

# Analysis of the Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 In Kenya's Education System

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This study sought to analyse the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level of Kenya's education system. The study was guided by the following evaluation questions: 1. To what extent does the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at secondary school level achieve the goals of Kenya's Vision 2030? 2. What are the views and attitudes of key education stakeholders towards placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools? and 3. To what extent is the policy of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools appropriate? The study used concurrent mixed methods research design. A cross sectional survey design was used for the quantitative strand while a phenomenological design was used in the qualitative strand. Participants were parents, students, head teachers, teachers and community leaders. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling were used to obtain respondents. Data were collected by means of questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages while qualitative data were analysed using categories, themes and patterns. The following are the summary findings of the study: 1. The majority of parents experience difficulty to pay fees for their children in secondary school. 2. Net enrolment rate is higher in primary education than in secondary education. 3. 1.8 million children aged between 6 and 18 who were supposed to be in school have either dropped out or never been in school at all. 4. Significant disparities exist between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds, children living in different geographical areas, boys and girls and in arid and semi-arid areas. These disparities are wider at secondary school than at primary school level. 5. The majority of parents and guardians of children in secondary schools find it difficult to pay school fees and hidden levies for their children. 6. The policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level could achieve the goals of Kenya Vision 2030 on quality education. 7. The policy does not achieve the goals of improving access to education and reducing disparities in education. 8. The 3-6-3 is an appropriate school system for Kenya, and 9. The appropriate level of Kenya's school system to domicile 7, 8 and 9 is a standalone middle school/junior secondary. On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made. Grade 7 and 8 children are too young to study in the same compound with adolescents. Second, secondary schools do not have the capacity to house grades 7 and 8. It will lead to congestion and high teacher pupil ratios. Placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level will continue to undermine the constitutional right of primary and secondary school age children. Children of disadvantaged groups that cannot afford to pay the high fees charged by secondary schools and those in informal settlements will not access grades 7 and 8. On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made. Most of the recommendations are intended to promote quality, access and equity.

*Keywords:* Placement, grades, education system

## Introduction

### Context of the Evaluation

### Brief Description of the Policy being Evaluated

A policy is an official position of an organisation on a matter of professional or public concern. The previous Kenya Government had decided to domicile grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level. The domiciling task force formed to advise Education Cabinet Secretary Professor

George Magoha on the implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) recommended domiciling junior secondary school in secondary schools. This reduced primary grades from eight to six. This policy was highly contentious.

Many prominent researchers and educators have identified the following characteristics of ineffective ministries of education.

1. A belief that the key to school effectiveness lies in changing the structure of the education system.
2. Belief that the educational policy proposed by the gov-

ernment is the best policy for the country.

3. Reluctance of senior ministry of education officials to stand out from existing policies.

4. Belief amongst ministry of education staff that outsiders have little to contribute in order to improve the quality of education in the country.

5. Unwillingness or inability of senior ministry of education officials to see the need for policy analysis by external evaluators.

6. Scholars have consistently said that the most important barrier to educational reform is failure to take into account the nature of the system into which the innovation is being controlled.

It has been a matter of concern to many educationists that there has been a tendency for the Ministry of Education to insist on implementing education policies before arriving at consensus with key stakeholders. There is no much evidence of improved education attributable directly to placement of classes for pre-adolescents in secondary schools and there is some evidence of improved education attributable directly to placement of grades for pre-adolescents in primary schools. It is because of these divergent views that the *Society of Educational Research and Evaluation* in Kenya decided to conduct a more comprehensive and rigorous study.

### Purpose of the Study

The Ministry of Education had decided to domicile grades 7, 8, and 9 in secondary schools. This meant that grades 7 and 8 would have ceased to be part of the primary cycle of the country's system of education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the need for this policy and examine the fit between the needs of learners and society and the proposed policy with a view to making recommendations concerning the placement of those grades in Kenya's education system. In particular, this study will attempt to remedy the lack of a pre-2.6.3.3.3 education structure data. It will analyse the existing situation, required situation and unmet needs.

### Evaluation Questions

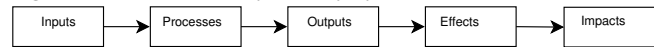
The study was guided by the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent does the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at secondary school level achieve the goals of Kenya Vision 2030?

2. What are the views and attitudes of key education stakeholders towards placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools?

3. To what extent is the policy of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools appropriate?

Figure 1. A Framework of Quality of Education



### Significance of the Study

It is expected that the findings of this study will assist the government to develop and implement an appropriate policy on domiciling of grades 7, 8, and 9. It is also hoped that the study will offer a thorough view of the needs and make recommendations for effective and efficient utilization of human and financial resources for the purpose of providing quality education.

### Analytical Framework

This policy analysis was based on the system approach. This approach has two essential principles. First, it considers any structure and organised activity as a system that produces outputs made from inputs. The second principle of the system approach is that it is not possible to understand and explain the way in which a given part of a system operates unless it is put into its context. This study used the input-process-output-effect impact framework which is presented in Figure 1.

**Inputs.** Educational inputs include curriculum, teachers, instructional materials, physical facilities such as classrooms, dormitories and libraries and water operating costs.

