

**EXPLORATION OF GRASSROOT STAKEHOLDERS' KNOWLEDGE AND
PERCEPTIONS ON RE-ADMISSION POLICY: THE CASE OF BLANTYRE RURAL
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation

By

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requirement for the degree of Master of Education (Policy, Planning and Leadership)**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the text of this dissertation entitled: EXPLORATION OF GRASSROOT STAKEHOLDERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS ON RE-ADMISSION POLICY: THE CASE OF BLANTYRE RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS is substantially my own work.

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Postgraduate Studies and research committee and the Senate for acceptance of this thesis entitled: EXPLORATION OF GRASSROOT STAKEHOLDERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS ON RE-ADMISSION POLICY: THE CASE OF BLANTYRE RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS submitted by SIBONGIRE NKHONJERA –CHISANGA in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Education (Policy Planning and Leadership).

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Ken Chisanga and my lovely daughter Praise.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored perceptions of rural stakeholders on the implementation of readmission policy at secondary school, in order to establish why the implementation of the policy was still challenging, and to find out if revision of the policy has aided effective implementation.

The main finding from the study was that most parents/ guardians, teen mothers and most teachers do not know the policy procedures. As such most of the procedures stipulated in the policy are not followed and the policy is being implemented according to how the school decides. For instance, 79% of the teen mothers in school did not follow the right procedures of readmission. The study also established that lack of knowledge of policy procedures led to passive grassroots stakeholders' participation. Furthermore, the study discovered that support rendered to teen mothers is inadequate, this resulted into poor performance of the teen mothers and permanent withdraw of some. In summary the study found that there has been some improvement in implementation of the policy since its review, however more needs to be done. Therefore the study recommends that the policy procedures be disseminated through the heads of schools and village heads to all stakeholders and active involvement of grassroots stakeholders should be promoted.

The study was conducted in thirteen secondary schools which were randomly sampled. The sampled schools included Community Day Secondary Schools and Conventional secondary schools. Participants included parents/guardians to teen mothers, teen mothers, and teachers. The study employed mixed methods strategy. Structured questionnaires and interview guides were used to gather responses from respondents.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADF: African Development Fund

CCAM: Chitukuko Cha Amayi M'malawi

GABLE: Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy Education

GNI: Gross Net Index

HDI: Human Development Index

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

EFA: Education for All

EMIS: Education Management Information Systems

IHS: Integrated Household Survey

MOE: Ministry Of Education

MDHS: Malawi Demographic and Households Survey

NAC: National Aids Commission

NCWD: National Commission of Women in Development

NESP: National Education Sector Plan

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

NSO: National Statistical Office

PTA: Parents Teacher Association

SADC: Southern African Development Community

TB: Tuberculosis

UN: United Nations

UNAIDS: The Joint **United Nations** programme on **AIDS**

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNGEI: United Nations Girls Education Initiatives

UNICEF: United Nation Children's Fund

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WLSA: Women and Law in Southern Africa

WMS: Welfare Monitoring Survey

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the socio-economic context, the cultural context and the political context of readmission policy. It also presents the background to readmission policy, followed by the statement of the problem. The chapter finally presents the purpose of the study and concludes with the significance of the study and limitations.

1.1 Socio-economic context

The preliminary results from the 2008 Census give the total population in Malawi as 13,066,320. Out of this, 6,365,771 (49 %) are males while 6,700,549 (51 %) are females. The population grew from 9,933,868 in 1998 to 13,066,320 in 2008, representing an increase of 32%; which gives an intercensal annual growth rate of 2.8 % per annum, (National Statistical Office, 2008). The Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS, 2009) results show that 70 % of the adult population were literate. Male literacy rate was higher than the female literacy rate, 79 %, as compared to 60 %. Overall, the gender gap in literacy was 76 %, indicating a higher literacy rate among males and literacy rates decreased with increased age, both among males and females.

The 2008 Population and Housing Census results estimated that infant mortality rate was at 87 deaths per 1,000 births; under five mortality was at 140 per 1,000 live births while maternal mortality was at 984 death per 100,000 live births (NSO and Macro, 2005).

Education of the mother is one of the major determinants of child survival. It is noted that at each age, infant mortality is highest among those mothers who are illiterate. For instance, the infant mortality rate was recorded at 76 deaths per 1000 live births and under five mortality rate at 133 deaths per 1000 births (MDHS, 2004). The MDHS 2004 report also explains that under five mortality rate is lowest among those with secondary and higher education. This is why it is important to have teen mothers complete their secondary education. The statistics above suggest that children of uneducated women are much likely to die in the first five years of life than those of women with secondary education. These low levels of maternal education, combined with limited access to health care and intervals between births both contribute to high rate of infant and child mortality.

Malawi is one of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa that has high HIV prevalence rate in the world. In 2010 Malawi Demographic and Household Survey (MDHS, 2010) reported a national HIV prevalence rate of 10.6%, with that of the females at 12.9% while 8.1% for males. Basing on the NAC Monitoring & Evaluation report (2007), national HIV prevalence was estimated at 12% and among females it was 13 % while males it was at 10 %. A study done in Eastern and Southern Africa on the impact of girls' education on HIV and sexual behaviour found that for every additional year in school, girls are better equipped to make decisions affecting their sexual behaviour and they have higher earning potential factors that have been proven to substantially lower the risk of HIV infection. In addition, girls who had completed secondary education had a lower risk of HIV infection and practised safer sex than girls who had only attained primary education, (Hargreaves and Boler, 2006). Considering high HIV prevalence among girls in Malawi, it is imperative to allow teen

mothers to go back to school and complete their secondary education so that they may be empowered to make informed decisions concerning their sexual behaviour.

In 2010, Malawi was ranked as the world's 17th poorest nation (UNDP Development Index, 2010). Over the past decade, the Gross Net Index (GNI) per capita for Malawi has been estimated at US\$200 compared to the continent's average of US\$ 800 (ADF, 2006). It is further estimated that about 52 % of the population in Malawi is classified as poor while 22 % is classified as ultra-poor (people living in extreme poverty) and rural poverty is at 52 % compared to 24 % of the urban (IHS, 2005). According to Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002), about 52 % of the poor were female. Furthermore, IHS (2005) indicated that female headed households were worse-off. This is evidenced by the fact that 59 % of people in female-headed households are poor. On the other hand, 51% of the people in male-headed households are poor. Women, who constitute about 51 % of the population, are marginalized in social and economic spheres such that they are unable to effectively contribute to social, economic and political development of Malawi. Education is a tool for poverty alleviation and a key factor for women empowerment. However, women tend to have lower education levels than men leading to their lower participation in many areas of development, (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS, 2008). It is therefore important to make deliberate efforts to allow as many women and girls as possible to enroll in schools, including girls that dropped out due to pregnancy.

1.2 Cultural context

Traditionally Malawian families are organized as either patrilineal especially in the Northern part or matrilineal which is dominant in the Central region and Southern region of Malawi. Under patrilineality, descent is through males, and residence is patrilocal. The wife leaves her village and resides in her husband's village. On the other hand, in matrilineality, descent follows the female lineage. Marriages are matrilocal (WLSA Malawi, 2002). Culturally, Malawian families attach more value to the education of boys than girls because they consider the benefits of education for girls to be limited and the cost of sending them to school to be unnecessary for the family (Swainson, Bendera, Gordon, and Kadzamira, 1998). Researchers have identified such cultural practices as one of the major constraints to girls' education. Cultural practices, beliefs and attitudes influence parents' decisions on whether to enrol their daughter in school and when to pull them out of the school (Swainson *et al*, 1998). This trend is also responsible for the increased rate of dropout of girls and early marriages. In both patrilineal and matrilineal societies women are a disadvantaged group. They have not commonly been part of the decision making process hence their limited participation in development activities.

1.3 Political context

Malawi was in a transitional period of moving from one party system which had ruled the country for 30 years to multi-party system, when the government started intensifying strategies to address inequities in girls' education participation. This was in recognition to international trends which recognized that educating girls is one of the most effective and least expensive ways to reduce poverty and to spur growth, (UNICEF, 2006).

Most of the key policy changes regarding girls and women education took place in the early 90's. Women's groups, particularly the organisation of Malawian women called Chitukuko Cha Amayi Malawi (CCAM) and the National Commission for Women in Development (NCWID), spearheaded the debate on girls' and women's education in the country at their various meetings, seminars and conferences and made several recommendations to the Ministry of Education (MOE), (Swaison *et al*, 1998). These changes were part and parcel of the Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy Education (GABLE) project which started in 1991. Under this project, policy-related research were commissioned. Prior to the introduction of the GABLE project, the recommendations from the workshops organised by NCWID helped to shape subsequent studies, which were undertaken under the sponsorship of the GABLE project. The recommendations also enabled the government to enact policies and strategies to improve on education of girls and women and one of the policies that were reviewed was the policy to do with girls who got pregnant while at school.

The period before 1993, there was a discipline policy which required that a girl who got pregnant while at school should be permanently excluded from school and that a school boy who was alleged to be responsible for pregnancy should be indefinitely suspended until the issue was resolved in a court of law. The policy was reviewed because the occurrence of female students dropping out of school due to pregnancy was high and girls who became pregnant were withdrawn from school and could not be allowed to return to school. As a result of the review of the pregnancy policy in December 1993, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) introduced a re-admission policy, (Maluwa-Banda, 2003). The policy allowed girls who got pregnant to return to school after spending one

academic year at home. The readmission policy also permitted the boy who impregnated a schoolgirl to be readmitted after being suspended for one academic year. The reviewing of the pregnancy policy opened chances for the teen mothers to have a promising future and also unlocked them from the hooks of poverty.

In 1994 Malawi general elections were conducted, and the United Democratic Front party won the elections and was ushered into government. This was soon after the introduction of readmission policy in December 1993 and the new government continued with the implementation of the policy. The main focus of this government was education, as it was perceived to be the tool for poverty reduction, in particular the education of girls.

In 2004, Democratic Progressive Party administration came into power. Within this administration, the readmission policy was revised in November 2006 because of the problems that were encountered in its implementation. The readmission policy introduced in 1993 did not have clear guidelines and procedures to be used by school administrators and parents to facilitate teen mothers going back to school. Head teachers interpreted the policy differently. As a result the majority of teen mothers were denied the right to enrol back into school, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000). Furthermore, there was inadequate awareness of the policy to the school authorities and parents. This government's vision of the education sector is to be a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless (NESP, 2008). Retention of girls and reducing drop-out rate are mentioned as ways of trying to achieve equity and access of girls' education. Therefore readmitting teen mothers was one way of ensuring that girls continue with education.

1.4 Educational context

Education is the fundamental human right of all people regardless of gender and physical disability, (UNESCO, 2002). One of the Education for All (EFA) goals aims at reducing gender disparity and achieve equity by 2015. Despite decades of attention to reducing gender disparity and achieving equity, some 72 million children are out of school worldwide, and 57% of them are girls (UNESCO, 2007). Literature suggests that girls mostly drop out of school because they often face issues of sexual harassment by other pupils and even teachers. Sometimes girls drop out of school due to poverty, legal systems and deeply embedded ideas of discrimination, (Grant and Hallman, 2006). Worldwide, girls' primary school completion rate still lags way behind boys', at 76% compared with 85 % of boys. This yawning gender gap means that more millions of girls than boys are dropping out of school each year, and thus suggest that majority of girls are not in school. The most worrying statistics come from sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of girls out of school rose from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002, (UNICEF 2003). Primary school survival rates (a measure used to indicate educational quality) continue to be unacceptably low in many developing countries, particularly in Africa where Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda have completion rates below 55 %, (UNESCO 2008). Secondary school access is also very low for girls in the sub-Saharan region with only 17% enrolment (UNAIDS, 2008).

In Malawi, participation of girls in school is tremendously low due to high absenteeism, high repetition and dropout rates. The completion, pass and transitional rates from one class/level to the next are also very low (UNESCO, 2008). It is estimated that in Malawi,

only 31 % of girls complete primary school and a mere 11% graduate from secondary school, (Scharff, 2007). At secondary level, access for girls is still very limited, with a gross enrolment ratio of 30%, (WMS, 2009). Access is also highly unequal, particularly affecting children from low-income families and girls. At secondary level, the student ratio was estimated at 72 % for boys and 28 % for girls, (Malawi government, 2006 as cited by White, 2007).

The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2008) estimates that 113,000 children were out of primary school in Malawi in 2005 of whom 27 % were girls. UNICEF (2006) using administrative data for the 2007 State of the World's Children report estimate only 44 % of primary school entrants in Malawi reached Grade 5. The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2007:306) explains that the Survival Rate to the Last Grade is even lower at just 30 % with that of girls at 26 %. In Malawi just as in other developing countries, studies have shown that early pregnancies and early marriages are major reasons for girls dropping out of school, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000). According to Government of Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2000) dropout rates were higher for girls than boys in primary school and it was estimated at 9.5 % for boys while 14.1 % for girls. In addition, African Development Bank (2006) also found that girls' dropout rate is higher than boys. This was attributed to family responsibilities, early marriage, and pregnancy. EMIS (2008) shows that dropout rate is still high in both primary and secondary schools. At primary school the dropout rate is 8.4 % with that of the girls at 10.4 % while that of boys is at 6.6%, and at secondary school girls' dropout rate is estimated at 9.7 % while that of boys is at 5.9%. MDHS (2010), shows that there were more men than women who attended or

completed secondary education i.e. 17 % compared to 11 %). This shows that female dropout rate was still higher than male. As evidenced from these statistics the incident of girls dropping out from school has been a persisting challenge. The government has been coming up with different interventions in order to allow girls complete their education. One of the interventions was coming up with a policy that allows teen mother to go back to school which was introduced as early as 1993. The policy was instituted to allow a large number of girls leaving school prematurely because of pregnancy to return and continue with their education. The policy was also introduced as one of the tools of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary schools by 2005, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to achievement in education regardless of their background; however gender parity was not achieved by 2005, (Millennium Development Goals, 2007). According to Ministry of Education (1993:1) the policy states;

A school girl who is pregnant be withdrawn from school for one academic year and be readmitted upon application as long as there is safe custody of the child. Such opportunity shall be given once in a girl's education and a school boy who is responsible for a school girl's pregnancy shall be withdrawn for one academic year and be readmitted on application.

Nevertheless, implementation of the readmission policy has been a problem. For instance, the policy faced resistance from the schools, stigmatization of the returning teen mothers, society's negative attitudes towards returning mothers and lack of publicity, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000 and Wolf, Lang, Mount and VanBelle-Prouty's, 1999). Some challenges such as difficulties in the communication of policy were consistent in all rural areas, bringing in disparities in implementation of the policy, (Wolf et al, 1999). Due to these problems the government revised the policy in 2006. The revised readmission policy articulates that;

A school girl who is pregnant should write a letter to the head teacher about her status indicating her home address. She should submit three copies of the letter to the head teacher, the girl should be counselled by the appointed member of the counselling committee and advised to apply for re-admission upon delivery and assurance of the safe custody of the baby, (Ministry of education, 2006).

The readmitted student(s) are supposed to report for classes at the beginning of the academic year, and once the students have reported for classes, they are supposed to be counselled on expected behaviour and stigma, (Ministry of Education, 2006). The revised readmission policy is explicit on how the girl who is pregnant should withdraw from school. It provides the office to which the application should be addressed and also requires that the girl should be counselled. This simplifies the whole process of readmission because the girls know which office they are supposed to go if they are pregnant, as well as if they would like to get readmitted, unlike the policy issued in 1993, which did not specify how a pregnant girl should withdraw and did not provide room for counselling.

The head teacher is advised to report the withdrawal case to the Division Manager, attaching a copy of withdrawal letter from the girl (duly stamped copies should be retained at the school and by the applicant). Consequently the Division Manager should report in writing withdrawal cases to the Ministry of Education Headquarters on monthly basis, (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Ministry of Education (2008) report explains that , with the revised policy, there has been an improvement in the number of girls taking advantage of the policy evidenced by 5089

students returning in both primary and secondary school out of about 15000 who dropped out from 2006-2008 and of these who have returned, 3772 were girls. However the number of those who do not return is still huge and literature shows that even the revised policy is facing problems in implementation.

1.5 Statement of the problem

Implementation of readmission policy that was introduced in 1993 faced a number of problems which include inadequate sensitization, negative attitudes towards returning mothers, stigmatization, and lack of support mechanism to supplement the policy initiative, (Wolf *et al*, 1999; Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000). This resulted into many teen mothers not returning to school. The readmission policy was revised in 2006 and UNICEF report (2008) still shows that there are challenges in implementing the revised readmission policy. For instance, UNICEF (2008) reported that, “implementation of the policy has been problematic at best; many schools are gender insensitive to this policy and are not implementing it as the Ministry intended. In many cases only girls are expelled and not boys. In some schools students are not aware of the policy and girls leave without knowing they have the opportunity to come back.” This means that a lot of teen mothers are not returning to school and this is retarding the progress of reducing the number of girls out of school due to pregnancy. In addition, if the school gates remain closed for the teen mother, the gulf between her and the woman she could have become will widen. This will result in the teen mother being locked up in a circle of poverty since education is believed to empower individuals economically. By denying teen mothers education, the right to education of the child is affected. A teen mother with higher education is more likely to control her own

destiny affecting change in her family and community. If a teen mother does not go back to school her ability to make informed decisions is reduced. Furthermore UNGEI (2009) preliminary findings on girls' education in Malawi highlight that there is still social stigma associated with young mothers returning to school. But the question is why should the 2006 revised policy experience similar challenges in implementation as those encountered before revising the policy? How then, has the revision of the policy helped to improve the implementation of the policy? It is against this background that this study sought after rural stakeholders' knowledge and perceptions on the implementation of readmission policy at secondary school. The study took place in rural area because literature explains that dropout rate is lower in urban centres relative to rural areas (IHS, 2005).

So far studies have been done to assess the impact of the policy at basic education level in Malawi. For instance, UNICEF (2008) report, Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) and Wolf *et al* (1999) have all shown the impact of the policy on basic education in general. But little has been done at secondary school level though it is evidenced that pregnancy is one of the major reasons why girls drop out of secondary school. Apart from tuition fees, the second major reason why girls drop out of secondary school is pregnancy (EMIS, 2008). The same EMIS (2008) report shows there were 101799 girls who enrolled at secondary school of which 8600 dropped out in 2008 due various reasons and out of this number 20 % dropped out due to pregnancy. Based on this evidence, this study was conducted at secondary school.

1.6 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore knowledge and perceptions of parents, teachers, and teen mothers on the implementation of the revised readmission policy at secondary school level, in the rural settings. The study answered the following grand tour question and their sub-research questions:

Grand tour question

Grand tour question is the central question of the study and Creswell (2003), defines central question as a broad question that asks for an exploration of the central phenomenon or concept in the study. This study answered the following grand tour question:

What are the teen mothers', parents' and teachers' knowledge and views on the implementation of the revised readmission policy at secondary school?

Study questions

1. What is the relationship between knowledge of the readmission policy and actual practice of implementing the policy in rural secondary schools?
2. How do grassroot stakeholders think of their involvement in the implementation of the readmission policy in rural areas?
3. What do grassroot stakeholders think of the availability of support mechanisms for teen mothers at secondary school in rural areas?
4. How do rural grassroot stakeholders perceive the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools?

1.7 Significance of the study

The study is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, the study may provide opportunity to teen mothers, teachers and parents at the grassroots level to communicate their views on the implementation of readmission policy through the findings. After all, the intent of policymakers is to change practice, so understanding policy impact at the local level informs policy decisions. The study may also contribute to the body of literature about the implementation process of the revised readmission policy as regards to communication, stakeholder participation and support initiatives at secondary school in rural areas. It is also worth noting that since the introduction of the 2006 guidelines, the policy has not been reviewed. Therefore the study may provide feedback on the implementation process. The findings from this study may hopefully be useful for policy makers and district education officers in their efforts to successfully implement the readmission policy.

