

## An evaluation of the implementation of re-entry policy in primary schools: A case of Ndola District, Zambia

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### Abstract

The study investigated the implementation of re-entry policy in primary schools in Ndola district and how teachers in primary schools perceive the policy. A case study was used to evaluate the implementation of the re-entry policy. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The sample comprised 35 teachers and 30 pupils. The study established that the re-entry policy is not well implemented as the guidelines stipulates despite it being introduced in Zambia two decades ago. The study also established that the re-entry policy gives girls a second chance to continue with their education and an economic standing in future. However it is misunderstood by pupils and has resulted in the decay of morals. The study recommended that all primary schools should fully participate in the re-entry policy process to ensure re-admission of the teenage mothers. The study also suggested that a lot of sensitization on the re-entry policy should be done to both teachers and parents.

**Keywords:** access, implementation, perception, pregnant girls, primary schools, re-entry policy

### 1. Introduction: Background of the Study

This study evaluated the implementation of the Re-entry Policy in primary schools of Ndola district. In order to understand the introduction of the Re-entry Policy, it is important to outline the history of the Re-entry Policy in Zambia. When western education was introduced by missionaries in Zambia, only men and adolescent boys were admitted to schools. Practical subjects such as Gardening and Carpentry were the only subjects offered then. The three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) were added to the curriculum later so that the new converts would be able to read the Bible and Christian tracts for themselves. Education of women was introduced in the mid-1930s after the colonial government had taken over the running of schools. The women were offered cooking, baby care, hygiene, sewing and nutrition. Their education just prepared them for their roles as wives and mothers. From the very beginning, therefore, men had an upper hand, and they were offered education that was of higher grade than that of the women. The tendency continued well into the independence period, when there were more school places for the boys, and technical subjects were offered to boys only. Several barriers such as ruined infrastructure, poor sanitation and not enough school places indirectly affected the education of girls (Sifuniso, 2006) <sup>[42]</sup>.

Pregnancy was one of the barriers that hindered girl's access to education. Girls who became pregnant were expelled from school and were not re-admitted into the school system. Till the 1970s even single teachers who got pregnant were fired and black listed. Boys who impregnated fellow students were expelled from school, if they were reported to the school authorities. In majority of cases, the boys were not reported and they continued with their education (ibid).

As earlier mentioned, before 1991, once a girl dropped out of school for falling pregnant, marked the end of her enrolment in any education system. Expulsion was considered as a

disciplinary measure. This led to early marriages as well as forced marriages, which created gender gaps in education and large disparities in completed years of schooling of the adult population. Various levels of people in society such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) like Forum for Women Educationalists (FAWE), the government itself and other stakeholders started looking at such issues of exclusion from school in different angles. In March 1990 a world conference for women was held in Jomtein, Thailand. The outcome from the meeting was a declaration of 'Education for All.' The Education for All movement which was launched at the world Conference on 'Education for All' was a global commitment to provide quality Basic Education for all children, Youths and adults. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and World Bank launched the conference, (World Conference on Education For All, 1990). An 'expanded vision of learning' was endorsed and participants pledged universal primary education and reduction of illiteracy by the end of 2000. A framework for action to meet the basic learning needs were adopted. It was declared that:

*"Basic Education should be provided to all children, youth, and adults to this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded, and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities. For basic education to be equitable, all children, youth, and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated" (WCEFA, 1990:33)*

After the Jomtein conference came the Beijing conference in 1995. The Beijing conference was the fourth world conference for women. At the conference education and action plans for the girl child education were prioritized. What was noted was that:

*“Discrimination in girls' access to education persists in many areas, owing to customary attitudes, early marriages and pregnancies, inadequate and gender-biased teaching and educational materials, sexual harassment and lack of adequate and physically and otherwise accessible schooling facilities. Girls and young women are expected to manage both educational and domestic responsibilities, often resulting in poor scholastic performance and early drop-out from the educational system. This has long-lasting consequences for all aspects of women's lives.”(UN, 1995).*

