

SCHOOL COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT IN DAY-TO- DAY PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL AFFAIRS IN TANZANIA

Joyce Nemes (PhD)*

ABSTRACT

This study examined the involvement of school committees in overseeing day-to-day school affairs. The qualitative study conducted in 16 public primary schools in Tanzania's Tabora Municipality used interviews, questionnaires and documentary review to get the necessary data from 60 respondents. It established that school committees operated on ad hoc, agenda-driven basis. The operational problems they faced included high transport and materials costs, lack of incentives and conflicts with village councils over school funds. Also, the school capitation and investment grants were inadequate. The study, therefore, recommends capacity-building for school committees to enhance their performance in overseeing day-to-day school affairs.

KEY WORD: School Committee Involvement, Head Teachers, Public Primary School, Day-to-day affairs of schools, Statutory Members of School Committee.

* Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, The University of Dodoma, Tanzania

1. INTRODUCTION

School committees have a vital role to play in enabling good school governance. Empirical evidence shows that children whose parents, families and communities are involved in school activities tend to perform better, knowing that their parents care about them and their schooling in addition to understanding the schooling process. Generally, teachers and principals who feel supported by, and observed by their respective communities tend to perform better. In most cases, the contribution of the community to the wellbeing of the school can create a dynamic energy for change and further improvement that impact on the quality in ways that a centralised, top-down change process cannot (Research Triangle Institute [RTI], 2010).

In Tanzania, the roles and functions of school are legally defined in the 1978 Education Act, which was amended in 1995. In fact, it is mandatory for all education institutions operating in the country to have school committees (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1995). In a bid to ensure that these school committees are fully functional and involved in the management of primary schools, the Primary Education Development Plans Phase One (PEDP I) 2002-2006 has entrusted them with the role and responsibility of working together with head-teacher in the management of day-to-day affairs of schools.

However, the effectiveness of these school committees or boards in adding value ought to be qualified since there are problems that need to be addressed to ensure that they offer meaningful contributions. Previous studies by Bray (2003), for example, have noted that one problem that school committee members had to contend with was that they were volunteers, who in many cases lacked expertise and understanding of their responsibility. Elsewhere, the literature available has, in fact, cautioned against the involvement of school committees in the management of day-to-day affairs of schools because of the danger of inadvertently ending up undermining the operations of these schools. Their caution is based on the fact that, in the management of primary schools, for example, the head-teacher or school principal is and remains the overall boss of his or her respective school. As such, he or she serves as the final arbiter in any disputes involving staff irrespective of the outcome. Moreover, these institutional heads hold crucial and often confidential information that cannot be revealed to others in their institutions due to issues of privacy and confidentiality as well as sensitivity of the matter (Daresh and Males, 2000). Thus, the last thing these heads need is obtrusive external interference

or meddling by school committees or boards, particularly on matters that can be effectively handled by the experts at the school.

Not surprisingly, in Scotland school boards appear confident about their ability to deal with practical matters, such as timetables or proposed school closures but are very reluctant to criticise head teachers and their staff (Wilson and McPake, 1998). In South Africa, Jonson (1995) proposed that it, thus, is imperative to make a distinction between day-to-day management issues such as the delivery of the school curriculum, or the organisation of staff and their development, on the one hand, and general governance issues which might include the formulation of school policy, on the other. The implication is that the former can best be handled by the school experts but in the latter the school committee or board can also step in handled. As a way of proposing a practical solution to the effective integration of community participation, Johnson argues that there is a need to work out a detailed plan for involving communities in school governance in addition to building the capacity of these governing bodies to ensure that their participation in educational management is meaningful and complete.

What emerge from this scenario is that decentralisation makes sense, therefore, only when decision-makers at the lower level in the system know and are capable of carrying out the best practices. By their training, experts are better placed to make decisions relating to their areas of expertise. However, this does not preclude the participation of persons at the local or non-expert level since they can be drafted in to provide advice and guidance based on matters requiring their participation. After all, they have experience and knowledge from outside the school which can add value to school governance. In a school environment, the experts can be principals, and teachers, and non-experts can be parents and other community members (McGinn and Welsh, 1999).