**Process.** These are teaching and learning processes including planning, time on task, teaching methods, use of teaching aids, peer support, assessment methods, supervision.

**Outputs.** It is expected that the use of these inputs will result in outputs by beneficiaries of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 at a particular level of education. Outputs of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 at a particular level of education include children motivated to come to school, larger school attendance, high retention rate, high completion rate, e.t.c.

**Effects .** Effects are learning outcomes. They include acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and student performance in national examinations. Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (KCSE) are used to evaluate student achievement.

**Impacts.** It is expected that acquisition of desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will lead to positive changes in the lives of people in a given geographical area.

### Research Design and Methodology

#### Research Design

The study used concurrent mixed methods research design. This is mainly because it allows evaluator to triangulate the results from the two studies. A cross-sectional survey design will be used in the quantitative study. Due to the multidimensional nature of education, naturalistic designs are used

to provide holistic in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated. The phenomenological design was used in this study.

### Participants

The target population for this study consisted of the following people.

1. Students and their parents
2. Teachers
3. Head teachers
4. Community leaders

These people were included because they are directly affected by the policy.

### Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures

#### 1. Sampling Counties

Administratively, Kenya is made up of 47 counties. Fifteen counties will be selected using stratified random sampling procedure.

#### 2. Sampling of schools

In each county, three primary schools and two secondary schools will be selected using stratified random sampling procedure.

#### 3. Teachers

In each school five teachers for the quantitative study will be chosen using several factors but primarily years of teaching experience. Other factors will include gender, professional qualification. For the quantitative study, two teachers will be chosen using purposive sampling technique.

#### 4. Students

For the quantitative study twenty pupils in each school were selected using systematic random sampling techniques. For the qualitative study four pupils in each school will be chosen using the purposive sampling technique.

#### 5. Parents

From a list of members of the parents association, ten parents will be selected in each school using systematic random sampling procedure. For the qualitative study, eight parents will be selected using the snow-ball sampling procedure.

#### 6. Community leaders

In each county, four community leaders were selected to take part in the study.

#### 7. Case Studies

Two schools (one primary and one secondary school) were selected in each county for case study purposes. The cases will be based on whether the school has been successful in the four pillars of education namely access, ... Purposive sampling was used to select the schools.

### Evaluation Instruments

The following instruments will be used to collect data.

1. Classroom observation instrument  
This instrument will focus primarily on teacher and pupil behaviours associated with classroom management and teaching and learning.
2. Teachers questionnaire and interview guide
3. Head teachers questionnaire and in-depth interview guide
4. Parents questionnaire and focus group discussion guide
5. School committee/BOM interview guide
6. School climate check list
7. Unstructured interview guides for administrators and community leaders.

### Validity of Research Instruments Results

To ensure the content validity of research instruments results, the instruments were reviewed by a panel of three experts in educational research.

### Pilot Testing of Research Instruments

A pilot study was carried out using respondents similar to the ones in the study. These respondents will not be included in the study.

### Reliability of Research Instruments Results

Reliability of quantitative research instruments results was estimated using test-retest and split-half techniques.

### Description of Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was done by means of questionnaires, observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis and interviews.

### Description of Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data will be analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation while qualitative data will be analysed using categories, themes and patterns.

### Ethical Considerations

1. The evaluator ensured that the relevant authorities and persons have been informed and the necessary permission and approval granted.
2. Informed consent  
Every participant was well informed of the study and freely accepted to participate in the study.
3. Confidentiality  
The evaluator did everything possible to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the research.

## Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

### Extent to Which the Policy of Domiciling Grades 7, 8 and 9 at Secondary School Level achieves the Goals of Kenya Vision 2030

The first evaluation question sought to determine the extent to which the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at secondary school level achieves the goals of Kenya vision 2030. Data were obtained by content analysis of the education sector section of vision 2030 and questionnaires for key education stakeholders.

The vision for the education sector for 2030 is “to have globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development. (p.84). It states that economic and social policies will be based on a strong science, technology and innovation (STI) foundation. (p.78). Improving the overall efficiency of the education system ranks high as an education policy priority, followed closely by the need to bridge disparities between the counties, regions, income levels and sexes. (p.80). The goals from this statement are to:

1. Improve the quality of education
2. Improve access to education and
3. Promote equity in access to education.

The education sector is facing many challenges. These challenges are affecting the achievement of goals of vision 2030. The Kenya government responded to these challenges by changing the country’s system of education from 8.4.4 to 2.6.3.3.3, introducing competence based curriculum (CBC) and rolling out CBC in grades 4, 5, and 6 without basing its decisions on a strong science, technology and innovation foundation Before the decision to change the country’s system of education from 8.4.4 to 6.3.3 was made, there was no education commission that was established to get the views of key stakeholders, no sessional paper was presented to parliament for approval (it was done much later). In addition, the Ministry of Education did not follow the systematic process of curriculum reform.

