

**LOSS OF LEARNING SPACE WITHIN A LEGALLY INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION SYSTEM: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS TO
MAINSTREAMING OF PREGNANT LEARNERS IN FORMAL
EDUCATION**

Tawanda Runhare¹

School of Education, Department of Early Childhood Ed, University
of Venda, South Africa

Saloshna Vandeyar²

Faculty of Education, Department of Humanities Ed, University of
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This study investigated how education stakeholders in South Africa and Zimbabwe responded to the policy of mainstreaming pregnant learners in formal schools. The study sample consisted of pregnant and former pregnant learners, mainstream learners, parents, teachers and community representatives on school governing boards. The major findings were that: socio-cultural beliefs of the community on pregnancy were more influential to educational access and participation of pregnant teenagers than the official school policy; stakeholders at both schools were found to have inadequate knowledge and political will to assist pregnant learners; and the South African school provided a more open response to teenage pregnancy, in contrast to concealment at the Zimbabwean school. The paper posits that the policy on mainstreaming pregnant teenagers in formal schools is largely a form of political symbolism. An all-inclusive approach to policy

¹ **Tawanda Runhare** holds PhD in Education Policy Studies and is lecturer in Educational Sociology at the University of Venda. His research interests are child rights and equity issues in education. E-mail: Tawanda.Runhare@univen.ac.za

² **Saloshna Vandeyar** is an NRF rated professor in the Department of Humanities Education at the University of Pretoria. She is interested in understanding and creating diversity in multilingual and multi-racial learning environments.

formulation and implementation is recommended as an intervention strategy to the problem.

Key words: Teenage pregnancy, action science, policy, theory, practice.

Introduction

The increase in the rate of teenage pregnancy the world over is widely documented (Sommers et al. , 2001; Gallup-Black & Weitzman, 2004; Darrick, Singh & Frost, 2001; Jackson & Abosi, 2007; Manzini, 2001; Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Panday et al., 2009;). It is also evident from research that pregnancy is still one of the major reasons for school drop out by girls, especially in developing and African countries (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Bennett & Asseffi, 2005; Richters & Mlambo, 2005; Gallup-Black & Weitzman, 2004; Gordon, 2002; Government of Zimbabwe [GoZ], 2004; Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture [MoESC], 2004; Hof & Richters, 1999; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2008).

One of the interventions that is gaining international momentum to bridge the gap between male and female educational access, participation and completion is the re-enrolment and continued enrolment of learners who could fall pregnant while at school (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Chilisa, 2001; Bayona & Kandji-Murangiri, 1996; Hubbard, et al., 2008; Key, Barbosa & Owen, 2002; Coulter, 1999; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Stromquist, 1999; Burdell, 1996). As a result, most UN member states are signatories to international conventions that seek to safeguard the right of every child to education, including girls who could fall pregnant before completing their education. Apart from being signatories to such conventions, South Africa and Zimbabwe have gone further to design policy guidelines that direct schools to mainstream pregnant and former pregnant learners (DoE, 2007; MoESC, Minute Policy Circular P35, 1999; Gordon, 2002; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Pandor, 2007; Manzini, 2001; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Hubbard et al., 2008). However, while formal policy measures are in place, the extent to which they are being effectively implemented could be subject to speculation in both countries because of inadequate research on the responses of both the policy duty bearers and the intended rights beneficiaries. It is not uncommon for policies to be formulated while implementers and beneficiaries are inadequately informed and empowered to effect the desired change (Jansen 2002; Jansen 2001;

Hess 1999). On the other hand, the emergence of such democratic education policies for the pregnant and former pregnant teenagers could imply that the population of pregnant and former pregnant learners in schools is higher than before (Pandor, 2007; Chigona & Chetty, 2008, 2009; Panday et al., 2009). Consequently, the capacity of schools to effectively identify and cater for the educational needs of this category of learners should be an area of concern for education policy makers and service providers.

Research focus and purpose

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional grouping, which includes South Africa and Zimbabwe, agreed to adopt the principle that girls who could fall pregnant while at school should be allowed and be assisted to continue with their education (Sadie, 2001). Subsequently, both countries formulated relevant policy circulars and guidelines that direct education stakeholders on how to manage pregnancy in schools (Department of Education [DoE], 2007; MoESC, Policy Circular P35, 1999). The implications of these policy measures are that the population of, and demand for formal schooling by pregnant learners could be on the increase. In view of this, our study sought to explore and compare the effectiveness of the South African and Zimbabwean education policies, implementation strategies and institutional support systems which are meant to assist pregnant learners cope with formal schooling.

Research questions

The study sought to explore the following questions:

1. How do education stakeholders in South Africa and Zimbabwe conceptualise and perceive policy guidelines on mainstreaming of pregnant learners in formal education?
2. How are the policy guidelines on the management of pregnancy in schools translated into practice at South African and Zimbabwean schools?
3. How are pregnant learners perceived and treated in the school, in the family and in the community?
4. What factors demotivate pregnant teenagers to remain in school during and after pregnancy?