Soon after the Beijing conference the girl child education campaign intensified in Zambia. What resulted was ‘Educating Our Future’ document. It is explained by Ministry of Education, (1996) that the document emphasised the need to accelerate and develop the full potential of girls and women. It aimed at investing in human resource development through proper education levels. Educating Our Future document prompted the government to build more girls schools after it was realised that there were more boys than girls in formal schools. Non- governmental Organisations (NGOS) like The Forum for African Women Educationalist in Zambia (FAWEZA), together with the government fought to redress the gender disparities that were there at that particular time. Schools were compelled equal enrolment of boys and girls at grades 1, 8 and 10. Public boys’ schools were converted in co-education high schools.

FAWEZA in 1996 brought about yet another voice for change of policy. The then chairperson Dr Kabunda Kayongo pushed for the approval of the Re-entry Policy. In 1997 at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka a conference for girls education was held where it was agreed that the re-entry policy be upheld. The then Minister of Education Mr Syamukayumbu Syamujaye announced that the Re-entry Policy which stated that girls who fell pregnant would no longer be expelled and those that were expelled to be brought back (Ministry of Education.)

Despite the introduction of the re-entry policy in 1997, gender disparities continued to exist in schools in the years that followed. The number of girls not returning to school after falling pregnant was also seen to be on the rise. Amidst the above information the questions that need agent answers are ‘how the re-entry policy is being implemented in primary schools?’ and ‘what perceptions do teachers have towards re-entry policy in primary schools of Ndola district?’ The above questions could not be answered without the researcher embarking on the study of this nature.

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

The Zambian Government through the Ministry of Education announced the Re-entry Policy to ensure that girls who fell pregnant while in school could go back and complete their education (Ministry of Education Science Vocational Training and Early Education, 1997). However the implementation of the re-entry policy and the way teachers perceive it was not

known. Hence the researcher embarked on this study.

### 1.2 Purpose of Study

The study sought to establish the implementation of the re-entry policy in primary schools in Ndola district. Further, the study ought to determine the perception of teachers towards the Re-entry Policy in primary schools

### 1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To establish how the re-entry policy has been implemented in primary schools of Ndola district.
2. To find out the perception of teachers towards the re-entry policy in primary schools in Ndola district.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. How is the re-entry policy implemented in primary schools of Ndola district?
2. What is the perception of teachers towards re-entry policy in Ndola district?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

It was hoped that the study might provide: information on how re-entry policy had been implemented in primary schools in Ndola district; a platform where communities should not engage their children into early marriages, perhaps even encourage them to go back to school. It would help teachers have the consideration that drop outs are normal pupils befitting in the mainstream. Educational practitioners, administrators, policy makers, politicians and other stakeholders might utilize the findings of the study. The findings of the study might also provide an insight on the shortfall of the policy. It might stimulate further research on the implementation of the policy as well as contribute information on the existing body of knowledge on the Re-entry Policy.

### 1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study was delimited to Ndola district. Ndola district was chosen because Re-entry Policy is also implemented in primary schools, there.

### 1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study was conducted in primary schools in Ndola district which might have had different characteristics with other primary schools in other districts – therefore, generalisation of the study should be done with caution.

## 2. Literature Review

Literature reviewed according to the two themes: How re-entry policy is implemented in other countries and the perception teachers have towards the re-entry

### 2.1 Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy in other countries

Dawson and Hosie, (2005) <sup>[1]</sup> in their research carried out in ten Local Education Authorities in England reported that the United Kingdom under the Department for Education and Skill published guidelines in 2001 on education of young mothers of school age, which stressed that pregnancy was not a reason for exclusion and that the Local Education Authorities in England have a duty to provide suitable education for all who become pregnant while of compulsory

school age. The guidelines are in line with the Equality Act of 2010 which ensures that the girls are not discriminated for being pregnant. This means that it would be unlawful for schools to discriminate pupils because they are pregnant, are breastfeeding or have recently had a baby. The Act also allows pregnant girls in schools and to be allowed more than eighteen weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. The Equality Act also emphasises the re-admission and support from education welfare officers to enable the girls complete their education. The act applies to schools in England, Wales and Scotland. It explains that:

*“Schools already have a duty of care to their parents and it is not expected that they alter their policies because of their new legal provision of the Equalities Act 2010, provided they are not excluding pregnant pupils or requiring them to study at home or alternative provision when they wish to remain in school, and are letting them return to education when they have had their babies.”*  
(London Borough of Merton Children, Schools and Families, 2014:3).

