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## Re-Admission Policy and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Performance in Bungoma North Sub-County, Kenya

**Violet Wekesa**

Maeni Girls' Secondary School, Kenya

### **Abstract:**

*The educational needs of pregnant school girls and mother-students have received minimal attention despite the introduction of re-admission policy in Kenyan secondary schools. The objectives of the study were to determine the extent of the implementation of re-admission policy in secondary schools, the involvement of stakeholders in the re-admission process, the effect of re – admitted mother – student on academic performance and challenges experienced by schools and students who return to school. The study was guided by the production function theory advocated by Tinto Model on school retention. The sample size for the study was 774 respondents who were chosen. The experts in the department were consulted to ensure that the data collection tools were valid, piloting was also done to ensure reliability. Questionnaires were used and the major data collection instrument supported was interview schedules and the observation schedules from the sample of population. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented using tables. The results of the study showed that the level of implementation of re – admission policy was on average in most secondary schools. The results of the study further revealed that parents were not involved in the re-admission process. The study also found out that mother students perform poorly in schools and this impacted on their final Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance. The study recommends that all schools should fully implement the re – admission policy and to ensure that the re – admitted students perform better in examinations. The study also suggests that there is need for holistic involvement of all stakeholders in designing, developing and implementing the re – entry policy.*

**Keywords:** Student performance, re-admission policy, perception & mother-student

### **1. Introduction**

Education has always played a pivotal role in the social and economic development of any country; this is more so in enhancing the quality of lives of its citizens (UNESCO, 2010). Gender equity in educational opportunities and outcomes has therefore emerged as one of the main areas of interventions and debates within global justice arena (Kane, 2004). However not all girls face the same challenges in educational participation. Pregnant school-girls and mothers -student are surrounded by discourses that stem from repressive hypothesis that served as an injunction to silence on sexuality, a silence that should not be misconstrued as an absence of discourses (Kane, 2004). Pregnant teenagers have also been framed as deviant students who were already performing poorly in school and therefore had low aspirations. Chigona and Chetty (2007) allude casting of pregnant school-girls as incapable' or poor students has had both short and long term implications on their educational experiences as well as those of mothers – student. Josselson, (2004) states that early childbearing among women below twenty years of age has been perceived as a social problem as it often leads to a premature end to many young women's educational careers in many Sub Saharan African countries. National Council for Population and Development (2014) reports that in Kenya, over 1,000,000 million babies are born year and 10-15% comprised of school going children. The Kenya National Bureau of Standards (KNBS) statistics shows that 9.9% of the out of school girls stopped attending school due to pregnancy and another 8.1% due to early marriage in the year 2004. This formed the basis for conducting this study to determine whether the re-admitted mothers excel well in their academics despite the burden of being mothers. Kenya has introduced re-admission policy for student-mothers in secondary schools and this is expected to be implemented in all schools around the country.

### **2. Statement of the Problem**

Despite the efforts by educational stakeholders, re-admission policy of mother student in secondary schools still affect the operations of many secondary schools country wide on daily basis as noted by Human Rights Watch (2005). The study is concerned with the notion that re-admission policies are not clearly defined nor practiced to some institutions despite the ministerial policy recommending

that mother students to be re-admitted back in school. The single most important element on mother-student re-admission requirements are managerial judgment, and individual principals, knowledge of the educational experiences and their own responsibilities, drawn up from their own requirement for mother- student re-admission. However, they do not always question their assumption in making their judgments hence most girls in mixed boarding and day secondary school perform below the bar. Inadequate studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between the re – admission policy and student performance in examinations in secondary schools in Kenya. Therefore, the study sets out to study in-depth the re-admission policy of mother-students in secondary schools and its effect on KCSE performance in Bungoma North Sub- County.

