

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RE-ENTRY POLICY REVISED GUIDELINES AND THE BAN ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF CHONGWE AND LUSAKA DISTRICTS

Mwazanji Phiri, Melvin Simuchimba and Tomaida Milingo



Mwazanji Phiri is a Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor at GIZ, in the Eastern Province of Zambia. Before joining GIZ, she worked for FAWEZA. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Development Studies from the University of Zambia. Her research interest include, Monitoring and Evaluation, Girls and Education, and Reproductive Health issues. Her email address is: mwazzy2002@yahoo.co.uk



Dr. Melvin Simuchimba is a Senior Lecturer in the Department Religious and Cultural Studies of the School of Education at the University of Zambia (UNZA). He holds a *Dip Ed* and *BA* from UNZA, *MA (Rel. Studies & Education)* from Leeds University, and *D Litt et Phil (Rel. Education)* from the University of South Africa (UNISA). He teaches Religious Studies and Religious Education Teaching Methods and has published many scholarly articles and book chapters in the two areas, including education policy related topics. His research interests include: the practice of RE, RE and the national education policy teacher education, education and religion, and religion and society. His email addresses are: scsimuchimba@yahoo.ca /melvin.simuchimba@unza.zm.



Dr Tomaida Milingo is a researcher in the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies of the School of Education at the University of Zambia (UNZA). She holds a *Dip Ed* and *BA Ed* from UNZA, *MA (Religious Studies)* from the University of Leeds. She teaches Religious Studies and has published scholarly articles and book chapters in Religious Studies, Religion and women, Religion and culture, Religion and society, Religion and environment and Religion and Education. Her email addresses are: t.milingo@unza.zm/tomaidakaulule@gmail.co

Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment in selected secondary schools of Chongwe and Lusaka districts. It involved key stakeholders, including Ministry of General Education (now Ministry of Education) officials in the Lusaka province and the two districts, head teachers, and teachers in those schools (as implementers), and pupils and their parents (as beneficiaries). Since the study was qualitative in nature, the descriptive design and qualitative methods were used for data collection. Secondary data was collected from literature including journals, organizational reports and the government of Zambia policy statements.

The study findings were that the two measures were ineffectively implemented, which caused them not to be effective and fail to meet their intended objectives. Therefore, the study recommended

that MoGE disseminates both the Re-entry Policy revised guidelines. In the case of corporal punishment, MoGE should first develop guidelines on alternative disciplinary measures to be used in schools. There should be a deliberate programme to ensure that teachers, pupils and parents are knowledgeable of the contents for both (the revised guidelines and alternative punishment guidelines). In addition, MoGE should develop a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that there is effective monitoring and evaluation at school, district, provincial and national levels of both measures while remedial actions are made timely.

Key Words: Effectiveness, Policy, Re-entry, Ban, Corporal punishment

Introduction

Children in many parts of the world have been exposed to the worst forms of inhuman and cruel treatment and they endure some of the worst forms of abuse because of their vulnerability and dependency on adults. Children and young people have the same general human rights as adults and also specific rights that recognize their special needs. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations Organisation, children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was announced in 1989; it is the most important legally binding international instrument which incorporates the full range of human rights for children. The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, legal, civil and social services. Governments of countries that have ratified the Convention are required to appear before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child periodically to report on their progress with regard to the advancement of the implementation of the Convention and the status of child rights in their country.

For many years, Zambian girls were expelled from school if they became pregnant. However, in 1997, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Education (Circular 13 of 1997) introduced the Re-entry Policy which requires all schools to grant pregnant girls maternity leave and readmit them to facilitate their education. The aim of this policy is to implement measures that will help prevent the exclusion of young mothers from furthering their education. In the event of a girl being forced out of school due to pregnancy, policy guidelines have been provided (MOE, 2004) to assist schools and other stakeholders such as parents and guardians to ensure that the girl is enabled to complete her education. However, since its introduction, a cross section of Zambian society has expressed mixed feelings and misgivings about the policy but in line with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the intention of the government was to promote the educational rights of the girls.

Similarly, for many years the country had regulated punishment which was put in place through Part V of the Education Act of 1966. The Act provided for the use of a suitable strap or cane on offending pupils and the recording of such corporal punishment in a relevant book in schools.

However, after strong activism against the practice worldwide, Zambia abolished all forms of corporal punishment in schools through an official circular in 2003. The abolishment was later consolidated in the Education Act of 2011. Like the Re-entry Policy, the Ban on Corporal Punishment was also received with mixed feelings. While human rights activists welcomed the ban, teachers and other some stakeholders in the education sector felt that the move would encourage bad behaviour among learners.

Thus in response to international efforts, the Zambian government has introduced various laws, policies and strategies to protect the rights of children, among them the Re-entry Policy and the Ban on Corporal Punishment. However, it is not clear how well implemented and how effective these policies are in enhancing pregnant girls and boys educational rights as intended by the government and other relevant stakeholders. Therefore, this study was necessary to establish exactly what was happening on the ground and therefore add to our knowledge on the problem of children's human rights within the education sector.