Theoretical framework

The major concern of this study was to investigate the attitudes of education stakeholders towards the policy on the management of

pregnancy in schools and the treatment of pregnant teenagers in the school, the family and the community. Since this was a study on human attitudes and actions, we chose to apply Chris Argyris and Donald Schon's action science theory which describes two theories of human action, namely the theories-in-use and the espoused theories of action (Argyris, Putman & Smith, 1985; Argyris & Schon, 1974; Smith, 2001; Anderson, 1997; Argyris, 1990). Argyris and Schon's action science theory explains the underlying factors behind human differential behaviour in socio-cultural groups and formal organisations. Specifically, the theory of action perspective posits that human action is constituted by meanings, which are socially and culturally constructed during interaction (Argyris, Putman & Smith, 1985; Anderson, 1997; Berger & Luckman, 1974).

According to the theory, meanings that people give to given situations and their actions in a formal organisation seem to be influenced more by their social and cultural background than the organisation's official policy (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Al-Kazemi & Zajac, 1999; Malen et al., 2002; Argyris & Crossan, 1993). Argyris and Schon (1974) posit that there is usually a split between an organisation's official policy, which they call espoused theory of action and how the organisation's stakeholders actually act, which they term theories-in-use. Espoused theories of action are what people only refer to when justifying their actions, but which they may not actually apply to guide the actions (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Al-Kazemi & Zajac, 1999; Malen et al., 2002). In a formal institutional setting like the school, it is uncommon for stakeholders to claim to be implementing official policy yet in reality, something different could be happening. We therefore found such a theoretical proposition applicable for analysing and interpreting the implementation of the policy on enrolment of pregnant learners at formal schools.

Literature study

The achievement of Education for All (EFA) by 2015 is a global mission which is part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which both Zimbabwe and South Africa unreservedly ratified (Government of Zimbabwe [GoZ], 2004; UNESCO, 2005). However, one impediment to the achievement of universal basic education, especially among developing nations, is the high prevalence of gender inequality in educational access, completion and performance rates (Stromquist, 2005; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2002; UNICEF, 2003a). With the realisation that the education for

girls and women is one unfulfilled fundamental human right, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) all advocate for the principle of gender equality with regard to educational access and completion by 2015 (UNICEF, 2003a , 2003b; UNESCO, 2000, 2004; Tsanga, Nkiwane, Khan & Nyanungo, 2004; UNESCO, 2005; GoZ,2004).

As signatories to these international conventions, the constitutions and Acts of parliament for both South Africa and Zimbabwe uphold the right to education for every citizen, regardless of any differences (Constitution of Republic of South Africa, Number 108, 1996; Prinsloo, 2005; Bray, 1996; The Constitution of Zimbabwe, 1980; South African Schools Act [SASA] Number 84, 1996; Zimbabwe Education Act Chapter 25:04, 1996). It is in this respect that pregnant and former pregnant teenagers of school going age are also extended the right to formal schooling in both countries (Department of Education [DoE], 2007; Manzini, 2001; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Kaufman deWet & Stadler, 2001; Ministry of Education Sport and Culture [MoESC] Circular Minute P.35, 1999; Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, 2004). Consequently, in both countries, policies are in place that instruct and guide schools to integrate both pregnant and former pregnant girls, who might fall pregnant while at school (MoESC, Circular Minute P.35, 1999; DoE, 2007).

At the legislative level therefore, both the Zimbabwe Education Act, Chapter 25:04 of 1996 and the South African Schools Act, Number 84 of 1996, explicitly stipulate that every child has the exclusive right to education, especially at the basic level (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, 1996; Government of Zimbabwe, 1996; Mothata, 2000). However, despite both countries having policy circulars that allow girls who might fall pregnant while at school to continue with their education (Ministry of Education Sport and Culture (MoESC) Policy Circular Minute P35, 1999; DoE, 2007; Gordon ,2002; Manzini, 2001; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Hubbard et al., 2008), the gender parity indices on access, completion and achievement, especially in rural areas, have generally remained in favour of male students in both countries (Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, 2004; Nziramasanga, 1999; Hyde, 1999; Truscott,

1994; Wolpe Quinlin & Martinez, 1997; Gordon, Nkwe & Graven, 1998; Richter & Mlambo, 2005; UNDP, 2001; UNICEF, 2003a).

Due to democratisation of education in South Africa, there are indications that the population of pregnant and former pregnant learners in formal schools is on the increase (Pandor, 2007; Makwabe, 2007; Boo, 2007). Currently, indications are that no study has been conducted in both countries to assess the effectiveness with which the continued enrolment of pregnant and former pregnant learners has been implemented at formal schools. Although studies on gender inequalities in education have been undertaken in both countries, most of these studies have tended to focus on the nature and causes of female under-representation and under-achievement in education, especially in mathematics, science and technology (Gordon, 1995; Tsanga et al., 2004; Gordon, Nkwe & Graven, 1998). Studies on schoolgirl pregnancy by Grant & Hallman (2006), Manzini (2001), Mokgalabone (1999), Gordon (2002) and Chigona and Chetty (2008) focused on how teenage motherhood is a contributory factor to school dropout, poor performance and grade repetition.

