

Re-Entry Policy and Inhibitive Cultural Practices Discord among Girls in Sirima Zone, Laikipia County –Kenya

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Abstract Re-entry policy guidelines are an outcomes of the Beijing conference of 1995. Since then, Governments' mapped out the guidelines to ensure that all school going girls who gave birth, went back and completed their basic education in line with Education for All (EFA) goals. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed the Reentry policy on adolescent mothers but in spite of the endeavors, to date, teenage mothers in Sirma Zone of Laikipia County, do not complete their education due to a discordant between the policy and inhibitive cultural practices. The purpose of this research was to assess the extent inhibitive cultural practices had influenced the Reentry policy in public primary education in Sirma Zone. Descriptive research design was adopted with a total of 169 respondent namely: 113 teenager mother, 53 teachers and three Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QUASO) from ministry of education forming the target population. 30% was used to get a sample of the 53 teachers in the five primary schools in the zone, then simple random sampling technique identified them from schools. Snowball sampling technique sampled the teenage mothers, while census sampling techniques sampled QUASOs. The total sample size was 53 respondents. A questionnaire collected data from the teachers and the teenage mothers and an interview schedule collected data from the QUASOs. Descriptive statistics, (means), was used to analyze the extent while inferential statistics mainly multiple regression was used to test the relationship. The qualitative data was analyzed in verbatim. The finding established that female genital mutilation (FGM) is still practiced and teenage mothers are still forced into early marriages hindering them from returning to school, that teenage mothers were married off by their parents to hide the shame and that the community still believed that boys should be given priority when it came to education. Qualitative data also agreed that practices like early marriages for girls and FGM was rife in Sirima Zone. In conclusion, inhibitive cultural practices found to be a hindrance for teenage mothers going back to school. The study recommended that the community should be sensitized on effects of inhibitive cultural practices to education of the girls and the community to allow the Reentry Policy to be implemented fully. Provision of appropriate, affordable and physically accessible child-care facilities should be enhanced as well as rescue centers for teenage girls. Proper follow up on by the stakeholders needs to be intensified.

Keywords: *inhibitive cultural practices, reentry policy, inclusive education, EFA goals*

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental ingredient which must be promoted for any country to attain upward socio-economic mobility. That is why Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) declares education a fundamental right to every person and made it free, at least in the elementary stages [1]. The declaration was backed by Education for All (EFA) stratagem over time in an attempt to ensure every person attained at least the basic education. That propelled the push as it came up with global progress towards achieving the EFA goals [2]. EFA is a school policy that gives schools an

explicit interpretation of inclusive education. Inclusive education means that all members of every school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture [3].

Further, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has quality and inclusive education as one of its goals (SDG4). Goal 4 focuses on eradicating gender inequalities in education and ensuring nondiscriminatory access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. That policy has helped to ensure that most countries make education accessible to their people. This has been clearly brought out by the achievement of gender parity in enrollment rates in two thirds of the countries globally [4]. However,

the completion rates for girls are generally lower than those of boys globally. This has mainly been attributed to challenges that the girls face such as early pregnancies, early forced marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among others [5].

Early pregnancies, among school going girls is a social problem which form the focus of this paper. 95% of teenage pregnancy cases are in developing countries and that has become a great obstacle in the educational achievements of female learners [6]. These teenage girls, while pregnant, may fail to go back to school due to stigmatization in the schools. Besides, after delivery, most parents prefer to marry off their girls instead of taking them back to school, since it is seen as futile to do that. Therefore, most teenage mothers do not get a chance to finish their education [7].

This happens in spite of many countries in the world having formulated Re-entry Policies to ensure that the girls who drop out of school due to early pregnancies get a chance to complete their education. Re-entry of teenage mothers to school was one of the outcomes of the Beijing conference of 1995 which demanded that girls who dropped out of school because of pregnancy be re-admitted [8]. Accordingly, educational settings that eliminate all barriers that impeded the schooling of pregnant adolescents and young mothers was to be promote. That was to include, appropriate, affordable and physically accessible child-care facilities and parental education to encourage those who are responsible for the care of their children and siblings during their school years, to return to or continue and complete schooling. Additionally, re-entry to school is seen as advantageous as it is considered significant in delaying a second birth while offering young women increased opportunities to get education and increase their economic standings [9].