In Tanzania, the government has made efforts to ensure that the concept of day-to-day affairs is well-understood by the school management team, particularly in the robust primary school system. In 1998, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture provided a manual for Primary School Managements in the country, indicating a sequence of school activities in a day. These activities include school cleanness, school parade, class sessions, break time for economic projects, hours for sports and games, specific time for beginning and ending school routine. Other activities include caring for the school environment, remedial teaching for slow learners

and pupils with special problems, adult education teaching and pupils' guidance and counselling. What this guideline fails to spell out are activities in which school committees can play a part.

This paper, therefore, investigates the kind of activities that signify the involvement of school committees in overseeing the day-to-day affairs of Tanzania's elementary schools as articulated in the PEDP I. It also delineates the challenges school committees face as they perform their role of overseeing the day-to-day school affairs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To achieve its research agenda, the study was guided by the following objectives:

- a) To investigate activities considered by both the school management team—the head teacher, his or her deputy and teachers in general—and members of the school committee as representing day-to-day affairs of the school.
- b) To examine the activities members of the school management team consider to fall under the domain of school committees and why.
- c) To find out the extent to which the activities identified in (a) and (b) reflect those outlined in the 1978 Education Act of No. 25 as amended by the 1995 Education Act No. 10
- d) To examine the problems school committees face in overseeing day-to-day school affairs.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study deployed a survey research design. The study mainly employed the qualitative approach but it also benefited from some elements of the quantitative method. The data used in this report were collected in Tabora Municipality in Tabora Region (Province) of Tanzania among 16 primary schools in 2006. The municipality was selected because it represents one among the regions in the country with poor performance in the national Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) for five (2001 -2005) consecutive years (MEO Office, 2006). However, the region's performance in the National PSLE in 2006 was better (MEO, Office, 2006).

A total of 60 respondents participated in the study. This sample was made up of one Municipal Educational Officer (MEO), 16 head teachers 13 school committee chairpersons, and 30 statutory members of the school committees. Purposive sampling was deployed to select MEO, the head-teachers, school committee chairs, and the 16 public primary schools. To select statutory members of the school committees, random sampling was employed.

Three research instruments—the questionnaire, interviews and documentary review—were used to collect the necessary data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study findings, a pilot study was conducted at Mwananyamala ‘B’ Primary School in Kinondoni District of Dar es Salaam Region. Moreover, multiple data collection methods were employed in a triangulated fashion. To fulfil ethical requirements, the study participants were informed about the objectives of the study and their informed consent sought. None of the study participants was coerced into taking part in this research undertaking that relied on voluntarism. The participants’ right to privacy was also respected. Moreover, the participants were free to decide on the place and time for the interview to be conducted. Furthermore, their right to remain anonymous was guaranteed. Before the study was conducted prior permission were obtained from the University of Dar es Salaam and the Local Authorities as required by research guidelines in Tanzania.

4 DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

4.1.1 Day-to-day School Affairs

Based on the first research objective of identifying the activities considered by both the school management team and members of the school committees as representing the day-to-day school affairs of the school, the study employed semi-structured interviews to get the required information from school committee chairpersons and head-teachers. Responding, 76.9 percent of the 13 school committee chairpersons, 62.5 percent of the 16 head teachers and the MEO all clearly explained that only the school management teams had day-to-day activities to perform. As one of the head-teachers clarified:

...the school committees do not have day-to-day activities to perform. Instead, their responsibilities depend on the school committee meeting agenda. Procedurally, the committee is supposed to meet at least once a term, which is four times a year. Nevertheless, depending on the issues that demand the intervention or participation of the school committee, it might meet several times. For instance, right now, we are constructing classes and the committee is monitoring and supervising these activities. When the construction is over, the committee will have no reason not to follow the normal schedule (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 27/10/2006).

Another respondent, this time a school chairperson, reported:

...because of the construction of 27 pit-latrines, we come daily to supervise and participate in daily activities. Once the construction is over, there is no need for us to come to school daily because we have our productive activities to attend to ... Moreover, our membership in the committee and the activities we are performing are voluntary... (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 27/10/2006).

And the MEO responded:

Generally, school committees do not have day-to-day activities to perform. It is the management team which has these day-to-day activities to perform such as ensuring that the school is clean, teachers and students attend school, and teachers enter the classrooms and mark pupils' assignments. The school committee will have day-to-day affairs only if there is a construction activity... (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 31/10/2006).