No needs assessment was carried out by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, the curriculum for grades 1, 2 and 3 was hurriedly piloted for three months and implemented despite a recommendation by an external summative evaluation team that implementation of CBC in grade 4 should be put on hold until the issues raised by key stakeholders, including experts in education are addressed. The curriculum for grades 4, 5 and 6 was rolled out without pilot-testing. To date no external summative evaluation of the curriculum for the first level of the country’s education system has been carried out.

**Improving the Quality of Education at Primary and Secondary School Levels.** There is a serious shortage of teachers at primary and secondary school levels. Teacher to student ratios are high. In addition many schools lack adequate physical facilities. These factors have significantly affected the quality of education at these levels.

The government was making things worse by using the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at secondary school

level to improve the quality of education. First, the policy would have led to congestion in secondary schools. Secondary schools would have needed more physical facilities including classrooms, laboratories and dormitories. Second, the teacher to pupil ratio would have significantly increased. There is a serious shortage of teachers in primary and secondary schools. Domiciling grades 7 and 8 in secondary schools means that the government would have employed teachers to cater for children in grades 7 and 8. Moreover, secondary school teachers have been trained to teach the curriculum for form 1 to 4. They would have found it difficult to teach the curriculum for grades 7 and 8.

**Expanding Access to Education.** Currently there are high levels of disparities of access to secondary education due to high subsidized school fees. The problem is less acute at the primary school level.

**Promoting Equity in Access to Education.** There are disparities in enrolment at primary and secondary levels by socio-economic status and geographical region. The problem is more acute at secondary school level and at all levels in arid and semi arid areas.

### Views and Attitudes of Key Education about Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 at the Secondary School Level

The second evaluation question sought to determine the views and attitudes of key education stakeholders about the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools. Data were obtained through questionnaires, interview schedule and interview guides. The results are presented and discussed in this section.

**Stakeholders Rating of the Policy of Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Secondary Schools.** Key education stakeholders were asked to rate the policy of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

Data in Table 1 show that apart from secondary school principals and teachers who are the main beneficiaries of the policy, most stakeholders consider the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools poor.

**Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Kenya’s Education.** Parents, head teachers, teachers and community leaders were asked to rank their most preferred strategy for placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in Kenya’s education system from 1-3, 1 being the most preferable strategy and 3 being the least preferable strategy. Their responses are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2 apart from secondary school principals, most of the respondents ranked domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools last. The implication of the finding was that the participants do not support the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level of education. Most secondary school principals indicated that they favour placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools because of the following reasons:

**Table 1**  
*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Stakeholders Rating of the Policy of Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Secondary Schools*

	Rating					
	Good		Fair		Poor	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Parents (n=50)	7	14	14	28	29	58
Primary school head teachers (n=21)	2	9.5	3	14.3	16	76.2
Secondary school principals (n=15)	9	60	3	20	3	20
Primary school teachers (n=42)	4	9.5	6	14.3	32	76.2
Secondary school teachers (n=38)	20	52.6	16	42.1	2	5.3
Community leaders (n=32)	2	62.5	6	18.75	24	75

**Table 2**  
*Percentage Distribution of Key Stakeholders Rankings*

Preferred Domicile	Primary Schools			Standalone Middle Schools			Secondary Schools		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Respondents	22	42	36	54	40	6	24	14	62
Primary school head teachers (n=21)	61.9	23.8	14.3	23.8	71.4	4.8	14.3	9.5	76.2
Secondary school principals (n=15)	13.3	67	80	40	40	20	60	13.3	26.7
Primary school teachers (n=42)	52.4	35.7	11.9	52.4	35.7	11.9	17.9	4.8	83.3
Secondary school teachers (n=38)	39.5	52.6	7.9	7.9	9	92.1	52.6	39.5	7.9
Community leaders (n=32)	37.5	46.9	6.1	15.6	46.9	46.9	15.6	6.3	78.1

1. Secondary schools have better physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and dormitories.

2. Secondary schools have boarding facilities where children stay and eat meals regularly.

3. Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will in the long-term compel the government to build more secondary schools to cater for grade 7, 8 and 9 children.

One secondary school principal remarked:

**Table 3**  
*Parent Reasons why Grades 7, 8 and 9 Should not be Domiciled in Secondary Schools*

Reason	f	%
Secondary school fees are too high	46	92
Grade 6 and 7 children are too young to share classrooms, dormitories and toilets with form 2, 3 and 4 students	28	56
Distance from home to the nearest secondary school is too long	16	32

There are thirty two primary schools in my sub-county. Some have two streams and only eleven secondary schools. If grades 7 and 8 are domiciled in secondary schools, the government will have no choice but to build more secondary schools to avoid congestion in existing secondary schools.

Parents gave reasons why grades 7, 8 and 9 should not be domiciled in secondary schools as shown in Table 3.

Most parents of children in grades 7 and 8 can afford to pay the little school fees for their children. This is because the government meets most of the cost of education. Domiciling these grades in secondary schools means that poor parents will have to pay school fees. This will have significant quality, access and equity implications. Many parents believe that domiciling of grades 7, 8 and 9 will eventually lead to the building of more secondary schools.

One parent said:

There are few secondary schools in our sub-county. Placing grades 7, 8 and 9 will make the government construct more secondary schools to cater for children in those grades.

Another parent argued that:

Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 would benefit children more if the government offered free education instead of subsidised secondary education.

