

## METHODS OF CURBING LEARNER MISCONDUCT IN ZIMBABWEAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored the methods used in curbing misconduct in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools. Our focus on the methods used for curbing student misconduct was on: the challenges teachers and school authorities experience in implementing those methods; the relationship between learner misconduct and school effectiveness and the psychological and physical damage that results from inappropriate methods to curb misconduct.

The study used a descriptive survey design in which 150 teachers completed questionnaires and 10 school heads were interviewed in Harare Province. An analysis of the causes of misconduct was imperative because methods used to curb misconduct can only be appropriate if causes are taken into consideration.

The methods used to curb misconduct comprised: codes of conduct and rules; the prefect system; parental involvement; counselling and disciplinary committees. Punishments to ward off misconduct included: manual work, detention and as a last resort, corporal punishment, exclusion and expulsion in accordance with procedures stated in Circular P.35.

There were some controversial findings which prompt further research and debate. For example teachers felt that they should apply corporal punishment without seeking authority from school heads first while the policy requires them to do so. Another one is where human rights organizations feel that corporal punishment should be discontinued as it dehumanizes learners while teachers argue that it is a necessary form of punishment. There is also debate on whether school girls who fall pregnant should be re-admitted after their maternity leave. However, most participants agreed that the methods under use serve their purpose well.

**Key Words:** Discipline, misconduct, school climate, school effectiveness, punishment.

### INTRODUCTION

Schools receive learners from communities in order to inculcate knowledge, skills and values which society expects them to have to become good adults, workers and citizens. Sometimes the schools' expectations regarding learner behaviour are not met due to either school-based or learner-based factors. Often there is culture conflict between the expectations of schools and those of the traditional African home in Zimbabwe on how student discipline should be instilled. This paper explores methods of curbing misconduct in schools which teach the 12-18 year old learners. The national procedures of handling learner misconduct in schools are stated

in Policy Circular N0 35. Our findings were rated to determine the appropriateness of the methods used in schools to curb learner misconduct against provisions of that circular.

### **School discipline and student misconduct**

Many scholars provide various perceptions of the concept of discipline. Some view it as training that produces a specified character or pattern of behaviour. Others view it as punishment intended to correct or train. Yet to others, discipline is a gradual and time consuming task of helping learners to see sense in acting in a certain way through enforcement of school rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption (Cotton 2001). Thus, discipline is educative order which tries to reach appropriate standards and follow rules for engaging in valuable educational activity (Wilson 1977).

Any behaviour contrary to discipline is misconduct. For instance, behaviour which prevents other learners from feeling safe, secure, respected and learning effectively is contrary to the learning contract between the school and the learner. Criminal offences and behaviour that is likely to put the school into disrepute could lead to disciplinary procedure (Hill 2006). The common acts of misconduct found among secondary school learners included: fighting, truancy, vandalism, bullying, taking drugs, sharing pornographic materials, improper sexual association and insubordination to staff. Society has continuous debate on how such acts of misconduct should be dealt with by schools. While some people argue that punishment is the answer, others prefer instilling discipline among learners. Enforcement of discipline governed by Circular P.35 in Zimbabwe is seen as essential for school effectiveness.

As an agent of human socialisation for adult life, school discipline involves self-control guided by moral, social principles of overcoming selfish emotions and desires. It does what is right and good. A disciplined person does not do well out of fear but because s/he believes such behaviour is better than actions that can harm other people. Schools need to cultivate habits of self-discipline rather than use authoritarian methods of controlling behaviour. There is need to diagnose and correct causes of indiscipline objectively then satisfactory solutions can be obtained (Ozigi 1977). While many teachers, administrators and parents believe that corporal punishment is necessary to teach children a lesson and discourage them from similar practices in future, other teachers say they do not want to use it but have no other way to control large classes. However, educators and psychologists argue that, teachers can praise good behaviour, impose non-physical punishments and involve children in making the school rules to reduce discipline problems (Kimaryo 1998).