All the three respondents are unanimous on the fact that school committee members were involved in other school activities such as construction projects but not in the actual running of the school. With their occupational engagements, they could only spare some time to contribute to the school construction projects in their spare time. As a result, day-to-day activities were left to the head-teacher and his staff unless in situations where their particular assistance was needed. The remaining 23 percent of the school committee chairpersons and 37.5 percent of the head-teachers agreed that both the school management team and members of school committees had day-to-day affairs to perform. The activities they mentioned included purchasing teaching and learning materials, mobilisation and sensitisation of parents to enrol their children for primary education. Other activities they mentioned were confirming or disallowing the suspension or expulsion of pupils, overseeing and supervising construction and rehabilitation of buildings. Other significant areas, they cited in which school committees took part were the preparation of the Whole School Development Plans (WSDPs), advising the head-teacher on matters relating to management, participating in collecting the monetary contribution from parents and overseeing the effective use of the school budget and management of PEDP funds. The activities they listed are contrary to what the Ministry of Education and Culture (URT, 1998) outlines. Thus we have two kinds of responses: the majority excluding the school committees from any day-to-day school undertakings and a significant minority acknowledging their role in these day-to-day activities. This discrepancy stems from their varied understanding of the concept of day-to-day school affairs. Evidently, it was not clearly understood by few of these respondents as school

committees were generally not involved in the day-to-day school affairs as spelled out by 1998 the Education Ministry guidelines.

4.1.2 Activities under the Domain of School Committees

The second objective was aimed at examining the activities the school committees and school management teams considered to fall under the domain of school committees. Information on this parameter was obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews. The information generated revealed that all the school committee chairpersons and head-teachers had an idea regarding the activities which were under the domain of school committees. The activities they mentioned included conducting census from house-to-house in their respective communities, sensitising and advising parents on enrolling their children aged 7 - 13 in school. Specifically, 79.9 percent of the 13 school committee chairpersons and 56.9 percent of the 16 head-teachers mentioned overseeing and ensuring effective the use of PEDP funds as one of the key activities in which these committees took part. The majority of the school committee chairpersons (84.6%) and head-teachers (81.3%) mentioned overseeing, supervising, and monitoring of construction and rehabilitation of school buildings as other responsibilities.

Also, a questionnaire was used to gather data on the same issue from statutory members of the school committees. Responding, 93.1 percent of these members responded that the school committee was responsible for checking on the discipline of both the teachers and pupils and ensuring that the PEDP funds were utilised effectively and as intended. The remaining 6.9 percent of the respondents mentioned the activity of monitoring the attendance of both the teachers and the pupils. On the whole, these findings demonstrate that the respondents were aware of the activities of the school committee.

Evidence gleaned through documentary review also verified these findings. Indeed, the school records affirm that the school committees were involved in the following activities: approving the school budget, preparing the WSDPs and overseeing their implementation. Other documented school activities in which these committees take part include convening meetings for parents, mobilising the community towards the school cause, mobilising for voluntary and obligatory contributions, and supervising the construction and rehabilitation of school buildings. One major school committee activity that was not mentioned by the respondents, but which documented in the school papers has to do with their role in receiving teaching and learning materials purchased with school budget funds. Another equally important documented activity

that the respondents overlooked had to do with maintaining a harmonious relationship between the school and the community in which the school is based.

As a follow-up to the research question on the acknowledged activities for school committees, respondents were asked to justify their identification of the activities they mentioned as falling under the domain of school committees. Through semi-structured interviews, 61.5 percent of the 13 participating school committee chairpersons and 56.3 percent of the 16 head-teachers pointed out that school committee members represent parental views, their aspirations and interests. Also, 38.5 percent of school committee chairpersons, and 43.7 percent of the head-teachers added that the involvement of the school committee in the decision-making process regarding various school-related problems created a sense of transparency and accountability for the community. As one female head-teacher elaborated:

...decision-making on matters which involve the contributions of money become easy if school committees are fully involved. For example, currently, we need money to pay a security guard to ensure that school properties are safe. Each pupil will be required to contribute Tshs 200 per month. We are going to involve the school committee in the whole decision-making process: making announcements, convincing parents, collecting the money and paying the salary to the security guard... (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 01/11/2006).

Similarly, the MEO offered a similar view. She said that school committees were a link between the schools and surrounding communities:

We can't run schools without school committees. In the institutional framework for PEDP implementation, the school committee is above the head teacher, who in turn has so many duties to perform. Having school committees, therefore, simplifies their work... (Interview with MEO held in Tabora Municipality on 31/10/2006).

