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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EFFECTS OF SCHOOL POLICIES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MIXED DAY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF KISUMU EAST

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#### ABSTRACT

It has been realized that investment in the education of the youth at secondary level improving the quality of life for developing nations. Many secondary schools and universities have been built and free primary and secondary education introduced to enhance academic achievement. Despite the Governments' commitments to provision of education policies to improve students' performance, in 2007, Kenya Certificate of secondary Examination only 42 students out of 1045 students got B+ and above to join public universities through Joint Admission Board. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of school policies on academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East District. The objective of the study was to find out the influence of school policies on academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East, District, Kenya. The major findings of the study was that school policies had positive and negative influence on the academic performance of students in mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East District. Recommendation from the study includes thinned for housing of teachers in the school so that they give students more time for consultation. Further research should be done on the role of parents on the education of their children. Although educational policies play a big role in academic performance, Guidance and Counseling, parental support helped to improve student's performance. The findings of this study will be useful to the administrators, parents, teachers and students in improving academic performance in mixed day secondary schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the effective instruments a nation has at its disposal promoting sustainable social and economic development (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The continued growing demand for education and high competition, for limited vacancies in the public universities have led to increased expenditure on education by many parents (Eshiwani, 1993). The new Constitution of Kenya (Government of Kenya, 2010) became the guiding legal document for all sectors in which articles 10, 35, 42, 43 and 53 states that it is a right for every person to have education. It addresses the fragmented legal framework in the sector through the enactment of several acts including the Basic Education Act, 2013; the Teachers Service Commission Act, 2012; the Kenya National Examination Council Act, 2012;

the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development Act, 2013; the Technical and Vocational Education Training Act, 2013 and the University Act, 2012. Based on the Odhiambo Report (Ministry of Education, 2012), that sought to realign the 2010 Constitution and Vision 2030, the Ministry of Education developed the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 (Government of Kenya, 2012) with the theme of reforming education and training in Kenya with secondary level of learning now recognized as basic education. The state can now be held accountable for ensuring that every child below 18 years has access to quality education. It is important to note that academic achievement foster appropriate interventions. It is evident that the costs of academic underachievement are growing (Mwangi, 2015). These include discontinuation of education, inferior career potential, lower self-esteem, endangering of students' future personal as well as social and economic outcomes. Schools can profoundly influence the academic resilience of students, and consequently determine their success or failure.

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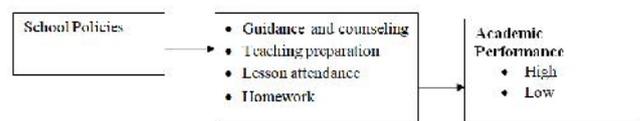
According to the World Bank (1988), the establishments of day secondary schools are a way of reducing financial constraints in education. Republic of Kenya (1999), recommended that day secondary schools should be established within reasonable, walking distances and if possible, be developed on the precinct of existing primary schools in order to share common facilities. The report also noted that schools are cheaper to develop and to maintain if communities and parents are encouraged to develop day secondary schools and provide them with adequate facilities and equipment to enable them maintain high standards of teaching and learning. The establishment of such day schools is more cost effective way of providing and expanding secondary education. The day secondary schools will reduce parent and community borders and enable the Government of Kenya to expand accessibility to secondary education.

In Kenya, the score in national examination is one of the indicators of good academic performance. Norris (1993) rightly observes that examination measure a system's goals, record change and provide information relevant for judging the efficiency of a system. The performance of all students sitting for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination is important, as there is stiff competition among schools, with each school seeking a top rank (Mutahi, 2006). He explain that lack of opportunities for employment and higher education and training push teachers and pupils to use any means, for example heating Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination examinations to get better performance. The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination performance leads to very marked differences in career paths followed. Most University courses require certain grade of pass in Mathematics (Nyambala, 1989). Several factors lead to good academic achievement (UNESCO, 1994) and the Head teacher of a mixed secondary school is at a focal position to address factors that influence academic performance. The head teacher is the implementer, manager and evaluator of policies at school level. This supported by Kwaka, (cited in Musungu, 2007) who asserts that the Head teacher is the instructional leader. He/She influences provision and management of instructional resources in the school.