Additionally, The Department for Education (2001) of England, explains that the readmission policy aims at providing guidelines to the school staff on how to support young women who become pregnant and those who are parents. The pregnant women are entitled to the following: right to remain in education; pastoral and educational support; attendance and care to learn funding. The pregnant girls have the right to remain in school. Pastoral and Education support suggests that the pregnant girl will have access to a named teacher who will assist her in educational and pastoral support, including completing a full pregnancy risk assessment as well as corresponding action plan. During pregnancy the girl is allowed to attend lessons normally. She is expected to attend antenatal classes which is recorded as authorised absence. Before and after birth, the young woman is entitled up to 18 weeks authorised leave. The father of the baby is given up to two weeks paternity leave to help take care of his child. The young mother would then be entitled to time out of lessons to breast feed the baby. The school provides a room where teenage mother could feed or express milk. A fridge for storing breast milk is also provided. The safe and correct storage of breast milk should be in line with the safe regulations and should be included in risk assessments. She is allowed time off to care of the baby in case of illness. If at all the young mother is below the age of twenty, she is entitled to apply for care-to-learn funding which can help pay for child care costs whilst in learning.

Tjombonde, (2012) expresses in his study that Namibian law requires that the policy on learner pregnancy must allow the pregnant learner to continue her education. The policy discloses that the girl may continue with her education at school until four weeks before her expected due date as certified by the care giver or may take leave of absence as advised by the care giver on medical grounds. The girl may also leave school if she feels unable or unwilling to continue school during any stage of her pregnancy. The school chooses a member of staff with whom the girl discusses her situation. The teacher discusses the matter systematically and non-judgmentally and provides counselling or directs the girl to

someone else, who can provide counselling. Counselling sessions would include developing an understanding for the need of ante-natal care and the options that are open to the girl once the child is born. The sort of support that is expected or that the girls is entitled from the father of the child is discussed. She is referred to a social worker in order for her to be assisted with some available services. The pregnant girl is obliged to reveal the identity of the responsible mate. If the male is a student at the same school he is also counselled. The girl is allowed to continue with her education at school till the time of her confinement or as the medical practitioner advises. Twelve months after giving birth the girl can be re-admitted at the same school as long as the social worker is satisfied that the baby will be cared for by a responsible adult.

In addition Tjimbondes' (ibid) report further explains that the teenage mother is allowed to go to a different school if at all space is not available. She if she decides not to return to full time schooling. Girls who have been attending school for at least the first half of the year before leaving school due to pregnancy and have work that is up to the required standard are allowed to write end of year examinations. She may write exams along with other learners or the School Board may decide to make other arrangements for her. Supposing that she feels uncomfortable to write with other candidates the school would arrange a separate venue and an invigilator, but the family would pay the costs of invigilation. The teenage mother will be entitled to continue in the hostel for the period that she is attending school under the same conditions she was enjoying before pregnancy given that she is a boarder in a government hostel. However, she would not be permitted to continue in the hostel in the event she is in need of specialized medical care which the hostels cannot provide.