### 3. Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the effect of mother-student re-admission policy on performance of Kenya Certificate Secondary Education in Bungoma North Sub-County.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

- To determine the level of implementation of re-admission policy in secondary schools towards improving performance in KCSE.
- To determine stakeholders involvement on re-admission policy towards improving performance in KCSE
- To establish the effects of the re-admission policy requirement on student performance in Bungoma North sub-County.
- To assess the challenges faced by re-admitted mother- student in relation to performance of KCSE in Bungoma North sub-County

### 5. Justification of the Study

There was need to carry out a comprehensive study on the performance of mother – student in secondary schools in Bungoma North Sub County. The study recognized that the mother-student passed through unbearable situation from the time they become pregnant until the time they deliver and take care of their children. It should be borne in mind that the ultimate aim of the re-entry policy is not just to see every pregnant girl back in school. It should be to equip girls psychologically and morally to say “no” to sex so that they complete their education without getting pregnant and by improving their academic outcomes. Further, such a policy should aim to instil in men and boys a sense of responsibility for their actions, and insist they show due regard for the rights of the girl-child. Due to unavailability of the literature and studies linking the re – admission policy and student performance in examinations.

### 6. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Vincent Tinto (1987) model of student retention in secondary schools (Draper, 2002). The model is based on theories of social integration; it addresses the process towards attrition from the pre-entry attributes of students to their integration (or lack thereof) and procession through the academic system to their voluntary decision to depart. Tinto (1987) describes the primary purpose of this model, to “explain how interactions among different individuals within the academic and social systems of the institution and the communities which comprise them lead individuals of different characteristics to withdraw from that institution prior to completion. Though it accepts as a given the fact that individuals have much to do with their own leaving, it argues that the impact of individual attributes cannot be understood without reference to the social and intellectual context within which individuals find themselves” (Tinto, 113 cited in Draper, 2002). Over the years, researchers have tested and challenged Tinto’s model; despite some critique, the model still remains a centrepiece of scholarship on student success and retention. However, the application of the Tinto model is based on the relationship between the re – admission policy which aims at retaining the mother-student in schools for the purpose of ensuring that her education dreams and aspirations are not shattered.

### 7. Literature Review

The World Declaration on EFA at the Jomtien Conference in 1990 noted the high incidence of girls amongst the children out of school and outlined some of the first signals that the education of girls was important for a global social justice project (UNESCO, 2001). In undertaking this commitment, it is likely to assist other states in recognizing Kenya as a responsible member of the international community. The Centre for Rights Education and Awareness [CREAW] (2007) indicates that education is an important pillar that determines ones health and legal status. Maluwa-Banda (2004) argues that girls’ education is an investment that serves as a way to achieve education for all children. He adds that it has been broadly accepted as being a powerful tool for self-advancement and fulfilment of development outcomes for present and future generations of children. Chege and Sifuna (2006) noted that getting and keeping young people in school, especially girls, dramatically lowers their vulnerability to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), leads to them having greater independence, equips them to make decisions pertaining to their lives and provides them with higher income earning potential. Bhana, Morrel, Shefer and Sisa (2010) concur that allowing pregnant teenagers to remain in school and return after giving birth is considered significant in delaying a second birth and in offering young women increased opportunities to get an education and increase their economic standing.

Kenya is among a handful of African governments that have put in place policies on pregnant girls within the education system. The policies on school girl pregnancy have been categorized as either continuation or re-entry policies (Chilisa 2002). Continuation policies allow for uninterrupted continuation of schooling by pregnant school girls and an immediate return to schooling after

delivery; these kinds of policies are deemed more transformative as they challenge gendered ideologies and practices and are also sensitive to the educational needs of pregnant school girls (Chilisa, 2002).

In 2009, the Kenya Ministry of Education (MOE), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation launched the National School Health Policy (NSHP) that also articulates the specified action that school administrators should take when dealing with school girl pregnancy cases. Both documents clearly state that girls who become pregnant while in school should be allowed to continue with the studies for as long as possible. Since there is no pre-determined mechanism for ascertaining how long is long enough, the decision is left to teachers, parents and the school girls, who have interpreted and implemented this disparately. Both policy documents place a great emphasis on the counselling of the affected school-girls, their parents and other girls, and it encourages the parents to seek re-admission for the mother-students in schools, other than those that they were enrolled in while pregnant, so to avoid psychological and emotional trauma (CSA 2008).