Statement of the Problem

As part of implementation of the Re-entry Policy for pregnant girls and the Ban on Corporal Punishment, the Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the Ministry of Education, Science Vocational Training and Early Education (2012) has put in place Revised Guidelines of the Re-entry Policy and enshrined the Ban on Corporal Punishment in the Education Act of 2011. However, it is not known how effective the two important policies are in enabling pregnant girls re-enter schools and ending corporal punishment completely so as to enhance the education rights of the pupils. If the effectiveness of these two policies remains unknown, no corrective measures will be taken by relevant authorities and school children's education may continue to be negatively affected.

Rationale for and significance of the Study

Although there have a couple of evaluation studies of the two policies, particularly the Re-entry Policy, this study was significant because it investigated the effectiveness of the two main policies affecting child rights in schools simultaneously, thereby enriching the study. The findings of the study may provide lessons that could help different stakeholders in the education system improve the implementation of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment, leading to improvement in the educational rights for both female and male children in schools. For MoGE and other line ministries, the study may help them in ensuring that the policies in place are implemented more effectively in schools. For organisations that deal with child rights, the findings may alert them to the challenges being faced by children in schools and help them to design more effective ways of helping the MoGE to more effectively implement the Re-Entry and Ban on Corporal Punishment policies in the schools. Furthermore, the study may contribute to the existing literature on government policies and strategies aimed at enhancing children's educational rights.

Brief Literature Review

Global studies

The Global Aids Alliance (2008) offered a number of recommendations to address violence against children, especially school girls. These included: national governments to carry out national research in collaboration with all key actors on violence against girls at school; using the results involving all stakeholders, especially pupils and students, to develop a legal framework which integrates all related aspects within the education system; coming up with adequate solutions and policy implementation; and putting in place permanent data collection and analysis mechanisms which would be multi-sectoral and coordinated by the government but made available and accessible to all to enable key actors and donors to focus their efforts in a concerted way. The Global Alliance further recommended that there should be clear instructions and directives for schools (both public and private) to make schools a safe place for all children and break the cycle of violence and discrimination against children in society. Additionally, the Alliance recommended that National governments need to intensify the harmonization of all legislation, including customary laws, to consider a child as any individual less than 18 years old and make education systems integrate education against gender violence. Girls' education should be seen as a means of empowering them to say no to all forms of violence and discrimination and school-level mechanisms should be developed through which girls could safely report cases of violence. Furthermore, the Alliance recommended the formation of a committee for the coordination and follow-up of the present recommendations such as national research, elaboration of a national model policy and code of conduct. Civil society organizations should promote the creation of a coalition/movement on the issue of violence against girls at school in order to make it visible on national and regional agendas. Additionally, there should be Alliance recommended collaboration with government officials within the coordination and follow-up committee once put in place. Together with all key actors, civil society organisations should carry out sensitization campaigns for teachers, pupils and the general public and produce and distribute simplified versions of instruments or texts related to violence against girls in schools.

African studies

According to Leach *et al* (2003), a study conducted in Zimbabwe in 2003 on abuse of pupils in schools revealed that gender violence was a major feature of school life for many adolescent pupils, particularly girls. The study further indicated that enrolments at primary level were higher for girls in most of sub Saharan Africa, though, more boys than girls went on to enter junior secondary level (grade 8 and 9) as many girls dropped out often due to pregnancy. This was a confirmation that violence against girls was 1.3 - 5 times higher than that experienced by boys. This study is important in that it points out the fact that violence against children in schools is a big problem and is worse for girls than for boys. The study further indicates that in order to effectively deal with this kind of problem, it is important to consider it as complex so that its root causes in the general patriarchal nature of African society may be addressed. This is relevant and useful information for our current study.

A Population Council (2015) study found that stigmatization and discrimination against pregnant girls and adolescent mothers was a pervasive barrier to resuming education for the affected girls in all the countries studied. The study recognized the effects of stigmatization and suggested that there

was need for changing this discourse. A number of specific actions to reduce stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls and adolescent mothers were identified and recommended. For example, Save the Children Ethiopia (2008) reports that the organization in Malawi implemented an intervention which involved raising awareness of the school Re-entry Policy among schools and communities and emphasizing the importance of readmission for pregnant learners/adolescent mothers. Preliminary findings from this program showed that school head teachers agreed that stigma and discrimination from both the school environment and the community remain significant barriers for the affected girls. School head teachers were also receptive to initiatives directed at teachers, boys and young men, but stressed that parents also needed to be engaged, and that sensitization was key to reducing stigma against pregnant learners and adolescent mothers in schools. According to the study, many programs to support the environment for affected girls in general tended to go unnoticed due to a lack of proper documentation and dissemination. This study/report by Save the Children in Ethiopia (with reference to Malawi) is important to the current study as it provides relevant background information for reference.

Zambian studies

Luangala (2008) carried out a survey on the implementation of the Re-entry Policy in some basic schools in Central and Lusaka provinces of the country. The findings of the study were that the main reasons for the failure of many girls to return to school after giving birth were lack of interest by the pregnant girls themselves, lack of support for care of the babies, and parents' desire for the girls to marry the men responsible for their pregnancies. The researcher recommended the need for more efforts in sensitisation of both the girls and their parents on the importance of the pregnant girls re-entering school and completing their education.