Also, Omwacha, (2012) in his report on the study of the implementation policy in Kenya made it known that the re-entry policy in Kenya was enacted in 1994. Though it was there on paper, there was notable lack of awareness and understanding of the policy at various levels. Among them were the Ministry of Education Officials, the head teachers, students, teachers and other stakeholders. The instruments used for Instructional Standards Assessment did not provide for follow up on students who drop out, and especially those who drop out of school due to pregnancy. Because of lack of understanding, the re-entry policy was reviewed in 2003 in an attempt to make the policy and its guidelines more relevant to attract more young mothers back to school. The guidelines according to Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE, 2001) in Kenya noted that the guidelines were that the re admitted girls were to seek admission at a different institution to avoid stigmatisation. FAWE Kenya also revealed that though the readmission strategy had been pronounced, it had left it to the discretion of the head teacher and school boards to decide if at all there was need to readmit the girl or not.

Furthermore Ahikire and Madanda (2011)<sup>[1]</sup>, in their report on 'A survey on re-entry of pregnant girls in primary and secondary schools in Uganda' commissioned by Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Uganda report that in their interview with the community and policy makers they found out that there is no clear government policy on pregnancy in schools though the practice varies considerably. This challenge has been dealt with differently by schools depending on the schools orientation and foundation as well as

the teachers in charge, parents, governing bodies and community. They quoted an interview with Gender Desk Officer in the Ministry of Education and Sports who said that:

*“Although there is no legislation or policy in the country that prohibits pregnant girls or child mothers from continuing with education, when a girl gets pregnant she is expelled from school. However after delivery the parents are free to take her to a different school” (Pg 34).*

Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (2012), in its guidelines document explains how the implementation process should be carried out and researches have been carried out on the implementation in secondary schools such as in the studies carried out by Laiser and Muyinga (2017) and Mutambo and Mwenda (2010) [28]. How the implementation is done in primary schools has not been established. The researcher therefore embarked to evaluate the implementation of the Re-entry policy in primary school in Zambia.

## 2.2 Perception of teachers on the Re-entry Policy

Maluli and Bali (2011) [23] in their research on pregnant and mothering secondary school students in Tanzania. Found out that school head teachers and religion leaders were said to be apprehensive of the rationale underpinning the government plan on readmission of teenage mothers claiming that the policy was still controversial in Tanzanian society. They emphasized that girls should maintain discipline, arguing that the policy would encourage more girls to fall pregnant since they would be assured of readmission after delivery; and that “it contradicted the Sexual Offense Provision Act of 1998, which provides for 30 years imprisonment of a man who impregnates a student”.

In addition the findings of Maluli and Bali (ibid) concurred with the existing literature of Mitchel and Halpern (2003); Boulden (2001); Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) by stating that, some school administrators or staff members fear that the presence of teenage mothers in the school will set a bad example to other learners and give a school bad image. The findings also indicate that sexuality in Tanzanian social context is loaded with traditional norms and values dominated by patriarchal values. Those against the policy in Tanzania based their arguments on perceived cultural norms and beliefs about sexual appropriateness. For them, any girl who violates traditional customs regarding sexuality deserves the burden and torture accompanying rearing her baby alone, including the difficulties faced in readmission into school after delivery, as such readmitting them would not be considered to be a good idea.

Furthermore, Ahikire and Madandas' (2011) [1] report on re-entry in primary and secondary schools in Uganda, is viewed by some policy makers as being acceptable for girls to stay in school even when they are pregnant as long as they are in good health and can easily be attended to by medical personnel. And they are for the view that young mothers should be allowed to re-enrol in a school of their choice after six months after delivery to allow for adequate breast feeding. Though policy makers are for the view that teenage mothers should be readmitted back in school, head teachers, teachers, senior women/men, matrons and wardens are opposed to the

idea that pregnant girls should remain in school. This however varies according to the religion, type of school and the nature of the foundation body. Muslim teachers oppose to the re-entry policy the most. Since it is overwhelming that pregnant girls both at primary and secondary schools should not be in school, the practice is that girls that get pregnant are suspended indefinitely. A minority re-join after giving birth, but rarely into their former schools.

Sifuniso (2006) [42] in her research, reports that the perception or views on the readmission of pregnant girls into schools by teachers in Secondary schools in Zambia was that most teachers were in favor of the policy though a few were opposed to the policy. Teachers opposed to the policy felt that both boys and girls were reckless in the way they conducted their sexual behavior because of the re-entry policy. They felt that the re-entry policy has put girls in a vulnerable position because they are being perceived as having low morals. They are referred to as bad examples when other children are being chastised. It is against these perceptions that the researcher took up to find out how teachers in primary schools of Ndola district view the Re-Entry Policy.