Among the countries that implemented the re-entry policy was Brazil in 1997 after realizing the important of education to the teenage mothers by improving their lives and those of their children [10]. In Jamaica, the teenage pregnancy rates were ranked 4th in the Caribbean. But before 2013, teenage mothers were permanently excluded from the school system. Although later the government implemented a national policy mandating school aged mothers to go back to school after giving birth in 2013, the implementation of this policy still faces challenges up to today [11]. Some institutions were found to discriminate against teenage mothers causing postpartum stigma which made most of them shy away from going back to school [12].

In the Philippines, by 2014, one out of every 10 school going girls aged 15-19 was already a mother or expectant [13]. Despite sex education being introduced in the curriculum as one of the ways of preventing more teenage pregnancies, concerns were raised over some schools that sent away girls that were expectant. That has been described as going against the rights of the girls and educational stakeholders and the communities were urged to avoid the discrimination that led to stigma among these girls. Instead, proper follow up by the stakeholders and the members of the community was encouraged to ensure the girls go back to school and continue with their education.

In Africa, statistics show that approximately one million school going mothers drop out of school because

of early pregnancies every year [14]. Many African communities force girls to get married while young. As a result, those who happen to get pregnant while in school face worse consequences since they are forcefully married off to hide the shame that comes with pregnancy out of wedlock. A good example is in Sierra Leone, after the Ebola crisis, teenage pregnancies increased by 25% because of the shutdowns [15]. The government banned teenage mothers from returning to school, because of strict cultural beliefs that prohibit girls from getting pregnant before marriage. These girls were seen as outcasts and were thought to have negative influence over the other girls in the schools. This ban was however lifted in March 2020 and pregnant girls and teenage mothers were allowed to go back to school after a court ruling in 2019 that keeping the pregnant girls and school going mothers out of school was denying them a right to education and was discriminatory [16].

In Uganda's Kitgum Diocese, 3430 girls of ages between 14 and 16 got pregnant between March and October 2020. This was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the closure of schools [17]. Unfortunately, most of these girls did not go back to school despite there being a Re-entry Policy through the Pre-Tertiary Education Act of 2020. That has been attributed to inhibitive cultural practices such as early marriages and gender discrimination that caused stigma among the teenage mothers. Most parents believed that a girl who got pregnant before marriage was a shame to the family and did not deserve a second chance of education. Some parents even went to the extent of disowning the girls and sending them away from their homes [18].

Statistics in Kenya show that as of 2016 the teenage birth rate was 82 in every 1000 girls of the ages 15 to 19. The percentage of girls aged 15 to 19 getting married was at 12% [19]. The country is ranked third in teenage pregnancies in East Africa with Tanzania being the highest, followed by Uganda. It is estimated that in a record three months, 152,000 teenage girls got pregnant during the nationwide COVID 19 lockdown and closure of schools [20]. No empirical study has been done to establish whether the girls went back to school despite the Kenya government having formulated the Re-entry Policy in education for girls in 1994 [21]. The aim of the policy is to integrate school aged mothers into the school system to ensure that they complete their education and transit to the next levels. Accordingly, all teenage mothers should unconditionally be re-admitted into school [21]. This is in line with the Kenya constitution 2010 which declares basic education as a right for all and more so every child [22], and the realization of the country's vision 2030 [23], the Basic Education Act [24] and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) no four [25]. Later, the 2020 National School Re-Entry Guidelines to facilitate and formalize teenage parents' re-entry into learning institutions was introduced by The Ministry of Education in Kenya [26].

School aged mothers in Kenya, just like in other countries, fail to go back to school due to some cultural practices as the cultures do not protect pregnant girls [27]. If anything, culture is the major reason why the girls are less empowered to complete their primary education [28]. It is common knowledge that girls who attend school have

a better and more successful life and better equalities at the community level and would improve their overall completion and motivation at school. However, the study only focused on private secondary schools in Nairobi East and not on public primary schools in a rural setting.

As found out in other countries, gender discrimination and early forced marriages are some inhibitive practices found to hinder the Re-entry Policy in Kenya [28]. For most communities in Kenya, the pregnant girls are treated in almost similar manner as literature has reviewed, for instance, forced marriages, being send away from their home and denial of the chance to continue their education [28]. A study done in West Pokot County found out that responsibilities taught to children as they grow by parents and guardians dictated by the culture of the community, escalate the cultural practices. While boys are trained to be leaders, providers as well as sources of security in society, girls are taught to be more home bound, hence they are seen as less deserving in terms of education. So, when girls get pregnant while still in primary school, the worst-case scenario occurs as she is perceived as a failure and in extreme cases could get banished from the community [29]. This is due to the strict cultural values that condemn pregnancy before marriage [30].