Generally, these findings establish that all the head-teachers, school committee chairpersons and the MEO understood the importance of involving school committees in the school management issues. School committees simplified the work of the school management by influencing other parents in matters relating to financial contributions. They also helped to mobilise parents to participate in school self-help ventures, which required their labour or material support. This community participation is akin to "community financing of education", a concept that embraces not only direct voluntary and obligatory monetary contributions, but also donations of land, materials, labour, and any other services on which the school (or the government) could have

otherwise spent a fortune in cash payments (Bray, 1999). In this regard the UK-based Department for International Development [DFDI] (2001) stresses the greater participation of parents and communities in the education of their children at the local level in pushing for improvement in the quality of their lives and in developing accountability.

4.1.3 Reflections on School Activities as Spelled out in the 1978 Education Act

The focus of the third research objective was to identify whether all the activities identified in the first and second research questions as they relate to the first and second objectives of the study reflected those outlined in the 1978 Education Act No. 25 as amended by the 1995 Education Act No.10.

All the school committee chairpersons and head-teachers interviewed were surprisingly found to be ignorant of the 1978 Education Act No. 25 and its provisions. This ignorance on an issue that is supposed to apply to the very wellbeing of the school can be interpreted in five ways. First, these school figures have not read the Education Act in question. Second, they did not have ready-access to relevant Education legislation and circulars, including Education Act itself, since these were not in their possession. Third, some of the decisions they made did not refer to the Education Act. Finally, the respondents did not fully comprehend their responsibilities nor the applicable specific rules and regulations. Similarly, Masanja (2003) found that the majority of school committees did not have access to important documents such as the 1978 Education Act, the 1979 National Education Corporal Punishment Act, and the 1995 Education and Training Policy (ETP) as well as other important circulars such as the 2002 School Board (Establishment) Order No. 444.

The MEO said she was aware of the 1978 Education Act, explaining that not all school committee activities mentioned in research questions were outlined in the Act. In particular, she mentioned seven activities which are not reflected in the Education Act: conducting census from house-to-house, advising parents to enrol their children for primary education, purchasing teaching and learning materials, overseeing and supervising the construction of school buildings and furniture, and the rehabilitation of school buildings and furniture. Others were the preparation of WSDPs, ensuring safe custody of school property and overseeing the effective utilisation of PEDP funds.

Further elaborating the MEO specified that the 1978 Education Act only spells out three roles of school committees. These roles were to vet the admission applications to the school; confirming

or rejecting the dismissal of pupils from school; and advising the head-teacher on matters relating to school management. However, the 1995 ETP, the 2002-2006 PEDP I and the decentralisation of primary education had since then added roles and responsibilities for school committees, she explained.

It was evident that this MEO was aware of not only the crucial 1978 Education Act but also other related policies and programmes as well. The school committee chairpersons and head-teachers in the school under review, on the other hand, were not aware of particularly of the Act and its provisions. One implication is that the head-teachers and school committee members had not been exposed to any induction programme to orient them to their duties and responsibilities upon taking up their appointments and nominations. And yet, the PEDP I institutional arrangements include capacity-building components as a strategy for inducting and empowering head-teachers and school committee members. These findings demonstrate that the PEDP I had yet to translate this strategy from paper into action that could benefit public school on nation-wide scale, an oversight that needs remedying. It is towards this end that De Grauwe and Verghese (2000) argued that organising orientation programmes is essential in raising awareness and boosting the capacity of communities to enable them to participate more actively and effectively in matters relating to managing schools. This is one area that education authorities in Tanzania ought to work on when it comes to raising the profile of school committees and their participation in school day-to-day activities.

4.1.4 Constraints School Committees Face

The study also wanted to examine the problems school committee members face in overseeing the day-to-day school affairs. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information from school committee chairperson and head-teachers. Their responses indicate that all the school committee chairpersons and head-teachers interviewed identified the high cost of materials as one of the biggest problems they had to contend with. Explaining, one school committee chairperson said:

It cost Tshs 15,000 to purchase one bag of cement. Before the price increase, this bag cost Tsh 12,000. And yet we received the same amount as other regions such as Dar es Salaam and Tanga which are near the cement production source. As a result, the funds allocated to the school amounting Tshs 3.1 million to build one classroom were not enough (Interview held in Tabora Municipality).