Punishment should be guided by principles of justice and fairness. It should fit the offence. It ought to be deterrent and consistent (Ozigi 1977). In Zimbabwe, Circular P.35 provides the procedure to be followed for suspension, exclusion and corporal punishment in schools. But prior to that, the circular states that:

*Every Head should strive to cultivate a school climate where pupils will/can develop internal discipline which is not initiated by fear of punishment. A school ethos which promotes self-discipline among pupils supported by positive remedial disciplinary and pro-active measures, where necessary, is preferred to situations where pupils avoid misdemeanours because the alternative could be infliction of physical pain by the Head (Chipfunyise 1999:7).*

Jones (1993) argues that, punishment does not effectively modify difficult behaviour in the long term. Reinforcement of good behaviour through praise, quick and spontaneous reward does. Reinforcement comes with self-awareness of success. There is need for authorities to listen to and respect learners to develop self-esteem and give students experiences of success in schools. This helps learners to reach for higher levels of social behaviour and cooperation.

### **Rationale for this research**

Nowadays schools face more complex acts of misconduct by students than previously experienced. This study sought to assist parents to complement school authorities' efforts to minimize learners' exposure to acts of misconduct. For example, in Zimbabwe, some ethnic groups unknowingly contribute to school girl pregnancies by training teenage girls in sexual skills (Chinamwari) which encourage premature sexual intercourse. Some

parents do not rebuke children when they find them either smoking or taking alcoholic drinks. Worse still, other parents fund their children's hire and purchase of pornographic tapes. Knowledge of sources of indiscipline helps educators to collaborate with parents to use suitable methods of curbing indiscipline.

Human rights activists criticize some traditional methods of instilling discipline among learners for disregarding children's human rights. This study sought to find out how schools were coping with such controversies. It also sought to establish the relationship between learner misconduct and school effectiveness. Findings of the study would inform educators about the psychological and physical damage that result from use of inappropriate methods of curbing misconduct.

### Statement of the problem

Misconduct is disruptive to the teaching and learning process. However, stakeholders do not always agree on how to control it. This raises the need to address the following questions.

### The research questions

- What methods are used to curb learner misconduct in Zimbabwean secondary schools?
- What challenges do teachers and school heads face in curbing learner misconduct?
- What is the relationship between levels of indiscipline and school effectiveness?
- How do schools orient teachers to use methods that minimize physical and psychological damage to offenders?

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

We used the descriptive survey design to obtain empirical evidence for our problem (Verma and Mallick 1999). The survey helped us to grasp the teachers' and school heads' views on indiscipline in schools and the methods of managing it. Descriptive survey design gathers data from many cases at a time and studies phenomena in their natural settings. It is also concerned with: population characteristics, practices, beliefs and attitudes that are held (Verma and Mallick 1999) about curbing misconduct in Zimbabwean schools.

Our study was qualitative because we drew data from respondents' feelings, attitudes and beliefs (Borg and Gall 1989). We sought to interpret why things happened the way they did. We used qualitative methods in order to understand controversial issues and people's perspectives in their social and cultural contexts.

We drew a purposive sample from 82 secondary schools in Harare Province. Forty schools went up to Ordinary Level and 42 went up to Advanced Level Certificate. Each school enrolled about 1400 pupils. Most schools ran double sessions. The province had 4420 teachers. Our sample had 10 school heads who we interviewed and 150 teachers from 15 schools that completed a questionnaire. We studied ten school log books to compliment interview and questionnaire data. We used a purposive sample because school heads and teachers are custodians of school discipline. This also enabled us to compare the perspectives of these two groups of educators on curbing learner misconduct.

Qualitative data are usually sourced from interviews, questionnaires, documents, the researchers' impressions and reactions (Myers 1997). We interviewed school heads and studied their log books while teachers completed a questionnaire.

We carried out guided conversation interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 2002). Although they are prone to bias, they reveal how respondents felt about their experiences. Although they were time-consuming and expensive, interviews enabled us to explore how educational practitioners interpret learner discipline and their role in it (Lawler 2002).

We used the questionnaire because we gave standard instructions to all the respondents and the conduct of the research did not affect the results. The administration and scoring of the questionnaire was quick,

straightforward and analysis was easy although sometimes questionnaires tend to force respondents to choose alternatives that might not represent some of their views (Borg and Gall 1989; Verma and Mallick 1999).