A grandfather who attended form 1 and 2 in a primary school said:

Placing grades 7 and 8 in primary schools used to work very well. Children used to study in primary schools (grade 1 to 4) and then move from primary 4 to class 5 intermediate school. Intermediate classes were 5 and 6 and form 1 and form 2. Most parents want their children to acquire their cultural values and language when they are still young. Therefore, they want to raise their children until they become adolescents.

In addition, the risks of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools are clear as strikes and burning at secondary schools, high level of indiscipline, drug and alcohol abuse in some secondary schools have illustrated. Thus measured by discipline, secondary schools face worse than primary schools. The implication is that it would be wrong to mix pre adolescents with adolescents.

Some secondary school principals also made reference to access to education:

Many households will not be able to afford school fees. This will result in lack of access to education and high dropout rates. Currently many students in my school depend on CDF bursary (secondary school principal).

A secondary school principal from northern Kenya said:

With all primary schools in each county enrolled in the few secondary schools particularly in arid and semi-arid areas, a crisis will be inevitable if these students joined grades 7, 8 and 9 in existing secondary schools.

Another secondary school principal said:

Placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will increase the cost of education for parents and the education budget. Currently the cost of secondary education is more than ten times the cost of primary education. The government gives more money to secondary schools than to primary schools. Parents from poor households will not be able to pay the high school fees charged by secondary schools. This will reduce access to basic education and there is a risk of segregation in grades 7 and 8.

A fourth principal of secondary school said:

Parents of more than three quarters of the children in my school cannot afford to pay school fees. They depend on National Government Constituency Development Fund bursaries. I do not know what will happen to these children now that the supreme court declared CDF unconstitutional. Domiciling grades 7 and 8 in my school denies children in those grades access to education because most parents will not afford the paid in school fees. Besides, my school has a shortage of physical facilities and teachers. Let grade 7 and 8 children study in primary schools.

A teacher in another school remarked:

Secondary education is too expensive. Parents and guardians often incur high education costs through subsidised school fees and hidden fees such as remedial tuition and building fee.

A bursar of a secondary school said:

Domiciling grades 7 and 8 in secondary schools will have a negative impact on young children. The young children will be influenced by the teenagers who can cause damage to their growth through introduction of pornography and drugs at an early stage. Most community leaders were not in favour of the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools.

One educator said:

Even if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in secondary schools rather than in primary schools we cannot assume that children will get better quality education. This has not been the case in Nigeria and Ghana. Both countries changed their systems to 6.3.3. Quality of education is not simply driven by type of education system.

Another educator remarked:

The policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will make it hard for children to access basic education. It will even have worse effect on enrolment and retention.

One public servant said:

Why do we spend money building classrooms in secondary schools when there are enough classrooms in primary schools? It is better to leave grades 7 and 8 in primary schools, look for land adjacent to primary schools and build laboratory classes and dormitories for junior secondary school children.

A highly respected elder who studied at a junior secondary school during the colonial period said:

We studied in the same school with older boys. But we had our own dormitories, toilets and even classes. The school administration did not want to acquire bad behavior from older boys.

A retired civil servant remarked:

Considering the current state of Kenya's economy, it is not proper for the government to build a classroom in each secondary school and leave empty classrooms in primary schools.

These comments suggest a need for the government to review the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools. It is obvious that if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in secondary schools, disadvantaged groups will not be able to pay school fees for their children. The richest parents will afford to pay

Table 4  
*Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Parents Responses to Options that are Affordable to Poorer Groups*

	f	%
Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in primary schools	28	56
Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools	14	28
Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools	8	16

fees for their children in public and private junior secondary schools. This will exacerbate inequality and stratification.

Domiciling grades 7 and 8 in secondary schools will make secondary school teachers teach the curriculum they were not trained to teach. Most secondary schools lack adequate physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and dormitories. Increased enrolment will lead to congestion and high teacher to pupil ratios. The next question in the questionnaire asked parents to indicate the option that is affordable to poorer groups. The responses are shown in Table 4.

The following insights can be derived from the data in Table 4.

- A large number of parents felt that secondary school level of education is not an appropriate level at which to domicile grades 7, 8 and 9.
  - Twenty eight percent ranked a standalone middle school as the most appropriate school in which to place grades 7, 8 and 9.
  - Only a small number of parents (16%) ranked domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools first.
- Not surprisingly some parents voiced concerns about the policy. One parent remarked:

I want my children to acquire our cultural values and language when they are still young. Besides, the fees paid in secondary schools are too high.

**Students Preferred Level of Education at Which Grades 7, 8 and 9 Should be Placed.** Students were asked to indicate the level of education at which grades 7, 8 and 9 should be placed. Their responses are presented in Table 5.

It is evident that about half of primary school pupils recommended that grades 7, 8 and 9 be placed at the secondary school level. This may be because primary school pupils want to join secondary schools. On the other hand, the majority of secondary school students want grades 7, 8 and 9 placed in standalone middle schools. This appears to reflect the experiences they went through in lower secondary classes.