Evidence from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) point to the fact that early child bearing remains pervasive in developing countries and continues to constrain girls and young women from participating in education (Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004). Unfortunately, the magnitude and plight of pregnant school girls and mother-students, especially in the developing context, has not been adequately highlighted as a crucial gender issue within education. The low enrolments for girls in many developing countries indicate aspects of social injustice and gender inequity in education. Increasing access to education through the re-entry policy for girls after school pregnancy could be seen in terms of bringing about social justice and equity in education especially in developing countries and enabling them to realize its benefits. The strong international and philosophical commitment to the idea that the education of girls is crucial to national wellbeing is different from the traditional view of education as preparation for life roles (Nsameng, 2002). Therefore, implementing it in African context might be expected to raise several problems, possibly resulting in a lack of commitment on the ground.

In Kenya, Omondi (2008) reports that school heads fear allowing the return to school of girls who give birth because of the stigma associated with having mothers in a student environment. Omondi (2008) observed that at a launch of the report on teenage pregnancy and school girl dropout, school heads talked of ostracism faced by schools that have implemented the Ministry of Education Policy on Re-admitting the girls who give birth in the same school. Omondi (2008) noted that other schools derogatorily refer to institutions that accept teenage mothers as "maternity schools" and openly encourage isolation of our girls in social gatherings.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, passed in July 1990, affirms in Article 11(6) states that parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that girls who become pregnant before completing education are able to continue with their education. Pursuant to this, a number of sub-Saharan countries including Cameroon, Madagascar, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia and Kenya, passed school re-entry policies allowing young mothers return to schooling (Chilisa, 2002). Kenya's school re-entry policy was passed in 1994, but despite the policy window of opportunity that allows the young mothers re-entry into education, it is acknowledged that very few of them do return to formal schooling (Lloyd and Mensch, 2008; CSA, 2008).

The paucity of empirical studies in developing countries on mother-students and their educational conditions make it difficult to ascertain the magnitude and myriad of challenges that hinder the school re-entry process as well as their long-term education participation. Though the benefits of girl's education are many, daunting obstacles prevent girls from getting into classrooms and then staying there throughout; the government should encourage and allow young mothers to come back to school. Girls who become pregnant are often prevented from going back to school after giving birth of their child. There is need for policy charge to re-admit girls, alongside challenging the stigma and associated bullying which also prevent girls from coming back to school.

## 8. Research Methodology

A mixed method research methodology was adopted by the researcher that involved describing the situation without manipulating the variables and made extensive use of primary data and secondary sources of information. The study employed correlation research design in which the researcher had no direct control over the independent variables, because their manifestation had already occurred or were inherent not manipulated (Orodho, 2005). The target population included 4 girls' boarding schools and 27 mixed secondary schools giving us a total of 31 schools in which one third was randomly sampled to get the accessible population. The research employed questionnaires, interview schedules, observation check lists and analysis of documents as data collection instruments. The instruments were tested for reliability and validity. The pilot study was conducted in four schools. The pilot study assisted to identify the problems and ambiguities that the respondents could encounter in the process of answering questions put across to them. The data collected from both questionnaires and interviews was analyzed along the themes and objectives of the study. The researcher then subjected quantitative data to statistical analysis to be synthesized and analyzed into frequencies and percentages using the APA tables, graphs and pie charts. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) aided in data coding, entry and analysis. The qualitative data from interviews was analysed using content analysis.

## 9. Data presentation, analysis and discussion (Results)

### 9.1. Re-admission policy implementation level

On looking at the level of implementation of re – admission policy in schools, results showed that at least half 32 (51.6%) of schools are at average stage of implantation of mother – student re – admission policy in secondary schools. Findings further showed that 15 (24.2%) level of implementation of the return to school policy was high in schools, 10 (16.1%) acknowledged that it was very low while 5 (8.1%) reported to have fully complied with the ministerial policy on ensuring that teenage mothers are re – admitted in the

schools. The result shows that there was divided opinion on the level of the implementation of the policy. Some principals and teachers feared that if they re – admitted students mothers, the students could set a bad example to the rest of students.