1.8 Scope of the study and limitations

The study was delimited to one district; Blantyre, because of the time available, consequently, the sample was not representative enough for generalization. However the results can be applied to other similar rural areas in the country. The other limitation was that the study was conducted during the same period that the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) were administering Junior Certificate of Education and Malawi School Certificate of Education. As a result some potential participants did not take part in the study as they were reportedly writing examinations. In addition to that, some head teachers were supervising examinations at centres away from their schools. This reduced the number of teen mothers that were supposed to be interviewed at a school. However to maintain the number of participants that were proposed for the study, the researcher sampled some more

schools in addition to the ones which were already sampled. Additionally, in some schools, more than one participant were sampled to maintain the number of participants for the study. The head teachers who were supervising examinations were followed to the centres where they were administering the examination. In some cases where the head teachers were not around, their deputy head teachers were interviewed instead.

1.9 Chapter summary and outline of the study

Having set the background to the problem, the statement of the problem itself and the purpose of the study, the next chapter presents literature review related to readmission policy. The chapter begins with literature on girls' education, benefits of girls' education, policy formulation and implementation. Finally the study reviews literature on readmission policy in Malawi and this is followed by a conceptual framework. The third chapter is on research design and methodology. In this chapter research design, sampling technique and research tools are discussed. This is then followed by the chapter on results and discussion where the findings from the study are discussed. The final chapter is on conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews related literature on girls' education, formulation and implementation of readmission policy. The literature review starts with a discussion on girls' education, why should girls' education be promoted and what are the benefits of educating girls. Then a definition of policy is given. Furthermore, policy formulation process and implementation are presented. Then a presentation is made on the readmission policy; challenges associated with its implementation are discussed, then implementation guidelines for the reviewed readmission policy are presented. Finally a conceptual framework of the study is outlined.

2.1 The Education of Girls

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, asserted that 'everyone has a right to education', and subsequent international conferences and normative texts have reaffirmed this goal and sought to achieve it, (UNESCO, 1998). In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All was convened in Jomtien, Thailand, to address concerns about the inadequate provision of basic education, especially in the developing countries. The conference adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and agreed on a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs. In the laudable drive towards education for all, it was assumed that the gender gap would be automatically reduced. In reality, this was not necessarily the case. UNICEF (2003) reports that the

greater attention paid to girls' education throughout the 1990s can be attributed to the intersection of two key movements based on human rights: the child rights movement that gathered steady momentum in the wake of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and the women's movement, which culminated in the Platform for Action at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a platform which specifically addressed the needs and rights of girls. In this sense it has taken until the 21st century for girls' education to receive its due primacy. However it was only in the year 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit and the World Education Forum in Dakar, that the push for girls' education was made, (UNICEF, 2003). At the Dakar conference an international agreement was reached to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 (UNESCO, 2000).

Despite the agreement to eliminate gender disparities in education at primary and secondary school, the challenge still remains persistent worldwide. By 2005 only 59 countries out of the 181 with data available had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. Most of them had already achieved parity by 1999, and most are developed and transitioning countries, or in Latin America and the Caribbean. Only seven countries in East Asia and the Pacific, two in sub-Saharan Africa, two in the Arab States and two in South and West Asia have achieved the EFA gender parity goal. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 17% of girls are enrolled in secondary school (UNESCO, 2008).

According to UNESCO (2000) gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education. Without overcoming this obstacle,

Education for All cannot be achieved. Girls are a majority among out-of-school children and youth. Even though the education of girls and women has a powerful trans-generational effect and is a key determinant of social development and women's empowerment, limited progress has been made in increasing girls' participation in secondary education. This requires that gender issues be mainstreamed throughout the education system, supported by adequate resources and strong political commitment. Merely ensuring access to education for girls is not enough. School environments which are not conducive and biases in teacher behaviour and training, teaching and learning processes, and curricula and textbooks often lead to low completion and achievement rates for girls. By creating safe and gender-sensitive learning environments, it should be possible to remove a major hurdle to girls' participation in education, (UNICEF, 2003).

2.1.1 Benefits associated with girls' education

Educating girls yields a higher rate of return than any other investment in the developing world (Summers, 1992). According to (UNICEF, 2003) when you educate a woman, she becomes more responsible in looking after the home than the male counterpart. An educated woman is able to send her children to school regardless of their sex. In addition, education empowers a woman to make informed choices such as the number of children to have since a woman with some education is able to use family planning methods, delay marriage and childbearing. Furthermore, women with some formal education are likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better

nourished. Moreover, education has been proven to increase income for wage earners and increase productivity for employers, yielding benefits for the community and society. In support, USAID (2001) reports that high levels of female schooling are associated with reduced fertility, low child mortality, and consequently with high per capita income growth. In fact, the overall returns to education for females are higher than for males. This is appropriate since women are the primary educators and nurturers of children. The societal returns on investments in women's education are therefore greater than for similar investments in men. UNICEF (2003) report signify that investing in girls' education today is a strategy that will protect the rights of all children to quality education since mothers' education is a noteworthy variable affecting children's education attainment and opportunities. If girls, including teen mothers become educated they are likely to send their children to school, thereby passing on the multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive, intergenerational effect. One of the clearest findings from a UNICEF analysis of household data of 55 countries and 2 Indian states is that children of educated women are likely to go to school, and the more schooling the women have received, the more probable it is that their children will also benefit from education, (UNICEF, 2003). In addition, Save the Children (2005) states that children of uneducated mothers are more than twice as likely to die or be malnourished than the children of mothers who have secondary or higher education. That is why it is important that teen mothers should go back to school and complete their secondary education.

Furthermore, education saves and improves the lives of girls and women. It allows women greater control of their lives and provides them with skills to contribute to their societies. It

enables them to make decisions for themselves and to influence their families. Though there is wide international recognition that there is no investment more effective for achieving development goals than educating girls, reaching gender equity in school enrolment remained a major challenge in most countries, (UNICEF, 2003). Nothing illustrates this better than the failure of many countries to attain the only Millennium Development Goal (MDG) fixed for 2005, “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education”, (UNESCO 2008).

Though it is argued that education improves lives of girls and women, in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries, girls and women are losing the battle for equal access to education. In many developing countries, teenage pregnancy has been one of the major hindrances to the educational success of girls (Chigona and Chetty, 2007). One way in which girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are denied access to school is when they fall pregnant and become teen mothers. This constraint hampers progress for individuals as well as for nations. At the individual level, education is the ultimate liberator, empowering people to make personal and social choices. Education is also the crucial equalizer, particularly in promoting greater equity for women, and for the poor and disadvantaged groups since education often is the only capital such groups can aspire to acquire, (Kane, 2004). At national level, educated citizens are the foundation for well-functioning democratic institutions, and for achieving social cohesion. Education beyond a certain level is also a necessary condition for creating, applying and spreading new ideas and technologies critical to achieving the economic growth required to reduce poverty and for creating human capital among the poor needed for them to benefit from that growth, (UNICEF, 2003). Comprehensive efforts therefore need to be made at all levels and in all areas to eliminate

gender discrimination and to promote mutual respect between girls and boys, women and men. To make these possible, changes in policies, attitudes, values and behaviour are required. Frameworks of action have to be developed where countries have to adopt policies and practices that would ensure equal access and completion of secondary education.

Influenced by the large number of girls who are not in school, African governments met in Ouagadougou where they discussed the importance of readmitting girl mothers into formal education system and provision of non-formal education opportunities for mother girls who are beyond school age, (UNESCO, 1993). The participants affirmed to carry out the framework of action in their different countries. Consequently, many countries reviewed policies to do with girls education one of which being the policy to do with girls who get pregnant while at school. Thus, most countries came up with the policy of readmitting teen mothers. The policy is being implemented in Sub-Saharan African countries, in an effort to improve the participation of adolescent girls in secondary education (Wolf and Kainja, 1999). The policy acknowledges the right of a pregnant girl to education and her right not to be discriminated against or punished because of the pregnancy. There is no acceptable excuse for denying her the opportunities to develop to her fullest potential. Pregnancy does not imply a definitive loss of the right to education. It also does not imply the provision of instruction to the pregnant school girl in conditions which are stigmatizing and discriminatory in comparison with other pupils. Since denying pregnant girls the chance to continue schooling is a violation of their right to education; introduction of readmission policy was therefore perceived to further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and aims to address high drop-out rates of pregnant girls.

The right to education for girls requires new thinking; policies and strategies to address the various barriers to and trade-offs in providing equal access to education for the achievement of gender equality. Education strategies at the policy level are essential to achieving gender equality. A policy environment, including structures, personnel, and policies, must exist to create change for girls' education.

2.2.0 Definition of Policy

Definitions of policy are numerous and varied, for instance Reimers and McGinn (1997) defines policy as plans of action that contain both whys and whats. While Haddad (1995) in his definition says policy is an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions, which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action or guide implementation of previous decisions. In the same vein Education policy refers to the goals for the education system and the actions that should be taken to achieve them (Reimers and McGinn 1997). Policy is both a process and product. Readmission policy in this aspect is a government decision which allows teen mothers to return to school and the process of that decision. This government decision gives a second chance to girls who fall pregnant while still pursuing their education. This is based on the fact that a policy is made, carried out or implemented just like a decision.

2.2.1 Policy Formulation process

Policy formation is a process that involves different stakeholders. Social science literature shows two distinct views of policy formulation. One view tend to characterize policy

formulation process as a set of stages which follow a logical order while the other view suggests that policy is messy, fluid process which cannot be reduced to a simple linear model, (Evans, Sack and Shaw, 1996). This means that there is no one way of viewing policy formation. Given a large number of actors in education sector and a variety of factors and forces, policy making process cannot be a pure rational process. The process of participation and consultation in policy making allows the policy options to be understood and actively supported during implementation. Remarkable changes require negotiation and not imposing on the people hence need for dialogue. According to Kadzamira and Rose (2001) people are receptive to dialogue and involvement than imposing on them pre-packed solutions, as this hinders effective policy formulation and implementation. Successful implementation of policies therefore involves participation and consultation with different stakeholders right away from policy formation stage.

In addition, Evans *et al* (1996) report that stakeholder expression creates, in the long-run, a climate in which better education policies can be formulated and implemented. As the Delors Commission report cited in Evans *et al* (1996) puts it:

The main parties contributing to the success of education reforms are first of all the local community, including parents, teachers and school heads; secondly the public authorities; and thirdly the international community. Many past failures have been due to the insufficient involvement of one or more of these partners, attempts to impose education reforms top-down, or from outside have obviously failed. The countries where the process has been relatively successful are those that obtained a commitment from local communities, parents and teachers.

However, complex forces are at work in most countries, and policies are not always created in such a participatory fashion. Nor, for that matter, do many policies of long term benefit to society have the support of the majority of society in the short term, (Wolf et al, 1999).

Likewise in Malawi the education policy reform does not have the tradition of consulting with stakeholders, including parents, communities, local leaders and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in education, (Kadzamira and Rose, 2001). The beneficiaries of the policy such as pupils, teachers and parents are suggested to be passive recipients of the pre-packed solutions proposed to them by a distant agent, (Chimombo, 1999 as cited in Kadzamira and Rose, 2001). Such conduct hinders the effective formulation and implementation of education policies in Malawi. For instance the readmission policy that was introduced in 1993 faced a number of implementation challenges (Swainson *et al*, 1998). The policy says; ‘a school girl who is pregnant be withdrawn from school for one academic year and be readmitted upon application as long as there is assurance of safe custody of the child. Such opportunity shall be given once in a girl’s education,’ (Ministry of Education, 1993). The policy also talks about a school boy who impregnates a school girl that he should be withdrawn for one academic year and be readmitted on application. The policy was introduced following international pressure and the pressure from within the country which emanated from the development wing of the League of Malawi Women, Chitukuko Cha Amayi Malawi (CCAM) who worked closely with National Commission of Women in Development (NCWD) and the then first female minister of education Kate Kainja, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000).

However there were no consultations with other grassroots stakeholders such as teachers and students on the formation as well as implementation of the policy. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) argue that when there are few or no consultations with those who are affected by the policy, implementation becomes difficult. Swainson *et al* (1998) elucidate the following challenges which cropped up, in implementing the re-admission policy which was introduced in 1993.

2.2.2 Lack of detailed implementation guidelines

Implementation of the readmission policy was not effective because there were no guidelines given to the Regional Education Officers, District Education Officers, head teachers and principals of colleges and yet these are the implementers of the policy on the ground. From the very outset it was not made clear whether girls and boys should be readmitted to their former school or reassigned to new schools. As a result, majority of the girls (about 80%) were re-admitted to a different school because a good number of girls were harassed when they tried to rejoin their original schools, (Swainson *et al*, 1998). However, re-admitting girls to a different school posed problems in case of primary education because the majority of schools (especially in the rural areas) were not close together. Monitoring girls who drop-out due to pregnancy was particularly difficult as most girls left school before they were discovered to be pregnant, (Swainson *et al*.1998).

2.2.3 Negative attitudes towards returning mothers

Opposition to the new policy by head teachers and teachers at some schools was reported. Some head teachers refused to admit returning teenage mothers on the pretext that they have no places available at their schools. According to Ministry of Education official, some head teachers felt it is not right that girls should be given a second chance when secondary school places for girls are so limited (Wolf *et al*, 1999). Some teachers felt that making the policy known to the community and parents is likely to encourage immoral behaviour on the part of the students thus increasing the cases of teenage pregnancies (Wolf, 1995). Preliminary findings from a survey on teenage motherhood conducted by the Centre for Social Research showed that although the majority of girls interviewed knew about the pregnancy policy, very few returned to school. Out of the 153 teenage mothers interviewed in three districts, only eight had returned, (Swaison *et al*, 1998). One of the reasons cited was that they were not actively encouraged by the head teachers to re-apply and return to school after delivery. It was also widely reported that girls were teased by their fellow pupils and this discouraged them from re-enrolling in school, (Swaison *et al*, 1998). This study therefore explored if negative attitude is still persisting and in what form.

2.2.4 Opposition to the timing of re-admission

According to the Ministry of Education (1993) pregnant girls are supposed to withdraw from school for one academic year and apply for re-admission when there is safe custody of the baby. In practice, most parents and girls were anxious to have their children back in school soon after giving birth. The current policy means that the girls can lose up to two

academic years. As result, some parents have forced their daughters to re-apply for admission soon after the baby is born, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000).

2.2.5. No support mechanisms devised to supplement the new policy initiative

Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) stipulate that the policy was not accompanied by supporting strategies at the school level. For example, no counselling of any kind (either in birth control or coping strategies) was given to the returning mothers and fathers. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education keeps the identity of returning mothers confidential from the school they are being re-admitted to, which makes it impossible for schools to provide counselling services to returning mothers. None of the schools in Malawi make provision for crèches. Options for returning mothers such as non-formal education were not considered.

Melissa and Rudd, (n.d.) carried out a study in the USA which aimed at finding factors that might help or hinder a teenage mother's ability to obtain further education after the birth of her first child. The study was done on teen mothers living in rural areas for five consecutive years, gathering information ranging from family life to health to income and job experience. An analysis on 275 teen mothers showed that rural mothers who had their first child as a teenager completed less total years of schooling than the years completed by mothers who waited to have children later. Secondly teenage mothers who reported high levels of social support were more likely to complete additional years of schooling than women who reported low levels of social support. This suggests that there is a relationship between social support and additional completion of schooling for rural teen mothers. The

study also shows that teen mothers who had low level of social support failed to complete more years of schooling due to parenthood responsibilities.

The finding that teenage mothers with high social support were more likely to complete further schooling after their first birth than teenage mothers with low social support, suggests that the presence of social networks and support systems can help to lessen the increased demands placed on young mothers. A study done by Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) in Malawi showed that lack of support was one of the reasons why the policy was not successfully implemented. This study therefore intended to establish the kind of support and social networks which were introduced as the policy was being revised, which still exist in secondary schools in Malawi that facilitates the schooling of teen mothers and prevents teen mothers from re-absconding.

2.2.6 Cultural values and Implementation of Readmission Policy

Cultural practices, beliefs, and attitudes have been identified by researchers as one of the major constraints to girls' education (Kainja, 1990; Kadzamira and Ndalama, 1997) as cited by White (2007). In support of that, Wolf *et al* (1999) report that cultural values can impede the success of educational policy process. Wolf *et al* as cited by Macjessie-Mbewe (2008) also found out that in Malawi the pregnancy policy failed to effectively be implemented initially because teachers felt that to allow teen mothers back into school would encourage immorality.

These challenges are enough evidence that the policy was introduced with little consultation with the grassroots stakeholders. Literature has it that participation is central to policy implementation (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002). Review of the pregnancy policy, which was introduced in December 1993, was done in 2006 and below is the revised policy guidelines:

a. **Withdrawal process of a pregnant school girl**

- i. A school girl who is pregnant should write a letter to the head teacher about her status indicating her home address. She should submit three copies of the letter to the head teacher.
- ii. The girl should be counselled by the appointed member of the counselling committee and advised to apply for re-admission upon delivery and assurance of the safe custody of the baby.
- iii. She should be withdrawn from the school for one academic year
- iv. The head teacher should report the withdrawal to the Division or District Education Manager for primary school students, attaching a copy of withdrawal letter from the girl (duly stamped copies should be retained at the school and by the applicant).
- v. The Division/District Education Manager should report in writing withdrawal cases to the Ministry of Education Headquarters on monthly basis.
- vi. The opportunity of re-admission shall be given once in a girl's education cycle.

b. Withdrawal process of a boy responsible for pregnancy of a schoolgirl

- i. A schoolboy who is responsible for pregnancy of a schoolgirl should write a letter to head teacher indicating his home address. He should submit three copies of the letter to the head teacher.
- ii. The boy should be counselled by the appointed member of the counselling committee and advised to apply for re-admission upon the girl's delivery and assurance of the safe custody of the baby.
- iii. He should be withdrawn from the school for one academic year.
- iv. The head teacher should report the withdrawal to the Division or District Education Manager for primary school students, attaching a copy of withdrawal letter from the boy (duly stamped copies should be retained at the school and by the applicant).
- v. The Division/District Education Manager should report in writing withdrawal cases to the Ministry of Education Headquarters on monthly basis.
- vi. The opportunity for re-admission shall be given once in a boy's education.

c. Re-Admission process of Students who withdraw on pregnancy grounds

- i. The students should apply for re-admission to the Head teacher with details of current contact address and phone number, who should in turn forward the application to the Division Manager.

- ii. She /he should submit one copy of the application letter to the Division Manager and retain one
- iii. The Division should immediately approve the re-admission in writing and communicate to the school with a copy to the parents or guardians.
- iv. The head teacher should inform the students of the readmission and encourage them to report for classes.
- v. The readmitted student(s) should report for classes at the beginning of the academic year.
- vi. Once the students have reported for classes, they should be counselled on expected behaviour and stigma. (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The 2006 guidelines, just as the one issued in 1993, did not have specification as to what time of pregnancy should the girl leave school. The 2006 guidelines also did not specify whether a student should be readmitted to the former school or a new school, (Ministry of Education, 2006). This shows that some of the challenges which were discovered through research were not addressed in the new guidelines. However the revised policy gives direction as to which office a girl should submit her application letter when she is found pregnant. The revised policy also stipulates the need for counselling. Literature shows that the issues of stigma, lack of publicity in some areas and lack of support to returning mothers are still persisting, (UNICEF, 2008; UNGEI, 2009). Many girls still were not returning to school because of the challenges outlined in the above. What is the cause of these challenges? Is there something wrong with the policy? Do grassroot stakeholders have clear

knowledge on the policy procedures? Is there ownership of the policy by the grassroots stakeholders? This study therefore wanted to explore the root of these implementation challenges through establishing the knowledge of the grassroots stakeholders on the policy procedures. What do they put in practice and what are their perceptions on the implementation of the policy?