**The Challenges of Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Secondary Schools.** It was perhaps unsurprising that when parents were asked what issues are likely to be most challenging to them if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in secondary schools, the majority of parents made reference to their inability

Table 5  
*Distribution of Students' Responses on Best Level of Placing Grades 7, 8 and 9*

	Level					
	Primary School		Stand Alone Secondary		Junior School	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Primary school pupils (n=124)	23	18.5	45	36.3	56	45.2
Secondary school pupils (n=106)	20	18.9	67	63.2	19	17.9

to get school fees for their children. In the words of one parent:

Currently I have three children in primary schools and one child in a secondary school. I find it more difficult to pay fees for the one child in form 2 then for three children in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Several head teachers made reference to the challenge of mixing young children with adolescents in secondary schools most of whom needed a lot of care. More specific problems mentioned by head teachers were:

- Lack of adequate physical facilities.
- For secondary school teachers, the major challenge in domiciling grade 7 and 8 in secondary schools is implementing the primary school curriculum which they were not trained to teach. A teacher remarked: "I was trained to teach Chemistry and Physics at secondary school level not Science at primary school level." The challenge to me will be teaching elementary Science. (Secondary school teacher).

On the other hand, one primary school said:

I'm fortunate to have got a bachelor's degree. It would be quite easy for me to teach grade 9 children. The main challenge is how to teach grades 1 to 6 children without stretching them too far. (Graduate primary school teacher).

**Key Education Stakeholders Preferred Plans for Improving Kenya's Education System.** Participants were required to respond to the item in the questionnaire on preferred option in reforming Kenya's education system. Their responses are displayed in Table 6.

It is evident from Table 6 that more than eighty percent of the parents recommended that the 8.4.4 system of education should be improved. Only sixteen percent of the parents recommended that the 6.3.3 system of education should be introduced. This could be mainly because most of them went through the 8.4.4 system of education and are unfamiliar with

Table 6  
*Frequency and Percentage Distribution*

	Plan			
	Improving and Strengthening the Existing System of Education		Introducing the 2.3.6.3.3 System of Education	
	f	%	f	%
Parents (n=50)	42	84	8	16
Teachers (n=80)	75	93.7	5	6.3
Head teachers (n=36)	32	84.2	4	15.8
Community leaders (n=32)	20	65.2	12	37.5

the advantages of the 6.3.3 school system.

**Extent to Which the Policy of Placement of Grades 7, 8 and 9 is Appropriate.** The final and most important evaluation question sought to determine the extent to which the policy of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools is appropriate. On the basis of the data gathered the evaluator was able to come up with a preferred system of education and most preferred level of Kenya's education system at which grades 7, 8 and 9 should be domiciled. The evaluator conducted an analysis of documents and textbooks in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) library at Paris in June 2022 and administered questionnaires to key education stakeholders in selected counties in Kenya.

An analysis of world education systems showed that in most countries after completion of elementary (primary) education which lasts 5 or 6 years, children join junior secondary school or middle school. In several countries junior secondary lasts 3 years and is part of secondary school. In the United States of America and many countries, children join middle school or junior secondary school which is a separate level of education.

Junior secondary or middle schools are normally established to address problems that arise when children of ages between childhood and adolescence who are still young are mixed with adolescents in senior secondary schools. The following are systems of education in selected countries.

Tanzania and Uganda

They operate a 2.7.4.2.3 system of education, (2 years of pre-primary, 7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary ordinary level and 2 years of advanced secondary education and a minimum of 3 years of university education).

**Belgium**

Primary school 6 years  
Secondary school 6 years

**China**

Primary school: 6 years  
Generally junior secondary: 3 years  
Senior secondary: 3 years

**Norway**

Primary: 6 years  
Lower secondary: 3 years  
Upper secondary: 3 years

**Russian Federation**

Elementary school: 4 years  
Basic education: 5 years

Upper secondary: 2 years

**Mexico**

Elementary: 6 years  
Lower secondary: 3 years  
Upper secondary: 3 years

**Indonesia**

Primary education: 6 years  
Junior secondary education: 3 years  
Senior secondary education: 3 years

**Japan**

Elementary school: 6 years  
Middle school: 3 years

Senior High school: 3 years

**Thailand**

Primary education: 6 years  
Lower secondary education: 3 years  
Upper secondary education: 3 years

**Denmark**

Primary school: 6 years  
Lower secondary: 3 years  
Upper secondary: 3 years

**Cuba**

Primary: 6 years  
Basic secondary: 3 years  
Senior secondary: 3 years

**Brazil**

Elementary school 8 years  
Secondary school 4 years

**Finland**

Primary school: 6 years  
Lower secondary school: 3 years  
General upper secondary school: 4 years

**Pakistan**

Primary: 5 years  
Middle school: 3 years  
Secondary school: 2 years

**Malaysia**

Primary school: 6 years  
Lower secondary school: 3 years  
Upper secondary school: 3 years

**Nigeria**

Primary: 6 years  
Junior secondary: 3 years  
Senior secondary: 3 years

**United States of America**

Elementary school: 6 years  
Middle school: 3 years

Senior secondary: 3 years

**Sweden**

Primary education: 6 years  
Lower secondary education: 3 years  
Upper secondary education: 3 years

**Turkey**

Primary education: 8 years  
Secondary education: 3-4 years

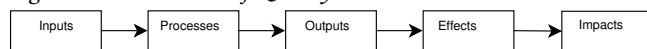
**Ghana**

Primary school: 6 years  
Junior secondary: 3 years  
Senior secondary: 4 years

This shows that the government is right that the 6.3.3 system of education is the most widely used system of education. Many of the stakeholders in the sample do not believe in the advantages of the 6.3.3 system over the 8.4.4 system of edu-



Figure 2. Basic Model of Quality Education



When asked what the government should do to reform the education sector, nearly 90% said that the government should improve the existing system of education. This shows that despite propaganda by top Ministry of Education officials against the 8.4.4 system, many Kenyans like it.

