

What is a School Committee?

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A school committee is a group of elected members responsible for managing and overseeing the activities of a primary school, and to provide it with community support. Each primary school is required by law to have a school committee. School committees have a pivotal role in the implementation of the Government's Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP).

Who are members of a school committee?

PEDP seeks to increase democracy, inclusiveness and accountability in the composition and functioning of the school committee. The PEDP document does not state the exact membership of the school committee, but it emphasizes the involvement of representatives of the community, teachers, pupils, parents and village government. It also requires gender balance so as to ensure voices of girls and women are heard.

What are the roles of a school committee?

The school committee is overall in charge of the school. According to the PEDP Annex, its key roles are:

- To sensitise, involve and effectively communicate educational information to all parents, pupils, community stakeholders, and to ward and local authorities.
- To oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school, including implementation of all four PEDP components.
- To work together with the Head Teacher and other teachers to make priorities and prepare a Whole School Development Plan and Budget.
- To open bank accounts and to efficiently and effectively manage funds received for implementation, while guaranteeing maximum accountability and transparency in the processes used, including making incomes and expenditures publicly available.
- To prepare and submit accurate and timely progress and financial reports to the community, Ward and Council.

This means school committees are empowered to mobilize the community to reflect on the major challenges regarding quality education for all, and to find practical solutions within overall Government guidelines. They should no longer wait to receive instructions for each and everything from above! The Government will support school committees with funds and overall policy guidelines, but it is now up to the people to use it to improve education in their community.

Who is a school committee responsible to?

The prime responsibility of school committee is to its stakeholders – pupils, parents, teachers and the community around the school. This is why information, feedback and transparency at the community level are so important, and why a school committee must keep good records. In his major speech on PEDP in September 2002, President Mkapa emphasized:

> "In order to strengthen democracy, each school is required to provide reports on incomes and expenditures to the Village/Mtaa Government every three months at the Council meeting. At the same time as providing reports to various meetings, the Council and schools need to account for funds received, and their use, on notice boards of the Council, school and other public places. Every citizen now must know how much was received by her or his Council and school, and how it was used …This is the transparency, accountability and good governance that we want" (translated by HakiElimu).



Everyone in the community should feel they 'own' the committee, and that they can go to it to ask questions, solve problems, offer ideas and get information. Legally, the school committee is also responsible to the Council Director for the proper use of funds. In turn, the Head Teacher is accountable to the school committee.

How will school committee capacity be developed?

PEDP has a number of new elements. One of the most important is that greater resources are now sent to the school committee for improving education. PEDP recognizes the need for considerable capacity building to enable school committees to perform their roles effectively.

As a first step, PEDP states that awareness will need to be created among all major stakeholders, including school committees and communities, for people to understand PEDP goals and targets and roles and responsibilities at each level. This is to be done through an "interactive" information, education and communication (IEC) program throughout the PEDP implementation period 2002 to 2006.

Second, a major capacity building program will be undertaken. All levels are important, but special emphasis is put on the school committee. The PEDP document specifies that USD 500 (about Tshs 500,000) will be made available for school committee capacity building for every school each year. Training is to be done by a district team, which will work with NGOs, to train members of school committees, school management teams and pupils' councils.

How can I follow up?

Everyone has a right to information, and everyone has a right to know about governance in PEDP. Now that you know what PEDP says about school committees, you can see how well they are functioning in your community and give constructive ideas on how to make things work better. For example, you can ask if the School Committee has been meeting regularly in your school, and how its decisions have been shared with everyone in the community. You have a right to ask questions, and get clear answers. According to Government policy, it is no longer acceptable for leaders just to give orders and not listen to the people. Of course change takes time, and one cannot expect everything to be perfect right away. But you have a right to see progress being made.

You can get information on PEDP from the head teacher, District Education Office, your Ward Counsellor or Member of Parliament. You can ask for information at the Village/Mtaa Assembly or at Council meetings. You can also ask NGOs that are active in your area, or contact HakiElimu.



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