Grant and Hallman (2006) observed that as much as teen pregnancy is associated with poor health outcomes for the woman and the baby, its effects reach beyond health. In Malawi, it can encompass stigmatization of young mothers, school dropout, and decreased likelihood that an adolescent will resume schooling after her baby is born. It was from this perspective that the present study, wanted to establish why similar challenges were still persisting, through seeking perceptions of grassroots stakeholders on the implementation of the policy. The study also illuminates if the reviewed procedures have improved the implementation of re-admission policy.

2.3 Implementation of policies

Implementation is policy in practice. Implementation of a policy includes translation of policy options into specific strategies for carrying out the policy. Strategies are in turn converted into plans with action, (Evans et al, 1996). Most of the policies however are not implemented as intended because policy makers do not consider policy implementation as part of the policy formulation process, (Evans *et al*, 1996). Additionally, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) suggest that if policy implementation is to be effective, the policy has to be viewed legitimate by those being affected by the policy. Policy implementation studies done

in the United States of America, reveal considerable fallout between policy and practice, (Moulton, Mundy, Welmond and Williams, 2001). Likewise, MacJessie-Mbewe (2008) stipulates that most developing countries, after technically developing good policies, they are not successfully implemented. Developing policies using technical approach alone is not enough. Hartwell (1994) argues that failure of implementation begins with the failure in the process of policy formulation in the first place. Lack of communication, dialogue, consensus and acceptance by the stakeholders leaves the policy on the shelf. An interactive rather than a rational or technical approach is essential if the policy is to be supported and be fully implemented by the beneficiaries of the policies. The study will therefore assess if the policy is being implemented as intended. The intention of readmission policy is to have teen mothers back in school by following the right procedure of withdrawal and readmission. In addition, teen mothers should receive counselling from members of the counselling committee of their schools.

2.3.1 Implementation of readmission policy

Implementation of gender-specific education policies have been problematic in most countries including Malawi, particularly so where policies touch on sensitive issues and where the beneficiaries have been girls only, this did not spare the Malawi readmission policy (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000). For instance a study done in Namibia by Shaningwa (2007) which aimed at investigating the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in coming back to school, revealed that the educational challenges faced by these young women range from social exclusion to the need to manage the dual responsibilities of motherhood and schooling. Furthermore, the study established that there is no shared

understanding of the policy among the participants hence its ineffective implementation in the schools, the study also found out that the policy was not uniformly applied. According to literature, social exclusion is a challenge that can be addressed by providing counseling to teen mothers. Counseling prepares teen mothers mentally for such challenges. Nevertheless, most teen mothers do not receive counseling and they end up failing to cope with the challenges.

In Malawi, Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) report that several problems arose in the implementation of the readmission policy introduced in 1993, both at the school level and at Ministry of Education. According to Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) it is apparent that inadequate attention was paid to detailed implementation procedures involved in the policy and little information was supplied to parents, teachers and the students themselves. Due to lack of consultation with important stakeholders within the Ministry of Education (e.g. heads, teachers, District Education Officers, Regional Educational Officers, parents, Parents Teachers Associations and school committees) and an absence of serious debate about the policy, unnecessary implementation problems were encountered. After revising the policy, literature shows that implementation is still facing similar challenges. Literature also suggests that if policy decisions do not have understanding and support of those who are affected by it, effective implementation is very unlikely. In addition, MacJesse-Mbewe (2008) specifies that the successfulness of policy implementation can also be affected by policy communication and stakeholder participation as described below;

2.3.2 Policy Communication

According to Wolf *et al* (1999) policy communication is the first step in policy implementation. However in their study, wolf *et al* (1999) on barriers to policy implementation shows that policies are not properly communicated especially to the rural masses who do not have access to radios. Their study established that poor communication resulted into difficulties in effectively implementing a policy on learner-teacher ratio in Namibia. According to them if a school is located in a city, its chances of having dependable mail delivery, phones, faxes, transportation, and radio reception are all increased dramatically. Difficulties in communication of policies were consistent problem in all rural areas in Malawi and Namibia. Though they may have come from rural communities, most policymakers live and work in urban areas, and such being the case, they often forget the realities of villages, and seldom make it part of their implementation strategies to ensure that information about policy changes reaches rural areas.

In Malawi policy communication has also been highlighted as a challenge in implementation of policy such as readmission policy. For instance, UNICEF (2008) found out that the readmission policy is not adequately communicated as it was evidenced by some girls leaving school without knowing that there was this policy. Wolf *et al* (1999), report about the problem of communication of the readmission policy in Malawi, seven years before the policy was revised. Policy communication therefore seems to be a persisting challenge. How then was the communication made and to whom was the policy communicated? Did grassroot stakeholders receive any communication on the policy? According to Wolf *et al* (1999), policy communication in Malawi is top-down, while communication is supposed to flow in both directions. As such it was doubtful if grassroot

stakeholders communicated their views to policy makers as regards to policy implementation. Two studies cited above, do not give the views of the stakeholders from the rural area on how best they felt readmission policy should have been communicated, especially noting that there were large communication gaps, this study explored the perceptions of the grassroots stakeholders on how the policy should be communicated to rural stakeholders.

Challenges to implement readmission policy were also experienced in Kenya. According to a survey done by the FAWE Kenya chapter, the challenges to the implementation of readmission policy guidelines include lack of information about the policy. Girls, parents and some head teachers did not know that policy guidelines existed, (FAWE news, 2001). Malawi came up with its implementation guidelines for readmission policy in 2006. This study intended to find out if the girls, parents and teachers knew about these guidelines. Furthermore, the study explored if the knowledge on the guidelines of readmission policy influenced the effectiveness of its implementation.

The importance of disseminating information and encouraging parents to send girls to school is demonstrated by the impact of GABLE SMC activities in the pilot district of Machinga in Southern Malawi where many teenage mothers have been encouraged to return to school (Brouder and Munthali, 1996). This shows that when information is not disseminated to the beneficiaries of the policy, its implementation is affected. In Botswana for example, Wamahiu (1995) found that less than 30% of teenage mothers return to school after delivery due to lack of information about re-admittance.

2.3.3 Stakeholder Participation

Participation of grassroot stakeholders such as teachers, students and the community at large is emphasized if educational reforms have to be successfully implemented. Reforms implemented under lack of trust among stakeholders and political instability are unlikely to succeed. Many actors in a reform tend to express their opinions and priorities during implementation; this can either hamper the policy implementation or can make the policy successful, (Moulton et al, 2001). It is important to involve stakeholders during the formation of the policy as well as when planning for its implementation, so that their views can be taken into consideration. According to Dyer (1999) as cited in Macjessie-Mbewe (2008) if the stakeholders interests are not sought the policy implementation is bound to fail.

In their study McDonough and Wheeler (1998) as cited in Macjessie-Mbewe (2008) reported that involvement of grassroot stakeholders resulted in a strong support by the community on school and community collaboration in social forestry project in Thailand. MacJessie-Mbewe (2008) also found out that the participants at grass root level in Malawi felt that unless policies started from the community where they live, they do not have power to effect any change on the policies since they do not have enough information about why policies are made. This suggests that government does not open the channel for them to give their views on most policies that affect them. This study intended to find out from teachers, teen mothers as well as parents to teen mothers on how they participate in the implementation of readmission policy at secondary school level. It is imperative to deliberately consult and involve those who are implementing the readmission policy at grass root level so as to solicit their views on effective implementation of the policy.

2.4 Challenges faced by teen mothers in school

Chigona and Chetty (2007) carried out a study in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to find out how teen mothers were coping with schooling, hence how much support was rendered to them. A qualitative research approach was used to understand the social phenomena of teenage mothers as learners. The result showed that teen mothers receive insufficient support both (physically and emotionally) and the consequence is that many do not succeed with schooling. According to other studies done on teen mothers in United States of America by Pillow (2004) as cited in Chigona and Chetty (2008) and in South Africa by Chigona and Chetty (2008), only allowing teen mothers to return to school without any support does not help them to succeed. Chigona and Chetty (2007) noted that while girls are allowed to go back to school after becoming mothers, they face many challenges in trying to balance both motherhood and schooling demands. Due to parenthood, the teen mothers do not have enough time to do their school work. As a result, many teen mother students usually lag behind and this hampers their progress in secondary school education. What is the situation in Malawian secondary schools? Since Malawi is still facing challenges in implementing readmission policy; it was important to establish through views of grassroot stakeholders, how teen mothers cope with their education in Malawi and what support initiatives have accompanied the reviewed policy procedures. How effective are the support initiatives in trying to keep the teen mothers at secondary schools in Malawi. In addition, after revising the policy in 2006, no study has been done at secondary school on availability of support initiatives. Therefore this study wanted to find out what kind of support is there at secondary school in Malawi that would encourage students to remain in secondary school.

Continuing with education for teen mothers may prove to be unyielding burden, more especially for those living in poor home environments. It has been argued that teen parents face an overwhelming number of difficulties. Parental and peer pressures are far more common than support and understanding. Managing to care for an infant and devoting to adequate time to school work is a great challenge for the teen parents, (Chigona and Chetty, 2008). How do teen mothers at secondary school in Malawi deal with such pressure?

The returning teen mothers experience several challenges within the school environment and sometimes at home when it is time to study or do homework. Such challenges include; irregular attendance, stigma, lack of time to study and do homework and lack of professional counselling.

2.4.1 Irregular attendance

A study done by Shacklock (n.d.), in Australia, which aimed at highlighting systemic, curricular, pedagogical and transitional issues that confront schools, teachers and pregnant and parenting students in managing the dilemma of difference in mainstream school settings, discovered that irregular attendance is one issue that was pointed out by respondents as a constraint to effective teaching and learning. According to the study, irregular attendance brought about stressful feelings amongst participants at both professional and personal levels. The bottom line is that if these students are not at school regularly their chances of succeeding academically are severely diminished. If schools do not have written policies explicitly addressing how to make decisions about absences for parenting students, the decision will rest on individual discretion and this does not work in

providing equitable access to education (Pillow, 2004 as cited by Chigona and Chetty, 2008). Is the situation the same at Malawian Secondary schools? What are the views of parents, teachers and the teen mothers? How do schools overcome such challenges? What measures do teachers apply to ensure educational success for pregnant girls and teen mothers?

2.4.2 Stigma

Stigma is another challenge faced by teen mothers. The same study done by Chigona and Chetty (2007) in South Africa also established that stigma is another challenge that deterred teen mothers from continuing with their education. Teen mothers were sometimes ridiculed in front of fellow classmates whenever they have not satisfied the class requirements. Furthermore, when a teen mother quarrels with another student, the other students usually picked on the teen mother's situation, (Chigona and Chetty, 2007). It is argued that pregnant students are at best ignored or at worst ridiculed. Boys and girls often verbally abuse these girls, making their participation in class to very challenging. These emotionally pressured teens require mature, adult decisions if they are to cope. However, it has been established that many teen mothers lose interest in school due to unsupportive community environment, and they ended up withdrawing again. Some teen mothers felt teachers did not understand their situation. These teachers expected teen mothers to perform and behave just like any other student in their respective classes. Clearly, Malawian girls face many challenges in completing their secondary education, and teen mothers face even tougher odds, (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000), hence the need to source their perceptions and that of their

teachers and parents on how they felt they can combat different forms of stigma if it is still persisting.

2.4.3 Lack of professional counselling

In South Africa most of the teen mothers reported that they were returning to school without going through any counselling on how they could be prepared to deal with stigma, issues around parenting and meeting the demands of the school. The consequence is that teen mothers get overwhelmed with their situation in school and many fail to cope, resulting in school dropout. All the teen mothers interviewed expressed that nobody offered them counselling on how to get themselves ready to face their new situation, (Chigona and Chetty 2007).

Lack of professional counselling in Chigona and Chetty (2007) study is depicted as one of the barrier to successful implementation of readmission policy. The revised readmission policy in Malawi requires that a student be counselled before leaving school while she is pregnant and upon being readmitted (Ministry of education, 2006). Fawe News (2001) argues that teen mothers become academic and social rejects. They are traumatized and fear being laughed at by their peers and schoolmates. In addition to that, there is the nagging thought at the back of their minds that they have a baby at home. That is why it is imperative that teen mothers receive counselling. In this regard this study explored through seeking views of participants if this is being implemented. The study went further to explore if the challenge also exist in secondary schools in Malawi and sought after ways of addressing such a challenge if it exists.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study used a conceptual framework outlined by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), which states that participation is central to policy implementation. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) argue that stakeholders' participation is especially most important for policy legitimization and constituency building. It is therefore imperative to note that if participation has taken place, policy implementation challenges are lessened. Participation is defined differently by different people; however for the purpose of this study, participation is defined as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions, (World Bank, 1996 as cited in Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002).

Participation according to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) has three dimensions, 'the who,' 'the what,' and 'the how.' The 'who' question looks at various stakeholders who are affected by the policy those who have the power to help it or obstruct it. It is vital to emphasize the need for identifying stakeholders, particularly those who are affected by the policy in order to determine their interests. The 'what' question addresses the kind of participation being undertaken. Finally 'the how' question clarifies the qualitative aspect of participation. This dimension ranges from relatively more passive to increasingly more active modes. Seeking views of grassroot stakeholders on the implementation of re-admission policy will help determine their interest in the policy and their mode of participation in its implementation.

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), argue that participation may increase the likelihood of implementation or sustainability of a new policy. Consulting stakeholders on their views is one way of involving them. In support to this Evans *et al* (1995: 25) say if consultation has

taken place, it provides an opportunity to listen to people's perceptions of the problems and to get their reactions. Expanded participation leads to greater responsiveness to the needs of the proposed beneficiaries. This may result into a better fit between needs and policy solutions leading to better policy outcomes. Finally participation increases support, legitimacy and responsiveness of a particular policy, (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002).

In this study grassroot stakeholders are very important for the successful implementation of the policy. Policy formation and implementation requires stakeholders' involvement. The conceptual framework shows that participation increases support, legitimacy and responsiveness of a particular policy. The study illustrates the kind of participation which was there among stakeholders in the process of implementing readmission policy. The study also explains how involvement of stakeholders or lack of it, affected the implementation of the policy. Through this framework, the study shows that if there is no participation, people have little knowledge of the policy. In that case, they do not take responsibility of policy implementation. The concept of who participates in the study and how they participate has also been used. The study illustrates how the grassroot stakeholders who participate in the implementation of the policy and how they participate.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on girls' education and the benefits of sending girls to school. The chapter also reviews the challenges that affect girls' education; such as high dropout and high repetition in the same class. The literature shows that one of the major reasons why girls dropout of school is pregnancy. This has led to different governments including Malawi, to come up with the readmission policy. Literature also shows that the

implementation of revised readmission policy in Malawi is facing challenges. Most of the studies that have been reviewed in this study agree that there are problems in implementing the readmission policy, and the question is; why is readmission policy still facing similar challenges that were faced before revising it? Studies have exposed challenges encountered in the implementation of the readmission policy and the causes but the studies did not go deeper to seek the views of the stakeholders at grass root level on why the implementation challenges that were there before revising the policy are still surfacing. In addition the studies do not explain on what the grassroots stakeholders thought would be the best way of implementing the policy. It is from this background that this study wanted to establish the reasons why the policy is still facing challenges through seeking perceptions of stakeholders at the grass root level, since insufficient involvement of one or more stakeholders, can result into failure of education reforms.

This chapter is followed by the third chapter which discusses research design and methodology. The chapter outlines the sample, sampling technique, data collection techniques, data analysis and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter describes the approach that was taken in order to answer the research questions of the study. It describes the methodology that was used as well as the design of the study. It also explains the sampling procedures which was used, data collection procedures and data analysis as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Methodology

The study employed mixed methods strategy. Mixed methods research is an approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative forms, (Creswell, 2008). The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods helped to counterbalance the biases of any single method. Creswell (2008) also points out that, mixed methods is based on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem. The intent of the researcher in this study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of participants on readmission policy. The qualitative data provided the personal narratives, views and experiences on the implementation of the policy. The quantitative data provided a generalized pattern of participation of the participants in the implementation of the policy.

Qualitative approach was used for exploring and understanding the views that individuals or groups ascribe to the implementation of readmission policy. According to Creswell (2003), the assumption in choosing the qualitative research lies in the social constructionist world view. Social constructionists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The goal of this kind of study was to seek the participants' views of the situation being studied. This fitted well with the study being undertaken since the study was an exploration on the knowledge and perceptions of parents, teachers and students on readmission policy. The quantitative approach on the other hand, provided a numeric description of trends on knowledge of the sampled population on readmission policy.

The theoretical framework guiding the methods of this study was pragmatism. According to Creswell (2008), pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions. It concerns itself with what works and solutions to the problems rather than focusing on methods. As such pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. Pragmatism as a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies focused attention on the research problem and then used pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the implementation of readmission policy. Pragmatism applies to mixed methods research such as this study in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research (Creswell, 2008). In addition, Teddie and Tashakkori (2009) articulate that pragmatism offers a third choice that embraces super ordinate ideas gleaned through consideration of the perspectives from both sides of the paradigms debate in interaction with the research question and the real world circumstances.

Furthermore, this study employed mixed methods in order to use both quantitative and qualitative approaches for collecting and analyzing data rather than subscribing to only one way in order to get a better understanding on the implementation of readmission policy. This study was multi-purposed in the sense that it was looking for knowledge and perceptions in the implementation of readmission policy and a “what works” tactic allowed the researcher to address questions that did not fit comfortably within a wholly quantitative or qualitative approach or research design and methodology, hence the choice of mixed methods.

3.2 Research design

Research design, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 117), is the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research question. It also provides the most valid and accurate answers possible for the research questions. It is important because it shows the individual what is to be studied, when, and under which conditions they may be studied.

This study is concurrent embedded study. According to Creswell (2008), this is a mixed method strategy which is identified by its use of one data collecting phase, during which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously. Concurrent method was preferred because it provided opportunity to gain perspectives from different types of data and from different levels within the study. Furthermore, it was less time consuming since it allowed both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected at the same time. The concurrent embedded strategy has a primary data source that guides the project and a

secondary database that provides a supporting role in the procedures (Creswell, 2008). In this study, the primary method is qualitative approach and the secondary method is quantitative. The secondary method addressed one research question that the primary method did not address. This strategy allowed the researcher to explore the perceptions of the participants at the same time the quantitative aspect helped enrich the description of the participants on their knowledge of readmission policy and its practice. The question which was addressed by the secondary method was determining the knowledge and practice of the policy. This information helped to explain the perspective that participants had on the policy.

3.3 Sample

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006: 126) describe a sample as the collective, group of subjects or participants from whom data are collected. The sample of this study incorporated participants from secondary schools in Blantyre rural. These schools were categorised as conventional secondary schools and community day secondary school (CDSS). There are three conventional secondary schools and twenty seven community day secondary schools in Blantyre rural. A total of ten schools were sampled from the CDSSs, whereas all the three conventional secondary schools were included. The target population included secondary school teachers, teen mothers and parents/guardians to teen mothers. These were ten head teachers, twenty nine teen mothers, twenty one parents/guardians and four teachers. In total, the study involved sixty four participants from the thirteen schools. The Education Division Manager for South West Education Division as well as head teachers from the chosen schools provided vital information which assisted in identifying

the teen mothers. The head teachers and Education Managers were able to identify which students were teen mothers because during withdrawal procedures they received withdrawal copies from some students, (Ministry of Education, 2006). Additionally, the head teachers were able to provide information by enquiring from their members of staff.