Even when the few girls get back to school they are not safe as the gender imbalances follow them to schools [31]. The teenage mothers' faces a lot of ridicule and some sort of resentment from the teachers since they are viewed as irresponsible pupil who makes improper decisions. The case is not the same for the boys, in a situation where a boy gets a girl pregnant, he is some sort of a hero and would at times get accolades from his mates and some respect, since he is seen as being man enough. Most of the blame goes to the girl who is labelled as being loose by society and the school fraternity.

In the year 2022, Laikipia County, where Sirima Zone is situated, 260 pregnancies of girls between the ages 10-14 were recorded at antenatal clinic representing 18 percent of all pregnancies in the county [32]. This was as a result of vulnerable children mainly girls being exposed to sexual predators as a result of the lockdown experienced during the Coronavirus pandemic 2019 [20]. Reports from the Ministry of Education Office -Laikipia Central Sub – County indicated that only one out of every five girls who got pregnant while in primary school went back to finish their primary school education [33]. Although there are other factor that contributed, traditions that disadvantage girls, were found to be the most chronic factor. For instance, some parents were found to often have the mentality that once a girl got pregnant in primary school that would mark the end of her education. Coupled with that was the discrimination these girls face from the members of the community and school community which play a major role in dropping out of these school going mothers. The lack of awareness of the existence of the re-entry policy among the parents of the girls and the community also played a key role. In addition, some school heads were reported to be reluctant in implementing this policy in their schools [34].

Sirima Zone in Laikipia County is a multi-ethnic area comprising of people from the Turkana, Meru and Kikuyu communities [35]. Most of the families are pastoralists and small-scale farmers. The area is semi-arid and

therefore most of the people tend to move in search of water and pastures for their livestock. Those who are employed work in nearby ranches as herders or in the mission facilities such as churches and hospitals as casual labourers. Despite the harsh conditions, primary schools in the area still register learners. The communities in Sirima Zone adhere strictly to their cultural practices, especially the Turkana people. This has been seen at times to have a negative effect on the education of the girls in this area. Teenage pregnancies and early forced marriages still account for the highest number of drop out cases among primary school girls of Sirima Zone. For this reason, there is need for research to investigate the far these cultural practices have influenced the implementation of the re-entry policy specifically in primary schools of Sirima Zone, which is evident by the low numbers of teenage mothers that go back to primary school after delivery.

2. Statement of the Problem

The Kenya government formulated the Re-entry Policy for basic learning institutions in 1994, but research shows that most primary school aged mothers do not go back to complete their education. Literature has associated that gap with the inhibitive cultural practice such as early forced marriages, a patriarchal society, stigma and lack of awareness of the existence of the re-entry policy among parents. Equally, literature obtained has shown that, the communities adhere strictly to their cultural practices. Early pregnancies are rampant and only one out of the five girls who drop out of school go back to complete their primary education in spite of the existence of a Re-entry Policy. This is a clear indication that the policy has not been fully implemented. Various researches have been done elsewhere in Kenya, for instance in Kilifi and in West Pokot Counties pointing to a number of substantial concerns on the cultural practices impediment on the re-entry policy. In spite of that, in Sirima Zone, similar empirical investigation has not been found. This study thus sought to find out the extent to which the inhibitive cultural practices found in the region influence the implementation of the re-entry policy,

3. Purpose and Justification

The purpose of this research paper was to assess the extent to which the identified cultural practices had influenced the re-entry policy in primary education in Sirima Zone – Kenya with the aim of having mitigation programs put in place to alleviate the teenage mothers suffering and allow them to go back to school in line with the global EFA goals.

4. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This is because descriptive design accurately and systematically explains a population or situation by answering what, where, when and how questions but not why questions [36]. So, it was appropriated as this study sought to

answer the question; to what extent had the inhibitive cultural practices influenced the re-entry policy among girls in Sirima Zone, Laikipia County in Kenya. Additionally, descriptive research allowed qualitative and quantitative data on how variables associated with inhibitive cultural practices influenced the implementation of the school re-entry policy among girls in primary schools of Sirima Zone, Laikipia Central Sub County.

The targeted population for the study consisted of 169 respondents comprising 113 teenage girls who had given birth and dropped out of primary school. Data obtained from the County Education office, Sirima Zone showed that, in the year 2022, 3 educational officers in the Ministry of Education offices at Sirima Zone and 53 teachers in the five primary schools found in Sirima zone. The schools were; Oltafeta Primary School, Withare Primary School, Tharua Primary School, Nyakio Primary School and Sirima Primary School.

