

AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADMISSION POLICY ON THE  
LEVEL OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION IN MBOONI WEST SUB-  
COUNTY, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

There has been an increasing concern both in public domain and academia that lack of fairness, transparency and equity in implementation of the secondary school admission policy curtails the achievement of the goals of diversity in national integration, student aspiration, and equity and equality in access to secondary education in different categories schools in Kenya. The implementation of the admission policy has been criticised for its overall effectiveness on improving diversity in catchment, promoting students' aspiration to learn in preferred secondary schools, fairness in merit based distribution of opportunities and improved access for marginalised and vulnerable groups. No study has analysed secondary school enrollment to assess whether it fulfills the deliverables of effective implementation of the admission policy. This study analysed secondary school enrollment with the objective of determining whether it reflected student diversity in catchment through quota system, enrolment by choice enhances accessibility to a preferred school, fairness in distribution of opportunities by merit, and improved access by vulnerable and marginalised groups through affirmative action in access to secondary education in Mbooni West Sub County, Makueni County, Kenya. Concurrent triangulation design was used. A census study of the forty public secondary schools was done. Various sampling methods were used to select 3757 respondents comprising 3535 students, 180 teachers, forty principals, the Sub County Education Officer, and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students on implementation of admission policy on access. Interview schedules were used to collect data from principals, the Sub County Education Officer, and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Observation Schedules were used to collect data on enrollment. Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics which included ANOVA and

regression while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis . The findings from different data sets were synchronised during the presentation and discussion. The findings of this study indicated that there was evidence of student diversity in enrollment but the proportion of students was skewed in favour of children from Mbooni sub county and Makueni county. The likelihood of a student being admitted to a preferred school decreased for students who scored over 349 marks and those who scored less than 249 marks in K.C.P.E because they were likely to make errors in school choices. Merit based admission promoted fairness in access for students who scored between 250 and 349 marks in K.C.P.E but was found to exclude students who scored poorly, create destructive competition for clever students and promoted unethical behaviours after post admission replacement of students who do not report and student transfers as students progressed from form one to form four. The study found that affirmative action had little impact on access where uptake of the opportunity increased the costs of education increased without mitigating measures. The study concluded that the implementation of the admission policy was largely ineffective in promoting diversity in catchment and access to education by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This study recommends that for admission policy to be effective measures should be taken to revise choices for high achievers in K.C.P.E, develop special, timely and sustained measures to provide subsidies to needy and and post enrollment period to promote reporting and retention of students from poor socio-economic backgrounds. If these recommendations are not implemented, the implementation of secondary school admission policy will remain largely ineffective.