3.4 Sampling technique

Sampling involves the drawing of the subject from the population for data collection. The study used stratified purposeful sampling technique. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogeneous groups, and each containing subjects of similar characteristics. The list of schools was provided by the Division office. The three convention schools were all included. In order to come up with the ten CDSSs, firstly the schools were categorised according to their geographical positions. From those groups, the schools were chosen purposively. The three identified strata were teen mothers, the parents/guardians to teen mothers that were in school and teachers, within the strata the participants were selected purposefully. Purposive sampling was done in order to come up with teachers who have handled the teen mothers. It also helped to come up with teen mothers from different years, as this provided a wider perspective of what was happening at the school concerning the policy. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because it provided room to the researcher to choose participants who could build up the sample that was satisfactory to the needs of study. In this case the participants were teen mothers, their teachers and their guardians/parents and these were specifically chosen because of the knowledge they had and perceptions they would have on readmission policy, since they had either dealt with teen mothers or they

were teen mother themselves. Participants for quantitative part included all teen mothers from all the sampled schools. Stratified purposeful sampling technique was adopted because of its possibility to blend randomization and categorization.

3.5 Data collection

Interviews and questionnaires were methods used for sourcing out data from participants, where as interview guides and a closed questionnaire constituted instruments used for collecting data. Interviews were conducted on twenty participants who included; four head teachers, four teachers, five parents/ guardians and seven teen mothers. The interviews conducted were semi-structured. According to Merriam (1988), ‘semi-structured interviews are guided by a list of the questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time and this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent and to the new ideas on the topic.

The main reason of conducting interviews in this study was to get to what people really thought about implementation of readmission policy at secondary schools which could not be elaborated by using any other method of collecting data. Through interviews the researcher had an opportunity to probe on answers which were not clear. In addition interviews were appropriate for this study because they allowed understanding of the context and reasoning for evolving policies such as readmission policy, as well as some understanding of its implementation from those at the school level as well as the community. Table one shows the participants for the interviews:

Table 1: Participants for interviews

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	Total
Head teacher	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
Teachers	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
Teen mothers	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
Parents	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
Totals	4	3	4	4	3	3	20

Table 1, shows that in some sampled schools not all categories of participants were interviewed. For instance, in some schools teen mothers, were not found as they had gone to write MANEB examinations at cluster centres. Similarly, some teachers and head teachers had gone to invigilate or to supervise MANEB examinations and it was not possible to follow some of them as the cluster centres were far away from their schools. In cases whereby cluster centres were near, participants were followed there.

The questionnaire was a method that was used to collect quantitative data which needed more participants hence the need to administer it in all the sampled schools. Through the questionnaire the researcher wanted to establish participants' knowledge and practice as regards to the implementation of readmission policy. The questionnaire was administered to sixty participants, who included twenty one parents/guardians, twenty nine teen mothers and ten head teachers. The questionnaires were self-administered and were collected soon after completion. Table 2 below shows the participants for the questionnaire:

Table 2: Participant for Questionnaire

	Teen mother	Parents/guardians	Head teacher
School A	3	3	0
School B	0	0	1
School C	3	1	1
School D	2	2	1
School E	1	1	0
School F	3	3	1
School G	3	1	1
School H	4	2	1
School I	1	0	1
School J	3	2	0
School K	1	0	1
School L	1	2	1
School M	4	4	1
Total	29	21	10

The study used dichotomous questions, these were chosen in order to enable comparison to be made within the three groups; the teen mothers, head teachers and parents/guardians. Furthermore dichotomous questions were used because they compel respondents to come off the fence on an issue and provide a clear, unambiguous response. Cohen *et al* (2007) argue that dichotomous questions are limited in their usefulness to researchers by their fixity of response caused by the need to select from the given choice of responses. To circumvent this issue the researcher carried out a pilot. This provided an opportunity for respondents to provide their suggestions on some more pressing issues which were not initially included.

The questionnaires were conducted in all the thirteen sampled schools. From these thirteen schools, six schools were then sampled for interviews. It was also proper to do the interviews in the same schools sampled for questionnaires because this provided room for

triangulation. Information obtained through the interviews was triangulated with that of the questionnaires. Participants who had gone for MANEB examinations were followed to their cluster centres. In addition to make sure that the number of participants is maintained in some schools questionnaires were administered to more than one participant.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis in this study occurred within both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixing of data from the two methods was through integration of the information and matching up of one data source with the other, (Creswell 2008). Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and in particular frequencies and cross tabulations. A cross tabulation has been defined by Cohen *et al*, (2007) as a presentational device, whereby one variable is presented in relation to another, with the relevant data inserted into each cell. The intention of having a quantitative data was to determine the relationship between variables such as knowledge of readmission policy and practice. The researcher then qualified the quantitative data, by creating factors or themes which were compared with themes from the qualitative database.

Qualitative data collection and analysis were concurrent thereby promoting the emergency of a substantive theory grounded in empirical data). Qualitative data analysis started with transcribing the data into text. The data analysis process was an ongoing process involving continual reflection about data, asking analytic questions concerning the implementation of the policy and writing memos throughout the study. Data from different individuals were merged into key issues and were coded. Coding the data involved dividing the text into

small units and assigning a label to each unit. Then from the coded units the researcher checked the list of relevant meaning and eliminated those clearly redundant to others previously listed. Themes and categories were subsequently generated and finally a report was written. In some cases numerical data was illustrated in table form and in reporting, unbiased language was used. According to Cohen *et al* (2007) qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data, in short making sense of the data in terms of the participants, definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Qualitative data analysis was completed when critical categories had been defined, relationships among them established and integrated into a grounded theory. Grounded theory involves a constant comparative technique, where comparison between similarities and differences are made between coded fragments, just as in this study. (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

3.7 Ethical considerations

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006: 16) describe ethics as a consideration of fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, respect of integrity of the individual, individual privacy and informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity. In this study, the researcher sought permission from gate keepers before going to the schools. Permission was sought from the Ministry of Education through the Education Division's office. The researcher then asked for the consent of each participant before taking part in the study. The principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self determination, (Cohen *et al*, 2007). The researcher explained to the participants the importance of their involvement in the study. The

participants were told that they had the right to choose whether to participate in the study or not and that they also had the right to withdraw if they felt so.

In addition, Creswell (2003) points out that the purpose for the study needs to be made clear to participants, in order for them to understand the nature of the research and its likely impact on them. In this study, participants were informed about the aim of the study and how it is significant. The participants were told that the study is for academic purposes.

In view of privacy, the researcher ensured that no names were written on questionnaires and during interviews participants were not asked to mention their names. In conformity to this Cohen *et al*, (2007) say the principal of ensuring anonymity is not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification. The second way of ensuring participants' privacy was through the promise of confidentiality. This means that although the researcher knows who provided the information or are able to identify the participants from the information given they will in no way make connections known publicly, (Cohen *et al*, 2007).

3.8 Trustworthiness of the study

To ensure trustworthiness of the study firstly the research instruments (questionnaire and interview guides) were given to the supervisors for scrutiny and comments and to classmates for peer reviewing. This helped the researcher to modify the research instruments accordingly. Furthermore the instruments were piloted at one secondary school in Blantyre rural which was not included in the sampled schools, to see if they were

capturing the intended data. The respondents were asked to make comments on the research instruments about questions which were not clear and this provided an opportunity for respondents to provide their suggestions on some more pressing issues which were not initially included.

Secondly, two data collecting techniques were used for the reason of triangulation, for instance interviews and questionnaires were used. The results which were obtained through the questionnaire were cross checked with the results obtained through interviews. In addition data was collected from several sources, for instance there were 29 teen mothers, 21 parents/guardians, 10 head teachers and 4 teachers. All these participants were respondent to the similar interview guides and questionnaires. According to Creswell (2008) to establish trustworthiness of the study, triangulate different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. Themes established based on converging several sources of data or perspective from participants can be claimed as trustworthy. Data triangulation helped to establish dependability and trustworthiness of the study.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology. The chapter shows that the study used the mixed methods strategy, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect and analyse data. It has also been expressed that the theoretical framework guiding the methods of study was pragmatism. Pragmatism as a philosophy for mixed methods studies focuses attention on the research problem and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem. Furthermore the

chapter outlined the sample and the sampling technique. The sample comprised of 29 teen mothers, 21 parents/guardians to teen mothers, 4 teachers and 10 head teachers from 13 secondary schools in Blantyre rural. The sampling technique used in this study was stratified purposeful sampling. Interviews and questionnaires were techniques used for sourcing out data from participants and the instruments used were interview guides and closed questionnaire. Data was analysed by using quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and in particular frequencies and cross tabulations where as qualitative data was analysed using ground theory. This chapter also described ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study. Participants were asked for their consent before participating in the study, and to achieve confidentiality no names were written on the interview guides and the questionnaires. To ensure trustworthiness the instruments for collecting data were scrutinised by the supervisors and were also given to classmates for peer review. In addition the tools were piloted.

This chapter is followed by chapter four which outlines the results and discussion. The chapter presents the findings from the study, the discussion and their implications.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study in relation to each research question. The study was set to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between knowledge of the readmission policy and actual practice of implementing the policy in rural secondary schools?
2. How are grassroots stakeholders involved in the implementation of the readmission policy in rural areas?
3. What support mechanisms are available for teen mothers at secondary school in rural areas? How do rural grassroots stakeholders perceive the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools?

4.1 Knowledge and Practice of the policy procedures

The first research question aimed at finding out what people know about the policy and its procedures and what they put into practice. The study assessed the knowledge of participants on the existence of readmission policy, knowledge that when girls fall pregnant they write withdrawal letters and after giving birth they apply for readmission through writing. The study further established whether participants were practising what they knew.

4.1.1 Knowledge of the policy procedures

The study established that almost all participants knew that there is readmission policy. However participants lack comprehensive knowledge on the policy procedures, as indicated below.

Table 3: Participants' knowledge on the policy's existence

Participants	N	Knowledge of the policy's existence		Total
		Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	93% (27)	2 (7%)	100%
Head Teachers	10	100% (10)	0 (0%)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	95% (20)	1 (5%)	100%
Total	60	57 (95%)	3 (5%)	100

Asked whether the participants knew the existence of readmission policy at secondary school level, table 3, shows that 93% of the 29 teen mothers who participated in the questionnaire knew that there is a policy that allows girls to go back to school after giving birth; on the same 95% of the 21 parents/guardians were also aware of the policy and furthermore, all the 10 teachers acknowledged knowing the policy. These findings show that most participants (95%) have the knowledge on the existence of the policy.

After establishing the knowledge of participants on the existence of the policy, the study further discovered the knowledge of participants on procedures that teen mothers were supposed to follow in withdrawing as well as readmission. Participants were asked if they knew that when girls fall pregnant they are supposed to write withdrawal letters. Table 4 shows that most teen mothers and their parents/guardians were not aware.

Table 4: Participants' knowledge that pregnant girls should submit 3 copies of letter to the head teacher when withdrawing.

Participants	Knowledge that pregnant girls should submit 3 copies to head teacher			Total
	N	Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	41% (12)	59% (17)	100%
Head Teachers	10	90% (9)	10% (1)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	24% (5)	76% (16)	100%
Total	60	26 (43%)	34 (57%)	100%

According to table 4, 59% of the 29 teen mothers did not know that they were supposed to write withdrawal letters to the head teachers. Similarly 76% of the parents/guardians did not know that their daughters were supposed to write withdrawal letters. On the other hand 90% of the head teachers were aware of the procedure. The results mean that, of the participants who participated in the questionnaire most parents and their daughters were not aware of this policy procedure, however almost all head teachers knew this policy requirement. Lack of knowledge by teen mothers and their parents/guardians that pregnant girls should submit withdrawal letters implies that the implementation of the policy was compromised. If teen mothers and their parents did not know this policy procedure it is obvious then that it was not possible for them to put the procedure into practice. However these are the most important stakeholders in the policy.

Participants were also asked whether they knew that teen mothers were supposed to apply for readmission after one academic year, table 5 below shows that most participants were not aware.

Table 5: Participants' knowledge that Teen mother should apply for readmission.

Participants	N	Participants knowledge that teen mothers apply for readmission		Total
		Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	41% (12)	59% (17)	100%
Head Teachers	10	100% (10)	0% (0)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	23% (5)	77% (16)	100%
Total	60	45% (27)	55%(33)	100%

Table 5 indicates that 59% of 29 teen mothers were unaware that they were supposed to apply for readmission through writing while 41% knew. On the same note all the head teachers were aware that teen mothers have to apply for readmission. On the other hand 77% of the parents did not know this procedure. This is an indication that this procedure was not adequately communicated to the parents/guardians and the teen mothers and this had an impact on the effective implementation of the policy.

Furthermore, teen mothers were asked if they knew that they were supposed to receive counselling, both before they left school while they were pregnant and after coming back to school as teen mothers. Table 6 shows that most teen mothers and parents were ignorant of this procedure.

Table 6: Knowledge on counselling

	Knowledge of counselling of pregnant girls					Knowledge of counselling of teen mothers			
Participants	N	Yes	No	Total		N	Yes	No	Total
Teen mothers	29	28% (8)	72% (21)	100%		29	17% (5)	83% (24)	100%
Head Teachers	10	60% (6)	40% (4)	100%		10	80% (8)	20% (2)	100%
Parents	21	10% (2)	90% (19)	100%		21	10% (2)	90% (19)	100%
Total	60	27% (16)	73% (44)	100%		60	(25%) 15	(75%) 45	100%

According to table 6 most teen mothers did not know that they were required to receive counselling, for instance 72% of teen mothers did not know that a pregnant girl was supposed to be counselled and 83% did not know that as soon as the teen mother reports for school she was also supposed to receive counselling. On the contrary 60% of head teachers knew that pregnant girls were supposed to be counselled and 80% of head teachers knew that teen mothers were expected to receive counselling when they reported for school. About 90% of the parents also did not know that their daughters were supposed to receive counselling while they were pregnant before leaving school, and after being readmitted as teen mothers. This means that this policy procedure was mainly known by the school administrators and not the beneficiaries of the policy. This means that the policy procedure was poorly disseminated to parents/guardians and to the students. This would result into ineffective implementation of readmission policy.

In general the study shows that most head teachers interviewed knew the policy procedures, while most teen mothers and parents/guardians did not know the policy guidelines. This

means that most head teachers did not disseminate the policy procedures to students and their parents/guardians even though they had knowledge about them. Lack of knowledge on the beneficiaries of the policy could be responsible for ineffective implementation of the policy because they could not seek for the procedures to be implemented.

4.1.2 Practice on implementation of the policy

A part from establishing participants' knowledge of the existence of the policy and its guidelines, the study also sought to find out how the actual practice on the ground was.

Table 7 shows whether teen mothers submitted withdrawal letters, to the head teachers before they went home or not. The table also shows whether head teachers received withdrawal letters or not.

Table 7: Pregnant girls who submitted a withdrawal letter to the head teacher

Participants	N	Pregnant girls		Total
		submit letters	withdraw	
		Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	35% (10)	65% (19)	100%
Head Teachers	10	70% (7)	30% (3)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	19% (4)	81% (17)	100%

When asked whether teen mothers actually submitted withdrawal letters to the head teacher, table 7 indicates that 65% of the teen mothers did not write withdrawal letters. They just withdrew on their own. This corresponded with the findings from parents/guardians, as evidenced by 81% of the parents/guardians who declined that their daughters wrote

withdrawal letters. However 70% of head teachers acknowledged receiving withdrawal letters from pregnant school girls. Though head teachers agreed that they received withdrawal letters, those letters came from a few pregnant girls since most the girls and parents indicated that the teen mothers just withdrew without writing withdrawal letters. In addition, the data collected through interviews indicated that some head teachers did not receive withdrawal letters. It can be concluded therefore that most teen mothers who participated in this study just left the school without tendering their withdrawal letters. This means that the policy was not implemented as desired, since the policy explains that once a girl is found pregnant she has to submit a withdrawal letter to the head teacher before she leaves school, who in turn forwards the letter to the division office. This means that the division office and the headquarters do not have a good picture of the reality.

The study furthermore established whether teen mothers applied for readmission through submitting letters to the head teachers or not. Table 8 shows that a few teen mothers submitted letters of readmission while others did not submit the written applications.

Table 8: Teen mothers that applied for readmission

Participants	N	Teen mothers that applied for readmission		Total
		Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	21% (6)	79% (23)	100%
Head Teachers	10	70% (7)	30% (3)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	18% (4)	82% (17)	100%

According to table 8, 79% of the teen mothers who were in school did not follow the normal procedure of application for readmission. Out of the 21 parents/guardians who answered the questionnaire 82% of them concur with the teen mothers, indicating that their daughters did not write application letters for readmission. On the contrary, 70% of the head teachers indicated that they received readmission letters from teen mothers. Though head teachers acknowledged receiving application letters from the teen mothers, table 8 shows that most teen mothers did not apply through writing. The study here suggests that some head teachers did not receive the application letters despite acknowledging that they were receiving application letters. This evidenced by most teen mothers' response and most parents/guardians who denied that teen mothers submitted application letters. The table shows that the policy procedure which requires teen mothers to write application letters for readmission was not followed by most participants. This would mean that most head teachers did not inform the pregnant girls about the policy procedures. A few head teachers indicated that they explained the policy procedures to the teen mothers. Head teachers who attended the interviews for instance, explained that they informed the pregnant girls about this policy procedure. However, the study shows that some head teachers were also not aware of this policy procedure therefore it was not possible for them to explain what they did not know. This implies that many teen mothers were readmitted without submitting application letters. According to the interviews which were conducted besides the questionnaire, teen mothers explained that an informal arrangement was made by their parents with their head teachers to have them readmitted.

Table 9 shows whether teen mothers returned to school after one academic year or more than that. The table shows that a good number of teen mothers returned after one academic year as indicated in the table:

Table 9: Teen mothers who returned to school after one year

Participants	N	Teen mothers who returned to school		Total
		Yes	No	
Teen mothers	29	53% (15)	47% (14)	100%
Head Teachers	10	100% (10)	0% (0)	100%
Parents/guardians	21	25% (5)	75% (16)	100%

Table 9 shows that 53% of the teen mothers who took part in the questionnaire returned to school after one academic year while 47% of the teen mothers returned to school after staying home more than one academic year. All head teachers showed that teen mothers returned to school after one academic year, while 75% of the parents indicated that their daughters did not return after one academic year. This means that teen mothers do go back to school, though some stay at home more than one academic year. In some cases teen mother returned after two or three years. The finding from the head teachers that all teen mothers returned to school after one academic year is doubtful, because some teen mothers that took part in the study indicated that they came to school after two academic years. However, this does not mean that all pregnant girls who leave school do return back to the school, the study only targeted teen mothers who were in school. The main focus of the study was to look at how the policy procedures developed in 2006 were being put in place.

In addition to that, the study wanted to establish whether revising the policy by putting up the readmission procedures had improved its implementation.

Lastly to determine whether procedures were being put into practice, participants were asked if teen mothers received counselling while they were pregnant and after coming back to school. Table 10 shows the percentages of those that received counselling and those who were not counselled as indicated below:

Table 10: Practice on counselling

Practice on counselling of pregnant girls					Practice on counselling of teen mothers			
Participants	N	Yes	No	Total	N	Yes	No	Total
Teen mothers	29	20% (6)	80% (23)	100%	29	31% (9)	69% 20	100%
Head Teachers	10	50% (5)	50% (5)	100%	10	40% (4)	60% (6)	100%
Parents	21	15% (3)	85% (18)	100%	21	10% (2)	90% (19)	100%

Table 10 shows that only 20% of the girls acknowledged receiving counselling while they were pregnant and 31% upon being readmitted. This was in agreement with what parents/guardians expressed. According to parents/guardians 15% of the girls received counselling while they were pregnant and 10% of the teen mothers during readmission. Almost half of the head teachers admitted that girls were not counselled either while pregnant or after returning to school as teen mothers. Counselling is supposed to be provided at school by the teachers. This means that teen mothers were counselled at school.

Table 10 shows that more teen mothers received counselling than those who indicated that they knew they were supposed to receive counselling in table 6. The study shows that in some school teen mothers were counselled despite having prior knowledge of the counselling procedure.

