



## **Influence of Teachers' Insight Towards Implementing Grade Repetition Policy In Gucha South Sub-County**

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### **Abstract**

*Grade repetition remains a significant barrier to the timely completion of the educational cycle. Despite government efforts aimed at enhancing student access and ensuring a 100% transition in accordance with educational policies, the issue persists, particularly in Gucha Sub-County, where instances of grade repetition are prevalent. This research investigates the factors affecting the implementation of the grade repetition policy in secondary schools across Kenya, with a specific focus on how teachers' perspectives influence the policy's application. Employing a descriptive survey design, this study is informed by the Social Promotion Theory, which posits that allowing students to advance is crucial for long-term educational outcomes. The research population consisted of 45 secondary schools, their principals and deputy principals, 540 students, and five educational officers. A simple random sampling method was applied to select participants, culminating in a sample of 17 secondary schools, 17 principals, 17 deputy principals, and 209 students, of whom 167 responded. To ensure the reliability and effectiveness of the data collection instruments, a pilot test was conducted, which demonstrated strong internal consistency. Data from educational officers were gathered through interviews, while questionnaires were administered to school administrators and students. The analysis utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), presenting quantitative data in tables and documenting qualitative insights from administrators regarding grade repetition. The findings revealed that economic status did not influence the decision to repeat a grade, and the adverse effects of repetition significantly outweighed any benefits. Ultimately, the study concluded that the government's implementation of the grade repetition policy was inadequate. Recognizing that education encompasses more than academic achievement alone, the research recommends a thorough execution of the grade repetition policy. Adhering to the recommendations provided in this study may enable stakeholders to effectively navigate the grade repetition policy, contributing to the achievement of Vision 2030 and beyond.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher Insights, Grade Repetition Policy, Social Promotion, Academic Success*

### **Introduction**

Grade repetition has long posed a significant barrier to achieving universal education in Kenyan secondary schools, particularly in Gucha Sub-County, Kisii County. In response to the escalating trends of low enrollment, high dropout rates, and poor transition rates, the Kenyan government implemented the Grade Repetition Policy in 2003. Despite these efforts, challenges continued to emerge, leading to the introduction of the Basic Education Act of 2013, designed to enhance educational equity by prohibiting the retention of students based on academic performance.

The Basic Education Act of 2013 represented a transformative shift in Kenya's educational framework, ensuring that no child would be denied the opportunity to advance through the education system due to their academic standing. This legislative change was reinforced in 2014 when the government officially enacted a ban on grade repetition within primary education settings, aiming to promote inclusive education and reduce the adverse effects associated with grade retention, such as heightened dropout rates.

In this context, teachers are critical as implementers and stewards of educational practices. Their insights and perceptions greatly influence the application of anti-repetition policies in the classroom. Often tasked with enforcing performance standards, particularly in key examination grades, teachers find themselves navigating the tensions between policy directives and established academic expectations, which could lead to students facing repetition if they fail to meet specific benchmarks.



Research indicates that, despite the introduction of these progressive policies, issues surrounding grade repetition and academic performance persist in Kenya. Numerous studies have revealed that students who are compelled to repeat grades frequently end up dropping out, thereby wasting valuable educational resources (Otiendo, 2023; Ezaki, 2024). Airo, Sika, and Olendo (2023) further assert that such practices contradict the ideals of "Education For All," which emphasizes inclusivity and equal access to education.

Globally, grade repetition is a widespread concern in many developing nations (Goos, Pipa, & Peixoto, 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, only a handful of countries report repeater rates below 10%, underscoring significant educational inefficiencies (Wambua, 2021). The economic implications of grade repetition can equal the costs of enrolling new students, placing additional strain on limited educational resources (Kyereko et al., 2022).

Despite initiatives like the Free Primary Education (FPE) program introduced in 2003 and the subsequent ban on grade repetition, challenges such as high dropout rates and difficulties in student transitions remain prevalent (UNICEF, 2021). Critics contend that although FPE marked a politically significant step forward, it has not effectively addressed fundamental issues related to resource allocation and classroom management (Kariuki, 2021; Langat, Olel, & Kawasonga, 2021).