**Research Objective:** The research objective was to find out the influence of school policies on academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East District, Kenya.

**Conceptual Framework:** The conceptual framework shows how the academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination is influenced by school policies. The management of guidance e and counseling, teaching preparation, lesson attendance and homework do influence the academic performance of students at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination.

The education policies, such as target setting and retaining of teachers also motivate the teachers. The conceptual framework guided the researcher in data collection and data analysis. Aspects of the conceptual framework such as teaching preparation and checking on homework of the students were examined in the course of data collection. This showed how they impacted on academic performance on mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East District.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework on factors that Affect performance at KCSE**

**Synthesis of literature on school policies:** The government of Kenya's guiding policy on education is the concern that every Kenyan has inalienable right to basic education. Universality of education has become evident in most countries after the World Conference on basic education for all held in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990 (UNESCO, 2000). The government introduced free primary school enrolment and further established more Mixed Day Secondary Schools. Despite the strides made in education, students still perform poorly, drip pit and even repeat classes (UNESCO, 1994). It was therefore necessary to establish the individual school's policies effects on the students' performance. School policies is one of the major factors which when implemented may have either positive or negative effects on academic performance of students in mixed day secondary schools. Craig (1990) summarizes experiences in implementing education policies by reference to various studies which reveal that although those involved in policy making often blame failures to implement educational policies on resource constraints and that while shortage of monetary and other material resources often are the proximate causes of implementation failures, it is important for analytical purposes to distinguish between those constraints that could have been foreseen and those that are unpredictable.

According to the Republic of Kenya (2002), the Teachers Service Commission has a weakness in its teacher transfer policy. It was attributed the serious shortage of teachers in North Eastern province to Teachers Service Commission where by some teachers even left the district without formally handing over. In the past few years, the Teachers Service Commission has put some measures in place to reduce frequent transfers. Teachers can only be transferred subject to availability of vacancies or a suitable replacement, after having served in a school for a period of not less than five years or on duly proven medical or security grounds (Teachers Service Commission, 2004). To make many schools retain their teachers, there is a five year bonding policy of newly recruited teachers (Sogomo, 2002). The policy of recruiting teachers by the district and the schools has also been adopted to promote employment of the willing natives who are familiar with the environment to reduce transfers (Republic of Kenya, 2005). The individual schools also have their internal school policies, which affect the performance of students. Odumbe (2003) argues that subject chosen by each pupil will affect his performance either positively or negatively. He therefore suggests that students should be guided to choose subjects as per the ability and interest of each student.

Academic resilience is students' ability to successfully deal with academic drawbacks, challenges and academic pressure (grades, exam pressure), stress and difficulties in the academic or school life (Martin & Marsh, 2006). There is evidence that academically resilient students are intrinsically motivated, are optimistic, self-regulated, and flexible, show agency toward being solution-focused, exercise reciprocity, have determination, are assertive, and possess good

communication skills (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Owing to the wide recognition of academic resilience as a key factor in determining students' success or failure, the twenty-first century society requires that schools and teachers should enhance the resilience of young people. Dweck (2009) points out that the twenty-first century will belong to the passionate and resilient learners. The academic resilience approach is based on the tenet that resilience offers a new perspective from which to view academic achievement. Instead of focusing on the deficits of students at-risk of failure, it attempts to identify the factors that account for their success. This shifts the focus of resilience research from a pathological, deficit, "at-risk" model to a strengths-based approach. Kathuri (1986), in a study on factors that affect student performance in Kenya, recommended the need to involve teachers in decision, making in schools administration. This improves teacher motivation and this translates into good performance. Kiganya (1993) in a study on the secret behind Starehe Boys centre impressive performance explains that harmonious relations between the head teacher and teachers enhances discipline among students hence the possibility of better performance. Maundu (1986) studied the factors affecting student performance and recommended the need to set up a policy with a minimum level of experience a teacher should acquire before being promoted to school leadership. He emphasized on the teacher quality while Kathuri (1986) on his study explains more on the involvement of teachers in decision making as a policy, present study looked into the effect of education policies on students' academic performance at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination level.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