On the student side, the results of the study shows that 44.1% of students were aware of the existence of re-admission policy in their schools, 33.2% said that the policy does not exist while 22.7% were found to be unaware of the policy. This shows that not all students in schools are aware of the implementation of re-admission policy by their head teachers and therefore could act as a barrier through which a pregnant – student may fail to report back to schools due to her ignorance of the policy. It is also seen that a significant number of respondents were not aware on when the policy revision in their individual schools. Education officials recognized the fact that government input was needed to support the implementation of the re-entry policy. They mentioned the need for creating awareness among all stakeholders on re-entry policy for girls for its effective implementation to be realized.

### 9.2. Stakeholder involvement in the re-admission policy towards improving performance of mother – student in secondary schools

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sensitised	67	26.2
Hardly sensitised	118	46.1
Not aware	71	27.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Students perception on parents' sensitization on mother student re-admission policy

The study findings revealed the following responses that 118(46.1%) of the respondents cited that their parents are hardly sensitized on the re-admission policy of mother-student, 71 (27.75) said that their parents are not aware of the re – admission policy while 67(26.2%) indicated that their parents are sensitised on the re – admission policy. It can be deduced that parents are hardly sensitized on mother student re-admission policy and this could be the reason for poor performance of re – admitted girls in secondary schools as their parents do not understand the policies. This was explained by Lloyd and Mensch (2007) who said that since teachers rarely intervened firmly, the ceaseless ridiculing was some form of punishment for the deviant mother-students for bending the gender sphere norms. The parents of the re – admitted girls were unaware of the ill treatment and stigma that their children faced in schools. Participants frequently mentioned the need for sensitization. Some of the head teachers interviewed suggested that there was a need to create awareness among the current students about the importance of the re-entry policy for girls. They felt that this sensitization about the policy was likely to make the students understand more about the policy and therefore appreciate it. They further thought if the students were fully aware of the re-entry policies then they were likely to appreciate the pregnant girls and support them. They also stated the sensitization of the students regarding the policy could make many pregnant girls take advantage of it and return to school after delivery. A number of participants suggested that sensitization about the policy was important in encouraging the young mothers and bringing change of attitude towards educating girls.

### 9.3. Effect of re – admission policy on performance of students in secondary schools

Results of the study showed that 34(55%) respondents indicated that there was no limited re-entry score for mother-students in their schools, 16(26 %) cited that they were not aware of the minimum mother-student re-entry score and 12 (19%) acknowledged that their schools had set up limited re – entry scores for students in secondary schools. Although majority of schools do not have re – entry scores for re – admitted students, a significant number of them were found to have created entry scores for girls who wished on continuing with their studies. These findings were supported by previous research findings by Wanyoike (2003) who states that many girl students drop out of schools and are re-admitted back without much ado with their previous performance.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	1	1.6
Good	5	8.1
Fair	30	48.4
Poor	16	25.8
Undecided	10	16.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2: Performance of re – admitted mothers in secondary schools

The results shows that the performance of re – admitted mothers in majority of secondary schools visited in the district is fair (48.4%), 16 (25.8%) said that it was poor, 10 (16.1%) remained undecided, 5 (8.1%) said that the performance of re – admitted girls in their schools were good and only 1 (1.6%) reported that the performance of the re – admitted mothers was excellent. The results implies that above it can be deduced that re – admission policy bears a significant relationship with their academic performance half of the

respondents citing fair performance for the last three years, these was a general belief that a low students teacher ratio results into better students achievement in schools.