We studied the school log books and Circular P.35. A school log book is a record of special visits, disciplinary problems and how they are handled. We studied the log books because they are the official record of serious acts of misconduct and punishments. The major limitation of the log book is that it may not be made accessible due to the sensitivity of some of its records. It may not be reliable because some cases go unrecorded. Policy Circular 35 is a ministerial document which gives guidelines of dealing with serious acts of misconduct. We studied Policy Circular 35 because it gives the national standard procedures of dealing with acts of learner misconduct in schools. Its limitation is that it may be in the school but not accessible to the teachers.

We present our results according to the research questions of our study. The reactions of parents, teachers and pupils to the national education policy on school discipline constituted key points of our analysis. We compare questionnaire and interview results according to themes and patterns that emerged as answers to our research questions (Judd, Smith and Kidder 1991). We summarized the results for easy conclusions and recommendations.

To ensure credibility of our results, we ensured that our data collection instruments were reliable and that the data we collected was valid. Validity is the degree to which a technique elicits what it investigates. Reliability refers to the extent to which a technique consistently yields the same results (Verma and Mallick 1999).

Reliability and validity of our findings were ensured by including qualified and experienced teachers in the sample. While all school heads and 46% of the teachers were university graduates, 54% teachers held diploma in education. Eight school heads and 90% of the teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience. With regards to participation in school discipline, we had: 34% class teachers, 28% heads of department, 23% deputy school heads and senior teachers, as well as 15% house masters and sports directors in the sample.

Content validity in both the questionnaire and interview was checked by pilot testing them. We promoted open and undistorted communication with interviewees to avoid contamination of interview data. We encouraged interviewees to share their uninterrupted feelings and thoughts. We held interviews in private to make respondents speak from the vessels of answers and not to respond to our presence (Lawler 2002). We personally delivered and collected questionnaires to afford respondents opportunity for clarification on some issues and high return of questionnaires. Multiple methods sealed loopholes of one method by strengths of another.

## RESULTS

We present findings of this study in this section. Ten school heads were interviewed but 132 out of 150 (88%) questionnaires were collected from teachers. Our results are based on these.

Our main question in this study sought the methods used to curb learner misconduct in Zimbabwean secondary schools. We found that methods of curbing learner misconduct varied with offences. Common acts of learner misconduct revealed by this study were: cheating, lying, lateness and bunking lessons, truancy, and insubordination to teachers, bullying, stealing, vandalism, as well as drug and sexual abuse. We grouped methods of curbing misconduct in schools among preventive, corrective and punitive according to the themes that emerged.

Responses from both interviewees and the questionnaire indicated that secondary schools in Zimbabwe crafted preventive codes of conduct, school rules, prefect systems, and disciplinary committees to educate, forewarn and deter learners from misconduct. Twenty-eight per cent of the teachers and all ten school heads agreed that parental involvement in school discipline is an effective method of curbing learner misconduct.

School rules were included in applicants' packages. Applicants and their parents/guardians were required to sign contracts for compliance with school rules prior to enrolment. The prefect system was considered by teachers and school heads as part of the school structure which maintained discipline. Disciplinary committees were another aspect of the school structure used for curbing misconduct in secondary schools.

Among the corrective methods used in secondary schools to curb learner misconduct were reprimands, supervision, counselling and rewarding good behaviour. Reprimands were the most applicable method of restraining learners from acts of misconduct by every teacher. Nineteen per cent of the teachers said supervision was vital to curb truancy, bunking lessons and not doing homework. Schools used attendance registers, teachers on duty, homework diaries and solicited parental supervision of homework. Counselling was the most popular method to 57% of teachers and all school heads. It curbed misconduct without causing physical and psychological harm to the offender. Rewarding good behaviour was also used to control misbehaviour.

Punishments used for curbing misconduct included: manual work, detention, corporal punishment, exclusion and expulsion. Manual work was the most popular punitive method to 70% of the teachers and all ten school heads. Corporal punishment was viewed by 35% of teachers as a necessary method for curbing learner misconduct. Detention was not a popular method for curbing misconduct in this study. Exclusion was preferred by 11% of the teachers. Expulsion, like exclusion was seen as the last resort of methods to curb learner misconduct.