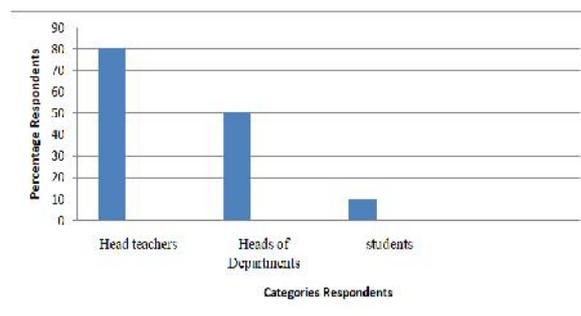
The study was based on a conceptual framework showing how academic performance is influenced by school policies. The study was based on a conceptual framework showing how academic performance is influenced by school policies. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study population consisted of 32 head teachers, 32 heads of examination departments and 1045 form four students. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 head teachers, 10 heads of examination departments and 348 students. Questionnaire and in depth interviews were used to collect data. The validity of the instruments was ascertained by presenting them to three experts in education while their reliability was gauged through piloting in two schools that were not part of sample before commencement of the study. Qualitative data obtained from in depth interviews were transcribed and analyzed on an ongoing process according to themes as they emerged. Quantitative data collected from closed ended questionnaire items were tallied and presented using descriptive statistics in the form of bar graphs, percentages and frequencies. The major findings of the study was that school policies had positive and negative influence on the academic performance of students in mixed day secondary schools in Kisumu East District.

## RESULTS

**Research Objective:** The research objective was to determine to establish the influence of the school policies on academic performance. The study findings on school policies revealed that schools had a policy on a set mean target of

40% mean average as was shown on Table 1 above. Interview with all the respondents further revealed that students who had not attained the average mean of 40% were to remain in their various schools after the schools had been closed. They were to be given remedial coaching during the holidays.

They were also supposed to open the school earlier than others. Such students with dismissal performance were supposed to be given "visit cards" which were to be signed by their respective subject head of examination department, whenever they would go for consultation. During the in depth interviews with the teachers, all (100%) noted that the policy on mean target was meant to make students study hard in order to avoid remaining back for remedial. All (100%) head of examination department and all 9(100%) students supported the policy that it would have made the students to be serious with their academic work. However when asked on how effective the policy was on academic performance, majority (80%) agreed that it was coursed while only after (40%) Head of examination department maintained their schools had started implementing the policy though it was existing on records. But on the other hand, only (10%) of the students noted that policy was being used in their schools though with a lot of laxity from the head of examination department who never wanted to attend the holiday remedial.



**Figure 2. Policy of remedial teaching as reported by head teachers (n=10), Heads of Departments (n=10) and students (n=348).**

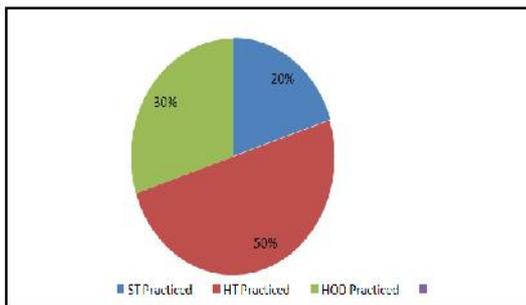
The study established from the above graph that, although the policy was known by the Head of examination Department and students, it was poorly implemented making it not effective in the academic performance of the students. This position could also be realized from the drop of the number of head teachers who initially maintained that the policy had existed in their schools. The study also established that schools had policy of Head of Examination Department meeting the parents of every low achiever at the beginning of every term.