When the study population is less than 10,000, a sample size of between 10% and 30% is recommended to be a good representation of the target population [37]. This study therefore adopted 30% which is above the recommended threshold to get a sample from the 53 teachers in the five primary schools in Sirima Zone through simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was the most suitable since it gave each teacher an equal chance to participate in the study. To sample the teenager mother mothers who had dropped out of school, snowball sampling technique which is a non-probability sampling method where the first participant refers the researcher to other persons to be sampled to was used. Again 30% was used to get a sample from the 113 teenage mothers. Using the Census sampling techniques, all the 3 Ministry of Education officers in Sirima zone were used in the study. The census method is a technique where data is collected from all the persons in a specific population. Census sampling technique is appropriate for a small population [38].

Therefore, using the 30% threshold as indicated, the sample size for this study comprised of 16 teachers (4 teachers from each school who were sampled using simple random sampling) 34 teenage mothers and 3 Ministry of Education officers sampled using census sampling techniques. Thus the total sample size comprised of 53 respondents.

Data from the teachers and the teenage mothers was collected using a questionnaire while an interview schedule was used to collect data from the ministry of education officials. Regarding data processing and analysis, the data was coded to produce meaningful categories. Descriptive statistics specifically mean was used to analyze the extent the cultural practices influenced the reentry policy, while inferential statistics mainly multiple regression was used to test the relationship between the implementation of the school re-entry policy and the inhibitive cultural practices. The qualitative data obtained from the QUASOs was analyzed in verbatim.

5. Results

A 5-likert scale questionnaire for the teachers and students was constructed using items identified from

literature reviewed. The respondents were requested to fill, indicating the extent they agreed with indicators of inhibitive cultural and the re-entry policy indicators. This was done by use of a tick (✓) showing Strongly Disagree-1, Disagree-2, Neutral-3, Agree-4 and Strongly Agree-5. The results for both teachers and teenage mothers' descriptive analysis on their perception towards the extent of influence of inhibitive cultural practices on the implementation of the re-entry policy in public primary schools in Sirima Zone were as follows:

A. Re-Entry of Teenage Mothers to School

The findings indicated that 84.5% of teachers strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement that majority of the girls who give birth at teen age went back to school after they delivered. This corresponds with the responses of the teenage mothers who 87.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed that they have seen other girls who give birth at teen age being taken back to school by their parents after they have delivered. These findings are a clear indication that the re-entry policy has not been fully implemented in Sirima Zone. This is evidenced by the fact that both the teacher and teenage mothers feel that teenage mothers who drop out of school due to pregnancy do not go back to finish their education. These findings are contrary to the report by MOE (2021) that the government of Kenya has achieved full implementation of the re-entry policy in marginalized areas. Sirima Zone is a marginalized area and the findings of this study prove otherwise.

Majority of the teenage mothers 96.8% strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement that their parents were willing to take them back to school after they had delivered. This could be attributed to various reasons such as the lack of financial resources to enable parents to continue educating their daughters, cultural practices that the parents still hold on to and disadvantage the girls to the extent of denying them their right to education and a negative attitude of the parents towards their daughters, hence most of them are unwilling to support their education.

Regarding the input by the government to ensure full implementation of the re-entry policy in Sirima Zone through the MOE officials, the teachers 84.5%, and teenage mothers 87.4%, disagreed and strongly disagreed that MOE Officials make efforts to talk to parents of teenage mothers, in a bid to convince them to take their daughters back to school after delivery. This shows that a significant proportion of teenage mothers did not receive follow-up visits or support from MOE officials after discontinuing their education. This echoed the finding of a research which established that most African governments do little to follow up the implementation of re-entry policies at grass root levels and this is the reason why the re-entry policy is yet to be fully implemented [39].

When asked if they have made efforts to reach out to parents to bring back the teenage mothers back to school after giving birth, teachers 69.2% agreed and strongly agreed. This data however suggests that while some efforts have been made, there is a notable gap in addressing situations where parental consent is not obtained, highlighting the need for more effective strategies to support teenage mothers' education in such cases. These findings are in agreement with research

findings which revealed that there are many societal hindrances to the implementation of the re-entry policy that the teachers alone may not have the ability to handle [40]. Collaboration of all the stakeholders that is the teachers, the MOE Officials and the parents is indeed very vital for the full implementation of the re-entry policy.