Our study also sought the challenges faced by teachers and school heads in curbing learner misconduct. Our participants identified occasional lack of parental support during implementation of methods to curb misconduct in schools. Some parents relinquished their responsibility to the school under the pretext that school discipline was none of their business. When a learner misbehaved, some parents took their child's rather than the school's side. Ill-educated parents and teachers discouraged prefects from "overcommitting" themselves to prefect duties under the pretext that it negatively affected students' academic performance. Due to large classes in Zimbabwe, teachers who were members of disciplinary committees were sometimes short of time to meet offenders and delayed justice. Sometimes corrupt staff members protected offenders.

Challenges faced from corrective methods varied. One challenge from reprimanding learners was the temptation for teachers to use abusive language to restrain improper use of language worsening the problem. Pronouncements of human rights activists tended to mislead offenders to ignore the advice of teachers in preference for that by human rights organizations. Schools usually do not have qualified teacher counsellors. Most schools in Zimbabwe found rewarding non-offenders unaffordable.

Use of manual work to curb learner misconduct is challenging since manual work is sometimes scorned by dull students who would rather have it than be "tormented" by difficult academic work in class. It also interferes with the teaching-learning progress. Manual work sometimes hardens offenders thereby promoting learner negativity. Teachers who supervise it also feel penalized. School heads said that they discouraged detention as it is susceptible to expose pupils to abuse by unscrupulous teachers. The Zimbabwean education Policy Circular 35 forbids the use of corporal punishment by teachers without the recorded school head's approval. Participants who knew the provisions of Circular P.35 argued that the implementation of exclusion and expulsion was inhibitive. Only the school heads were allowed to expedite exclusion with the concurrence of parents and the Provincial Education Director (PED).

With regards to the relationship between levels of indiscipline and school effectiveness, where schools involved parents, learners and educators in developing and implementing school rules, mutual understanding and loyalty translated into school effectiveness. The prefect system enhanced democratic leadership training and involved learners in effective school organization. Parental involvement in school discipline increase school-home co-operation as a pre-requisite for learner discipline to promote school effectiveness. Disciplinary committees enhanced school effectiveness through empowerment of parents and academic staff. Counselling

addressed individual learner needs which encouraged learner focus on their studies thereby enhancing school effectiveness.

As for schools' orientation of teachers to use disciplinary methods that minimize physical and psychological damage to offenders, staff induction and meetings were used to discuss policy, code of conduct and school rules on how to administer school discipline. Participants' responses revealed deficiencies in staff orientation since schools still had some teachers who flouted school regulations by having improper sexual association as well as sharing alcoholic drinks and cigarettes with learners. Some staff members protected learner offenders in disciplinary committees. Ill-educated teachers discouraged prefects from "overcommitting" themselves to prefect duties under the pretext that it negatively affected students' academic performance. Some teachers used abusive language to restrain improper behaviour among learners. There were no qualified teacher counsellors to help with learner counselling in Zimbabwean schools. Some teachers shunned supervising manual punishments as they felt that they were also being punished if they are not the ones offended. As teachers were not allowed to administer corporal punishment "without authority" from school heads, they felt disempowered in the eyes of mischievous students. Such teachers quietly relinquished their responsibility of administering learner discipline and turned a blind eye to offenders. While all school heads interviewed claimed that the teachers knew the provisions of Circular P.35, 76% of the teachers in the sample testified ignorance of its provisions.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that learner misconduct is partly attributable to ineffective family socialization. Our discussion accounts for all our research questions.

The preference of methods of curbing learner misconduct ranged from slight (6%) to high (70%). Some responses that are peculiar to Zimbabwean schools are highlighted. It took several trips and in one school we made five visits to collect questionnaires.

We grouped methods of curbing learner misconduct into: preventive, corrective and punitive. Apart from teacher-based methods, teachers and school heads argued that a suitable environment for managing learner discipline required parental involvement. Parents could visit schools during: parents', consultation and sports days as well as during meetings to create communication opportunities for shared-vision on school discipline with teachers. Parents could also teach their children how to cope with cultural invasion. Nowadays learners are exposed to a technologically transmitted television, social media and film acting culture incorporating sexual abuse, violence and crime which influences misconduct in schools as learners are misled into believing that films are real and imitate them.