Mable Sitali (2009) undertook one of the early assessments of the Re-entry Policy in the country, focusing on Kabwe District. Her study found that the implementation and effectiveness of the policy were negatively affected by the mixed feelings that its introduction had caused among stakeholders, with some welcoming it and others questioning it. Despite some misgivings, government schools were trying hard to implement the policy and the progression rate for the girls who had re-entered school was fairly good. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should adequately explain the importance of policy to relevant stakeholders, such as school administrators, teachers, parents and pupils. Additionally, teachers and parents should take upon themselves to educate pupils, especially girls, on the importance of staying away from sex during their school age.

Luangala's and Sitali's studies above are important to this study because they were perhaps the earliest evaluation and assessment studies on the Re-entry Policy and thus raise relevant issues which our study will also raise and expand on. However, our study will in addition go further by assessing a sister policy, the Ban on Corporal Punishment, which is also aimed at enhancing children's educational rights by helping them to learn without fear and therefore to stay in school and complete their education.

Namuunda Mutombo and Mumbuna Mwenda (2010) conducted a review of the Re-entry Policy since its inception in 1997, on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The objectives of the review was to critically examine the problem of girl pregnancies and systematically document and assess

the efficacy and outcomes of the Re-entry Policy since its introduction as a means of contributing to a more responsive and effective education policy. According to their findings, there were still mixed views on the policy. On the positive side, the policy encouraged re-entry into school for once pregnant girls, but on the negative side, it encouraged irresponsibility amongst girls and promoted immorality as girls could fall pregnant any time knowing that schools would allow them back. Further, the study revealed that girls that re-entered school were frequently scorned by fellow pupils and the teachers and this discouraged them and others to return to school. The 75% of the girls that failed to re-enter school after child birth indicated lack of financial support and support for child care. In addition, it was reported in the study that re-admission rates varied from province to province with rural provinces showing highest re-admission rates. The two researchers made the following recommendations: sensitise all teachers on the guidelines of the re-entry policy, strengthen and expand the support system at home and in schools and determine provincial specific actions to improve re-admission rates.

This study is important to our study in that it provides insights of some of the challenges faced in ensuring effective implementation of the policy, which lead to the introduction of Revised Guidelines of the Re-entry Policy in 2012. The Revised Guidelines now make it clear on the steps to take when a fellow pupil, adult boys, men or teachers are responsible for the pregnancy; the guidelines further make it clear on the number of times a girl can re-enter unlike before when one could re-enter as many times as they could.

In 2015, another study was done by Wedekind and Milingo, which involved comparing two secondary schools, one in which many girls were returning to school after pregnancy and another where girls were returning at a lower and more typical rate. The findings revealed that in the school where there were higher rates of re-entry, the following were the factors: counseling and mentoring before and after pregnancy, and counseling and mentoring every step of the way until completion of school. However, the main challenge was limited time for the guidance and counseling teachers. Financial support, awareness raising, and positive attitudes happened at both schools. Finally, community outreach involving children's fathers, and reducing pregnancies was also listed though both schools experienced frequent refusal among the children's fathers to take responsibility, leaving the girls without support.

A study on educational stakeholders' views on the Ban on Corporal Punishment (in 2003) conducted in the Copperbelt Province by Simuchimba and Luangala (2007), unfortunately, confirmed the persistence of corporal punishment in many schools, especially the semi-regulated and unregulated forms of it.¹ It was found that the teachers defined teaching not as a communicative action facilitating understanding and voluntary acceptance of what is taught but as telling, through talk and chalk, backed up with the a cane, to re-enforce compliance and facilitate rote learning. The study recommended a redesign in teacher education to help teachers to transition from this pedagogy to a modern one where teaching and learning processes are viewed as involving dialogue between teachers and learners. In addition, the study suggested an improvement in the conditions under which teaching and learning processes take place. There was overwhelming feedback from the teachers who gave various reasons for using corporal punishment, the main one

¹ Semi-regulated punishment is one carried out without either the consent of the head teacher or witness and is not recorded. The unregulated punishment is one carried without prior planning but rather a spur of the moment.

being a way of controlling large numbers of pupils in a classroom as opposed to using modern teaching and learning methods which made attainment of such control very difficult.

Another study which focused on the impact of abolishing degrading punishment, especially corporal punishment, on discipline in selected schools in Solwezi district of Zambia was conducted by Freddie Nkhani Phiri (2011). The study revealed that the abrupt imposition of the Ban on Corporal Punishment without provision of alternative and less harmful forms for punishment had led to the sudden deterioration of discipline in schools. The recommendations of the study were that the Ministry of Education needed to involve stakeholders and come up with alternative positive practices of punishment; colleges of education needed to revisit their curriculum to suit the demands of the changing psycho-social factors influencing learners' pattern of behaviour and a number of these alternative disciplinary measures were suggested, such as detaining offending pupils after school and informing their parents as a deterrent.