The appropriate level at which to domicile grades 7, 8 and 9 to a large extent depends on the desired quality of education which is determined by the quality of inputs and processes which in turn, result in quality outputs and outcomes as illustrated in the Basic Model of Quality Education in Figure 2. The elaboration of this model is presented below.

**1. Inputs.** In the context of placement of grades 7, 8 and at Kenya's level of education, the appropriate level is attributable to education inputs which include quality of curriculum, quality of teachers, financial resources, physical facilities such as classrooms and desks. Domiciling of grades 7 and 8 in secondary schools will make it possible for children to learn a secondary school curriculum taught by teachers of high quality at an early age. On the other hand, domiciling grade 9 in primary schools will make grade 9 children learn a primary school curriculum taught by non graduate teachers.

However secondary school head teachers and teachers reported that their schools lacked critical inputs for the teaching and learning process. Input challenges mentioned by a majority of head teachers and teachers are:

- Shortage of teachers
- Inadequate physical facilities such as classrooms, dormitories, laboratories and toilets in schools leading to overcrowding.
- Inadequate financial resources.

The inadequacy of these resources will constrain the ability of secondary schools to absorb more students. One head teacher argued:

My school lacks adequate classrooms, dormitories and laboratories. Why should the government build one classroom in my school and leave two classrooms in each of the six primary schools in this location empty. The most logical thing is to domicile grades 7 and 8 in primary schools and 9, 10 and 11 in secondary schools.

Similarly, one primary school head teacher said:

My school has adequate teaching physical facilities. What we do not have are laboratories.

A primary school teacher said:

What is the fate of standard 7 and 8 teachers if these grades are transferred to secondary schools? Does the government want to retrench us? It is evident that in terms of inputs, the

most appropriate level of education for domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 is primary education. Later, these grades should be domiciled in standalone middle schools.

**Access to Education.** Secondary schools are largely fewer than primary schools in all sub-counties. With children in grade 6 in primary schools in each county enrolled in the few secondary schools, a crisis will be inevitable if these children joined grade 7 in existing secondary schools. Secondly, the cost of secondary education is too high for the poorest households.

Public education is not free. Households with children in secondary pay fees. Children are often sent home when fees are delayed or not paid. The fee in primary schools is small compared to that in secondary schools. Domiciling grades 6, 7 and 9 will increase the cost of education. Currently, primary schools obtain lower finance support of various forms per pupil than students in secondary schools.

**2. Processes.** Appropriate level of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 also depends on processes. In this context, these processes include accessing education, teaching and learning process, school management and learning environment. Placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will make it difficult for disadvantaged groups that cannot afford to pay the high fees in secondary schools to send their children to school. One parent said:

The cost of secondary education is high for the poorest households. It is better for my children to study up to grade 9 in primary schools and then join the technical and vocational centre in our sub-location.

This shows that focusing solely on the quality of education that will be provided to children if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in secondary schools ignores disparities of access to education based on students geographic and socio-economic backgrounds. The policy does not fix this problem and could do more harm than good because education equity will be undermined due to the high cost of secondary education.

One academic has said:

The most important issues to consider when deciding on the level of education system at which to domicile grades 7, 8 and 9 is access to education.

**3. Outputs.** Education outputs include rates of enrolment, retention, completion and transition. Critical to outputs is an understanding of the interlace between equity and socioeconomic background. Too often education policy makers forget that most Kenyans live below the poverty line. This means that parents and guardians of children in secondary schools cannot afford to pay school fees and hidden fees such as remedial tuition and motivation fees.

Responses to the questionnaire by parents showed that most of them find it difficult and very difficult to pay school

fees for their children in secondary schools and only twenty (20) said that they find it difficult to pay school fees for their children in primary schools. This implies that domiciling grades 7 and 8 in secondary schools will lead to low enrolment, retention and transition rates. There is little evidence that domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will improve access to education yet the evidence base for domiciling those grades in primary schools is large.

A doctoral student from northern Kenya said:

The government is wrong in believing that domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will lead to low enrolment rates, high dropout rates and low transition rates from grade 6 to 7 and grade 7 to 8.

**4. Outcomes.** The education outcomes include pupil academic achievement, basic skill gained and acquisition of social skills. Learning outcomes are a result of inputs and the teaching and learning process. The issue is how many children will actually acquire desired knowledge, competencies, attitudes and values if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in primary or secondary schools?