## 3. Methodology of the study

### 3.1 Research Design

A research design is defined in Kothari (2004) by Selltitz (1962) as ‘the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.’ He further explains that the research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blue print for collection, measurement and analysis of data. The study used a case study strategy in answering the research questions. Robson (2002) states that the case study strategy would be useful if the aim of the study is to gain a rich understanding of the research perspective and the process being used. Since the study wished to evaluate the implementation of the re-entry policy, a case study was most effective.

Qualitative approaches was used. According to Neuman (2003), qualitative researcher borrows ideas from people what they study and place them within the context of natural setting. Monitoring, Evaluation Assessment and Learning, (2014) also explains that a qualitative approach is exploratory and seeks to explain ‘who’ and ‘why’ a particular phenomenon, or programme operates as it does in a particular context. The themes utilised in this study were derived mainly from the literature review and were important in developing the questions that were raised during the study. The key respondents offered information through focus group discussion, interview and open-ended questionnaires in order to elicit in depth information on the re-entry of pregnant girls.

### 3.2 Target Population

The study targeted all guidance teachers, girls who have been re-admitted, school teachers, and all grades 9, 8, 7 and 6 pupils in Ndola district.

### 3.3 Sample Size

The sample comprised of 65 respondents, 35 teachers (10 male and 25 female); 30 pupils. The researcher was conscious of gender.

### 3.4 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used in selecting schools, teachers and pupils to ensure that the sample was representative. The re-admitted girls and guidance teachers were purposively selected because they represented the intended purpose of the study. This was done in agreement with the views of Ritchie and Lewis (2003) who state that in purposive sampling the units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which enables detailed exploration and understanding of main themes and puzzles that the researcher wishes to study. Random sampling was also used in selecting teachers and pupils. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) <sup>[50]</sup> defines simple random sampling as a procedure that involves picking certain number of participants out of the total number of possible participants in the sampling frame. As such, each member of the sampling frame has an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the study.

### 3.5 Data Collection Techniques

In collecting data for this study, these instruments were used: questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning, (2014) explains that Individual interview are designed to elicit the interviewees' knowledge or perspective on a topic. They are useful for exploring individual belief, value, understanding, feeling, experience and perspective of an issue and that Focus group discussion provide participants with space to discuss a particular topic, in context where people are allowed to agree or disagree with each other. Focus group discussions allows one to explore how group thinks about an issue, the range of opinions and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variations that exists in particular community in terms of beliefs and experiences and practice.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Data was analysed thematically. Thematic network analysis approach was used. According to Attride-stirling, (2001) thematic network analysis is an exploratory approach which encourages one to consider and code all data, allowing for new impression to shape for ones interpretation in different and unexpected direction. Data will be read in its entirety and each piece of data will be summarized because the aim will be to condense all of the information to key themes and topics that are shed in the research questions.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations in this study such as seeking permission from school authorities and issues of confidentiality was taken into account. The researcher obtained consent from the respondents to participate in the study. In addition, the questions were done with care to avoid psychological harm to respondents. Similarly, the researcher had to abide by human rights and international research policies in order to comply with the current legal requirements such as human dignity, autonomy, free and informed consent, respect for vulnerable persons, privacy and confidential. Therefore, the attention was paid to ethical rules and regulations during the process of research in the field. During the research, the researcher made sure that respondents understood the purpose of the study in the selected areas and asked for their consent. The respondents were not be required

to write their names anywhere and were assured of confidentiality

## 4. Presentations and Findings

### 4.1 Implementation of the Re-entry Policy in primary schools of Ndola district.

In order to get the real situation obtaining in schools on the implementation of the Re- entry policy teachers that are directly involved in the implementation of the policy at school were asked if at all they had the Re-entry policy document in their schools and department and how they implement the policy. Of the three schools sampled only one school had the policy document guidelines and were able to fully explain how the re-entry policy is implemented. This meant that the two schools were not implementing the guidelines as they are stipulated. The guidance teacher from school A was asked how the re-entry policy is implemented and this is what she said:

I just know there is a policy that allows girls to go back to school. When the girls fall pregnant they don't come back and we don't know what happens to them. Follow-ups are so difficult because the school does not offer transport money to visit the girls 'home. All we do is allow the teenage mothers that are willingly to come back. This policy is quite difficult to implement. It needs financial resources.

Further the findings show that teachers from school B had no re-entry policy guidelines but claimed to know the content of the re-entry policy document and one teacher explained that:

We are aware of the steps needed to be taken after pregnancy is detected though it is difficult for us to carry on with the investigations because the parents are not willing to come to school when they discover that their daughter is pregnant. The documents that should be given to the pregnant girls when they go on leave and the ones that the guidance teacher should keep on pregnant girls are not readily available. The guidance teacher just writes the names of the pregnant girls or the readmitted girls in a book and nothing else follows up.

However, the findings from school C revealed that the teachers were much aware of the re-entry policy and the implementation is done according to the stipulated guidelines. One guidance teacher explained as the follows:

When a case is identified of the pregnant girl, a report is made to me being the guidance teacher and I discuss with the girl. I inform the head teacher and the parent/guardian to the girl. Then the girl is taken for official confirmation/examination at the clinic or any health facility. I file the report from the doctor and advise the pregnant girl to write a letter confessing her pregnancy.

The findings reviewed that counselling starts with the parent of the pregnant girl together with the girl. They are made aware that being pregnant does not mean that the girl has to stop school and that she is entitled to go on leave a soon as she feels she can no longer cope. Further one teacher espoused that:

When time comes and the girl decides to go on leave, a letter is formally written to the parents/guardians about the girl's pregnancy and exclusion from school. The letter states that she is free to resume her studies after the agreed leave. A copy of the letter of exclusion is sent to District Education Board Secretary's (DEBS) office. If a school boy is responsible, a letter is written through the head teacher to the head of his

school for information only. Maternity leave form is signed by the pregnant girl. The administration encourages the person responsible for the pregnancy to fill in forms of commitment that are shown in the re-entry policy guidelines.

The findings also enlightened that maternity leave takes six (6) months to twenty four (24) months and that guidance and counselling teachers take note of the last day of attendance in the school register when giving maternity leave. The girls are at liberty to ask for transfer if they feel uncomfortable to return to the same school after delivery. As soon as the parenting student is ready to return to school she is advised to apply for readmission. Application for readmission is just a formality, if the girl decides to go back to the same school and that the guidance teacher is obliged to find a place at another school if the teenage mother feels uncomfortable to continue at the same school. One readmitted girl was asked how she got back to school and this is what she said:

The guidance teacher helped me to get a place in school. The teacher told me that she could also arrange for a transfer if I did not feel comfortable to continue at the same school by giving me a letter of transfer but I preferred coming back because it is near home and it makes it easy for me to go and feed the baby at lunch break.

#### 4.2 Teachers' perception of the re-entry policy

Findings show that teachers expressed mixed feelings towards the readmission of teenage mothers in school. Some teachers appreciated greatly while others were against it. It was argued by teachers that the Re-entry policy serves a purpose of according girl children to continue with school after unplanned cases of pregnancy and that education is a human right as such all children including those that are pregnant/teen mothers are entitled to education, expelling them from school violets their right: For example one teacher said:

It is a right for every child to attain an education. The re-entry policy persuades or allows a girl child to at least advance in her studies so as to increase the number of educated women who happen to be the pillars in their families. This will enable the nation at large to benefit when women are educated.

One male teacher agreed with the other teachers by adding that the re-entry policy gives a second chance to the teenage mother to improve her education and helps them realise that being a mother at their age is not the end of the world, by saying that:

"I think it is a good move by the government as it gives girls the chance to complete their education and better their future as well as that of their children."