The findings of table 10, shows that once girls are pregnant they do not go through the process of counselling likewise when teen mothers are being readmitted. This means that teen mothers are not prepared emotionally to cope with challenges that come due to motherhood and schooling.

In summary the study is showing that most of the policy procedures are not followed by most grassroots stakeholders. For instance, though teen mothers were back in school, most of them did not follow the right channel of readmission. Most teen mothers did not write withdrawal letters while they were pregnant rather they just left school. Furthermore, during readmission, most teen mothers did not write application letters but they just used informal arrangements with their head teachers. The study also shows that parents/guardians did not help their daughters to follow the policy procedures during readmission, since they too did not know the policy procedures. However most head teachers indicated that they received withdrawal copies and readmission applications from teen mothers, which signifies that within a school some teen mothers followed the policy procedures whereas others did not.

4.1.3 Relationship between knowledge and practice

After establishing the knowledge and practice which teen mothers had on re-admission policy procedures, the study also wanted to find out whether teen mothers who knew the policy procedures were putting them into practice as shown by tables 11, 12 and 13.

Table 11 shows the relationship between teen mothers' knowledge on submission of letters to head teachers and actual practice. The table shows that there was some relationship between knowledge and practice.

Table 11: Relationship between Teen mothers Knowledge on Submission of letters to Head teachers and actual practice

KNOWLEDGE		PRACTICE		
		I Submitted Copies		
		NO	YES	Total
Knowledge to Submit copies	NO	88.2% (15)	11.8% (2)	100% (17)
	YES	33.3% (4)	66.7% (8)	100% (12)

Table 11 indicates that 88.2% of the teen mothers who were not aware that they were supposed to submit withdrawal copies also denied that they submitted withdrawal copies. However 11.8% submitted withdrawal letters despite not having the knowledge. Furthermore 66.7% of the teen mothers who admitted to have the knowledge of the procedure also admitted to have submitted withdrawal copies and 33.3% of them who had

knowledge that they were supposed to submit withdrawal copies, indicated that they did not submit the copies. The study shows that most teen mothers who knew about this policy procedure were putting it into practice, and those who did not know the policy procedure they did not put it into practice. However there are a few teen mothers who were not putting into practice what they knew. It can be concluded therefore that there is a significant relationship between knowledge and practice on this procedure, with Pvalue being 0.005 where as the level of significance is 0.05.

The study also sought to establish if there was a relationship between teen mothers knowledge on application for readmission and its practice. Table 12, shows the relationship between knowledge on the policies requirement that teen mothers should apply for readmission and its practice (i.e. whether teen mothers actually submitted a written application for readmission).

Table 12: Relationship between Teen Mothers knowledge on application for readmission and actual application for readmission

KNOWLEDGE		PRACTICE		
Knew they had to apply for readmission		I applied for readmission		
		NO	YES	Total
	NO	92.9% (13)	7.1% (1)	100% (14)
	YES	60.0% (9)	40.0 % (6)	100% (15)

Table 12 shows that 92.9% of the teen mothers who disagreed that they knew they were supposed to apply for readmission through writing also denied to have applied for readmission. Whereas 7.1% did not know about the policy procedure but they indicated that they applied for readmission. Furthermore 40 % of the teen mothers who agreed that they have knowledge of the procedure actually tendered written applications to the head teachers and 60% of the teen mothers who indicated that they had knowledge of the policy procedure, did not actually submit written applications.

In general the table 12 shows that most teen mothers who did not have the knowledge of the policy procedure did not apply for readmission. Some teen mothers who had the knowledge of this procedure, applied for readmission through writing. However a bigger percentage of

the teen mothers who knew this policy procedure did not put it into practice. Table 12 shows that most teen mothers who were knowledgeable on this procedure were not putting it into practice. This means that there is no significant relationship between those that knew the policy and its practice.

Table 13 below shows the relationship between teen mothers' knowledge on counselling and whether the teen mothers received counselling after being readmitted.

Table 13: Relationship between Knowledge on Teen mother's counselling and actual counselling received

KNOWLEDGE		PRACTICE		
Knowledge on Counselling		I received counselling		Total
		NO	YES	
	NO	75% (18)	25% (6)	100% (24)
	YES	40% (2)	60% (3)	100% (5)

About 75% of the teen mothers who did not know that they were supposed to receive counselling also disagreed to have received counselling. While 25% of the teen mothers received counselling though they did not know that they were supposed to receive counselling. Conversely 60% of the teen mothers who acknowledged that they were aware of the counselling procedure indicated that they received counselling. About 40% of the

teen mothers who knew that they were supposed to receive counselling, did not receive it. This shows that most teen mothers who knew this procedure were actually putting it into practice and as expected most of those who did not know this policy procedure did not receive counselling. The study suggests that there are some schools that do not provide counselling to teen mothers, although a good number of head teachers indicated that they knew that teen mothers were supposed to receive counselling. This is evidenced 75% of teen mothers not receiving counselling. In addition, 40% of the teen mothers who knew about counselling also did not receive counselling, could suggest that these teen mothers did not seek for counselling services from their teachers. It could also mean that schools did not have counselling committees.

In summary the study found that there is a relationship between knowledge and practice of the policy. In most cases teen mothers were putting into practise the policy procedures they knew. Likewise when teen mothers expressed that they did not know a procedure most of them were unable to put that procedure into practice. The results from the questionnaire concur with the explanations given by the teen mothers during interviews. The results from the interviews showed that most teen mothers did not know the policy procedures. As a result, they did not follow the procedures when withdrawing from school. Most teachers who participated in the study were also not aware of all the policy procedures stipulated in the 2006 guidelines. Teachers also concurred with the teen mothers that policy procedures are not followed by most of the teen mothers and head teachers. At one school, a teacher pointed out that “unfortunately it is the head teacher who is more knowledgeable of the policy procedures and not its beneficiaries i.e. the teen mothers and the parents/guardians.” In agreement two teachers from different schools said they had never seen the policy

document, and when it was enquired if the head teachers from these schools have ever explained the policy to them they declined. However some head teachers had a different opinion from that of the teen mothers. These head teachers indicated that the policy procedures are being followed.

At one school the head teacher agreed that some girls withdrew without the knowledge of the teachers while some teen mothers followed the following procedure;

- Head prefects inform teachers, of the girls who are suspected to be pregnant
- After getting the news, we do ask the Parents Teachers association (PTA) female members to interrogate the suspected girls.
- The PTA female members provide counselling to the girls that they should not abort the baby.
- We ask the parents to come and discuss with them that they have to accept the situation and still handle the girl as their daughter. We also advise parents to write a letter and that the girl should also write a letter explaining her condition. We also write a cover letter, each copy is sent to Education Division office to secure a place so that after delivery the girl can come back to school.

In support to this another head teacher said; “we do ask guardians to write a letter because they are the ones who will be looking after the baby while the mother goes to school. The letter is an assurance to us that the guardians are accepting the responsibility over the baby.” On their part parents/guardians said the most common procedure that they follow when their daughters have been found pregnant is to go and discuss with the head teacher on what should be done to ensure that their daughter comes back to school. As one parent put it,

“when my daughter got pregnant I went to the head teacher to enquire about what we should do. The head teacher advised us to come back to him when the baby is born. When the baby was born, we went back to the head teacher, and he accepted my daughter back to school.”

This means that the policy procedures were not adequately disseminated to all stakeholders within the school. This explains the reason why the policy procedures in most schools were not being fully followed. In most cases teen mothers were coming back to school without following the procedures. In some cases the head teachers accepted the applications without sending them to the Education Division office.

The implication of grassroots stakeholder’s inadequate knowledge on the policy procedures is that the implementation of the policy is compromised. Since most teen mothers did not know the policy procedures they did not practice them where as few teen mothers who knew the policy procedures were practising them. Dissemination of policy procedures is very important if the implementation of the policy is to be successful. In a study done by Wamahiu (1995) in Botswana, it was found that less than 30% of teenage mothers returned to school after delivery due to the lack of information about re-admittance. This evidence points to the fact that even where there are policies in place regarding the re-admission of teen mothers, if the information is not very clear to the grassroots stakeholders, policies cannot be implemented effectively.

4.2 Participation in the implementation of readmission policy

The second research question sought to find out how teen mothers, parents/guardians and teachers were taking part in the implementation of readmission policy. The participants were asked to explain how they were being involved in the implementation of readmission policy and the kind of collaboration that is there amongst grassroots stakeholders in implementing the policy.

4.2.1 Teen mothers' participation on implementation of readmission policy

Participation of teen mothers in the implementation of readmission policy was mainly by; going back to school and seeking a place for readmission.

4.2.1.1 Going back to school

Teen mothers were asked to explain how they participate in the implementation of readmission policy. The study found out that 4 out of 8 teen mothers who took part in the interview said their role was to go back to school and to work hard at school. One teen mother said “my role is to go back to school, because if I do not go back to school my baby will suffer.” On the same point, another teen mother uttered, “My role is to go back to school and work hard at school so that I should get educated.” In agreement to the views of these teen mothers, parents/guardians also explained that teen mothers take part in the implementation of readmission policy by voluntarily going back to school after delivery. The study found out that 3 out of 5 of parents felt that teen mothers took part in implementing the policy through attending classes. One guardian said, “By showing willingness to go back to school and participate in schooling, teen mothers take part in the

implementation process.”The views of teachers on this question are also in agreement with what the teen mothers themselves said. According to teachers, teen mothers involve themselves in the implementation of readmission policy by showing willingness to go back to school and stay there. As explained by one teacher who said “the role of teen mothers is to show interest in education and by showing interest, it means they are taking consequences that may follow because it is abnormal for a mother to be at school.”

All in all, the study shows that going back to school is one way through which teen mothers were participating in the implementation of the policy. This shows that teen mothers take an initiative in implementing the policy. This implies that teen mothers have the desire to go back to school and continue with their education.

4.2.1.2 Seeking a place for readmission

The study found that the other role that teen mothers play in the implementation of the policy is to go to the head teacher to ask for re-admission. It was discovered that some teen mothers go straight to the head teacher to request for a place. Out of the six schools which were sampled for interviews, in three schools teen mothers were re-enrolled by head teachers. It was discovered that in these schools, teen mothers, in the company of their parents/guardians, would go and make a verbal request to the head teacher to readmit them and the head teachers accepted them back into class.

A teacher from one of the schools said, “Teen mothers participation in the implementation of the policy is evidenced by going to the head teacher’s office to ask him to reserve a place for them and if they were of good reputation they are re-admitted.” However the reputation

of the teen mother is not part of the policy. According to the policy, readmission of students requires that one should follow the withdrawal and readmission process as explained in the literature. On the same point, a head teacher said “the teen mothers participate by coming to school to ask for readmission and once they are readmitted they assure us that they are eager to go ahead with their education.” This role was only expressed by teen mothers and teachers. Parents did not indicate seeking a place for readmission as a role played by teen mothers. Parents/guardians were of the view that it was them who went to look for a place for readmission of their daughters.

This section shows that teen mothers had the responsibility of fetching a place for their readmission. The study shows that teen mothers returned to school though they did not know the policy procedures for readmission. Teen mothers would personally go to the head teachers to ask them for a place. This implies that in these schools teen mothers neither wrote letters to withdrawal due to pregnancy nor did they submit written applications for readmission through the head teacher and the Education Division office. However the policy says that teen mothers should apply through writing to the head teacher and Education Division Manager.

4.2.2 Participation of parents/guardian in implementation of readmission policy

The study discovered that parents/guardians too participate in the implementation of readmission policy by supporting the teen mothers to go back to school. The participation was through encouraging teen mothers to go back to school, looking after the babies to teen mothers and providing financial support.

4.2.2.1 Encouraging teen mothers to go back to school

All the participants; teen mothers, teachers, head teachers and parents/ guardians were asked to explain how they felt parents/guardians were taking part in the implementation of readmission policy. All teen mothers except one, expressed that their parents encouraged them to go back to school, as one teen mother puts it;

When I got pregnant my parents went to see the head teacher to find out if I had the chance of going back to school. The head teacher informed them of the policy which allows teen mothers to go back to school and informed them that we were required to write a letter to the Division through the school to request for my re-admission.

In addition, one teen mother explained that her parents were involved in the implementation of the policy by making sure that she did not get married. In her case the parents ensured that she did not meet the father of her child. In support, another teen mother said; “my mother encouraged me to go back to school” and she gave examples of some teen mothers who had gone back to school. On her part, another teen mother explained that “by allowing me to go back to school and assuring me that they were going to look after my baby was enough encouragement to get from my parents.” It was learnt through the study that apart from encouraging their daughters to go back to school, parents/guardians were also advising their daughters to work hard at school. Several teen mothers in the study said that their parents advised them to go back to school and complete their secondary education. To concur with the views of the teen mothers, parents/guardians also felt that they participated in the implementation of the policy as one parent explains;

I advise my daughter to work hard and concentrate on her studies and I point out to her the disadvantages of dropping out from school as well as the advantages of continuing with school. I also remind her, the experience that she went through while she was pregnant so that her focus should be on school.

While agreeing with the views of the parents/guardians and teen mothers on this role, teachers further proposed other roles that can be played by parents/guardians in the implementation of the policy. Teachers explained that parents/guardians need to be discouraging teen mothers from engaging into early marriage. Teachers also suggested that as long as the teen mother is at school, the parents should not be entertaining the man who fathered the child as this will lead to lack of seriousness on the part of the teen mother and may result in to poor performance. As one teacher said,

If the parent allows the father of the child to be meddling around a teen mother who has gone back to school, any small challenge that a teen mother can encounter at school she will not bother herself to deal with it because she will feel that the man to take care of her is already available.

Some teachers felt that parents should avoid making comments that would discourage their daughters to continue with schooling. Parents/ guardians have to understand the importance of sending their daughters back to school, as one teacher explains “school will help these teen mothers to be self reliant, thereby being able to support their children.”

The study therefore shows that parents/guardians play a big role in helping teen mothers to return to school. Encouraging teen mothers to go back to school and advising them to work hard would help them remain at school since they have sufficient support from their parents/guardians. This concurs with literature for instance, a study in Namibia, also shows that parents play an important role in encouraging their daughters to return to school after giving birth, (Shaningwa, 2007). This implies that encouragement coming from parents/guardians would assist in wooing teen mothers back to school and also retaining them in school.

4.2.2.2 Looking after teen mothers' babies

Apart from encouraging teen mothers to go back to school, participants felt that the other role of parents/guardians was looking after the babies of the teen mothers. For instance, teen mothers explained that parents/guardians take part in the implementation of readmission policy by taking care of the babies to teen mothers when the teen mothers have gone back to school. This was echoed by all the teen mothers who participated in the study. For example, one teen mother said 'my parents take care of my baby when I am at school.' This sentiment was echoed by another teen mother who said that her mother looks after her baby and she stays at school as a self boarder. Whereas another teen mother said; "my dad advised me to go back to school and mentioned that my mother would be looking after the baby when I am at school." In the same vein one teacher said; "by taking care of the babies to teen mothers, parents/guardians show interest in the policy and its implementation, since there were so many teen mothers who had not gone back to school because their parents were not willing to look after the babies." Parents also indicated that they do take care of the babies to teen mothers when their mothers have gone to school. For instance one parent explained that, "When my daughter gave birth, I allowed her to go back to school and I assumed the responsibility of taking care of her child. I provided the baby with all the necessities such as milk and clothes."

All categories of participants involved in this study expressed that looking after the babies to teen mothers was a significant role of parents/guardians, if teen mothers had to go back to school. It was found out that teen mothers could not afford to have their babies in a day care since they could not afford paying for the babies' school fees. In addition, rural secondary

schools that were sampled for this study do not provide day care facilities for the babies. So the only option of teen mothers was to leave their babies with their parents/guardians.

4.2.2.3 Seeking a place for readmission of their daughters

Furthermore, the study found that the other role of parents/guardians was to go to the head teachers to ask for a place for their readmission of their daughters. This was evidenced by one teen mother's response, who said; "I did not take any part as regards to my going back to school, it was my mother who went to ask for a place from the head teacher of our school and he granted her request." To concur with this view another teen mother said;

When my parents learned that I am pregnant they took me to the head teacher to request him to reserve a place for me. The head teacher advised them that I should write a letter and that after giving birth I will have to apply through writing another letter addressed to the head teacher.

Perceptions of Parents/ guardians on their role in the implementation of readmission policy agree with their daughters. Parents/ guardians also felt they participate by going to school to ask for a place for their daughter once they drop out due to pregnancy. As one parent explained; "when my daughter got pregnant I went straight to the head teacher to look for a place for her. I did not ask her to apply through a letter." In support, another parent explained, "When I realised that my daughter was pregnant, I went to talk with the head teacher who allowed her to be readmitted." This same view was also shared with teachers and at one school the head teacher said,

Parents/ guardians at this school do not only come to seek a place for readmission of their daughters, once their daughter has been readmitted they also come from time to time to find out their daughter's progress in class. When we send them school reports they come to seek explanation of the results.

On the same point another teacher said “we have seen several parents coming to the head teacher office to ask for a place for their daughters.” This shows that there was general consensus across the participants on this point.

All in all the study shows that parents/guardians to teen mothers want their daughters to continue with their education. In several cases cited in this study parents/guardians would go to the head teachers of their daughters to have the teen mothers readmitted. This shows that parents/guardians to teen mothers were not ashamed to accompany their daughters to school to seek a place for readmission and it also implies that they accepted the situation in which their daughters were. The parents/guardians were involved in their daughters’ education. This finding was inconsistent with the study that was done in South Africa by Chigona and Chetty (2008) where they established that some parents to teen mothers were distancing themselves from their daughters because they felt ashamed and that the community would look down upon them because of the actions of their daughters. Such parents did not want to be associated with their daughters’ education.

4.2.2.4 Providing financial support

Teen mothers indicated that their parents were responsible for paying school fees and providing them with writing materials. As one teen mother points out; “my parents are responsible for paying my school fees, buying me school uniform and writing materials.” While on the same, another teen mother said “my parents give me all the support I need for my school, ranging from school fees, school uniform, exercise books and many more things.” Additionally parents/guardians seconded this view as evidenced by one parent who said; “I support my daughter by providing her with school fees and all other necessities, and

I inform her that having a baby is not the end of her education. I would like her to be a role model to other girls who may find themselves in the same situation.” From the study, the only source of financial support mentioned was parents/guardians. If the parents/guardians did not take up this role, the teen mothers would not have gone back to school.

This study therefore shows that there was no financial support to meet the extra cost of bringing up a child apart from the financial support they got from their parents/guardians. The person responsible was not made to support the child by paying child maintenance. The burden was left entirely with the girl. This finding corresponds with what was found in Namibia, as Shaningwa (2007) reports, “Many young mothers assumed their family responsibilities alone because the fathers of their babies often left prior to the birth of the babies”.

In summary, the study established that parents/guardians look after teen mothers’ babies, encouraging teen mothers to go back to school, seeking a place for readmission of their daughters and providing them with financial support. The study shows that readmission of teen mothers largely depended on parents/ guardians’ requesting for a place from the head teachers. Some teen mothers were readmitted immediately as the head teachers were accepting the requests straight away, whereas some teen mothers were advised to write letters seeking readmission through the head teacher to the Education Division Manager. Therefore effective application of the policy procedures depended on the head teacher discretion.

4.2.3 Teachers' participation in the implementation of readmission policy

The study further explored the views of parents/guardians, teen mothers and the teachers themselves on the roles of the teachers in the implementation of readmission policy. It was discovered that teachers participate in a number of ways which include informing teen mothers about the policy, encouraging teen mothers to apply for readmission and creating a conducive environment for teen mothers.