In his study on the implication of such differential costs on the schools receiving the same amounts of money, Galabawa (1991) cited the June 1988 figures when that the cost of cement in Dar es Salaam was Tshs 350 per bag when the same bag was being sold at Tshs 750—double the amount— in Bukoba Region. In other words, it costs more to construct a classroom in Bukoba than in Dar es Salaam, and yet both regions received the same disbursements in form of grants from the government. Thus, there was a need to factor in the varying costs of school materials from one region to another, one district to another, and from rural areas to urban centres when determining the monies the schools would receive for such purposes.

The second problem they identified was lack of motivation. The findings show that 84.6 percent of school committee chairpersons who singled out motivation mentioned three types of motivation. As the school committee chairpersons complained that they performed demanding tasks which consumed a lot of their time and required them to walk over long distances to purchase school materials, they thus needed some form of allowance as motivation. They also complained that they had too many activities to perform, which sometimes interfered with their own activities. As such, they needed motivation to boost their morale. Third, the school committee members complained that they were involved in making decisions that involved a lot of money. Thus, paying them an allowance would help them avoid the temptations that have to do with embezzlement and abuse of public funds. For illustrative purposes, the following statement by a school committee chairperson can suffice:

Once we stay for long hours, some members of the school committee tend to dodge one after another before a consensus could even be reached. However, after four years of serving no one is ready to volunteer. There should be some allowances in the meetings and for activities that consume a lot of time (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 27/10/2006).

A third problem was transportation as identified by 38.5 percent of the school committee chairpersons and 50 percent of the head-teachers interviewed. These respondents said that their schools were located far away from the municipality, forcing many of them to cycle or walk to the school. Two statements from respondents can illuminate the problem they face:

My school is 20 km from the Municipality's headquarters, near the railway station. We normally use bicycles for carrying school materials from there. Though we face many problems such as robberies on the way, what can we do (Interview with head teacher in Tabora Municipality held on 2/11/2006).

Renting a car for one trip from the Municipality's headquarters to carry a load costs Tshs 30,000. To avoid such a cost the sub-committee usually decide to purchase teaching and learning materials that a bicycle can carry at a time. (Interview with a Head Teacher held in Tabora Municipality on 30/10/2006).

These two responses indicate that transport constitutes a hassle for these rural-based schools located situated far from the administrative urban centre of the municipality. Table 4.1 shows the distances of the school under study from the municipality's administrative centre from where they buy school basic necessities and essential materials:

Table 4.1: Distances of Tabora Rural-Based Primary School to Administrative Centre

Name of School	Ward	Distance from the Tabora Municipality's Administrative Centre in Kilometres
Itaga	Misha	9
Misha	Misha	15
Kipalapala	Itetemia	6
Kwihara	Itetemia	7
Kazima	Itonjanda	11
Manoleo	Itonjanda	15
Itulu	Ndevelwa	20
Ndevelwa	Ndevelwa	15

Source: Head-teachers' Offices in Primary Schools under Study (2006)

Table 4.1 shows that even primary schools located within six kilometres from the municipality's administrative centre, with the shops and other important services, were faced transport problems. It should be noted that these cash-strapped schools are in no position to purchase a school vehicle. Misha, Ndevelwa, Manoleo and Itulu were the worst-hit when it came to transportation blues. As Komba (2003) has observed, many of these schools are located in distant and remote areas with no reliable roads. In consequence, the school authorities had to travel over long distances on foot carrying the materials they had purchased. Such form of conveyance exposed the materials to the risk of being damage or stolen.

Also, 30 percent of school committee chairpersons and 43.8 percent of head-teachers said that some parents were too poor to contribute money for school development activities. As one school committee chairperson put it:

Economic standards of living are very low. Parents are not able to pay even Tshs 100 per month for their children. As a result, the security guard is paid his Tshs 30,000 monthly wage by the Village Council... (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 30/10/2006).

Similarly, Galabawa (1994) had earlier observed that in some areas community participation in financing primary education was in still in its infancy. Most of these areas were also found to be less endowed with natural resources than other better off areas, hence providing only a poor economic base for the residents. Galabawa (ibid) called for government intervention in these areas to bail them out and provide the necessary support in financing primary education.

However, being too poor to afford and simply being unwilling to contribute are two different things. Indeed,, 69.2 percent of school committee chairpersons and 56.2 percent of head-teachers interviewed explained that some of the parents could afford to contribute money for the school security guard but were simply unwilling to pay. A female head-teacher explained:

Some parents have that ability to contribute Tshs 100 per month... but they are not willing to do so. I think they believe that the security of the school is the responsibility of the government (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 27/10/2006).