The overall mean for the statements on the re-entry to school of girls in Sirima was 2.4 for the teachers and 1.8 for the teenage mothers. Indicating that the teachers and the teenage mothers felt that the re-entry of girls had not fully been achieved yet.

The interview responses from the MOE Officials shed light on the complex challenges surrounding the re-entry of girls in Sirima Zone.

One Officer stated that:

MOE officials play a critical role in identifying girls in the Sirima Zone who have not returned to school after delivery. They employ communication channels with head teachers, social workers, and engage in home and school visits. This multi-pronged approach helps track and support girls who may have otherwise been left out of the education system. Regarding home visits, MOE officials conduct them once a term

Another officer mentioned that:

To ensure the implementation of the school re-entry policy for girls, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken several initiatives. These include policy formulation, working closely with parents, and creating awareness within the community. These efforts are pivotal in promoting the reintegration of girls into the educational system after childbirth. The collaboration between the area chief and MOE officials is a positive development in the effort to ensure girls in the Sirima Zone return to school after delivery. This collaboration highlights the importance of involving local authorities and leaders in promoting girls' education and re-entry.

These results are in agreement with a report by Fawe that suggested that only through collaboration with the schools and the community leadership, will the government of Kenya achieve proper implementation of the re-entry policy [41]. The responses gotten from the interviews with the MOE Officials on the efforts by the officials to reach out to teenage mothers contradict those of the teachers and the teenage mothers who expressed their disagreement with the fact that the MOE Officials in Sirima Zone follow up on teenage mothers and talk to parents about the importance of taking their daughters back to school after delivery. This means that further research should be conducted in Sirima to investigate the status of follow up efforts by the MOE officials to teenage mothers.

In the descriptive statistics and the interviews with the MOE Officials, the re-entry policy for girls in Sirima zone has not yet been fully implemented. This is evidenced by the responses from the teachers and the teenage mothers that there are few or no girls at all who go back to school after they have delivered. There is therefore need to address the challenges facing the implementation of the re-entry policy to enable all teenage mothers to go back to school for the completion of their education.

B. Findings on Inhibitive Cultural practice

Both the teachers 92.2% and teenage mothers 78.0% agreed and strongly agreed that female genital mutilation is practiced in Sirima Zone and this disadvantages the teenage mothers. This is because the effects of this practice such as complications during childbirth are so severe that the teenage mothers are not in the right physical state to go back to school after delivery. It also signifies that the girl had become women hence could get married or have babies, hence it is associated with the early pregnancies. These findings are in agreement with research which found that young girls who undergo FGM are at a risk of never going back to school after this practice. This is due to the physiological and psychological harm that these girls undergo. This alignment underscored the community's recognition of the adverse impact of this practice on girls' educational opportunities, emphasizing the importance of addressing cultural traditions that disadvantaged female students [42].

Similarly, both the teachers and the teenage mothers expressed strong concerns about forced marriages of girls following childbirth. A consensus emerged, with 92.2% teachers and 84.3% teenage mothers agreeing and strongly agreeing that these marriages hindered teenage mothers from returning to school. This alignment had highlighted the urgent need for addressing issues related to early and forced marriages, as it directly affected girls' access to education. These results mirrored finding on a research that argued that the cultural norms such as early marriages affecting girls in the school system are vast barriers to education and eventually a hindrance to the achievement of inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning for all [43].

As concerns an item on whether teachers can freely talk about sex to their students irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, all 100% of the teacher disagreeing and strongly disagreeing that they cannot do that. This corresponded with findings of research that revealed that teachers in Muhoroni in Kenya did not teach sex education in schools, since matters of sex and sexuality were considered a taboo in the community [44]. This can be interpreted to mean that sex education is almost outlawed in Sirima Zone which explains why the teenage pregnancies are on the increase.

The students had been given an item on: My community still believes that only boys should be educated and that is why I did not go back to school after delivery and the results were that 46.8% agreed to that and 43.75% strongly agreed. That implies that girls in Sirima Zone are still discriminated on gender basis. These findings are in agreement with research that revealed that most parents in Western Kenya still prefer to educate the boys since they feel that the boy child is more deserving when it comes to education [31].