4.2.3.1 Informing teen mothers about the policy

When teachers were asked on how they take part in the implementation of readmission policy, teachers expressed that they inform the girls who fall pregnant about the policy. This was evidenced by one deputy head teacher at one school who said; “we civic educate the girls on the policy. We inform them that once a girl falls pregnant, she has a chance to come back to school after delivery.” This view was shared by another teacher who expressed that; “We do inform the students who are at school about the policy so that they should be aware of it. While in the communities some still thought once a girl is found pregnant then that is the end of her education but the policy gives hope.” This view was also echoed by parents/guardians. All the parents/guardians who had their daughters readmitted through writing application letters admitted that it was the head teacher who informed them that their daughters were required to apply in order for them to get readmitted. For instance, one guardian explains; “when our daughter got pregnant, the head teacher invited us so that he should inform us of the policy. He told us that if we want our daughter to come back after delivery then we have to write a letter which would be sent to the division together with the

head teachers copy.” This shows that teen mothers who were readmitted following the recommended way of readmission were informed by their head teachers and teachers.

4.2.3.2 Encourage teen mothers to apply for readmission

The study established that encouraging teen mothers to go back to school was one way of participation in the implementation of readmission policy. It was discovered that teachers encourage teen mothers to go back to school after giving birth and to work hard at school once they are readmitted. This was the general consensus of all the teachers who participated in the study. One teacher said; “as teachers we encourage teen mothers to continue with their schooling.” This was seconded by another teacher who said “we give words of encouragement to teen mothers and urge them to come back to school after giving birth.” On their part parents/guardians also expressed that teachers do encourage teen mothers to go back to school. For instance one parent said “when my daughter got pregnant, the head teacher took an initiative to invite her and tried to reason with her to come back to school.” In conformity with other participants several parents said they were told by the head teacher to apply for re-admission of their daughters. As one parent narrated “the head teacher asked me to apply to the Education Division Office in order for my daughter to come back to school. However, I did not apply, I just withdrew her from the school she was attending and sent her to a new school where the head teacher allowed her to be readmitted.” Teen mothers also agreed with parents that teachers persuaded them to come back to school as evidenced by one teen mother who said, “Teachers encourage us to come back to school and to work hard at school.” In support, another teen mother said, “My teachers are so supportive and they always encourage me to work hard.” The study found

that teachers encourage teen mothers to work hard at school. Due to such encouragement teen mothers felt supported.

4.2.3.3 Create conducive environment for teen mothers

Teen mothers felt that the other role that teachers are taking in the implementation of readmission policy is providing a good learning environment for them. According to teen mothers, teachers treat them just like any other student. One teen mother said;

Teachers are happy with the policy and they allow us to be readmitted, had it been that they denied our re-entry we would have been at home. In addition teachers do not treat us as outsiders they integrated us within our fellow students and look at us just like any other student.”

Furthermore, another teen mother said “teachers are so accommodating. They keep on encouraging us to work hard.” On the same point another teen mother explained that, “teachers are happy with the policy and are much willing to help us.” Teachers also concur with the teen mothers on this role of teachers, as one head teacher explained;

We help mix the teen mothers into the society of other students and create an enabling environment for the teen mothers to feel at home and part of the school. This helps to improve their performance and helps them not to give up. We also see them competing with other students. If it was not for the warm welcome they receive most of them would have dropped out.

Additionally, one teacher explained that they talk to other students at the school that they should not mock the teen mothers and if students are found mocking teen mothers they are disciplined. This initiative by teachers helps to protect teen mothers from stigma and discrimination. In support another head teacher at another school said,

There are a number of ways through which we support teen mothers. Firstly teen mothers are encouraged to be coming to school on a regular basis. We also assist in integrating them with other learners by appealing to other students not to discriminate against them, and if a student is rude to them we discipline that particular student. We encourage students to treat them just

as they treat other learners. Occasionally, we do give them study materials such as notes and past papers so that they can easily catch up with their friends.

The issue of creating a conducive school environment is very important if teen mothers are to continue with their education. In most cases, teen mothers did not undergo any form of counselling to prepare them psychologically. Therefore, to retain them in school there is need to create conditions which are favorable. If the environment is not conducive, teenage mothers would end up isolating themselves from the classroom experience. Besides teen mothers might end up being frustrated and in the end their performance would be affected.

In a nut shell, involvement of teachers in the implementation of the policy shows that teachers' attitudes towards the policy have changed and they no longer resist its implementation. Wolf *et al* (1999) explained that when readmission policy was introduced teachers had a negative attitude towards it. Teachers viewed girls who became pregnant while at school as immoral and that they would be bad influence to the other students. For many teachers not permanently expelling girls who become pregnant contradicted what they viewed as basic standard. In this study teachers did not express such sentiments, rather the study established that teachers are involved in a number of ways in the implementation of the policy. These include encouraging teen mothers to apply for readmission, informing teen mothers for a policy and making the place conducive for teen mothers to continue with their schooling.

4.2.4 Collaboration among grassroots stakeholders

On the theme of collaboration among grassroots stakeholders in the implementation of the policy the study established that in 20 % of the schools visited, there was some kind of team work among the stakeholders. However it was found that the joint effort would only be there when it has been discovered that a girl is pregnant. For instance one head teacher said,

We call the girl who is pregnant and her parents and advise the parents on how they should handle the situation. We appeal to them to forgive their daughter and give her a second chance. Then we explain to them the procedures they are to follow in order to have their daughter re-admitted. Parents are also requested to take care of the baby of their daughter, as the mother continues with school. Besides, parents/guardians come to inform us whenever there is any challenge at home concerning the teen mother. For example when her baby is ill and she has to take the baby to the hospital. Parents also come to discuss the performance of their daughters especially when the school report shows poor results.

Furthermore the same participant continues to say, “There is an understanding on the part of the parents. They do their part and we the teachers also do our part.” In addition one participant pointed out that they work hand in hand with the Parents Teachers Association on the implementation of the policy. This teacher said; “teachers and the PTA assist in wooing teen mothers to come back to school and they also persuade parents who are reluctant to send their daughters back to school.” At another school, a teacher pointed out that; “the head teacher invites the girl and the parents to advise them on how they should treat the girl in her current pregnant status, and the procedures to follow when the girl is ready to come back to school.” In support another teacher explained that parents/guardians are also advised of the responsibility of taking care of the baby as the mother continues with her schooling.

However in 80% (N=13) of the schools, it was established that there was no team work in implementation of readmission policy. It was discovered that in these schools the head teachers informed parents that their daughters had the chance to come back to school. This information normally was given out when a girl fell pregnant and the parents had come to the head teacher to seek the way forward. As much as the head teachers have the role to inform all the stakeholders, that is; students, teachers, and parents, this was not the case in most schools. Most head teachers communicated the procedures of the policy only to a girl who was found pregnant as well as to her parents/guardians. This view was shared by some teen mothers who pointed out that the policy had never been disseminated to students during the school's morning assemblies, such that the teen mother only knew the policy procedures when she fell pregnant, or through the radio. This view was echoed by one deputy headmaster who said "we have never told the students of the policy procedures." According to this deputy, teachers at this school do not know of the policy procedures because they have never been told about the policy by their head teachers. Therefore, it was not possible for the teachers to explain the policy procedures to the students. In addition, a teacher from another school said; 'some head teachers felt disseminating widely re-admission messages was a way of encouraging immorality among pupils.'

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), collaboration means joint activities in which the initiator invites other groups to be involved. Collaboration moves beyond just collecting feedback but, it involves other stakeholders in problem solving, policy design, monitoring and evaluation. Collaboration involves formation of joint committees with stakeholders, representatives, joint working groups and task forces. However from the findings of this study in 80% of the schools that were sampled, it was apparent that there were no task

forces, no joint working groups comprising of students, teen mothers, the parents and the teachers. All students whether teen mothers or not are supposed to know the policy and the procedures that are supposed to be followed because this information would enable the students to make informed decisions. If students know the readmission policy it can also reduce cases of stigma because they would not be surprised to have teen mothers in their midst. On the part of parents/guardians, the knowledge of the policy procedures would enlighten them on how best they could assist their daughters when they fall pregnant. This may also enhance the willingness of some parents/guardians who are reluctant to send their daughters back to school because of pregnancy.

In general, the study found out that all grassroots stakeholders were participating in one way or another in the implementation of readmission policy. Teen mothers as well as parents/guardians were inadequately involved in their participation than the head teachers. The passiveness on the implementation of the policy was evidenced by the inability of most teen mothers to follow the right procedure of application for readmission. In most, cases teen mothers would drop out without writing withdrawal letters and when coming back they would just request the head teachers to readmit them, such that most teen mothers were readmitted through informal arrangements between the head teacher and their parents/guardians. The study found that head teachers were more knowledgeable of the policy than any other stakeholder, and in most schools it was only the head teacher who handled issues pertaining to readmission policy. If this policy was well disseminated to all stakeholders, it would have increase the way teachers were participating. Girls would know how best to withdrawal from school when they get pregnant and when to apply after delivery. More parents/guardians were unaware of the policy procedures, and had not been

adequately involved in its implementation for example taking an initiative of assisting their daughters to seek counselling. In this study, participation in the implementation of the policy signifies following the policy procedures as stipulated in 2006 guidelines and providing an enabling environment for teen mothers to come back to school and remain there. On the issue of collaboration, since most teachers, parents and teen mothers did not know about the policy procedures, collaboration was difficult to achieve in most schools. As a result, in almost all schools, participants mentioned that there were more teen mothers who did not come back to school than those who actually returned. If there were vibrant task forces some teen mothers would have been persuaded to go back to school and some parents would have also been convinced to send their daughters back to school. In addition strong collaboration among grassroots stakeholders would increase ownership of the policy. A participatory approach in the refinement and implementation of this policy would instill a sense of ownership in stakeholders at the grassroots level.

4.3 Support for pregnant girls and teen mothers

In order to find out what grassroot stakeholder's perception on the availability of support mechanisms for teen mothers at rural secondary schools are, the discussion centred on four sub-themes. The sub-themes included; support given to pregnant girls: on this sub-theme teen mothers and their teachers were asked to describe the support given to pregnant girls before giving birth. The second sub-theme was support given to teen mothers at school. Thirdly, the study sought support from parents/guardians and lastly the study also gathered information on challenges that were encountered by teen mothers and how they could overcome the challenges.

4.3.1 Support available for pregnant girls

On this sub-theme the aim was to establish the assistance that is available to girls while they are pregnant both at secondary school and at home. It was discovered that the only support available were pieces of advice while some participants indicated that pregnant girls did not receive any support.

4.3.1.1 Inadequate support for pregnant girls at school

Other participants had different opinion on how a pregnant girl is handled before withdrawing from school. Most teen mothers for instance expressed that they just withdrew out of their own will, before the teachers were aware that they were pregnant and before they were officially asked to withdrawal. As one teen mother explains, “I was not aware of the policy procedures to follow, I just withdrew,” and when she was asked whether she wrote the letter to the head teacher before withdrawing, she declined. In support of this, another teen mother said, “I withdrew without telling anyone because I did not know that I was supposed to inform the teachers or any other person at school.” The study established that these teen mothers were not aware that they were supposed to submit a written report to the school that they were withdrawing on pregnancy grounds. As a result most of them withdrew without receiving any form of support. In another case, a teen mother got pregnant while she was in form one. Her parents went to talk with the head teacher at CDSS that they should reserve a place for her as it was not possible for her to return to school immediately after giving birth. After spending two years at home she went back to school. According to her, prior to giving birth the only support she got from her parents was assurance that she would go back to school. When asked whether they received counselling

at their schools teen mothers disclosed that they did not receive any counselling, and yet the policy mandates schools to provide counselling to girls when they get pregnant.

Teachers also concurred with the teen mothers on this point. Several teachers explained that it was not possible for them to render any assistance to the girls when they got pregnant because they just withdrew without letting the school authorities know. When the school authorities were trying to find out why the girls were absenting themselves, that was when they learned that the girls were pregnant. One teacher said, “Girls just withdrawal and since this is a day school it is difficult for us to make a follow up on them, so they do not receive any assistance.” In addition to the same point, another teacher commented as follows; “there is a challenge in our schools because once girls fall pregnant they do not know what to do, so they just withdraw on their own and as a result no assistance is given to them.”

The study discovered that most girls did not receive much support while they were pregnant since they just withdrew without informing any teacher. It was further established that it was not common for girls who became pregnant to go to school authorities to report that they were pregnant. Usually the report was made by classmates. Chigona and Chetty (2008) pointed out that the consequence of not giving counselling to pregnant girls is that some girls do not come back to school. Furthermore, those who do come back are not prepared psychologically to deal with issues of motherhood simultaneously with schooling.

4.3.2 Support given to teen mothers

In order to get to the root of why the implementation of readmission policy is still facing challenges, the study sought out the kind of support that was given to teen mothers from their school. The study established that some teen mothers receive support in form of advice and counselling.

Teen mothers were asked to explain the kind of support that they received while they were pregnant, some few teen mothers explained that their head teachers advised them to come back to school after giving birth. At one school the teen mother said,

I withdrew without telling the school authority. However the head teacher enquired why I was not coming to school when he learnt that I was pregnant, he invited me together with my parents. He told us that I have a chance of coming back to school and advised that I should write a letter, my parents too should write a letter and these letters were sent to the Education division office.

In concurring with this view, one teen mother said, “when I got pregnant the only kind of support which I received from my teachers were pieces of advice.” I was advised that I should not abort the baby and that I had a chance of coming back to school.” When teen mothers came back to school after giving birth, they also explained that the most form of support given to them by their teachers were advice. It was mentioned that teachers encouraged teen mothers to work hard at school. Participants indicated that supporting teen mothers by giving them advice would help them feel part of the school community once again. However they were some areas where teen mothers explained that they were not assisted. For instance teen mothers elucidated that they were not assisted with makeup lessons.

4.3.2.1 Counselling

The study found out that at four schools, teen mothers received counselling. At one school a teacher said, “Once girls report for classes they are counselled by a member of the counselling and guidance committee, which encourages the teen mothers to work hard and also advises the teen mothers to ignore what other students might be saying concerning them. This helps them overcome the challenge of stigma.”

However the study established that most of the teen mothers interviewed came back to school without going through any form of counselling to prepare them to deal with peer pressure, stigma, parenthood and schooling concurrently. For instance, the policy guidelines stipulate that once the students have reported for classes, they should be counselled on expected behaviour and stigma (Ministry of Education policy guidelines, 2006). These responses concur with information sourced through the questionnaire which showed that 75% of the teen mothers did not receive any counselling. In some cases participants explained that teen mothers were not counselled because schools do not have female teachers. Participants felt that counselling teen mothers is supposed to be done by female teachers.

Furthermore the study found that teachers were not trained on how to handle teen mothers. Teachers do not know what is required as far as counselling is concerned. All teachers who participated in this study have never undergone a counselling training. As such, most schools did not have a counselling committee. This information corresponds with findings of Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) which indicated that the policy was not accompanied by supporting strategies at school level. For example, no counselling of any kind was given to

the returning mothers. This study is done ten years later but still most teen mothers return without receiving counselling. Thus, teachers, and parents did not help teen mothers to deal with their psychological trauma associated with teen motherhood. Teen mothers return without being provided with any moral, emotional or mental support from the schools as well as from their homes.

Furthermore participants were also asked if they had mother groups in the communities who were working hand in hand with the schools in implementing readmission policy but they all expressed ignorance. The mothers' group comprises a group of women from the community tasked with the responsibility of coaxing girls to return to school and providing counselling. This initiative encourages community participation in school management (UNICEF, 2008). Holding regular counselling sessions for girls and emphasizing the importance of completing secondary school would help teen mothers remain in school. Parents' participation in educating girls would most likely help to keep their teen mothers in school.

In a nut shell the study shows that teen mothers returned to school without being counselled. This finding is consistent with literature. For instance, Chigona and Chetty (2007) in a study done in South Africa found out that all teen mothers who participated in their study explained that nobody offered them counselling on how to get themselves ready to face their new situation. Teen mothers were only advised to work hard at school. Counselling would enable teen mothers to have confidence in themselves, to have hope for the future and to succeed at school. If these teens are not counselled on issues to deal with

their motherhood and schooling it means they can easily drop out again and some will even not come for readmission. Other teen mothers would get pregnant again as it was reported by two participants. Counselling will enable these teen mothers to make informed decisions.

4.3.2.2 Inadequate classroom support

Although teen mothers received support in some areas, the study established that teen mothers were inadequately assisted with their classroom work. Teen mothers expressed that when they came back to school they were treated just like any other student. Teen mothers were not seen nor treated as learners with special needs. In addition, some teen mothers explained that teachers did not help them with lessons that they did not attend due to motherhood roles. As one teen mother puts it; “my main concern comes, when I go to the hospital with my baby, this means I have to miss lessons and when I come back teachers do not help me with makeup lessons.” In support, another teen mother had this to say, “I have problems to catch up with my friends on the lessons that I did not attend because I had to go to the hospital with the baby.” Makeup lessons for teen mothers are a necessity if teen mothers are to improve in their performance. Teen mothers are already struggling to deal with their low esteem, and if they are not helped with the missed lessons their performance will continue being poor and this will even worsen the situation. However makeup lessons would only be possible where teen mothers take initiative to ask teachers on what they did not learn.

The study found out that teen mothers were missing many lessons and often fell behind with schoolwork because of double responsibilities of schoolwork and motherhood. It is therefore apparent that teenage mothers should not be treated as a homogeneous group with

the other group of students and that services rendered to them by their teachers need to be flexible to meet their two competing priorities. Lack of support to teen mother is not only a problem in Malawi. In Namibia Shaningwa (2007) found that schools were not providing any support to young mothers on their return to school. Support facilities ought to be introduced at schools to help young mothers cope with the challenges or difficulties encountered at schools because of motherhood.

4.3.4 Challenges experienced by teen mothers

Participants indicated that teen mothers face a number of challenges. The challenges include, inadequate time for studies stigma and absenteeism.

4.3.4.1 Inadequate time for studies

One of the challenges that was explained by participants is poor performance. About 50 % of teen mothers explained that their challenge was poor performance. Teen mothers explained that they did not have enough time for their studies. When they knock off they rush home for their babies and while at home they are expected to relieve their parents, who have been looking after the baby for the better part of day and do some household chores. When it is time to retire to bed they are already exhausted such that they are unable to go through their school work. One teen mother alleged that her poor performance was attributed to spending most of her time thinking of the baby while at school, as she puts it; “when I was not a teen mother, my performance was good, but now my performance is not good because most of the time I think of my baby instead of concentrating on my studies.” Some teachers were of the same opinion as that of the teen mothers. Teachers explained that

teen mothers' performance was poor compared to their performance before they dropped out of school. For instance one teacher said, "The performance of teen mothers is not the same because one or two year break from school makes their performance deteriorate. Most teen mothers fail to catch up with their friends in their academic work."

However one teen mother (a form two student) expressed that her performance is better now that she is a teen mother than before. According to her this is because she realised that she has the responsibility of educating her baby and that can only be achieved through coming to school and working hard that will make it possible for her to get a job and achieve her goal of taking care of her child. This shows that basically most teen mothers were not performing well at school. Poor performance was attributed to the inability of teen mothers to balance up motherhood roles and schooling simultaneously. As mothers, they do not have adequate time to carry out their school work.

4.3.4.2 Stigma

The other challenge faced by teen mothers is stigma. Some teen mothers indicated that sigma still exists in schools for instance one teen mother said "my fellow students sometimes call me names such as *ntchembere*, a name that shows that we are mothers and not girls, especially when we are involved in an argument with them." This sentiment was also echoed by some teachers. For instance one teacher said, "challenges are there such as, provocative language and insults." On the same, another teacher said, "boys would call the teen mother by the name of her baby and ask her to go and breast feed the baby." Furthermore, it was discovered through this study that some students feel teen mothers are not fit to be in school and would deliberately pick on the situation of oozing breast milk by

the teen mother and would say some people are stinking breast milk, and sometimes they laugh at them. Stigma can make teen mothers lose confidence in themselves and this can deter them from staying back in school. Stigma can also make it very difficult for them to attend classes regularly. If teen mothers stop attending classes regularly or drop out of school again, it means the policy's objective would not be achieved. Teachers in this study indicated that one way in which they participate in the implementation of readmission policy is by creating conducive environment for the teen mothers. This finding shows that in some cases the effort of creating conducive environment was not successful.