According to all (100%) head teachers and all (100%) Head of Examination Department, this policy was supposed to enable the parents as stake holders of the schools to know what their children were performing i.e. not serious with their academic work. It was also meant to make them assist and monitor the study habit of their children after school and understand the need of the students, which could lead to good performance. All (100%) students saw the policy as providing opportunity to air out their grievances both at home and school to both the parents and the Head of Examination Department. Despite its good intention, the policy was up hazard implemented in most of the school as can be realized from the presentation on the pie chart.

**Table 1. Schools Policies that existed in Secondary Schools as indicated by Head teachers (n=10), Heads of departments (n=10) and Students (n=348)**

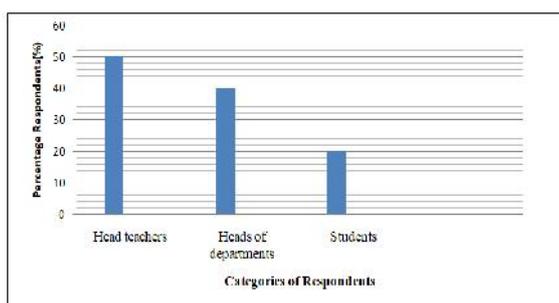
School Policies	Head teacher		Head of Department		Students	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Students must attain 40% pass mark						
Teachers meeting parents of low achiever	10	100	10	100	348	100
Face to face discussion between The head teacher and teacher	10	100	10	100	200	83.3
Teachers parenting the students						
Across all forms	10	100	10	100	180	75
Students must choose their subjects						
As early as from Form 2	10	100	8	80	160	66.6
School rewarding good performance	10	100	8	80	150	62.5

Key: F=Frequency response, % = percentage response.



**Figure 3. Policy of inviting parents to school as indicated by Head teachers (n=10), Head of departments (n=10) and Students (n=348)**

From Figure 3, the policy of inviting parents was minimal in the schools, although it was put in place most of the respondents noted that it was not being practiced in their schools and this was evident from the pie charts above. It was also evident that the number of the head teachers, Head of Examination Department and students who agreed that policy was being used in their schools were fewer if compared to their initial response that the policy was in existence in their schools.



**Figure 4. Policy on face to face discussion as indicated by Head teachers (n=10), Heads of departments (n=10) and students (n=348)**

The study then established that policy of inviting parents of achievers was not effectively implemented or practiced in schools despite the fact that it was in the schools records. The (50%) head teachers who noted that if was enforced in their schools however noted that parents were reluctant to attend their schools invitation while the (30%) Head of Examination, who acknowledge its practice on their schools, blamed their various head teachers for its weak implementation hence failing to make the parents see its importance.

On the other hand the (20%) students who acknowledged the practice of this policy did not like how it was being implemented in their schools since it always turned to be a session of blame game. Head of Examination Department quarrelling their parents when they come. During the interviews with (100%) Head of Examination Department the study established that the schools had a policy of face discussions or in other words the head teachers do practice open door policy between the head teachers, Head of Examination Department and students. This was maintained by all head teachers that it was done regularly and that schools and general assembly (Kamkunji) once a term. On their part, (50%) of the Head of examination Department noted that the policy was in force in their various schools. The remaining (60%) Head of Examination Department maintained that they formulated the policy in their schools but was never used as their head teachers would always have an excuse of being busy when they were to meet the Head of Examination Department and students. Some head teachers differed with their Head of Examination Department whenever they had problems and it was never used as forum of discussion to settle problems.

The Head of Examination Department sentiments were also supported by (80%) students who noted that the policy was read to them in the assembly but was never applied in their schools whenever they had problems. They also explained that they had not heard any forum with their head teachers and the Head of Examination department to discuss their problems although it was spelt out in the policy that was read on their various assemblies of their schools. The bar graph below shows how poorly the policy was enforced in schools. From Figure 4, the policy of face to face discussion was minimally affected in the schools and therefore could not have a greater influence on the students’ academic performance. Going by the earlier findings, it was poorly implemented and its impact was never felt by the Head of Examination Department and students who were suppose to have been motivated by the same policy. While giving their views on the prevailing policy, (90%) Head of Examination Department maintained that the policy was existing in their schools. They further noted that the policy was to enhance good Head of Examination Department/students relations which were healthy for better academic performance. They also maintained that policy was meant to foster bonding especially among students who were from different streams but belonged to one teacher as their foster parent. However the head teacher registered disappointment from their Head of Examination Department who were never serious with the students who they fostered citing that the Head of