Preventive methods of curbing misconduct are systemic as they form part of every school. Twenty-eight per cent of the teachers and all the ten school heads regarded parental involvement as an effective method of curbing learner misconduct because charity begins at home. Poor parenting through erratic discipline and parental conflict can be a source of learner indiscipline (Mcnamus 1993; Hollin 1993).

Under the hard economic conditions in Zimbabwe, many children lacked parental guidance for various reasons. Parents were pre-occupied with eking a living and left children to their whims while schools grappled with learner misconduct. Such parents were either involved in cross-border trading or had left for greener pastures abroad. Maybe out of ignorance, some parents relinquished their responsibility to the school under the pretext that school discipline was none of their business. Some parents received stolen property from children while others sent children to buy cigarettes and alcoholic drinks exposing them to temptation to consume them. When a learner misbehaved, some parents took their child's rather than the school's side. Other learners misbehaved out of ignorance because they lacked parental guidance and role models since they came from child-headed families due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

All the school heads and teachers in this study concurred that school codes of conduct and rules were the basis of discipline in every school. They are preventive and systemic methods of curbing misconduct in schools as they provide guidelines and standards of behaviour expected of learners. School rules seek to achieve a quiet, smooth and efficient school environment. Nowadays, many people are cynical about the growing tendency of young people towards permissiveness and demand for excessive freedom. Enforcement of discipline based on fear, paternalism or inaction only produce negative results without developing characters for good citizenship. Rules need to guide students in what they are expected to do and not to do in terms of courtesy, obedience, table manners, respect for elders, bullying and fighting among others. For conformity, pupils should be involved in rule-making (Docking 1987). There is need to explain reasons for the rules especially those that students do not like (Ozigi 1977). Rules need to be clearly understood and fairly enforced to avoid defiance by offenders. Some frustrated teachers with limited powers influenced learners to flout regulations with the support of uncooperative members of the community who stole school property and shared alcoholic drinks and cigarettes with pupils. Of late, the Zimbabwean education system incorporates school development associations and committees in which parents are involved and informed about the school rules and codes of conduct as well as how discipline is administered if anyone breached them. Although restrictive rules that occasionally ignore learners' and parents' freedom obtained in some schools, codes of conduct enhance school effectiveness.

The prefect system was considered by teachers and school heads as part of the school structure which maintained discipline. Prefects are learners who have formal authority over other learners (King 1973). They are selected, well behaved and exemplary learners who are delegated organization and coordination of school activities. Such learners are also required to deal with minor cases of indiscipline, learner welfare, study and checking attendance. Functions of prefects help to set a good tone for the school. Prefect system helps to train students in democratic processes, taking responsibility and ownership of the school while ensuring the consolidation of good manners and representation of learners. Prefects suggest improvements to the tone and standards of the school with regards to simple courtesies, consideration for others, cleanliness, hygiene, loyalty and self-discipline (Ozigi 1977). It is an effective way of involving learners in the administration of the school. We found that its effectiveness was sometimes marred by lack of commitment among some prefects. Ill-educated parents and teachers discouraged prefects from "overcommitting" themselves to prefect duties under the pretext that it negatively affected their academic performance. Some prefects were timid while others were defied and threatened by jealousy and stubborn students. However, schools ensured that prefects were protected and accorded full recognition.

Disciplinary committee was another school structure used for curbing misconduct in secondary schools. It comprises senior staff members including: deputy head, senior and other teachers with specialist proficiencies. It plays a key pastoral role in the school. Counsellors, boarding matrons/masters in boarding schools, heads of departments, housemasters and sports directors are often incorporated in these committees. Disciplinary committees facilitate fair and democratic administration of discipline among staff and students. However, due to overpopulated schools in Zimbabwe, our study found that they were sometimes short of time to meet offenders and delayed justice. Occasionally, corrupt staff members protected some offenders. Disciplinary committees enhance school effectiveness by recognizing and motivating staff members with special skills. In some cases school disciplinary committees include teachers and parents.