Finally, the teachers 84.61% and the teenage mothers 90.5% held the perception that the community still adhered to the belief that only boys should be educated. This showed the deeply rooted gender bias in education that had continued to be a significant challenge for girls' educational prospects in Sirima Zone and most especially the teenage mothers who had dropped out of school. This was in correspondence with research that stated that patriarchal beliefs in some communities stand as a hindrance to the access of education by the girls [29].

These findings highlighted the importance of addressing cultural norms and gender biases to promote girls' education and gender equity in the region.

The overall mean for the inhibitive cultural practices on the implementation of the re-entry policy was 4.08 for the teachers and 4.20 for the teenage mothers. This indicates a consensus among the respondents that inhibitive cultural practices affect the implementation of the Re-entry policy in Sirima Zone to a great extent.

The study interviewed Ministry of Education Officers in the Quality Assurance Office in Sirima Zone, about the reasons why most teenage mothers who drop out of school in this area due to pregnancy do not go back to finish their education.

One Officer observed that:

Most of the teenage mothers who drop out of Primary school due to pregnancy are in most cases viewed as outcasts in the community. The parents of these girls who tend to strongly hold onto their cultural beliefs, either send their daughters away, completely banishing them or marry them off in order to hide the shame of pregnancy out of wedlock. The Ministry of Education is however campaigning against such traditions that deny these teenage mothers a right to education.

These findings are in agree with results that had showed that teenage mothers in some communities in Kenya face inhuman acts such as being forcefully married off to old men, being perceived as unclean and being sent away from their homes since they are viewed as a disgrace and bad luck to their families [44].

Another officer observed that:

The patriarchal beliefs are not necessarily a reason why the teenage mothers do not go back to school after delivery. This can be attributed to the campaign done for gender equality in education and the sensitization done by the Ministry of Education in the community, on the importance of educating the girls. Parents who refuse to take their daughters to school are summoned by the area chief and made to understand the legal consequences of not taking their daughters to school.

This contradicted the response gotten from the teenage mothers who felt that boys are still very favored when it comes to access to education. However, some research results had agreed that there is mixed reaction on the input by the government to ensure gender equality in education, with most feeling that some areas especially the marginalized areas, are yet to fully achieve gender equality in education [45]. This gives room for further research to be done in Sirima Zone, to ascertain if there is gender equality in this area, when it comes to access to education.

Summary of the Findings

The study revealed that female genital mutilation is still practiced in Sirima Zone, Laikipia County, Kenya and was disadvantages the teenage mothers. The study further established that teenage mothers are forced into early marriages which hinder them from returning to school. Further, the findings revealed that girls who got pregnant while in school were married off by their parents as a way of covering the shame of having a child out of wedlock,

which is against their cultural norms. This denies the girls the opportunity to go back to school after delivery.

It was also found that the community still embraced the patriarchal belief that boys should be given priority when it comes to education. This disadvantages the girls and especially the teenage mothers who drop out of school due to early pregnancies. The teachers agreed in unison that parents preferred to educate the boys and left out the girls. The teenage mothers all agreed and strongly agreed that one of the reason they did not go back to school was because their parents believed that girls did not deserve to be educated. That showed the deeply rooted gender bias in education that has continued to be a significant challenge for girls' educational prospects in Sirima Zone and most especially the teenage mothers who drop out of school.

The overall mean for the inhibitive cultural practices on the implementation of the Re-entry Policy was 4.08 for the teachers and 4.20 for the teenage mothers, implying that Inhibitive Cultural Practices affected the implementation of the Re-entry Policy in Sirima Zone.

The Ministry of Education QUASO officials in Sirima Zone were in agreement that practices like early marriages for girls and FGM greatly hindered the teenage mothers from returning to school to complete their basic education.

From this study, it was clear that the inhibitive cultural practices in Sirima Zone are a significantly hinders to the teenage mothers from going back to school after they have delivered and therefore are a challenge to the implementation of the Re-entry Policy among girls in public primary schools.

Recommendations of the Study

This study recommends that the government should sensitize the community on the adverse effects of these practices especially to the teenage mothers. Awareness should also be created by the responsible government ministries and other stakeholder on the importance of educating girls including the teenage mothers who have dropped out of school. The government should also establish rescue centers in this area for teenage mothers who have been sent away from their homes by their parents to enable them bring up their children in a conducive environment and also get an opportunity to continue with their education. The government should also strive to provide appropriate, affordable and physically accessible child-care facilities as was the spirit of the Beijing Conference as that was not found in any of the schools studied. Proper follow up on the pregnant girls by the stakeholders chiefly the QUASO and the members of the community needs to be intensified.

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