

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.