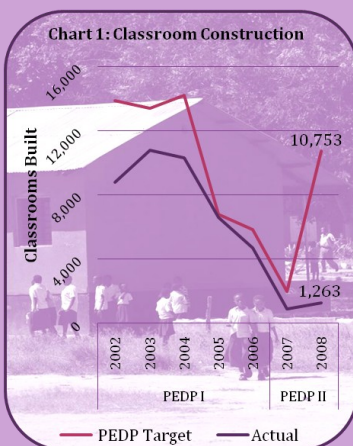
Just like if there are not enough spigots in your village then more people will be forced to fetch water from the same one, classroom construction of course relates to the number of students stuffed into a single classroom. As enrolment increases and fewer classrooms are built, the existing classrooms become more and more crowded. Chart 2 shows how PEDP I succeeded in lowering the classroom-pupil ratio while the shallow implementation of PEDP II has allowed the classroom-pupil ratio to skyrocket.

Because classroom construction has apparently been forgotten, classrooms are more overcrowded than they were even when PEDP began, as can be seen by comparing the 2008 classroom-pupil ratio with that of 2002 above.

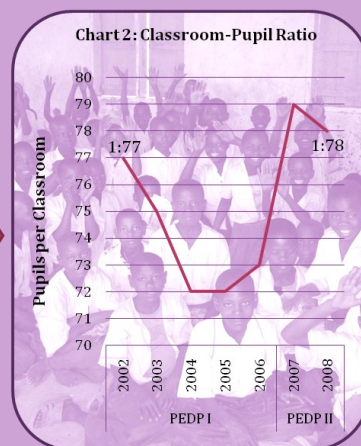
When You Don't Care for Teachers, Fewer People will Want to be One

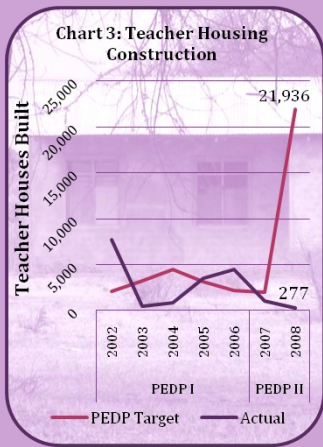
Similarly, construction of teacher houses has become non-existent. While such construction actually surpassed the targets during PEDP I, it is almost as if construction of teacher housing has halted in PEDP II. In 2008, while the government had written a plan to build 21,936 teacher houses, it only built 277, or 1% of what was called for by PEDP II. That's like buying medicine that advertises that there are 100 tabs in the box, but when you open it, there's only 1!

Teacher housing is a major problem in our education sector. Not only are current teachers leaving the profession to seek work elsewhere due to the poor living conditions that they are subjected to, but new graduates are becoming more and more reluctant to enter the teaching field because they know they will not be well cared for. Obviously, the

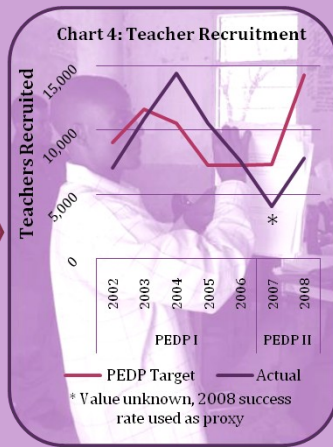


Fewer new classrooms = tighter existing classrooms

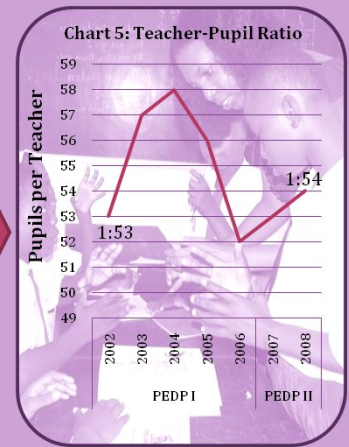




Poor living conditions = demotivation to become a teacher



Fewer new teachers = more students for existing teachers to educate



government failure to construct teacher houses exacerbates this problem. This is reflected in the low teacher recruitment that is currently being experienced by PEDP II, as in Chart 4. Again, while teacher recruitment actually exceeded PEDP I targets, only half of the target was met in 2008.