#### 9.4. Hindrances to better performance in examinations by mother-students

It was established that there is a negative relationship between re – admission policy to mother – students in secondary schools in the area. Most 180 (70.2%) of the respondents indicated that it was due to lack of proper guidance from the teachers while 76(29.8%) cited intimidation from fellow students. It can be deduced that the major hindrance to better performance in KCSE by mother-students is poor guiding from the teachers with 543(70%) responses and intimidation from fellow students. This finding was supported by previous research findings by Kaufman *et al.*, (2001) who asserts that some teen mothers feel teachers do not understand their situation and they are expected to perform and behave just like any other student in their respective classes. As a result, mother students are sometimes ridiculed in front of classmates wherever they do not satisfy the class requirements. Balance of work and school needs was also found to be a constraint inhibiting student-mothers performance in secondary schools in Bungoma North Sub County. Findings from students showed that 230 (89.7%) said that it was difficult for mother-students to balance between school and home life while 26(10.3%) indicated that they found it easier balance their school work verses their workload back home. This implies that it is extremely difficult for mother-students to maintain a balance of school work and family responsibilities.

#### 9.5. Impact of re – admission policy on performance of mother – student

A regression analysis was computed to check on the impact of re – admission policy on performance of mother – students in secondary schools in Bungoma North Sub County at 95% confidence interval. The correlation coefficient value was 0.612 which indicated that there exists an average degree of correlation between the variables. The adjusted R square finding shows that 36.4% of change in performance of mother – student is dependent on the implementation of re – admission policy in secondary schools. Furthermore, The ANOVA results showed that the model was fit ( $F=35.963$ ,  $df=1$  and  $p=0.001$ ). This shows the there exist enough evidence to conclude that re – admission policy implementation in secondary school is useful for predicting therefore making the model to be useful. Findings show that at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance, there exist enough evidence to conclude that the slope of the independent variables is not zero hence the independent variable as a predictor of student performance in examination. The quadratic regression equation is:  $y = 1.178 + 0.564 + e$ . This interpreted to mean that single unit increase in the implementation of re-admission policy, performance of re-admitted students' increases between 0.376 and 0.752. This implies that head teachers in secondary schools within the district need to ensure full implementation of re-admission policy.

### 10. Conclusion

The study has shown that the level of implementation of re-admission policy in secondary schools in Bungoma North Sub County is still on average. The students also reported that their school have not developed school policies aimed at implementing the re-admission policy in schools. Most of the students who were surveyed by the study reported that they were not aware of the revision of re – admission policy guidelines in their schools. Parents and other stakeholders were not adequately involved and informed on the status of the implementation of re-admission policies in secondary schools. Lack of stakeholder involvement in the re-admission process was a probable factor that explained the low implementation of the policy in secondary schools in the area. The results of the study further revealed that there was a significant relationship between the re – admission of mother-students in schools and their academic achievement in class work activities and KCSE. The regression analysis results revealed that there was significant impact ( $p<0.05$ ) between the re – admission policy implementation and performance of mother-students in secondary schools. The correlation coefficient was on average ( $R=0.6$ ). The students reported that most of the re – admitted students feared participating in classroom discussions and this influenced their performance in end term examinations and KCSE. School – family balance issue was also found to be another hindrance to the effective implementation of re – admission policy in secondary schools.

### 11. Recommendations

- There is need for full implementation of the re – admission policy in secondary schools in the area to ensure that the rights of the child as enshrined in the constitution are respected and adhered to. This will end up creating a knowledge based nation that will propel the country towards achievement of Vision 2030.
- The study suggests that re- policy needs reviewed to bring about the clear roles that stakeholders; teachers, parents and other interested parties should play in ensuring that mother-students are not denied chance of continuing their education. The community and all other stakeholders should be involved in designing, developing and implementing the re-entry policy.
- Re-entry score should be well determined or set so that it increases the chances of mother students return to schools and with a focus to perform better in national examinations, the entry score should focus on improving the performance of mother-students.
- It is important to create awareness and sensitization to the policy among all communities and other stakeholders of education in order to recognize the rights of girls and appreciate the importance of educating girls. Schools had mother student readmission policies in line with the ministry of education guidelines so that the mothers-student were well taken care of in the study schools and other schools nationwide.
- School administrators in secondary schools should create a proper platform for students' mothers to attend guidance and counselling sessions to boost their confidence and self esteem towards improving their academic outcomes.

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