Methodology

This study was descriptive in nature to help obtain information on the effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines for pregnant school girls and the Ban on Corporal Punishment. The research was carried out in Chongwe and Lusaka districts of Lusaka Province of Zambia. These rural and urban districts, respectively, were chosen to provide a comparison of the findings from rural and urban setups. Three (3) secondary schools in each district were purposively selected.

Primary data was collected from six (6) head teachers, twenty-four (24) teachers, one hundred and eight (108) pupils, thirty (30) parents and six (6) Ministry of General Education (MoGE) officials. Secondary data was collected from literature including journals, organizational reports and the government of Zambia policy statements.

The study employed Stratified random sampling techniques to select pupils from all the secondary schools selected to participate in the study. Stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups known as strata. This method was used because it offered all pupils in all the targeted schools an equal chance of being selected because it increased the representativeness of the sample. In this regard, the pupils were divided into strata of grade 8 and 9 and further into boys and girls. Using classroom registers, the pupils were then randomly selected. In an event that a pupil was not available, the next pupil in the register was selected in order to meet the target sample size.

MoGE officials were selected purposively taking into consideration the number of years they had been in the Ministry departments they belonged to, such as the Guidance and Counseling department, responsible for implementing policy measures, especially those under the Re-entry Policy and the Ban on Corporal Punishment. The guidance and counseling teachers were also selected purposively based on their obvious role in the schools. The class teachers on the other hand were selected based on their availability. Together, the MoGE officials, school head teachers and the teachers constituted the implementers, while the pupils and parents constituted the intended beneficiaries.

Although the study was largely qualitative, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used in the collection of data. However, primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews with key informants. The key informants were people who were well vested on the subject matter, and would offer a better perspective on the magnitude of the problem and how it could be addressed. Data was collected from the pupils using semi-structured questionnaires and focus group discussions. Data was also collected from parents who had children going to the sampled schools. These parents were organized in groups of six based on each of the schools. In-depth interview guides were used with MoGE officials, i.e. the Provincial Education Office (PEO), District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), head teachers and the teachers themselves. Analysis of documents and reports produced by Ministry of General Education, VSU, NGOs and scholars in the field was done to gain a more precise understanding of the issues and supplement primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 computer software. Cross tabulations were used to compare responses from rural and urban schools. For qualitative responses, Interpretative analysis was involved by restructuring the answers forming a pattern based on the research questions as a guide for grouping and analysing data.

All the data collected were strictly treated as confidential and not used for any purposes other than the intended one. The names of the schools sampled were equally not mentioned but code named as A-F in order to uphold required ethical confidentiality. The researchers also sought an introductory letter from the university in order to enable data collection from the different respondents. Further, the researchers got permission from the Ministry of General Education Permanent Secretary's office, Provincial Education Office, DEBS office and schools to collect data from the different categories of respondents. From the respondents, informed consent was sought before each interview was conducted.

The study was restricted to only six (6) schools in Chongwe and Lusaka districts, respectively. Therefore, the findings may not be easily generalised to all provinces and districts of the country.

Findings and Discussion

In order to obtain the required data, many questions centred on assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment of 2003, were asked to the different categories of respondents, including provincial and district education officials, head teachers, and teachers (the implementers of the policies). The questions included, among others, whether the two policy measures were achieving their intended purposes of preventing the expulsion of pregnant girls and allowing them to return after child birth and complete their education on the part of the Re-entry policy, and preventing teachers and prefects from beating or caning pupils as punishment, on the part of the Ban on corporal punishment. Other questions were on whether there were any challenges in the implementation of the two measures. The responses and findings were as reported and discussed under the sub-headings below.

Educational Officials, Head teachers and Teachers (Implementers)' Views on the Effectiveness of the two Policy measures

As alluded to above, the intended objective of the Re-entry Policy was for schools to allow pregnant girls to re-enter school after child birth, while the ban on corporal punishment aimed at eliminating forms of punishment such as beating, kicking or lifting of heavy items or manual work beyond a pupil's capacity which were deemed to be degrading. The data collected (in form of statistics) for the two districts (Chongwe and Lusaka) still indicated high numbers of pregnancies with low numbers of re-admissions, which meant that school girls were still being lost in the education system due to factors related to child care and discrimination. According to the DEBs for Lusaka district:

In 2016, Lusaka recorded 430 pregnancies and 190 re-admissions. In 2017 the number of pregnancies reduced to 402 and the re-admissions increased to 219. In 2018, the number of pregnancies increased to 439 and the re-admissions dropped to 170 compared to the previous years. We are losing girls in the school system, which is contributing to the gender disparities in the education system.

The Chongwe District DEBs officials also indicated having high pregnancies and lower re-admissions numbers from 2016-2017 except in 2018 when they increased their sensitization campaigns on the Re-entry Policy to have all girls who had fallen pregnant return to school. The DEBS said:

After sensitization, we saw a lot of girls getting back to school from two years before. Many of them were not aware that they could re-enter school even after a year had elapsed or they had gotten pregnant more than once. We encouraged our girls to feel comfortable in class when they returned even if they had become teen mothers.