The results of this study have shown that more children will actually study if grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in primary schools although the education they will receive will be of lower quality compared to the one they would receive if the grades are domiciled in secondary schools. Many scholars recommend the following criteria for judging the quality of the policy of domiciling grades at a level of education.

**Quality of Education.** Domiciling of a grade at a level of education should improve the quality of education.

**Access.** The policy should improve access to basic education.

**Equity.** The policy should to the maximum extent possible ensure access to education by all groups; to girls, to children from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds and to children in remote parts of the country. In normal circumstances, no education policy is perfect. All of them should be subject to revision in the light of how they work in practice. But the demerits of domiciling of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools are clear.

**The Potential Benefits and Loses of Domiciling Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Secondary Schools .** Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools could bring the following benefits to secondary schools and primary school teachers and loses to primary schools. Gains by secondary schools would include the following:

- Two extra grades
- More funding from the government
- More buildings including classrooms, laboratories and dormitories
- More students
- More money from hidden fees
- Establishment of junior secondary schools in private schools will make private schools very profitable.

It will bring the following benefits to teachers:

- Upgrading of the knowledge and skills of some primary school teachers
- Transferring primary teachers with degrees to secondary schools

However, primary schools parents and the country at large will have loses. Primary schools will be exposed to the following loses if grades 7 and 8 are placed in secondary schools.

- The physical facilities such as dormitories and laboratories which would have been built in primary schools will be built in secondary schools.
- Teachers will be redundant and may be retrenched.
- Many graduate teachers will be transferred to secondary schools.
- Many rich parents will take their children to private schools.
- Parents will incur high education costs through high school fees and hidden costs.
- The government would spend more money on basic education.
- Net enrolment and retention rates will drop.
- There will be an increase in disparities in access to basic education of different geographical regions and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The evidence from countries that have 6.3.3 system of school education and the results of this study clearly show that grades 7, 8 and 9 should be domiciled in stand-alone middle schools/junior secondary schools and that the ideal way to address challenges in Kenya's school system is to continue domiciling grades 7 and 8 in primary schools so that children can use existing classrooms and be taught by current teachers. They should gradually be moved to stand-alone middle schools where they will be taught by graduate teachers and primary school teachers who will have upgraded their knowledge and skills.

**Benefits of Domiciling Grades 7, 8 and 9 in Middle Schools.** The benefits of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools can be measured in terms of the number of children who have access to basic education, the quality of education they will receive and equity in education, learning environment and school management.

**Access.** Like primary schools most middle schools will be within walking distance from pupils' homes and there will be no need for them to be boarding schools. Since the school fees will be low most parents and guardians will be able to afford school fees. This will result in access to education and high retention rates. Second, domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools will continue to ensure that children attend schools near their homes and later join grades 10, 11 and 12 in national, extra-county and county schools of their preference. This will promote the mixing of children from diverse communities which is an important national goal of education.

Third, pastoral regions will reap benefits from placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools because the government

will be forced to build more schools where distances between existing schools are long.

**Quality of Education .** Domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools will improve the quality of education. Teachers will be graduates who have specialised in their teaching subjects. They will be assisted by primary school teachers who have been trained to teach grade 7 and 8 subjects such as Social Studies, Home Science and Science. In addition, placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools will ensure that the school curriculum is efficiently implemented.

It will also lead to retention of current primary school teachers of standard 7 and 8. Those who lack appropriate knowledge and skills to implement the middle school curriculum will attend in-service courses.

**Equity in Education.** Placing grades 7, 8 and 9 in middle schools will reduce disparities in basic education between children of different sexes, geographical areas and socio-economic backgrounds. This is because most middle schools will be day schools near children's homes. The fees charged will be much lower than the school fees parents pay for their children in secondary schools.

**Learning Environment.** There is research evidence that the family, community and language and culture have influences on a child's development. For this reason, pre-adolescents should study near their homes. Currently indiscipline is high in secondary schools. Causes of indiscipline include drug abuse, conflict between students and teachers and lack of parental care.

**School Management.** Compared to primary schools, middle schools will be administered by principals, deputy principals, senior teacher, bursars and secretaries with high academic qualifications.

## Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### Summary

This study sought to analyse the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level of Kenya's education system.

The study was guided by the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent does the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at secondary school level achieve the goals of Kenya Vision 2030?

2. What are the views and attitudes of key education stakeholders towards placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools?

3. To what extent is the policy of placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools appropriate?

The study used concurrent mixed methods research design. A cross sectional survey design was used for the quantitative strand while a phenomenological design was used in the qualitative strand. Participants were parents, students, head

teachers, teachers and community leaders. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling were used to obtain respondents. Data were collected by means of questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages while qualitative data were analysed using categories themes and patterns.

The following are the summary findings of the study:

### I. Extent to which the Policy of Domiciling Grades 7, 8 and 9 at the Secondary School Level Addresses the Goals of Kenya Vision 2030.

1. The policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level could achieve the goals of Kenya Vision 2030 on quality education.

2. The policy does not achieve the goals of improving access to education and reducing disparities in education.

### II. Views and attitudes of key education stakeholders towards the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level.