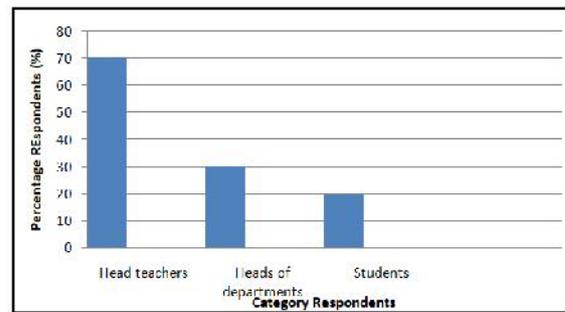
Examination Department did not meet students as per policy and those they never had time to solve some of their problems. This policy according to the Head of Examination Department was in line with the Ministry of Education's expectations that Head of Examination Department were in "loose parentees" while students were under their custody in schools.

Some (70%) Head of Examination Department agreed with their Head of Examination Department that the policy was being used in their schools, but also doubted its effectiveness on the students' academic performance citing that it was poorly and minimally used. The Head of Examination Department cited too much load and a congested curriculum which did not give them room to attend to their foster "children" or students. They noted that as much as their names could be read as foster parents of some students, they had never gotten time to discuss with them hence the policy was dormant in their schools. Only (30%) revealed that the policy was effectively in force in their schools. Although they also indicated that too much work load in their schools had not allowed them to be effective as was expected by the policy stipulations. The policy was not having any impact on their academic; this was according to some (20%) students who were interviewed. The students noted that although the policy was existing in their schools, it was not effective since they did not have a meeting with their Head of Examination Department who were supposed to foster them. They were never given attention by their Head of Examination Department whom they thought should have been close to them.

The policy on meeting the parents of low achievers were equally implemented by the schools but had very minimal effect on the academic performance of the students. A study by Abel (2008), Nandi North, in-line with this study revealed that parents and teachers continued to play a leading role in deciding whether students repeated or not. From interviews, the policy was of more disadvantage to the students, it turned out to be a reprimanding meeting where the parents were not given opportunity by their Head of examination departments to explain why they were performing dismally. Instead, Head of examination lectured both the parents and their children and insisted on repetition for improvement.

This study differs with Yaola (2012), whose study on indicators of internal efficiency in schools in Lugari District established that forced repetition was a factor causing poor performance. This concurs with Ogada (2014) who revealed that 56% of pupils and 42% of teachers in Kakamega Municipality indicated that repetition resulted into poor performance. He explains that when students are forced to repeat, they lose self esteem as they sit with those who joined after them. In agreement, Grira (2001) found that in Bangladesh forced repetition reduces completion rates for any given cohort which further compromises internal efficiency of mixed day schools. The study explains that repetition reduces intake capacity of school and prevents other children from entering school or cause overcrowding of classroom.

The effectiveness of the parenting policy in the schools was therefore presented on the Figure 5.