As earlier indicated, head teachers and the teachers interviewed were from six schools selected from both the rural and urban locations of the two districts. On the effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines, the school head teachers specified that they were not effective because some girls were not returning to school and it was difficult to track them or convince them otherwise. This was despite the agreements signed between the schools and the pupil on returning to school within a specified period of time.

On their part, the teachers' responses revealed that the policy was partially effective. They were aware that some formerly pregnant girls had returned to school. However, they also complained that they had not seen the Revised Guidelines, meaning that it was difficult for them to fully know if the Re-entry Policy and its Guidelines were effective as they did not know their contents. One of the teachers from school F in Chongwe district responded as follows:

I know the advantages of the Re-entry Policy. However, I have never seen the guidelines and the tools that I am supposed to use to send a pupil on maternity leave and to re-admit them once they have delivered. This sometimes makes us the teachers feel discouraged to even make our pupils aware of such a document as

we are not very clear of the contents such as when to go back to school. Sometimes the guidance and counseling teachers are too busy to support us.

This particular finding was supported Simuchimba and Luangala (2007) who found that several teachers had no access to MoE policy documents such as *Educating our Future* and *Teachers Curriculum Manual*.

Table 1 below shows some statistics on pregnancies and re-entry obtained from the schools under study for the period 2016-2018.

Table 1: Number of pregnancies and re-admissions (2016-2018) at school level

District	School	School status	2016		2017		2018	
			Pregnancies	Re-admissions	Pregnancies	Re-admissions	Pregnancies	Re-admissions
Lusaka	School A	Urban	0	0	0	0	2	2
	School B	Peri urban	5	2	6	3	7	3
	School C	Peri urban	2	0	0	1	2	2
Chongwe	School D	Rural	4	0	3	2	6	3
	School E	Rural	3	3	2	1	4	2
	School F	Rural	5	2	2	2	7	4

From the teachers' responses above, it can be said that the ineffectiveness in the implementation of the Re-entry Policy was partly exacerbated by the lack of responsibility by the teachers themselves and the lack of supervision of teachers by head teachers or deputy head teachers. For example, the teasing of re-entered girls and use of abusive language against them in the classroom which was confirmed by 60% of the pupils could easily be handled by the head teachers as was found in the study conducted by Population Council (2015) in Malawi, where head teachers were in the lead in raising awareness of the School Re-entry Policy among schools and communities and emphasizing the importance of readmission for pregnant learners/adolescent mothers. The sensitization was targeted at teachers, boys, young men, and parents and the need for no stigmatization of re-admitted pupils was strongly stressed.

When asked about the effectiveness of the Ban on Corporal Punishment, the officials at the Provincial Education Office explained that it was not fully effective as corporal punishment was still going on in many schools, especially those in rural areas. This was despite the fact that the practice was banned by a Ministerial Circular in 2003, and by law in the 2011 Education Act. One official said:

Although there is a range of appropriate disciplinary measures in response to the type of misbehaviour which we have requested teachers to administer, some of the

teachers are still administering inhumane punishment. They claim that it is due to the unruly behaviour of some pupils who had taken advantage of the ban on corporal punishment to misbehave.

On their part, all head teachers reported that the Ban was effective as their schools did not administer any corporal punishment. They added that they had never observed or recorded any such punishment in the punishment books. The head teachers further explained that their schools had tabulated what punishment to administer for each offence and this was well known by both the pupils and teachers as well as parents. A head teacher from school F in Chongwe district said: 'I monitor the kind of punishment given to the pupils by teachers and prefects in the punishment book and no corporal punishment has been reported nor documented so far.'

On the other hand, in response to the questions on the effectiveness of the Ban on corporal punishment, the teachers admitted that it was not very effective. They explained that it was very difficult to discipline children in schools without corporal punishment, especially with large number of pupils in the classrooms, which were common in Zambian schools. They confirmed administering corporal punishment only in 'special cases' involving severe breach of school rules as a deterrent to other pupils.

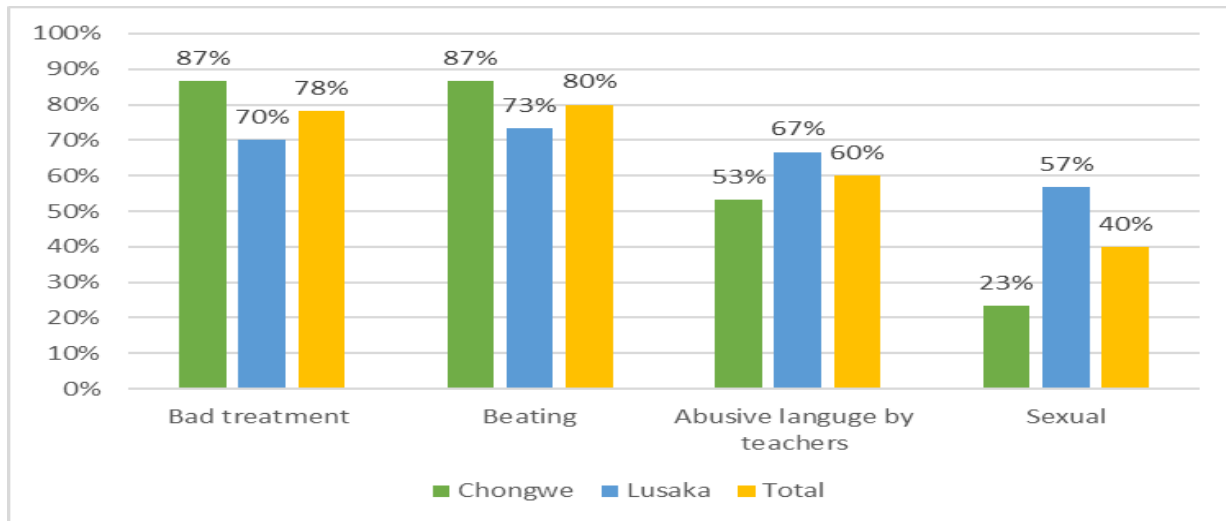
Pupils (Intended Beneficiaries)' Views on the Effectiveness of the two Policy measures