The other finding was that the re-entry policy allows to lessen gender disparities that have been experienced in schools and places of work. It was explained that once girls are given the second chance to go back to school, gender disparities in enrolment will lessen, girls completing education will increase. In turn that will enable equal chances of employment to girls/women as well:

When girls are allowed to continue school. The gender gaps in schools and in employment are lessened. A lot of girls are able to continue till tertiary. After that both boys and girls will find employment thus allowing economic development in the country.

However findings show that other teachers were apprehensive of the rationale underpinning the re-entry policy, claiming that the policy is decaying morals in society and discipline in

schools has declined because they have nothing to fear. The teachers insisted that girls should maintain what society expects of them. Most girls find themselves indulging in sexual activities as early as grade five (5) because they know that even if they get pregnant they will still find themselves back in school. Sexually transmitted diseases have increased knowing that education is granted to everyone no matter the status. To some extent the re-entry policy encourages promiscuity in the girls. For example one female teacher explained that:

The policy has created problems at home and in school because the girls and boys no longer fear getting pregnant or making one pregnant knowing that they will continue with their education. HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies have increased among the school going children starting from the age of fourteen (14) because they no longer fear losing their school places. They indulge themselves in sexual activities with no fear as the policy protects them by allowing them back in school. It also promotes a lack of abstinence among learners.

In addition, findings from focus group discussions indicated that teachers insisted that the teenage mothers should be kept away from school because they have a negative influence on other girls. They insisted that pregnant girls or teenage mothers pollute the minds of other girls and develop bad behaviour, lack of respect toward teachers and fellow pupils. As such, readmitting them back in the main stream would create bad presidency to the other girls. The teenage mothers ask to be treated like grown-ups and they think they are equal to teachers because they have children. This in most cases result in misunderstanding among teachers and teenage mother. Some teachers interviewed expressed the following:

Girls who fall pregnant should not be allowed to go back to school because they are bad examples to their friends. They most of the time engage in talks about their boyfriends and how it feels to be a mother thus making others to also want to be one. Besides, they become rude to teachers and their fellow pupils and demand for too much respect because they are mothers.

Further, one female teacher expressed disappointment on the re-entry policy that it disadvantages the girl when she goes on leave because if a school boy is responsible for the pregnancy the boy remains in school learning whilst the girl has to be home for a long time taking care of the baby at the same time missing out on lessons. This is what she had to say:

"The re-entry policy has no provision of punishment for the boy who continues going to school whilst the girl is home is looking after the baby till time for leaving the baby comes. It therefore disadvantages the girl."

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Implementation of Re-entry Policy

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the implementation of the re-entry policy in primary schools. The study established that the re-entry policy is not fully implemented in all primary schools. Of all the sampled schools only one school was accurately implementing the policy as per guidelines. The ineffectiveness in implementation of the policy is attributed to lack of guidelines document. The study found out that teachers have little knowledge of the guidelines of the policy. Teachers only know that the re-entry policy is a policy that allows girls back to school after falling pregnant.

The implementation process is not known. This means that teachers implement the re-entry policy according to their own orientations. The inconsistency in implementing the policy concurs with Ahikire and Madandas' (2011) <sup>[1]</sup> study in Uganda that states that the practice in implementation of the readmission policy varies considerably. Schools deal with the re-admission policy differently depending on its inclination and justification as well as parents, community and teachers in charge.

This can be understood that implementation of any policy involves the process of moving from decision to operation. So understanding the policy during its implementation is absolutely necessary. Failure to that, the policy can be changed or revised by institutional officials from inception to implementation in a manner that more closely meets their understanding of what is in their or institutions best interest. As is the case with the sampled primary schools of Ndola district.

The study also found out that parents are not willing to be involved in the implementation process. Teachers therefore find it difficult to help the pregnant girls/teenage mothers. The cause of such attitude can be attributed to lack of sensitization of the policy to the community. Head teachers rarely call for Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings to sharpen parents' knowledge on the re-entry policy or make them understand the policy implementation process.