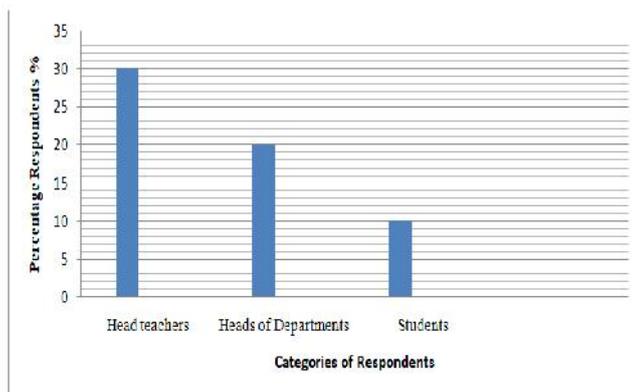


**Figure 5. Parenting policy as indicated by Head teachers (n=10), Heads of departments (n=10) and Students (n=348)**

From Figure 5, the policy was having any impact on the student's academic performance and only (20%) could realize its existence on their schools. The (30%) Head of Examination Department who acknowledged its existence also noted that it was not effectively implemented due to the workload which was heavily weighing on them. The (70%) head teachers who noted its existence in their schools also expressed disappointment that Head of Examination Department had never implemented this policy to the students. The study further established that most schools had the policy of making students to identify their future careers as early as form two. During interviews with all (100%) Head of Examination Department, they maintained that this policy was to enable the students to start focusing earlier enough on their future careers and working on how to achieve it.

The head teachers further explained during the interviews that most students were not serious with their academic work until they were made to identify their careers and that they changed their study habits only after they had made their vocational choices and had been told of the requirements for the careers they had chosen. When asked on how effective the policy was academic performance of the students, only (30%) head teachers noted that it was properly implemented. The other (70%) noted that although the students were made to make careers choices earlier, the Head of Examination Department never explained to them what requirements on the various career they had chosen. This then did not make the students work hard academically since it was seen by the students as a school normal routine. During interviews with Head of Examination Department all (100%) Head of Examination Department maintained that the policy was being used in their schools. They maintained that students needed information about their future careers. Some (20%) Head of Examination Department however maintained that the policy was not properly implemented and that students were never explained for the requirements and efforts needed in order to pursue such careers. This however did not motivate the students to work hard as was initially intended. While interviewing the students most (90%) of them maintained that their schools were practicing the early career choices right from form two. They up hailed the idea of the policy since it was making them reduce their work load by choosing on a few subjects as early as from two. The students also noted that the policy was in force in their schools and that they learnt about subject clusters and combinations as per the Kenya National Examinations Councils' requirements.

It was however only after (10%) who maintained that their Head of Examination Department were giving details of various careers and what they require a student to have achieved at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education level. The few students also noted that the policy was motivating them to work harder since could then work as a team of people aspiring for a similar career. The effectiveness of the policy on career choices were then presented on the bar graph below.

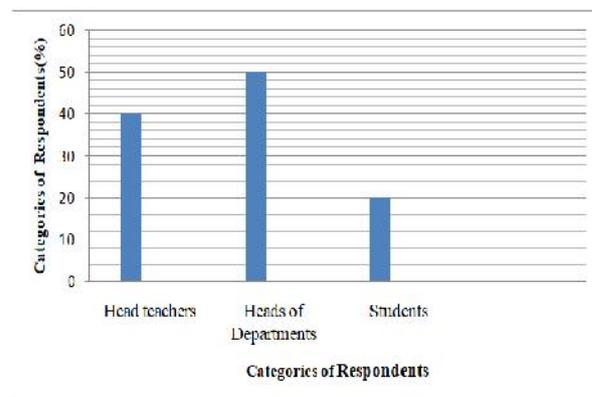


**Figure 6. Effects of policy career choice as indicated by head teachers (n=10), Head of departments (n=10) and students (n=348)**

Figure 6 is the presentation of effectiveness of the policy on earlier career that was being practiced in mixed day secondary schools. From the above findings therefore it was established that although the policy on career choices was being practiced in mixed day secondary schools, it had very minimal impact on the student’s academic performance in mixed day secondary schools. Lastly the study established that the mixed day secondary had a policy of rewarding good performance to both students’ and the Head of examination Department. During the in depth interviews with the head teachers, all(100%) noted that their schools encouraged both the students and Head of Examination Department by either rewarding them with materials gifts, money or certificates. The policy was meant to reward from “A to B+” mean grade per subject per teacher and per subject per teacher and per total mean grade to the students. The reasons for implementing the policy were to improve the individual students’ performance and the average school means score. According to some (60%) head teachers, this policy was not effective on academic performance since the caliber of students they selected in form one were those with below average marks of 250. Such students were noted having self motivation and so getting mean grade of A and B+ was impossible they instead were discouraged by the high standard set for the rewards. Interviews with Head of Examination department also indicated that all (100%) Head of examination Department liked the policy and felt that if it were taken positively, it would have enhanced the academic performance of the students.