As a way of triangulating the foregoing perceptions or views of the implementers above, many questions centred on assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment, were asked to the pupil respondents (the intended beneficiaries of successful implementation of the policies). The questions included, among others, whether the two policy measures were helping to prevent the expulsion of pregnant girls from school and/or to allow them to return to school after child birth and how they were treated by school authorities and teachers, on the part of the Re-entry policy; and to prevent teachers and prefects from beating or caning the pupils as punishment, on the part of the Ban on corporal punishment. Other questions were on whether there were any challenges the pupils and parents were facing in relation to the implementation of the two measures. The responses and findings were as reported and discussed below.

The majority of the pupils were of the view that the two policy measures were ineffective because they were still experiencing violence, bad treatment, and beatings despite the measures being in place. According to the pupils, using re-entered girls as examples of bad behaviour, using abusive language against them, and failure to provide support to victims of bad treatment (especially re-entered girls) were common experiences and ranked highly for both Chongwe and Lusaka districts. From Figure 1 below, the percentage figures for bad treatment and beating were 87% and 70% for Chongwe district and 70 % and 73% for Lusaka district, respectively. Further, it was found that abusive language by teachers ranked highest in Lusaka at 67%, compared to 53% for Chongwe district. This data is illustrated in figure 1 below. Further, analysis of the data from pupils showed that the common type of violence experienced by male pupils was beating for both districts; this was confirmed by 67% (20) pupils in Chongwe and 60% (18) pupils in Lusaka districts. For

female pupils, bad treatment ranked highest for Chongwe district at 57% (17) pupils while in Lusaka district sexual violence ranked highest at 53% (16) pupils.

Figure 1: Type of violence still being experienced by pupils by district



Responding to a specific question on whether the teachers had stopped giving corporal punishment, 31% of the respondents representing 19 pupils said the teachers had not stopped as corporal punishment was still being administered. By district, only 7% of the confirming pupils came from Chongwe while 90% of these came from Lusaka. However, there was no written evidence showing that corporal punishment was going on because the school punishment books did not show records of corporal punishment since it was deemed to be against the law. The existence of corporal punishment in schools was also confirmed by some of the parents, teachers and MoGE officials except for the head teachers for fear that they would be prosecuted. During the FGDs, at all the six schools, similar issues were reported and recorded. Some pupils asserted that the teachers were in the forefront of promoting violence against them. The pupils, particularly in Lusaka district, cited examples a number of examples including: abusive language, inability to provide full support to victims of violence (especially re-entered girls), corporal punishment such as caning, digging pits, stone crushing, ferrying heavy wheelbarrows of sand, making blocks, slashing; and sexual advances to girls. According to the pupils, even though they were being taught life skills, they still feared to express themselves fully.

The foregoing findings are supported by Phiri (2011) and Simuchimba and Luangala (2007) whose studies established that there was persistence of corporal punishment in many schools in Solwezi district and the Copperbelt Province, respectively. This persistence in the two areas and perhaps even beyond was partly due to a wrong but widespread belief among teachers that ‘an African child cannot learn without a whip...since he listens with the skin’ (Simuchimba and Luangala, 2007:14, 15; Phiri, 2011: 33).

Challenges in the implementation of the two policy measures

In the interviews and discussions with the MoGE officials, head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents, the challenges faced in the implementation of the two policy measures came out clearly. The MoGE officials mentioned that effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment was compromised due to a number of challenges in the implementation process. The two DEBS for the two districts under study indicated that implementation of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines was negatively affected by the lack of funding to disseminate enough copies of the Guidelines as well as to monitor and provide support to all the schools in their districts. In addition, there were delays in the reporting of pregnancies and re-admissions, thereby causing under reporting of cases at district level. An officer from the Guidance and Counseling Unit at Lusaka DEBS office informed the researchers as follows:

There are times when we fail to conduct our monitoring visits to schools to track implementation due to lack of resources. We mostly rely on partner support for such activities. Other challenges include delays or non-submission of reports by schools, which affects overall reporting and tracking of the measures put in place to promote a conducive learning environment for the pupils.

Other officers from the DEBS offices of both Chongwe and Lusaka districts gave other challenges such as parents' preference to marry off their daughters, thereby compromising effective implementation of the Re-entry Policy as such girls would not return into the school system.