1. The majority of secondary school principals and teachers and primary school pupils favoured placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools.

2. The majority of parents, primary school head teachers and teachers favoured placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in primary schools.

3. Nearly all community leaders in the sample favoured placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in standalone middle schools.

4. More than 60 percent of 67 out of 106 secondary school students indicated that middle school is the best level of placing grades 7, 8 and 9.

5. About ninety percent of the parents claimed that grades 7, 8 and 9 should be placed in primary schools because secondary school fees are too high. Fifty six percent said that grade 7 and 8 children are too young to share classrooms, dormitories and toilets with form 3 and 4 students.

6. Some secondary school principals said that placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools will increase the cost of education for parents and the education budget.

7. Sixty percent of secondary school principals and slightly more than half (52.6%) of the secondary school teachers rated the policy good.

8. More than seventy five percent of the primary school head teachers (76.2%) and primary school teachers (76.2%) rated the policy poor. Seventy five percent of the community leaders rated the policy poor.

### III. Appropriate level of Kenya's school system for domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9.

1. The 3.6.3 is an appropriate school system for Kenya.

2. The appropriate level of Kenya's school system to domicile grades 7, 8 and 9 is a standalone middle school/junior secondary.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made. This study has shown that far from a simple two levels of education, primary and secondary, there is a third level known as middle school. That is the reason why the school system is 6.3.3. The question to education policy-makers is not whether grades 7, 8 and 9 should be domiciled at the secondary school level, but also how domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools promotes or hinders efforts to ensure quality, access, equity, affordability and inclusion in basic education.

According to Kenya Constitution every child has a right to free, compulsory public funded basic education (2 years of pre-primary and 12 years of primary and secondary education). Currently the government does not provide sufficient funds and teachers to schools to effectively implement this requirement. In fact parents pay extra taxes due to teacher shortages. Parents end up paying additional taxes to hire teachers in public schools (BOG teachers). As a result most households find it difficult to pay fees for children in secondary schools. The question is who gains? Who loses when grades 7, 8 and 9 are domiciled in secondary schools?

The first issue is whether all grade 7, 8 and 9 learners will receive the quality of education they are entitled to if their grades are in primary, middle school or secondary school. Besides, grade 7 and 8 children are too young to study in the same compound with adolescents. Second, secondary schools do not have the capacity to house grades 7 and 8. It will lead to congestion and high teacher pupil ratios. Placement of grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level will continue to undermine the constitutional right of primary and secondary school age children. Children of disadvantaged groups that cannot afford to pay the high fees charged by secondary schools and those in informal settlements will not access grades 7 and 8.

The policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools would not have improved the quality of education, access to basic education, equity and internal efficiency. In fact it will make them worse. The second issue is whether domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 in secondary schools would have favoured some learners and excluded others. The findings of this study have shown that equity is unlikely to be ensured if grades 7 and 8 are domiciled in secondary schools because parents and guardians from disadvantaged backgrounds will not be able to subsidise school fees and extra levies for their children.

## Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made. Most of the recommendations are intended to promote quality, access and equity.

1. To ensure quality education, access and equity, the government should establish middle schools as a separate entity that will provide free, accessible, good quality education to

children in all geographical parts of the country.

2. Before reforming the country's education system, it is essential for policymakers to consult widely and take into account the views of all stakeholders for the policy to be transparent instead of relying on views of few actors who may make money to increase their economic power rather than for the public good.

3. The government should not reform the education system without using the systematic process of education reform.

4. The agenda of international organisations and other donors who push for education reform should be disclosed.

5. The Ministry of Education also needs to build a relationship with Kenya National Union of Teachers, educators, parents and private schools by building consensus on this policy.

6. The government should critically analyse the staffing situation in different parts of the country and come up with appropriate qualifications for joining the teacher training colleges.

7. There is need for the government to secure and maintain trust in education policy making processes through measures that promote transparency including establishing an education commission, preparing a sessional paper, conducting a needs and pilot of curriculum.

8. Since the policy of domiciling grades 7, 8 and 9 at the secondary school level is not likely to achieve the education goals of Kenya Vision 2030 and the constitutional requirement for every child to have free and compulsory education, the policy should not be implemented by the incoming as it stands. Grade 7, 8 and 9 should in the short term be domiciled in separate places in primary schools as junior secondary school and later as standalone middle schools.

9. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should conduct formative evaluation of the competence-based curriculum.

10. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should appoint a team of senior education experts to conduct external summative evaluation of competence based curriculum. The team should make recommendations to continue, revise or terminate competence-based curriculum. The incoming government should establish social dialogue as an integral part of policy formulation.

11. The government needs to prevent the Teachers Service Commission from designing and implementing policies that have a negative impact on education in arid and semi arid areas of the country and equity. Policies on requirements for admission to certificate, diploma and degree programmes in education should be designed and implemented by the National Qualifications and Placement Body.

12. Changes in the education system need to be piloted and tested for suitability.

13. Suggestions for further research – the findings of this study are based on a small study. *Barwa Quality Consultancy Firm* should solicit funds and conduct a comprehensive study

of competence-based curriculum.

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