The other discovery during the study is that most teachers lacking knowledge of the implementation of the re-entry process are teachers that started work from the year 2000. The reason being that when the policy was introduced they had not yet joined the teaching profession and that colleges they went to did not orient them on the re-entry policy.

## 5.2 Teachers' Perception towards Re-entry Policy

The study wished to find out teachers' perception on the re-entry policy. The findings indicate that teachers viewed the re-entry policy as a human right for every girl child. The sampled teachers argued that education is a right which is in line with the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child which openly recognises the right of the pregnant girl to an education. Human right for education is supported by the United Nations Platform for Action, Beijing conference declaration and also granted by the Policy of Education for All.

The findings suggest that the policy gives a second chance to the girls to continue their education. It's not all girls that get pregnant on their own will. Some are victims of abuse as such they deserve a second chance. The chance given to teenage mothers if well utilized would enable lessen gender disparities in schools where one finds more boys enrolled than girls because of girls dropping out after falling pregnant. The study found out that teachers perceived readmission as an avenue of empowering girls to have an economic stance once one completes her education. The findings though positive are not supported by the literature reviewed. The literature reviewed states how negative some teachers sampled perceive the re-entry policy in Uganda and Tanzania.

The findings also revealed that some teachers were opposed to the re-entry policy basing their arguments on moral grounds. According to the findings they insisted that the teenage mothers should not be allowed back in school because they are a bad influence to the other girls. The finding concurred with

the existing literature of (Helpern 2003; Boulden 2001 and Canadian Ministry of Education 1998) which state that some school administrators fear that the presence of teenage mother in school is a bad example to other learners and give a bad image.

The study revealed that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV/AIDS are on the increase because the girls are not fearing to lose their school places and indulge in unprotected sex. HIV/AIDS will not be eradicated because of policies that give offenders a chance to go back to school and that discipline in school and home has decayed because the girls are given chance after being promiscuous. The re-entry policy is being perceived as the encouraging factor of reckless behaviour among the boys and girls.

A discovery was made during the study that the readmitted girls do not only see the re-entry policy as a second chance to their education so that they have an economic standing in future but see it as an opportunity to protect their relationship with the father of the child. The fear of the teenage mothers is that if they did not return to school and acquire a good education the father to their child would not marry them as it is believed that men nowadays want to marry women that are educated and are financially independent.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

### 6.1 Conclusion

Based on findings the study concludes that the re-entry policy has not been implemented as stipulated by the policy guidelines. It is evident from the number of teachers that are not knowledgeable about the re-entry policy. Teachers revealed that they have not been acquainted with the policy guidelines. The study also established that the policy guidelines are not available in primary schools as a result teachers are unable to implement the policy effectively resulting in a great number of dropouts. Measures need to be put in place to overcome inefficient implementation of the re-entry policy like: educating the teachers on the re-entry policy; sensitizing parents on the policy; introducing sexuality education in all primary schools as well as providing counselling to pregnant mothers to enhance readmission.

The study further established that teachers have a positive perception of readmission of teenage mothers because it allows girls to continue with their education and lessen gender disparities in schools and empowers girls with an education which would later increase their economic standing. However negative views were established in the study that readmission of girls after falling pregnant has led girls to lead reckless lives. This has seen an increase of sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS. Morals have decayed because of the way girls have misunderstood the intent of the re-entry policy.

### 6.2 Recommendations

The teachers must ensure that they dialogue with parents and make them understand the importance of girls returning back to school after falling pregnant. Guidance teachers must be well informed on the re-entry policy, Teacher group meetings in schools should include on their agenda sexuality education integration in other subjects. The Ministry of Education through Teacher Training colleges must play leadership role in policy implementation process by training teachers in the re-policy so that as they go in the field they should be aware of what policies exist in the country and how they are

implemented. Guidance teachers should conduct counselling to pregnant girls/ teenage mothers more often.

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