4.3.4.3 Absenteeism

The other challenge mentioned was absenteeism. Teen mothers said they could not attend classes when the baby was ill and needed to be taken to the hospital. One teen mother explains; 'when my baby falls sick I have to take her to the hospital and that means I have to be absentee from school.' In addition, one teacher lamented that teen mothers do not come to school regularly because of shyness, as he puts it, "Teen mothers are shy and fearful especially the first days because they are not sure of how the other students would look at them so they resort into absenting themselves from school," though he was quick to mention that with time they do overcome the shyness and start interacting with other students.

On the same point of shyness, participants said teen mothers were afraid of how the society was viewing them as they were going to school. For instance one teacher said, 'when teen mothers are coming to school people would call them by the name of their children and this discouraged some from going back to school.' One teen mother expressed that; "It took

time for me to go back to school because I was afraid of how other students would accommodate me.” To concur with the teachers, another teen mother said, “Some teen mothers do not come back to school because they are shy, they are afraid to face other students in their current situation.”

In all cases teachers were asked on how they help the teen mothers overcome the challenges, and said that they help teen mothers overcome the challenges by giving them a word of encouragement, to still help them hold on to schooling. It was also pointed out that students who laughed at teen mothers or said rude things to teen mothers were punished. Teachers also said they talk to other students that they needed to co-exist with the teen mothers and they do warn them against any kind of discrimination and stigma.

4.3.4.4 Lack of school fees

It was also discovered that some parents / guardians to teen mothers give up paying school fees for teen mothers because of being so angry with the pregnancy. Such parents feel if they are to send their daughters back to school, the daughters would become pregnant again. As one head teacher puts it; ‘the guardian might sometimes become very disappointed in their daughter and stop paying school fees.’ In addition one teen mother commented, “Once a girl becomes pregnant, support from parents/guardians stops right away and they no longer wish to pay school fees for the teen mother. The only option left for the teen mother therefore is to completely dropout of school.”

4.3.4.5 Home Environment

The study found out that environment from which a teen mother comes from influences whether the teen mother goes back to school or not. For instance, one teacher explained that, “Some parents prefer their daughters getting married to going back to school once they are found pregnant.” In agreement another teacher said; “teen mothers are sometimes encouraged by their parents to get married rather than sending them back to school because some parents value marriage more than school.” On their part, guardians felt some teen mothers did not return to school because the teen mothers themselves were unwilling to go back to school.” Another guardian said; “parents here in the rural areas value marriage and would deliberately frustrate the efforts by the teen mother to get re-enrolled into school.” Furthermore, another guardian explained that some teen mothers fail to go back to school because of the environment that is created due to death of both parents as such apart from looking after their baby they are also responsible for looking after their siblings. In her own words, this guardian says; “Instead of teen mothers going back to school they would rather go and look for pieces of work so that they can raise money for food and clothing.”

All in all, the study shows that the environment that a teen mother comes from plays a vital role in ensuring teen mothers’ success in education. If an environment which a teen mother comes appreciates the importance of school, teen mothers are encouraged and motivated to go back to school. Conversely if the environment which a teen mother comes from values marriage, the teen mother is discouraged to go back to school. Instead, she is encouraged to get married.

In summary, the study has established that despite putting in place a policy that allows teen mothers to be readmitted to school, no support mechanism was devised to accompany the policy. Due to lack of support teen mothers faced several challenges as discussed above. Therefore, it can be concluded that putting in place the policy alone is not enough. Support available within the family both economic and social could not only help the teen mothers to go back to school but also help them stay in school and continue with their education. In addition environment/family which a teen mother comes from plays a big role in determining whether or not a teen mother can resume schooling following childbirth.

4.4 Perspectives of stakeholders on the implementation of readmission policy

On this research question, participants were asked to elucidate their opinion on implementation of readmission policy, what they felt could be the best way of communicating the policy procedures to the rural areas and what they felt should be included to make readmission policy more effective. Participants were also asked to express how the Education Division Office is assisting in making the implementation of readmission policy more effective, and lastly the study enquired if there were cultural values which affected the implementation of readmission policy. In addition teachers were asked to explain how the policy was monitored at their schools.

4.4.1 Policy communication

The study sought to find out how best the policy should be communicated in the rural areas. Throughout this study parents/guardians explained that the implementation of readmission policy is not very effective, due to the fact that most of the parents/guardians

and teen mothers are not aware of the policy procedures. The head teachers do not disseminate all the procedures. The participants then suggested a number of ways through which the policy can effectively be communicated.

4.4.1.1 Communication through local leaders

Teachers explained that the policy should be communicated to the grassroots stakeholders through local leaders using the Local Government decentralised structures. These local leaders include the chiefs and religious leaders. According to one teacher, “local leaders should first of all be oriented on the 2006 guidelines and then should take the lead in informing members of their communities on the 2006 policy guidelines. This could be when they are holding their regular village meetings.” In addition, one guardian said, “Chiefs are the ones who live with people. If the policy procedures are made very clear to the chiefs it would be easy for them to explain to their subjects.” One guardian who also happened to be the group village head woman had this to say when she was asked on how she feels the policy should be communicated,

Government should hold meetings with chiefs and village headmen/women to inform them about the policy procedures, who in turn should be mandated to inform their subjects of the same. This way the message will reach almost everyone because most parents normally attend meetings called by their chiefs.

On the part of using religious leaders, one teacher said,

I feel the best way to communicate the policy is through the church or the mosque, because almost everyone has a church or mosque where she/he congregates and if the policy procedures are announced at these religious gathering the message will reach a lot of people.

4.4.1.2 Communication through the radio

It was also suggested that the government should continue to disseminate the policy through the radio. However participants suggested that the policy should be explained in details. All policy procedures should be announced clearly. One teacher said, “We would like to listen to the policy being aired just as TB and HIV/AIDS programmes are aired.” To concur with this view, another teacher said, “The policy procedures should be explained thoroughly on the radio including all the details.” Most teen mothers were in agreement that the policy procedures should be announced on the radio very clearly. As one teen mother said, “I feel like the radio is still the best way the message of the policy should be disseminated to the people in the rural areas.”

4.4.1.3 Communication through sensitisation campaigns

The other suggestion was that the policy should adequately be sensitised to the grassroots stakeholders through sensitisation campaign. One teen mother says; “the government should send people to sensitise grassroots stakeholders in the villages because in my village many people do not know the policy procedures.” On her part, one guardian said, “The government should come up with community sensitisation campaign, where they should explain the policy thorough in order for the people to understand it.” This participant suggested that, “the campaign would be through organising open day where rural people would be sensitised of the steps the girl has to take if she is found pregnant. This campaign should be similar to campaigns such as measles campaign.” Additionally, one teacher had this to say; “the government should sensitise the community on the policy procedures because many people do not know them. This could be through drama and traditional dances.”

4.4.1.4. Communication through role models

Another proposition from teachers was that the policy could be best communicated to the rural areas through the use of role models, for instance one teacher said,

role models should be used to motivate girls to come back to school, this should be a case where a former teen mother who is working at any organisation comes to talk to the teen mothers the advantages of going back to school and how possible it was for her to overcome all odds surrounding teen motherhood and attain her educational career.

One guardian also concurred with this view and on her part she said, “The policy can be communicated through the use of teen mothers who have excelled in life, these will act as role models to the girls.”

In general, the study established that there were difficulties in implementing the policy because most grassroots stakeholders did not know the policy procedures. This shows that once policies are formulated they have to be properly disseminated to the stakeholders if they are to be implemented effectively. Lack of knowledge on policy procedures in this study was as a result of poor communication. Therefore grassroots stakeholders suggested radio programs, use of role models, sensitisation campaigns and using local leaders to communicate the policy during community meetings and religious gatherings as some of the best ways through which the policy could be communicated to grassroots stakeholders. It is therefore apparent that there is still need for community sensitisation in order for the grassroots stakeholders to be well conversant with the policy procedures and also for the community to change their attitude toward returning teen mothers.

4.4.2 Modification of the policy and policy implementation

After looking at the perceptions of the participants on policy implementation and having discussed the challenges, the study went further to explore what the grassroots stakeholders think should be included in the policy to make its implementation more effective. Besides the study sought suggestions of participants on what other roles they felt the education division office should undertake to make the implementation of the policy more effective.

4.4.2.1 Suggestions of grassroots stakeholders on the policy and its implementation

On what should be incorporated into the policy to make its implementation more effective, all participants who were interviewed on this question had some suggestions to make. Some of the participants suggested that the policy should have the provision of scholarships to teen mothers who can no longer afford school fees. For instance one teacher said, “at times a teen mother would want to go back to school but there would be no school fees either because the parents have deliberately suspended paying school fees for the teen mother because they are frustrated by their daughter becoming pregnant or the parents cannot afford to take care of the baby and cater for school fees at the same time.” Additionally one teacher says, “apart from requiring school fees, writing materials, the teen mother has to take care of the needs of the baby, hence the need for the government to assist them.” On the same a teen mother suggested, “Government should be providing materials such as writing materials because teen mothers have a lot of needs.” Another point that was raised by participants was that the policy should give the right to teen mothers to have extra time during national examinations just as is the case with disabled students. According to one participant, “as much as teen mothers are not disabled but the fact that they were pregnant and have babies obviously disturbs them, thus it is apparent that teen mothers are distressed

psychologically, the pressure of examinations can easily cause them to withdrawal completely.”

A further suggestion made by some participants was that government should be organising retreats during the holidays where teen mothers in one zone or two zones will be allowed to interact with role models. One participant said, “The role models should be former teen mothers who have done well with their education. These retreats will act as eye opener especially for teen mother from the very remote areas.” Furthermore another participant said that the retreats will also give an opportunity to teen mothers to share their experiences.

Some participants said that only allowing teen mother who dropped out of school for the past two years to apply for readmission is not reasonable. According to one head teacher, “some girls may have had complications in giving birth, such that they may take more time to recover, such teen mothers would need to be considered.” The interpretation of the above view by some participants shows that there is a lack of understanding of the policy, regarding the admission of learners to schools. However the policy does not indicate that only teen mothers who dropped out of school for the past two years be the only ones entitled for readmission. The policy requirement is that a teen mother has to return to school after staying home for one academic year.

Suggestions raised by participants such as, introducing role models and retreats are excellent, since they would inspire teen mothers to stay in school. The use of role models who were teen mothers but continued with their education after giving birth could also improve the girls self esteem. It is possible to implement these suggestions raised by the

participants. However, some suggestions raised by participants could be difficult to implement. For instance, the suggestion of providing scholarships to teen mothers is not so easy to implement because of lack of resources. Besides, this would also encourage some girls to deliberately fall pregnant. However a consideration could be made on those teen mothers who are can no longer afford to pay school fees. Thus the criterion used for giving them scholarships should not just be teen motherhood but rather what should be considered is lack of school fees. Lastly, the suggestion that teen mothers should be given extra time during national examinations is also not feasible. There is no justification that because one is a teen mother then she will be slow in writing examinations.

4.4.3 Proposition on the role of Education Division Office

Teachers were asked to explain the responsibility of the Education Division office in the implementation of readmission policy. One head teacher said the Education Division office organised a workshop for the head teachers where head teachers were told about the new policy procedures participants to the workshop were also told that the Education Division office was responsible for handling application letters from teen mothers. This office, according to one teacher, sees to it that all the letters from teen mothers have been answered back, though sometimes the Education Division office takes long i.e. it may take up to a year before giving feedback. However they ensured that all teen mothers got readmitted. Additionally, at one school the head teacher explained that when officers come from the Education Division office for inspection, they enquire if the school has teen mothers, however they do not spend special time with them. One teacher also mentioned that, “Education Division office has recently started asking for school reports of teen mothers.

This shows that the Education Division office is interested in the schooling of the teen mothers.” In addition, another teacher said, “The Education Division office just informed us of the policy in general and not detailed as explained through this study.”

However, teen mothers and the parents/guardians were ignorant of the roles that the Education Division offices play in the implementation of readmission policy. The ignorance on the part of teen mothers and their parents shows the low level of participation that is there between the grassroots stakeholders and the school administrators. The study did not seek the views of officers at Education Division level to understand their role since the study was mainly interested in exploring the perceptions of the grassroot stakeholders on the policy.

Lastly participants suggested that the Education Division’s office should be monitoring the policy through school reports every term and find means of assisting teen mothers who are not performing well. The other proposal was that some officials from the education division’s office should have time to go to zones and interact with the teen mothers and provide role models to talk to teen mothers. In addition it was suggested that the Education Divisions office should organise workshops for the teachers in order to sensitise them on the policy procedures since it seems most of the teachers are not aware of the policy procedures.

Perceptions of teachers show that they know the role of the Education Division office in the implementation of the policy. Participants have indicated that Education Division office can do more to help in the effective implementation of the policy. The suggestions of holding

retreats for teen mothers and organising workshops for head teachers and teachers can be ably handled by this office while incorporating such suggestions in their strategic plans. The issues of monitoring the policy implementation can also be implemented by the Education Division office. This can be achieved by the Education Division office, creating teen mothers' database which would be indicating the number of girls leaving school due to pregnancy and the number of teen mothers returning. The database would also indicate the year the pregnant girl leaves school and the year she comes back as a teen mother. The head teachers in various schools would be tasked with the duty of providing this information.

4.4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter present a discussion on the relationship between knowledge of the readmission policy and actual practice of implementing the policy in rural secondary schools. The study shows that only some head teachers know the policy procedures while most of teen mothers and their parents/guardians do not know the procedure and as a result they do not follow them. The chapter also discusses the involvement of grassroot stakeholder in the implementation of the readmission policy in rural areas. It was established that all grassroots stakeholders were participating in one way or another in the implementation of readmission policy. However teen mothers as well as parents/ guardians were inadequately involved in their participation as compared to the head teachers. Most teen mothers and their parents did not know the policy procedure and were unable to follow the right procedure of application for readmission, hence their limited involvement in the effective implementation of the policy. Furthermore, the chapter looked at the support available for teen mothers at secondary school in rural areas. The study established that the most common support given to teen mothers are pieces of advice and encouragement The chapter

also sought views of participants on the implementation of readmission policy in rural secondary schools. Participants have suggested that there is need to improve communication about the policy. Participants appreciated the roles being played by the Education Division office and the schools but suggested that they could do more in order to make the implementation of the policy effective.

Finally, the central argument of the study is that there are still challenges in the implementation of the re-admission of young mothers in rural secondary schools. There is a gap between theory (what the policy says) and practice (what is happening on the ground). The evidence shows that teen mothers, parents/guardians and teachers had the knowledge on the policy. However, teen mothers and parents/guardians did not know the policy procedures to follow, as such most of the policy procedures were not put into practice. The study further established that participants' perceptions towards the policy were positive. This is a complete departure from some previous studies which indicated that participants had negative attitude towards the policy. As regards to policy implementation, participants felt that the policy was not being successfully implemented. This was attributed to lack of support to the pregnant girls and returning teen mothers in rural secondary schools and lack of knowledge of the implementation procedures. These findings therefore, indicate that the policy is still not being effectively implemented in rural secondary schools. This chapter is followed by chapter five, which presents the conclusions drawn from this study and the recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

The purpose of the study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of parents/guardians to teen mothers, teachers and teen mothers on the implementation of readmission policy in rural secondary schools. Specifically the study sought to find out if there is a relationship between the knowledge and practice in the implementation of readmission policy, how the rural grassroots stakeholders perceive the implementation of readmission policy, how they are involved in the implementation of readmission policy and what support initiatives are there for teen mothers at rural secondary school. This chapter presents the conclusions of the results and recommendations.

5.1 Relationship between Knowledge and Practice of readmission policy

As regards to the relationship between knowledge of readmission policy and actual practice in the implementation of the policy in rural secondary school, the results have shown that participants who knew the policy procedures were putting them into practice. For instance, teen mothers who knew that they were supposed to write withdrawal letters also agreed that they actually wrote withdrawal letters. In addition, teen mothers who knew that they were supposed to apply for readmission through letters agreed that they submitted written application.

The study found out that participants who were ignorant of the policy procedures did not put those procedures into practice. Teen mothers who indicated that they were not aware that when they got pregnant they had to submit copies of letters to the head teacher informing him/her of their status, in actual practice they did not write any letter of withdrawal. This obviously means that teen mothers withdrew without telling anyone. Likewise the teen mothers who indicated that they did not know that they were supposed to submit written application for readmission, they actually did not apply through writing letters to the head teacher and the Division Manager. It was discovered that these teen mothers who did not know the policy procedures were readmitted either through their parents or themselves asking the head teachers to readmit them. In some cases, teen mothers were advised by the head teacher to write a letter while in most cases the head teacher would just readmit them. Furthermore, most teen mothers who expressed that it was unknown to them that the policy provides room for counselling both before leaving school and after coming back to school actually did not receive any counselling prior to leaving school and after returning to school. This implies that in other cases teen mothers had to request for counselling. However it is the role of the school to provide counselling to teen mothers without teen mothers necessarily asking for it.

Most head teachers expressed that they were aware of the policy procedures. Therefore it is apparent that there is a difference between what head teachers know and what happens in their schools. Most head teachers as implementers do not follow the policy procedures, as explained earlier they would sometimes just readmit teen mothers without informing the Division office and no counselling was provided for teen mothers and yet the policy demands so.

This study therefore shows that participants know that schools allow girls who become pregnant to return to school, but most of them were ignorant of the policy implementation procedures. Their parents/guardians were also ignorant of the procedures and it was found that they did not advise their daughters to submit copies of an application letter to the head teacher as well to the Division Manager both during withdrawal and readmission process.

In addition, most head teachers and teachers expressed that teen mothers withdrew from school without letting the school authority know about their condition. As a result, it was not possible for the school to provide counselling to the teen mothers while they were pregnant. Nevertheless, most schools still did not provide counselling to teen mothers when they came back to school for readmission. Counselling is necessary for teen mothers since it can help them deal with stigma and cope simultaneously with mothering and schooling. Besides, counselling would also prepare teen mothers emotionally and psychologically for their new situation.

All in all the study shows that when stakeholders of the policy do not have knowledge of what the policy says, it becomes difficult for them to put in practice what the policy requires, and this leads to ineffective implementation of the policy. This implies that knowledge of the grassroot stakeholders in any educational policy would contribute to effective implementation of the policy.

5.2 Involvement of grassroots stakeholders in the implementation of readmission policy

The second research question intended to find out how grassroot stakeholders participate in the implementation of readmission policy. The study established that teen mothers participate in the implementation of the policy by going back to school and seeking a place for their readmission. Participants felt that when teen mothers go back to school and attend lessons it means they are participating in the implementation of the policy. Teen mothers' role in seeking a place for readmission was important, since most of them were readmitted by their head teachers. Therefore it required the teen mothers to go to the head teacher to request for a place in order to have them readmitted. The study discovered that parents/guardians were also involved in a number of ways in the implementation of the policy. For instance parents/guardians participate through encouraging their daughters to go back to school, taking care of the babies to teen mothers and giving pieces of advice. Participants explained that parents look after the babies of their daughters and this gives opportunity to teen mothers to concentrate on school work. Parents also provide moral and material support to teen mothers. The study also established that head teachers take part in the implementation of readmission policy through encouraging teen mothers to work hard at school after readmitting them.