However, (150%) teacher noted that the policy was not effective in improving academic performance since it only favored the Head of examination who were not handling technical subjects like science and mathematics. They maintained that such Head of examination Department had no hope of getting the reward and so to them, the policy was not taken seriously. This they said in consideration of the type the students whom their schools were admitting form

one. On their most (72%) students did not like the policy and noted that it was discouraging them since the mean grade for reward was so high for them. The students also expressed their feelings about their being low achievers and the policy would have motivated them if their school would have stated rewarding them from a mean grade of C plain. Although some (25%) students were for the policy, they too were discouraged from the target mean required. The effectiveness of this policy was then summarized on Figure 7.



**Figure 8. Policies on Rewarding as indicated by Head teachers (n=10), Heads of departments (n=10) and Students (n=348).**

From the summary on Figure 8, it emerged that the policy of rewarding Head of Examination Department and the students were not effective in most mixed secondary schools. It was also established that most students and teachers were not supporting the way the policy was implemented in their school.

**DISCUSSION**

From the findings of the study, it emerged that most mixed secondary schools have good school policies that would have good school that would lead to improvement of academic performance. However the way the policies were implemented, did not take into consideration of the real school situations. For example, the policy of the appointment of a 40% pass mark was adopted up hazard without considering the fact that holidays were very vital for the students after having been in schools for three months and that the policy ended up being a bother to the Head of examination Department who also needed rest during the holiday. The policy on meeting the parents of low achievers were equally implemented by the schools but had minimal effect on the academic performance of the students. From the obtained data during interviews, the policy was not fully supported by the head of examination department and when implemented, it turned out to be a reprimanding meeting where the parents were not given opportunity to discuss the performance of their students. Neither was the students given opportunity of their Head of examination Department to explain why they were performing dismally. The policy of face to face discussion between Head of Examination Department, Head of examination Department and students was established by existing only records in most schools. However when it was being practiced, the study established that the head teacher did not give room for discussion but instead they lectured the students and Head of Examination department on what they want to be done in their schools.

This policy like the previous policy was formulated with good intentions of “open door” system which was to allow all the stake holders to their institutions. But just like others policies was poorly implemented in schools and therefore did not have only Impact on the academic performance of the students. Other school policies such as the choosing of future careers as early as from form two, Head of Examination Department parenting the students and school rewarding good performance were all minimally effective on the academic performance of the students. This was because they were either poorly implemented or they were never implemented in schools. Some which were implemented did not get full support of the Head of examination Department and students. It was then evident from the data collected that the school policies had no greater impact on the academic performance and this called for revisiting of the policies and using new methods in implementing them so as to help improving the academic performance.

## Conclusion

**On the basis of the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:**

- J The policy the student must attain 40% pass mark to be promoted to the next class enhances academic performance.
- J The policy that the parents of low achievers must have meetings with subject teachers at the beginning of every term enhances academic performance.
- J The policy of face to face discussion between head teachers and teachers promotes academic performance.
- J The policy of teachers parenting students across all forms fosters academic performance.
- J The policy that students should choose eight subjects in form two promotes academic performance.

## Recommendation

- J The policy of teachers meeting the parents’ of low achievers at the beginning of every term to discuss and find solution to their dismal performance to be made compulsory by the ministry of education in all schools.
- J It should be made a policy that all students in mixed day schools choose their subjects in form two second term to reduce the work load in terms of fewer subjects to be studied.
- J The policy of warding students with mean grade from B+ and above be made compulsory in all schools. The ministry of education should also make it a policy that all teachers whose subjects are performed well at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations be rewarded.
- J The Ministry of Education should make it a policy that all students with grade D+ and below in formative evaluation be given remedial teaching.

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