Corrective methods used in secondary schools to curb learner misconduct were reprimands, supervision, counselling and rewarding good behaviour. Reprimands were the most applicable method of restraining learners from acts of misconduct by every teacher. It is a rebuke or reproach that a teacher makes to students against minor acts of misconduct like making noise in lessons, use of vulgar language and wearing improper attire. They are meant to get learners into line. One challenge was the temptation for teachers to use abusive language to restrain improper language worsening the problem.

Supervision was found vital by 19% of the teachers against offences like: truancy, bunking lessons, and not doing homework. Teachers used attendance registers, teachers on duty, homework diaries and solicited parental supervision of homework. The process involved monitoring the learners to help them and ensured

that they did the correct things. Teachers and school heads added that large classes, common in Zimbabwe, required teachers to keep mark records to ensure that every learner did homework.

Counselling was the most popular method to 57% of teachers and all school heads. Guidance and counselling curbs misconduct without causing physical and psychological harm to the offender. It is often used on traumatic and addictive offences like pregnancy and drug abuse.

A teacher is more likely to elicit appropriate behaviour if s/he understands the situation that the learner faces (Kimaryo 1998). This explains why most schools have guidance and counselling committees which have a pastoral function. They assist learners with problems of growing up and adjustment into the school system. Where learners are preparing for tertiary education and leaving school, they help in career guidance. They also help learners with family, social, economic and disciplinary problems (Ozigi 1977). A major challenge of using counselling in curbing learner misconduct is that it requires time and expertise which schools often ill-afford. Pronouncements of human rights activists which according to one male school head give children "too much freedom too early" tended to mislead offenders to ignore the advice of teachers in preference for that by human rights organizations. Since Zimbabwean schools do not employ qualified counsellors, senior teachers take that role.

Rewarding good behaviour was also used to control misbehaviour although most large schools in Zimbabwe found it unaffordable. Schools use the house point system where learners are involved in inter-house co-curricular clubs, games and societies as well as behaviour competitions in order to reward good performance while minimizing misconduct. This system divides the school into houses for purposes of competition in all academic and co-curricular activities. It is intended to encourage collective responsibility and discipline (Docking 1987). Agreed points are given against learners who misbehave and are punished. The house with best behaved learners per week earns a behaviour trophy or some prize. Prefects and members of the house try to exert influence on problem students in the house so that the house does not lose points. Such students are watched, warned and advised by the members of their house to improve their behaviour (Ozigi 1977).

Punishments to ward off misconduct included: detention, manual work, and as a last resort, corporal punishment. We found that these were used on persistent acts of misconduct. Only in extreme cases, should learners be excluded and expelled from school (Ozigi 1977). Manual work was the most popular punitive method to 70% of the teachers and all ten school heads. Being seen publicly on punishment was seen as an embarrassment which could deter offenders from future acts of misconduct. However, manual work is sometimes scorned by dull students who would rather have it than be "tormented" by difficult academic work in class. It interferes with teaching-learning progress. It is painful but hardly addresses the actual problem. Manual work sometimes promotes learner negativity. Teachers who supervise it feel punished if they are not the ones offended. Detention was not a common method for curbing misconduct in this study. School heads said that they discouraged it as it was susceptible to expose pupils to abuse by unscrupulous teachers.

Corporal punishment was viewed by 35% of teachers as a necessary form of punishment while others had reservations about it. The Zimbabwean Education Policy Circular 35 forbids the use of corporal punishment by teachers without the recorded school head's approval. Most learners and parents know the policy. Consequently, teachers who contemplated using corporal punishment "without authority" felt disempowered in the eyes of mischievous students. The provisions of Circular P.35 are that only the school head or her/his delegate can apply corporal punishment. A witness has to be present to countersign the number of strokes the offender receives. School heads felt that in double-session schools where they were required to teach classes and supervise all 50 and above teachers per school, the record-keeping of corporal punishment was difficult. Most school heads had very little recorded in their log books on corporal punishment, implying that they carried it out without recording.