Similarly, the head teachers revealed that the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines were not followed in their totality, thereby compromising its effectiveness in meeting its intended objective of retaining pregnant girls in schools. The head teachers admitted that they lacked resources to put in place supportive systems for re-entered girls, especially child care and scholarships. The only service provided was counselling through the Guidance and Counseling Committees for the young mothers. As such, some girls failed to continue with their education and left to go and take care of their babies, while others dropped out due to financial constraints and failure to pay school fees as they either lost their scholarships or spent whatever money they had on child maintenance. A head teacher at school B in Lusaka district further explained as follows:

There are no strong supportive systems for the girls who re-enter after pregnancy. Many need to care for their babies and schools do not have baby care facilities. Others are stigmatized and at times may not feel completely taken care of by the Guidance and Counseling team. Others end up losing their scholarships when they return to school. All these factors make it difficult for pregnant girls to re-enter and stay in school. There are times when girls want to transfer to other schools but unfortunately there are usually no other schools nearby, hence they end up dropping out of school completely.

All the head teachers added that it was difficult to track girls who preferred to go to other schools and that once enrolled, such girls did not disclose the reason for their transfer as being re-entry. They stated that such cases lowered the numbers of girls who were officially re-entered in a year

as they were not counted. This particular finding was in line with Wedekind and Milingo (2015)'s study which found that some girls were still being lost in the education system due to either dropping out or transferring to other schools where their backgrounds were not known.

Some head teachers further informed these researchers that another challenge faced was that sometimes informal negotiations between the responsible male and the pregnant girl's family were often preferred and the school failed to re-admit such girls, thereby defeating the purpose of the policy.

Similarly, the teachers pointed out and explained that cultural practices still played a big role in some villages and therefore still posed as a big challenge. Thus when girls come of age, they stay in their own huts and are directly or indirectly encouraged to engage in sexual activities to prove their womanhood and this made it easy for them to fall pregnant. Other traditions instill fear in the children, discouraging them to speak but only to listen to adults. Such children ended up failing to express themselves as it was seen as disrespectful to adults. A teacher at school F in Chongwe district said:

Some girls that fall pregnant fail to report the matter to anyone for fear of being stigmatized. One girl ended up aborting her pregnancy with the help of venders at the school. The girl was stigmatized by her fellow pupils and some teachers and eventually dropped out of school.

The teachers further reported that in some cases, parents felt it was their duty to decide whether their children should remain in school or get married once they fell pregnant. This, to a large extent, negatively affected implementation of the Re-entry Policy and eventually its effectiveness in ensuring that girls who fall pregnant return to school. The teachers added that the withholding of information about who was responsible for the pregnancy made it hard to follow them up for either child support or for leave in the case of a fellow pupil. However, overall, school authorities were reluctant to follow up the males responsible for their girls' pregnancies as their concern were the pregnant girls. A teacher at school B in Lusaka district said:

I am aware that the responsible men or boy pupils are to fill in the forms and for male pupils, leave is to be granted as a way of punishing them. However, very rarely does this happen. Also, the boy going on leave is not something that we are concerned about hence, we don't implement that part of the policy guidelines.

Upon further questions, some teachers observed that another challenge was that some girls had taken advantage of the policy and had fallen pregnant more than twice. In such cases, the girls concerned had not been re-admitted into school, thereby making the policy seem as though it disadvantages such the concerned pupils. This finding on the increased number of pregnancies in some schools in the two districts are in line with Mutombo and Mumbuna (2010) whose study's hypothesis and findings were that the high number of pregnancies was partly due to girls taking advantage of the Re-entry policy as it guaranteed them the opportunity of returning to school after delivery.

Coming to parents, they also added their voice on the challenges contributing to the ineffectiveness of the Re-entry Policy. In the focus group discussions, some parents complained that even though the policy allows girls to return to school after child birth, the implementation at school level was uneven. While some schools assisted pregnant girls to return to school, other school authorities resisted the policy and there was persistent social stigma associated with teen pregnancies, especially in urban schools and particularly in grant aided schools, which had completely refused to implement the policy. This finding was in line with those of Kapele-Luchembe (2014: 28-29) who established that the mainline church-managed (or grant-aided) schools had rejected the Re-entry Policy on grounds that it would compromise Christian teaching and moral standards in their institutions. This means that girls in church-run schools who fall pregnant have to find other schools if they are to continue with their education after delivery but this was not easy and such girls would most likely drop out completely.

Other parents pointed out that it was not easy to implement the policy effectively because sometimes teachers themselves as implementers were responsible for impregnating the girls. One community member from school F complained that he was upset with the school because a teacher who had impregnated a girl was not disciplined but merely transferred to another school. He further lamented that if such teachers were not punished, they would continue their unprofessional behaviour and increase the numbers of pregnant girls dropping out of school.