To navigate the complexities of grade repetition policies, it is essential to delve into teacher perspectives, as they play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes, particularly in Gucha Sub-County. Understanding these viewpoints is vital for tackling persistent educational challenges and enhancing the experiences of at-risk students within the educational system

## Methodology

Social Promotion Theory informs this research

The study employed a descriptive survey design, guided by Social Promotion Theory, which emphasizes the importance of allowing students to advance for improved long-term educational outcomes. The research population comprised 45 secondary schools, including their principals, deputy principals, 540 students, and five educational officers. A simple random sampling method was utilized to select the participants, resulting in a final sample of 17 secondary schools, alongside 17 principals, 17 deputy principals, and 209 students, of which 167 provided responses. To ensure the reliability and effectiveness of the data collection instruments, a pilot test demonstrated robust internal consistency. Data were collected through interviews with educational officers and questionnaires directed at school administrators and students.

The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which presented quantitative data in tables and qualitatively documented insights from administrators about grade repetition. The findings indicated that economic status did not impact the decision to repeat a grade, while the negative consequences of grade repetition outweighed any potential benefits. This research aimed to uncover the factors affecting the implementation of the grade repetition policy in Kenyan public schools. By focusing on the views of different stakeholders regarding the policy's effectiveness in improving retention, reducing dropout rates, and enhancing overall academic performance, the study sought to underscore the relevance of support interventions that foster student engagement and progress toward graduation. Ultimately, the research shed light on the relationship between policy implementation and the educational experiences of students in South Gucha Sub-County, Kisii County.

## Discussion

In the Gucha South Sub-County, the researcher aimed to ascertain how teachers perceived grade repetition policy's implementation. To ascertain how teachers' attitudes toward repetition have impacted the application of the repetition policy, the researcher employed a series of questions. The discussion that follows takes the questions into account.

### Students repeat grades in your schools

The researcher sought to find out from the principals whether students repeat grades in their schools. The results are shown in Table I



**Table I**

**Students repeat grades in your school**

Principals' response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	9	52.9	52.9	52.9
No	8	47.1	47.1	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents (52.9%) supported that students repeat grades in their schools. This indicates that repetition policy has not been implemented in schools.

**Stakeholders who institute repetition idea to students**

On the item of who suggests repetition ideas to the students, the principals' responses are shown in Table 2

**Table 2**

**Stakeholders who institute repetition idea to students**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parents	5	29.4	29.4	29.4
Students	4	23.5	23.5	52.9
Principals	8	47.1	47.1	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

According to the research findings, 8 (47.1%) of the principals supported that teachers are the ones who come up with the ideas for repetition, followed by 5 (29.4%) who said parents do so, and 4 (23.5%) who said students do so. This demonstrates that teachers continue to have the final say over whether or not students repeat a grade. This demonstrates that teachers believe that if students don't meet a certain score, they should be forced to repeat their classes.

Teachers believe that grade repetition is an effective remedial strategy, according to studies comparing their views on the advantages of retention (Sang, Kinuthia, and Ayiimba, 2024; Kangwa, 2022). The issue of policy implementation is brought up by this. Do teachers' views and ideologies not always accurately reflect "official" policies, and do they translate laws and policies into their daily work?

**Parent's involvement on repetition**

The deputy principals' answers to the question of how frequently parents recommend repetition for their children are shown in Table 3 below.



**Table 3**  
**Parent's involvement on repetition**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not often	8	47.1	47.1	47.1
	Often	5	29.4	29.4	76.5
	very often	4	23.5	23.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

According to the findings, 4 (23.5%), 5 (29.4%), and 8 (47.1%) of the respondents said they did not often. According to the research findings, parents rarely recommend repetition to their children. Parents may recommend repetition to give their children another chance in the grade of interest if they believe that their children will be at a disadvantage. Because of this, parents and educators make decisions about repetition based on erroneous presumptions and place an excessive amount of emphasis on the immediate advantages of repetition. Furthermore, when making decisions about repetition, the student's voice is mostly ignored.

#### Students are willing to repeat grades

On the question of whether the students are willing to repeat grades failed without being persuaded, the results from the deputy principals' responses are shown in Table 4

**Table 4**  
**Students are willing to repeat grades**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	4	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Sometimes	6	35.3	35.3	58.8
	Mostly	2	11.8	11.8	70.6
	All time	5	29.4	29.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

According to the findings, 6 teachers (35.3%) said that students occasionally agree to repeat grades without being convinced, 5 respondents (29.5%) said that they do so frequently without being convinced, and 4 respondents (23.5%) said that students never agree to repeat grades without being convinced. Finally, two respondents (11.8%) said that the majority of students are open to repeating grades without being convinced. Despite these results, grade repetition is regarded as detrimental to students from a psychological standpoint.