Human rights organizations regarded corporal punishment as a dehumanizing method of curbing misconduct. Maybe due to cultural belief rather than psychological considerations, there was still a strong belief among teachers, school heads and parents that, one either spared the rod and spoiled the child or spoiled the rod and



spared the child. Teachers who felt disempowered by the policy on corporal punishment quietly relinquished their responsibility for administering learner discipline to heads of schools and ignored offenders. In fact, while all school heads interviewed claimed that the teachers knew the provisions of Circular P.35, 76% of the teachers in the sample testified ignorance of its provisions. Whereas Wilson (1977:45) says, "the teaching of discipline necessarily requires a great deal more control (power) than the teacher usually has available", one teacher who illustrated some teachers' apparent abdication of power to discipline learners due to fear of being embarrassed said, "Some teachers have been hauled before the courts and asked to meet the legal costs", for applying corporal punishment. This intimidated teachers out of their role as custodians of school discipline. Recording punishment cases protects offenders, teachers and the school heads. However, it is complex and time-consuming. This method did not always yield its intended results as school discipline suffered from what teachers and school heads called undesirable external interference.

Exclusion was preferred by 11% of the teachers. However, teachers who knew the provisions of Circular P.35 argued that its implementation was inhibitive. Only the school heads had the mandate to expedite exclusion with the concurrence of parents and the Provincial Education Director (PED). Excluded pupils could go to some other or return to the same school after a prescribed period. Policy Circular P.35 provides that school girls who fall pregnant be re-admitted into school after "maternity leave" when previously they were expelled from school. This is a good idea when considering that every child needs an educated mother and that education is every person's right. However, most teachers who taught students to abstain from premarital sex argued that the policy promoted promiscuity among students in the face of the HIV/AIDS scourge. They also felt that it promoted learner sexual abuse by some teachers. Besides, teachers argued that such students were difficult to control and had bad influence on other learners.

Expulsion, like exclusion, required parental involvement, approval by the PED and concurrence of the Secretary for Education. It is the most extreme method used by schools to curb misconduct. Our participants viewed it with mixed feelings. Sometimes either the PED or the secretary for education reversed decisions made by the school after appeal by parents. We found that some methods of curbing misconduct were perceived differently between policy makers and schools in Zimbabwe.

We established that discipline is a prerequisite of an effective teaching-learning process, good academic results and reputable school tone. Contradictions over a national policy implied lack of stakeholder consultation which was necessary during policy formulation confirmed by both the ten school heads and 100% of the teachers in our sample.

## CONCLUSIONS

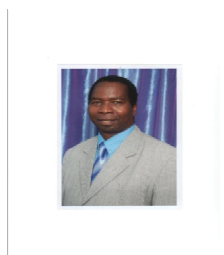
Basing on all participants' preferences we concluded that school-home co-operation was a pre-requisite for learner discipline in order to promote school effectiveness. Where schools involved parents, learners and educators in the drawing up and implementing the code of conduct and school rules, mutual understanding and loyalty translated into school discipline and effectiveness. Prefect system is essential for training learners in taking responsibility, democratic leadership and effective management of school organization. We also concluded that disciplinary committees enhanced school effectiveness. Reprimands are an effective way of curbing misconduct as they discourage unacceptable behaviour.

Supervision makes teachers to keep mark records to ensure that every learner did homework. We concluded that guidance and counselling was the most effective method of curbing learner misconduct since it addressed individual learner needs which in turn enhanced school effectiveness. Although manual work deterred misconduct it could be abused by offenders. Corporal punishment did not yield its intended results as school discipline suffered from undesirable external interference. We also concluded that exclusion of pregnant learners discouraged teenage pregnancy. However, re-admission of excluded pregnant girls is good because it reduces re-generation of ignorance in the population in the long term.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We made some recommendations based on our study. Suitable methods of curbing learner misconduct in schools should be used appropriately. Parents should help schools by training children in good personal behaviour which prepares learners to easily adapt to school discipline. Crafting school rules should involve all stakeholders to earn collaboration. Prefects should be inducted for self-confidence and re-assured of full support of school authorities, parents and the community. Disciplinary committees are an essential part of the schools' machinery for fair and transparent administration of school discipline. Teacher counsellors should receive in-service training and support from both parents and school administration. Manual work should be used after thorough analysis and when appropriate to avoid unintended results. All stakeholders should be consulted during policy formulation for them to be committed to school policies. Human rights organizations should work with rather than against schools to teach learners discipline. Students who fall pregnant should either be re-admitted into a different school or in the non-formal and continuing education system.

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