It was discovered that there was no collective effort in implementing readmission policy. In most schools which were visited, one would be told of the procedures of implementing readmission policy only when found pregnant. It was therefore established that only parents/guardians whose daughters were found pregnant were the ones who had some knowledge on the policy procedures and this also depended on whether the head teacher

decides to explain the policy procedure to them or not. The implication is that there is no ownership of the policy by the grassroot stakeholders. In most schools it is assumed that the head teacher owns the policy therefore he/she should be accountable for its effective implementation. In most of the schools that were sampled for this study not all girls who left due to pregnancy came back. In most cases those who came back were less than those who did not come back.

Expanded involvement of teachers, parents and teen mothers can lead to greater responsiveness to the needs of the teen mothers. According to literature, stakeholders' participation is especially most important for policy legitimization and constituency building. Policy legitimacy is essential for effective implementation and sustainability. A participatory approach in the implementation of readmission policy will inculcate a sense of ownership in stakeholders at school, household, community, division and ministerial levels as roles and responsibilities of each group will be clear.

However in their participation parents/guardians and teen mothers were not actively involved in the implementation of the policy. To participate actively in policy implementation in this study means to follow what the policy procedures stipulate and that the grassroots stakeholders effectively contribute their views in the policy implementation process. It was discovered that parents/guardians and teen mothers did not take a leading role in implementing the procedures because they were not aware of the procedures. This means that teen mothers as well as parents/guardians from the grassroot levels did not participate in the formulation of these procedures, therefore their views were not taken into

account. The policy was handed to the grassroots stakeholders without sensitizing them. As such there was no ownership of the policy by the teen mothers and their parents.

5.3 Support mechanisms available for teen mothers at secondary schools in rural areas

The third research question aimed at finding out the support mechanisms available in rural secondary school in Malawi. The study found that the common kind of support given to teen mothers at school were pieces of advice. It was established that teen mothers were advised by teachers to work hard at school, in order for them to realize their goals.

However the study established that the support given to teen mothers was inadequate for them to carry on successfully with their studies. To start with the study found out that when girls get pregnant they do not receive counselling. According to teachers and the head teachers who took part in the study this was because girls left school on their own volition without the school's knowledge. The school would only know that the girls withdrew because of pregnancy through enquiring from other students. Furthermore, when girls returned to school as teen mothers they did not receive counselling. Though the study found out that teen mothers did not receive counselling, there is a provision in the policy to provide counselling to the pregnant girls as well as to the returning teen mothers. Counselling is supposed to be provided by a member of the counselling committee of the school. Unfortunately in most schools that were sampled for this study, they do not even have the counselling committees or a deliberate structure set to handle issues of readmission policy. Literature suggests that lack of proper counselling for teen mothers as indicated by the heads of schools is a serious problem for these girls. Teen mothers need to be counselled regarding their stigma and schooling. That is, because they have become mothers before

completing school and while they are still young, they are stigmatised and their peers and society judge and view them as girls with low morals. The drawback of not providing counselling is that some teen mothers may not come back to school for fear of stigma and being ridiculed. Some may come back but fail to cope with the situation, worse still others may come back and withdrawal again when the pressure is too much for them to bear.

The study also sought the kind of support teen mothers do receive from their homes. It was established that parents/guardians to teen mothers support the teen mothers schooling by looking after the babies. The other support is providing school fees and other materials to the teen mothers. However the study found that parents/guardians also did not arrange for counselling for their daughters, meaning that teen mothers return to school without being psychologically prepared. Teen mothers experience a number of challenges which could have been lessened if there was team work in the implementation of readmission policy and if enough support was rendered.

The study shows that there were no support mechanisms put in place to support the policy. In addition, this study has revealed that young mothers are not provided with any moral, emotional or mental support from the schools. Teachers did not mention counselling as one of their role in implementation of the policy, which means that there was inadequate support given to teen mothers. This could mean that participants did not realise the importance of giving support such as counselling and guidance to young mothers before they return to school. The implication of inadequate support to teen mothers was that the performance of teen mothers would be affected, since teen mothers would not have enough time for their studies. The increased responsibilities of teen mother hood and schooling make it difficult

for the teen mothers to concentrate on their education hence poor grades. The best way to assist teen mothers to earn an independent life is to assist them to stay in school in order to acquire the necessary qualifications they need to get a job and to be competitive on the job market. Lack of support to teen mother can also hinder some from returning school as indicated in the literature.

5.4 Perceptions of grassroots stakeholders on the implementation of readmission policy in rural secondary schools.

Lastly the study sought to find out how rural grassroots stakeholders perceive the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools. The presence of teen mothers in almost all schools sampled indicated that with the revision of the policy there has been some improvement in the number of teen mothers who returned to school after giving birth. However participants are of the opinion that most teen mothers did not follow the policy procedures. The revision of the policy aimed at effectively implementing the policy and providing an enabling environment for all students that drop out of school due to pregnancy to be readmitted. The general consensus of the participants therefore, were that implementation of the policy is still not effective. According to the study, this is attributed to lack of knowledge of the policy procedures by teen mothers, parents/guardians, and most teachers. Due to lack of knowledge the policy is not implemented as it was intended.

Grassroot stakeholders suggested that the policy could best be communicated in rural areas by conducting mass rallies, by passing the message through the chiefs and also by using churches and mosques. Some participants expressed that they had heard about the policy on

the radio. However they felt that the radio did not explain the procedures which were supposed to be followed. If teachers and other grassroots stakeholders were not aware of the policy procedures, effective implementation of the policy would be difficult to achieve. It is obvious that more effort should be applied if the policy was to be implemented effectively.

5.4.1 Suggestions of the grassroots stakeholders on the implementation of the policy

Participants made suggestions on what should be done to make the policy more effective. Firstly participants indicated that the office of Education Division Manager do help in the readmission of girls by processing their application letters. However participants suggested that the Division office should not be taking too long to process the letters as was the case most of the times. The education Division office is supposed to process the letters as soon as they receive them. The second proposition was that government should come up with the scholarship scheme for teen mothers. According to the participants, teen mothers have many needs, ranging from school needs to baby's needs and these put teen mothers in an awkward situation. The other suggestion was that the Division should be organizing retreats for instance during the holidays where teen mothers from different zones would be allowed to interact with role models. These role models should be those who were teen mothers, went back to school, completed their studies and then they were working. There was also a proposal that since most teachers do not know the policy procedures therefore the government should organise a workshop for them.

5.5 Grand tour question

The purpose of the study was to find out what the views as well as knowledge of teen mothers, parents/guardians and teachers on the implementation of readmission policy were. The results from the study show that participants knew that there is a policy which allows teen mothers to go back to school. However, the results show that most teen mothers did not know the policy procedures to follow while withdrawing and when being readmitted. Few teen mothers who knew the policy procedures were putting them into practice. Lack of knowledge of policy procedures was one reason for ineffective implementation of the policy. Participants' perceptions towards the policy were positive. They realized that teen mothers needed a chance to go back to school. This is a total deviation from some previous studies which indicated that participants had pessimistic attitude towards the policy. The findings of this study point out that the implementation of the policy is still facing challenges.

5.6 Recommendations

The study established that almost all participants were aware of a policy which allowed teen mothers to go back to school. However, most of the participants admitted that they were not aware of the procedures that they were supposed to follow when withdrawing as well as when seeking readmission. As such most schools do handle the implementation of the policy in their own ways, other than those laid down in the 2006 policy guidelines. Consequently for the readmission policy to be effectively implemented, the study recommends that the grassroot stakeholders should learn the policy procedures. Therefore policy orientation must continue at all levels including school, community and division

office. The policy procedures should also be disseminated to Village Heads since they are the ones who live with the parents/guardians and to the teen mothers.

The study found that teen mothers receive inadequate support from their schools. Literature and findings suggest that lack of support to teen mother affects their education. Thus, to improve performance of teen mothers and the number of girls who return to school, each school should have supportive structures. At school level, supportive structures should include; guidance and counselling desk and trained counsellors. Since the schools do not have trained counsellors, the study also recommends that the government should organise training sessions for teachers so that the schools should have professional counsellors. Literature suggests that psycho-social counselling is of paramount importance if teen mothers are to remain in school. Each school should have a teacher who is able to counsel the girls. It is important to get close to the teen mothers so that teachers know when they are not concentrating on school work and be able to assist them accordingly. Furthermore, special arrangements should be put in place to help nursing mothers. In cases where parents are refusing to send their daughters (teen mothers) back to school, such parents should also receive counselling so that they have to accept the situation and start supporting their daughters. This counselling could be organised by the school in collaboration with Parents Teachers Association.

In addition to curbing the problem of inadequate support, the study also recommends that the government should be organising and funding retreats for teen mothers especially those from rural areas who are in school so that they can have an opportunity to interact with teen mothers from other areas. These retreats will help teen mothers to learn from each other on

how to handle challenges they face in their various schools. This will also help boost the morale of the teen mothers.

In some cases the participants explained that lack of counselling was due to unavailability of female teachers. Basing on this finding, the study recommends that each community day secondary school should have a mother group. The mother groups will work hand in hand with the school counselling committee and will help lobby teen mothers from the surrounding villages to go back to school. Where possible, parents of former teen mothers should be included in the groups. In cases where parents are resistant to send teen mothers back to school mother groups should be able to persuade such parents.

Throughout the study it was observed that in schools there were no readily available data on how many students dropped out due to pregnancy. Schools were also unable to provide data on how teen mothers were performing in class as compared to their performance before they fell pregnant. Therefore, in order to know the performance of the teen mothers and if the teen mothers who are readmitted are graduating from secondary schools, there is need for monitoring. Thus the study recommends that a guideline for collecting data on pregnant school girls and on re-entrants be developed and integrated into the Education Information Management system (EMIS), as well as an instrument for monitoring re-entry. The Ministry should stress on the need for schools to supply data to the Ministry.

In summary, the study recommends that adequate support is necessary to make implementation of readmission policy more effective. The study further recommends that government should be organising retreats for teen mothers and introduction of mother

groups at CDSSs. The study also recommends that teachers should be trained to ably handle counselling. Lastly the study recommends that government should develop guideline for collecting data for teen mothers to be used for monitoring the policy.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEEN MOTHERS ON KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE POLICY

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

Biographic data (tick what is applicable)

1. Participant

Teen mother ☐ teacher ☐ parent/guardian ☐

2. Sex male ☐ female ☐

3. Type of school CDSS ☐ Conventional ☐ ant aided

4. Age 13-15 ☐ 15-18 ☐ 19-25 ☐ above ☐

Question Number		
1	Schools allow girls who get pregnant to return to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes	When I got pregnant I returned to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes
2	A school girl who is pregnant submits three copies of the letter about her status to the head teacher indicating her home address. 1)No 2) Yes	When I was pregnant I submitted three copies of letter about my status to the head teacher indicating my home address. 1) No 2) Yes
3	The teen mother applies for re-admission through the head teacher with details of current address. 1) No	After giving birth, I applied for re-admission through the head teacher with details of my current address. 1) No

	2) Yes	2) Yes
4	The teen mother submits one copy of the application letter to the Division Manager. 1) No 2) Yes	I submitted one copy of the application letter to the Division Manager. 1) No 2) Yes
5	The pregnant girls are counseled by the appointed member of the counseling committee before they leave school. 1) No 2) Yes	When I got pregnant I was counseled by the appointed member of the counseling committee before leaving school. 1)No 2)Yes
6	Once students report for classes they are counseled on expected behavior. 1) No 2) Yes	Upon returning to school I received counseling on expected behavior. 1) No 2) Yes

APPENDIX II:

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GUARDIANS/PARENTS ON KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE POLICY

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

Biographic data (tick what is applicable)

1. Participant

Teen mother ☐ teacher ☐ parent/guardian ☐

2. Sex male ☐ female ☐

3. Type of school CDSS ☐ Conventional ☐ Grant aided

4. Age 13-15 ☐ 15-18 ☐ 19-25 ☐ above ☐

Question Number		
1	Schools allow girls who get pregnant to return to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes	When my daughter got pregnant I allowed her to return to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes
2	A school girl who is pregnant submits three copies of the letter about her status to the head teacher indicating her home address. 1) No 2) Yes	When my daughter got pregnant I advised her to submit three copies of letter about her status to the head teacher indicating the home address. 1) No 2) Yes
3	The teen mother submits one copy of the application letter to the Division Manager. 1) No 2) Yes	I permitted my daughter to submit one copy of the application letter to the Division Manager. 1) No 2) Yes

APPENDIX III:

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEAD TEACHERS ON KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE POLICY

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

Biographic data (tick what is applicable)

1. Participant

Teen mother ☐ teacher ☐ parent/guardian ☐

2. Sex male ☐ female ☐

3. Type of school CDSS ☐ Conventional ☐ Grant aided

4. Age 13-15 ☐ 15-18 ☐ 19-25 ☐ Above ☐

Question Number		
1	Schools allow girls who get pregnant to return to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes	We allow pregnant to return to school after one academic year. 1) No 2) Yes
2	A school girl who is pregnant submits three copies of the letter about her status to the head teacher indicating her home address. 1) No 2) Yes	I receive three copies of letter from girls who fall pregnant concerning their status. 1) No 2) Yes
3	The head teacher reports the withdrawal to the Education Division Manager attaching a copy of withdrawal letter from the girl. 1) No 2) Yes	reported the withdrawal to the Education Division Manager attaching a copy of withdrawal letter from the girl. 1) No 2) Yes

4	The teen mother applies for re-admission to the head teacher with details of current address. 1) No 2) Yes	I receive application for re-admission from teen mothers. 1) No 2) Yes
5	The pregnant girls are counseled by the appointed member of the counseling committee before they leave school. 1) No 2) Yes	The school organized counseling session for girls who fell pregnant before leaving school. 1) No 2) Yes
6	Once students report for classes they are counseled on expected behavior. 1) No 2) Yes	Upon returning to school teen mothers received counseling on expected behavior. 1) No 2) Yes

APPENDIX IV:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS AND TEACHERS IN RURAL AREA

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

How are the stakeholders involved in the implementation of readmission policy in rural areas?

- a. What role do teen mothers play in the implementation of readmission policy?
- b. How do parents participate in the implementation of readmission policy?
- c. How is the teacher involved in implementing readmission policy?
- d. What kind of collaboration is there among stakeholders in implementing readmission policy?

What support mechanisms are available for teen mothers at secondary school in rural areas?

- a. What procedure do girls who fall pregnant take before leaving the school?
- b. What kind of assistance do pregnant girls receive before they leave school?
- c. Who provides the assistance?
- d. Would you explain to me the kind of support that is given to readmitted teen mothers in rural schools?
- e. What kind of support do teen mothers receive from their parents?
- f. What kind of challenges do teen mothers encounter at school after being readmitted?
- g. How do you assist them overcome the challenges?

How do grassroots stakeholders from rural areas perceive about the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools?

- a. What is your opinion on the implementation of readmission policy?
- b. How is the implementation of readmission policy monitored at this school?
- c. What do you think could be the reason why other girls do not come back to school after leaving due to pregnancy?
- d. What cultural values are inconsistent with the implementation of readmission policy?
- e. How does the Education Division office contribute to the effective implementation of readmission policy?
- f. How best do you think the policy should be communicated in rural areas?
- g. What do you think should be incorporated into the readmission policy to make its implementation more effective?

h. What role do you think the following stakeholders need to undertake to make the implementation of readmission policy more effective:

- Division Managers?
- Parents?
- Teachers?

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS/ GUARDIANS IN RURAL AREA

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

How are grassroots stakeholders involved in the implementation of readmission policy in rural areas?

- a. What role do teen mothers play in the implementation of readmission policy?
- b. How do parents participate in the implementation of readmission policy?
- c. How is the teacher involved in implementing readmission policy?
- d. What kind of collaboration is there among stakeholders in implementing readmission policy?

What support mechanisms are available for teen mothers at secondary school in rural areas?

- a. What kind of assistance do pregnant girls receive before they leave school in rural schools?
- b. Who provides the assistance?
- c. What kind of support is given to readmitted teen mothers in rural schools?
- d. What kind of support do teen mothers receive from their parents in rural areas?

How do rural grassroots stakeholders perceive about the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools?

- a. What is your opinion on the implementation of the readmission policy?
- b. What should be incorporated into the readmission policy to make its implementation more effective?
- c. What cultural values are inconsistent with the implementation of readmission policy?
- d. What do you think could be the reason why other girls do not come back to school after leaving due to pregnancy?
- e. How best do you think the policy should be communicated in rural areas?
- f. What role do you think the following stakeholders need to undertake to make the implementation of readmission policy more effective:
 - Division Managers?
 - Parents?
 - Teachers?

APPENDIX VI

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEEN MOTHERS IN RURAL AREA

I am a student pursuing Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership at Chancellor College. I am carrying out a study titled “Analysis of Grassroots stakeholders’ perceptions on readmission policy in rural secondary schools. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of parents/guardians, teachers and teen mothers on implementation of readmission policy at rural secondary school.

The study is for academic purposes and the results will be treated with confidentiality. Hence no names will be mentioned in process. Thank you for taking part.

How are the stakeholders involved in the implementation of readmission policy in rural areas?

- a. What role do you play in the implementation of readmission policy?
- b. How do parents participate in the implementation of readmission policy?
- c. How is the teacher involved in implementing readmission policy?
- d. What kind of collaboration is there among stakeholders in implementing readmission policy?

What support mechanisms are available for teen mothers at secondary schools in rural area?

- a. What procedures did you take before leaving the school?
- b. What kind of assistance did you receive before leaving the school in rural schools?
- c. Who provides the assistance?
- d. What kind of support is given to readmitted teen mothers in rural schools?
- e. What kind of support do teen mothers receive from their parents/guardians?
- f. What kind of challenges do you encounter at school after being readmitted?
- g. How do you overcome the challenges?

How do rural grassroots stakeholders perceive the implementation of readmission policy in secondary schools?

- a. What is your opinion on the implementation of readmission policy?
- b. What do you think could be the reason why other girls do not come back to school after leaving due to pregnancy?
- c. What cultural values are inconsistent with the implementation of readmission policy?
- d. How does the Education Division office contribute to the effective implementation of readmission policy?
- e. How best do you think the policy should be communicated in rural areas?
- f. What do you think should be incorporated into the readmission policy to make its implementation more effective?
- g. What role do you think the following stakeholders need to undertake to make the implementation of readmission policy more effective:

- Division Managers?
- Parents?
- Teachers?

APPENDIX VII

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Department of Education Foundations

PRINCIPAL

Emmanuel Fabiano, B.ED., Msc., Ph.D.

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4th June 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCING SIBONGIRE CHISANGA

I have the pleasure of introducing to you Sibongire Chisanga our M. Ed (Policy, Planning and Leadership) student in the faculty of Education. To fulfill some of the requirements for the program, Sibongire is carrying out a research study titled "Analysis of grassroots stakeholders' perceptions on the re-admission policy." I, therefore, write to kindly ask for your support towards her study as she collects the information.

I thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and support.

Dr. Bob Wajizigha Chulu

Lecturer in Psychometrics & Head, Educational Foundations Department.

APPENDIX VIII

Ref. NO

8th June, 2010

FROM: THE EDUCATION METHODS AND ADVISORY SERVICES SOUTH WEST
EDUCATION DIVISION, PRIVATE BAG 386, CHICHIRI, BLANTYRE 3.
TO: THE SECONDARY SCHOOL HEAD-TEACHERS, BLANTYRE RURAL
AND BLANTYRE URBAN DISTRICTS

INTRODUCING SIBONGIRE CHISANGA TO CONDUCT A RESEACH STUDY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

I have the pleasure to introduce to you Sibongire Chisanga a student of Master of Education (Policy, Planning and Leadership) programme at Chancellor College. She is carrying out research study titled “Analysis of grassroot stakeholders’ perceptions on the re-admission policy” in some Secondary Schools in this Division.

EMAS section is aware of this research study and have no problem allowing her to collect information being sought.

I therefore kindly ask for your support and cooperation if she visits your school.

Aubrey Kanyambwala

FOR EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGERESS (SWED)