When asked about the challenges faced in enforcing and observing the Ban on Corporal Punishment, all teachers indicated that unruly behaviour by the pupils themselves was a big challenge as it tended to force them as teachers to resort to corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure. The teachers claimed that some pupils had taken advantage of the ban and were misbehaving badly. One teacher from school B in Lusaka district further explained this as follows:

It is very difficult to control naughty male pupils in class without corporal punishment. Being a school in a shanty compound, my school is surrounded by bars and some of the boys drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. Their behaviour is unruly and at times they boo or haul insults at us in classes because they know they will get away with light punishment. Such boys are punished even during learning hours. It is believed if the punishment is done that time then the impact would be felt but unfortunately the pupils like to be kept out of class. Even in the Bible beating a child with intent to correct them is recommended. Therefore, just a little whipping of the naughty ones could help us.

This finding is supported by Simuchimba and Luangala (2007: 14) and Phiri (2011: 33-34) whose studies established that many teachers were not happy with the ban on corporal punishment and used all sorts of reasons and arguments, including religious and Biblical beliefs, to defend its continued practice.

However, another teacher indicated that her school did not provide guidelines on what alternative punishment could be given instead of corporal punishment, hence she was not sure what constituted corporal punishment apart from the beating of pupils as a way of disciplining them. This too was a real challenge because despite the Ministry sending out circulars on the Ban on

Corporal Punishment, it seems that clear guidelines on alternative forms of punishment had not been provided to schools though the call for such guidelines goes as far back as 2007 (Simuchimba and Luangala, 2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment in selected secondary schools in Chongwe and Lusaka districts. On the basis of the foregoing data and discussion, the following conclusions were made.

Both the Re-entry Policy (Revised Guidelines) and the Ban on Corporal Punishment as policy measures are only partially effective as they have not fully achieved their intended objectives of all pregnant girls being able to re-enter school after giving birth, and complete eradication of the use of beating and other forms of degrading punishment of pupils, respectively, in schools. With regard to the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines, although there has been an increase in re-admissions of formerly pregnant girls, this was also unfortunately followed by an increase in the number of pregnancies in subsequent years. Similarly, corporal punishment is still being administered in almost all the schools sampled in the study. Thus the Re-entry Policy's aim of reducing the dropout rate among pregnant school girls could not be guaranteed since the higher the numbers of girls who fell pregnant, the higher the chances that some girls would not re-enter school, leading to an increase in gender disparities in education. The situation is therefore not very different from that under the old 2004 guidelines.

Similarly, the complete eradication of corporal punishment in schools could not be guaranteed because despite the school administrators denying its existence, the practice is still going and teachers strongly believe that they cannot enforce discipline in their institutions without caning or beating of some (most unruly) pupils.

The ineffectiveness of the Re-entry Policy is compounded by numerous challenges of which the main ones include cultural beliefs and practices whereby the girl child is expected to get married soon after reaching puberty; the vulnerability of most girls due to poverty; lack of commitment among teachers and parents; and lack of necessary facilities to assist the re-entered girls. Similarly, the ineffectiveness of the Ban on Corporal Punishment is exacerbated by among other challenges, the strong cultural and religious beliefs that a disobedient child needs to be punished even by beating in order to instill the sense of discipline and respect for elders/authority in him or her. The lack of clear guidelines on alternative forms of punishment is also indirectly encourages the practice of corporal punishment among teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the following recommendations were made by the researchers:

Ministry of General Education

1. The Ministry of General Education should strengthen the implementation of the Re-entry Policy according to the Revised Guidelines and the Ban on Corporal Punishment by ensuring that all the necessary and supporting documents for both strategies are available in schools. For corporal punishment, the guidelines on alternative disciplinary measures have to be formulated with support from stakeholders, literature and the pupils themselves.
2. A deliberate orientation programme on the Re-entry Policy Revised Guidelines and any new set of guidelines on alternative disciplinary measures should be carried out in schools.
3. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Re-entry Policy and the Ban on Corporal Punishment should continue and be intensified.
4. The Re-entry Policy and the Ban on Corporal Punishment should include an implementation framework with indicators and targets that must be followed. Necessary adjustments as informed by emerging information should be undertaken. This should be included in the school/district/provincial and national implementation plans right from the outset. The evaluation of the Policy should be periodic at school, district, provincial and national levels.
5. The Ministry of General Education should also ensure that there are support systems in place for re-admitted girls which should go hand in hand with the policy to ensure that once girls are re-admitted, they are retained in the schools.

Schools

1. Schools should strengthen their guidance and counseling units to ensure that all teachers provide the much-needed support to the pupils.
2. Schools should continue with deliberate programmes on comprehensive sexuality education, child and human rights, and working closely with organisations that deal with such issues for further support programmes and perhaps even funding towards enforcement of the policy measures.
3. Schools should strengthen community engagement such as through the Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) and School Based Committees (SBCs) for discussions with parents on various school issues that require their support in addressing violence against children in their institutions.

Future research

1. Larger scale or country wide research commissioned by the MoGE or other stakeholders should be carried out as a follow up to the 2010 review of the Re-entry Policy to find out if the Revised Guidelines were being implemented effectively and if the Policy was achieving its intended objectives.
2. Further and more comprehensive research on corporal punishment in schools is needed as there are clearly mixed feelings among stakeholders about its ban.

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