Of course, teacher recruitment then has implications on the teacher-pupil ratio: the less teachers recruited, the more students each single teacher is responsible to teach. This has consequences on the quality of education our children receive because the more students a teacher is responsible for, the less individual attention he or she may give to each student.

The national target for the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:40, that is, 40 students for each teacher. Chart 5 shows that while effort was put forth in curbing the teacher-pupil ratio during PEDP I, PEDP II has now allowed it to grow back to a level even higher than when PEDP was initiated. Currently there are 54 students for every teacher while in 2002 there were 53 students per teacher.

Failing Exams

With all of this—fewer new classrooms, more crowded classrooms, fewer new teachers, a higher teacher-pupil ratio—one would expect the quality of education to plummet and our students to begin to fail. That is exactly what is happening. Chart 6 tracks the success rates of the Primary School Leaving Examination. Again, as there were clear improvements in PEDP I, matters are

worsening in PEDP II as a smaller proportion of students are passing their Standard VII exam. In 2008, only 52.7% passed whereas at the end of PEDP I, 70.5% passed. If the education system is likened to agriculture, it would be as if only *half* of our crops grew to fruition in 2008...nationwide! How could our country survive?

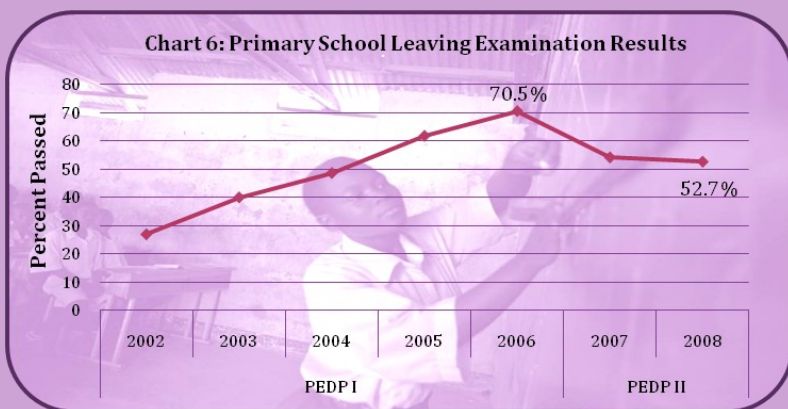
Where is PEDP II?

All of these charts say the same thing: From 2002-2006, during PEDP I, targets were more closely met if not surpassed. Starting in 2007 and with the onset of PEDP II, targets begin to be grossly missed. Every chart shows improvements from 2002-2006 then drastic failures starting in 2007. All of this correlates into the recent troubles students are having with Standard VII examinations. Though inputs such as numbers of classrooms and numbers of teachers do not solely determine the quality of education our children receive, such inputs clearly play a vital part.

In relation to the 2008 PEDP II construction targets, only 12% of classrooms, 1% of teacher houses, and 5% of latrines were built. Failure rates of 88-99% do not raise questions as to why PEDP II is crashing; rather, they make one ask if PEDP II even exists other than just on paper. If PEDP II didn't exist, would the state of education be much different than it is today?

It is not too late to fix this. The first step is to realize these trends and to decide to do something about it. Most of these problems begin with the central government budget—despite the budget written in PEDP II, year after year, far too little funds are committed by the government to follow through with its own plan.

Talk to your local government representative today! Demand that they fund PEDP II! Demand that they prove to you that PEDP II is more than just words on paper!



All figures have been taken from or derived from PEDP I, PEDP II, Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST), and PEDP II Annual Performance Report FY 2007/08, all published by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.