#### Likelihood of repeaters dropping out of school

Table 5 displays the principals' answers to the question of whether there is a chance that students will repeat their school dropouts.



**Table 5**  
**Likelihood of repeaters dropping out of school**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	9	52.9	52.9	52.9
Minimal	5	29.4	29.4	82.4
High	3	17.6	17.6	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

Regarding whether there is a chance that students will drop out of school again, the principals' answers revealed. According to the findings, 9 (52.9%) of the principals said there was a low chance that students would repeat their dropout, followed by 5 (29.4%) who said there was a minimal chance and 3 (17.6%) who said there was a high chance. This demonstrates the principals' belief that repetition has no detrimental effect on students' attitudes toward learning. They therefore view repetition as a useful tool in a student's academic career shown in Table 5.

In addition, according to the findings, 9 (52.9%) of the principals said there was a low chance that students would repeat their dropout, followed by 5 (29.4%) who said there was a minimal chance and 3 (17.6%) who said there was a high chance. This demonstrates the principals' belief that repetition has no detrimental effect on students' attitudes toward learning. They therefore view repetition as a useful tool in a student's academic career shown in Table 5.

Promotion policies could thus be a component of an equal opportunities or social inclusion agenda, which could inspire and encourage strong political backing from a broader range of political perspectives in order to raise the standard of education.

Repeating grades is not an exciting experience, and failure is typically not good for students' self-esteem. The majority of research from the past few decades indicates that grade repetition is more detrimental than beneficial (Onyango, Sika, and Gogo, 2024).

According to the data analysis, schools have not adopted a repetition policy. Repetition continues to be seen as beneficial to students' learning and final performance by parents, educators, and even students themselves. There is conflicting evidence regarding the academic and socio-emotional effects of retention on students in the empirical literature evaluating the effects of grade repetition. According to Duflo, Kiessel, and Lucas (2020), there are actually two camps within the empirical literature that is currently available. The first lends credence to the idea that students benefit from grade repetition. The second suggests that it is detrimental to the students.

Despite the fact that grade repetition is expensive for the systems, these conflicting results make it challenging to evaluate this educational intervention and controversial for policymakers to use (Seibert Hanson, and Brown, 2020). There is still a lot of misunderstanding regarding retention policies, even after efforts to explain the discrepancies in results as the consequence of the different contexts examined—in terms of student characteristics, educational system features, country differences, etc.—have been made. To help separate the benefits and drawbacks of grade retention, more research is necessary.

The pedagogical implications of grade repetition are hotly debated. Numerous studies show that retention is detrimental and does not raise students' academic achievement. In Europe and America, where sufficient resources enable an emphasis on the individual student, the pedagogical debate is the most intense, claim Pollock and Tolone (2020). The pedagogical focus of grade retention research in developing nations, especially those in Africa and South America, does not extensively treat the effects of repetition in terms of educational quality and internal efficiency" (p. 151). According to Ortan, Simut, and Simut (2021), the high retention rates are a reflection of the educational system's inefficiency. From a pedagogical standpoint, it would appear that new methods of instruction have shown that learning is an ongoing process and that moving students up to the next grade is preferable to retention.

### Relevance to Social Promotion Theory

Social Promotion Theory is relevant to this study because it places a higher priority on students' social, emotional, and developmental needs than on rigorous academic performance. Retaining students based only on academic criteria is not as beneficial as keeping them with their peers or age groups and offering targeted support. The



theory is a significant component of the debate about how to best assist students who are having academic difficulties, despite its contentious nature and detractors.

In addition, the theory suggests that all actions that will keep students on track to graduate are supported by the theory. It needs critical consideration since teachers supported grade repetition to some level, contrary to views that Social Promotion Theory favors, providing students with greater support at the next grade level rather than holding them back. The teachers argued that long-term educational outcomes should be the ultimate goal.

### Conclusion

The study indicates that the prevalence of grade repetition in schools suggests that the policy is not being effectively implemented. Teachers believe that repeating a grade ultimately enhances students' learning and performance. Furthermore, the findings reveal that teachers' perspectives significantly influence decisions regarding grade repetition. It appears that some educators, when collaborating with parents, base their recommendations on flawed assumptions and are overly focused on the short-term benefits of retention. Notably, the research highlights that students themselves are rarely consulted in discussions about repetition, operating under the belief that their academic performance will improve solely as a result of being retained. This underscores the need for a more inclusive approach that considers the voices of students in the decision-making process.

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