Accustomed as many of the parents were to free universal education at the primary level, they found it hard to adjust to cost-sharing the government introduced to make parents contribute in kind to the education of their children. At the same time, it was established that for some parents it was simply a lack of awareness on the importance of education for their children and their need to contribute to the process that stood in their way. Also, the view that, parents had little faith in the way the school authorities spent the funds at their disposal. Narayan (1997 as cited in Galabawa et al., 2001) found that there had been a decline in trust in local government and other officials among rural poor. Although parents retained a degree of confidence in the school committee and the head teacher, there was widespread mistrust of local government as a service provider. This stems from the perception that school fees and other obligatory payments are neither accounted for nor turned into better education (ibid). This unwillingness to contribute in cash or in kind to primary education appears to have also been compounded by the PEDP strategies. In an attempt to increase school enrolment, the Tanzania government abolished statutory school fees and other obligatory contributions and, instead, instituted capitation and investment grants that are managed at the school level. As a result, the cost-sharing policy— itself a recent phenomenon in the country's education system—that encourages mandatory and

voluntary contributions at the school level has lost its meaning of government financial support (URT, 1995), no matter how limited in scope.

When it came to addressing the problems besetting these rural-based school that school committees had to grapple with in their efforts to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school, the MEO provides some insights during a semi-structured interview, particularly in dealing with the six vexing problems she identified. First, the MEO complained that many teachers, especially head-teachers, were unwilling to work and live in rural areas due to the poor standard of rural life. This affects the effectiveness and efficiency of school committees. During a visit to Ndevelwa Primary School with the researcher, the MEO complained:

The house you see there is a head-teacher's house using solar energy but the teacher himself lives in the urban area, 15 km from this school. This affects his work performance (Interview held in Tabora Municipality on 02/11/2006).

The reforms she was making included the relocation of the head-teachers. First, new head-teachers, especially those who had just completed the probation period, were appointed. The MEO appointed them because they were still young and willing to live in the rural areas. Such appointments were geared towards enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the school committees. Their presence and ready availability at their work stations helped; however, but they also happened to have little management experience. During the field visits, the researcher found these newly appointed as head-teachers were still young and raw. They were employed at the rural-based Manoleo, Itulu and Kazima primary schools. In collaboration with the District Commissioner (DC), the Municipal Director (MD), the MEO held a meeting with head-teachers in the area on living in the quarters allocated to them or face disciplinary action.

The second problem had to do with lack of allowance for school committee members when they undertook activities that consumed their energy and time. As a result, they ended up dispirited. Third, the MEO also bemoaned the problem of transport, especially for rural-based primary schools. Fourth, she lamented that some head-teachers failed to involve school committees in the decision-making process. Fifth, some contractors and suppliers were not trustworthy as they vanished soon after the school committee had paid them before fulfilling their end of the bargain. Finally,, the MEO pointed out that in some primary schools there was a conflict between school committees and the village government. For example, at Manoleo Primary School there was a conflict between the Village Council and school committee because the latter had power in the

management of PEDP funds. The wrangle revolved around the question of why it did not have greater authority than the school committee in the management of these funds. In the same vein, Mulengeki (2004) found that conflicts between the school committees and the Village Social Service Committee of the Village Council abound. Ironically, both bodies were legally instituted and empowered by community members to participate in social service development, including education.

5 CONCLUSION

In the light of these findings, three lessons can be learned. First, school committees do not have day-to-day affairs to perform as conceptualised by the respondents and instead their responsibility depend on the meeting agenda. Second, school committees were aware of their school roles and responsibilities, despite the majority of them being ignorant of the 1978 Education Act of 1978 (and its 1995 amendment) that should otherwise serve as their beacon. Finally, school committees of rural-based schools faced transport problems and high cost of materials. The committee also had to grapple with lack of motivation and conflict with the Village Council over the control of PEDP funds. In consequence, this study recommends that authorities clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of both the school committees in the day-to-day running of the schools. They should build the capacity among school committee members to enable them to perform effectively their roles and responsibility. Rural-based school should also be provided with relevant documents to guide them in their execution of their roles and responsibilities. Where funds are available, the committee members in the rural-based schools should be given allowances for school activities that consume a lot of time and energy to motivate them. Also, the disbursement of capitation grants should take into consideration the location of each individual school. The role of the Village Councils should also be spelled out.

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