Research Methodology

This study sought to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that influenced the attitudes and reactions of education stakeholders to the policy and practice of mainstreaming pregnant learners in formal schools. Accordingly, the qualitative case study design was found applicable in this respect because “the case method is an extremely useful technique for researching relationships, behaviours, attitudes, motivations, and stressors in organizational settings” (Berg, 2001, pp. 333).

Two secondary schools that enrolled pregnant and former pregnant were selected for the study because they had the relevant study population. At the two schools, subjects were purposively selected (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) because they were affected in different ways by the policy measures on mainstreaming of pregnant learners and therefore were assumed to be knowledgeable on the topic under study. The sample therefore included learners who were currently pregnant or had been pregnant, parents or legal guardians of the identified pregnant or former pregnant learners, senior teachers, community representatives in the school governing boards, and mainstream learners who studied with pregnant and former pregnant girls. The

participants were purposively selected because they had either experienced or witnessed the phenomenon which was under investigation for this study, namely the continued enrolment or re-enrolment of pregnant and former pregnant learners at their school.

Ethical considerations and data gathering procedure

Since the subject of schoolgirl pregnancy is viewed as a sensitive issue in schools (Kutame & Mulaudzi, 2010) there was need to de-construct any negative perceptions to the study before voluntary participation in focus group interviews was sourced from the targeted population. This was achieved by first explaining the objectives and nature of the study, how results would be released and used, allowing them to check and confirm their views before and after they were compiled into the report of the study.

In view of the participation of pregnant and former pregnant learners and their parents in focus group and key participant interviews, the following measures were taken:

- Only pregnant and former pregnant learners who had chosen to become public about their status were invited and selected to participate in focus group and key participant interviews.
- The main objective of this study was to explore the social variables that could influence the perceptions of education stakeholders on policy guidelines that extend educational rights to learners who may fall pregnant while at school. Participants were therefore asked not to provide any information on their personal life, background or history of their pregnancy.
- The composition of each focus group was homogenous in terms of gender, age and power differences.
- Arrangements were made for face-to-face key participant interviews with some of the pregnant learners and their parents who expressed unwillingness to participate in focus group interviews.

Data analysis

The study generated qualitative data in the form of narratives which explored the perceptions that study participants held on the policy of mainstreaming pregnant learners in formal education. The views of the participants were therefore presented as verbatim accounts (Clandinin, 1989; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in order to infer into the socio-cultural contextualisation of factors

that influence the perceptions and treatment of pregnant teenagers at formal schools in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Content, hermeneutic and discourse analysis and interpretation (Babbie 2007; Babbie and Mouton 2004; Berg 2001; Stemler 2001) were employed to discuss participants' views in identified themes, codes and quotations, which emerged from Atlas ti processed data (Smit 2001, 2002). The quoted statements which were used as illustrations for the discussed themes indicate the codes under which the statement is categorised, and whether the statement was from a key-participant or focus group interview. For example, the first quotation in the text, which is cited below, indicates that the statement was: made by a Zimbabwean pregnant learner number two; selected from P8 (document 8), which was a key participant interview; the sixth quotation from document 8 (doc-8:6); from the 20th line in the document; and expressing an idea in code of [New Goal Setting after Pregnancy].

I feel like I betrayed many people, but I have to face the future and make sure that I achieve my goal of going further with my education (**Zimbabwean pregnant learner 2**). P 8: KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW.doc - 8:6 (20:20) Codes: [New Goal Setting after Pregnancy]

Emerging themes and discussion

We categorised gathered data into five themes on how the mainstreaming of pregnant teenagers was perceived by the different education stakeholders at the two formal schools where the study was conducted. In the first theme we present and discuss factors that motivated pregnant learners to continue with schooling despite a hostile social environment. The other four themes explore how education stakeholders' perceptions towards the inclusion of pregnant teenagers in formal schools influenced their educational access and participation.

New goal setting as the motivating factor to pregnant teens

Because theories-in-use are social constructions that are acquired during the process of interaction within one's social and cultural group, Argyris and Schon's action science theory posits that individuals can deconstruct behaviour that brings undesirable consequences. In the same view, Argyris and Schon further propose that individuals can learn new theories-in-use or actions in order to change their situation and that of the organisation to which they

belong (Argyris, 1976; Schon, 1982; Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985). The process of re-defining, deconstructing and changing theories-in-use involves and requires reflecting and re-examining one's actions (Argyris, 1976; Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985).

This study revealed that pregnant learners who chose to continue with schooling after falling pregnant had applied what Argyris & Schon (1974) call double-loop learning to reflect on their past, redefine and set new educational goals which informed their new theories-in-use or new behaviour. The statements by three pregnant learners cited below show that they reflected on their past and made the decision to remain in school despite negative perceptions from other people:

I feel like I betrayed many people, but I have to face the future and make sure that I achieve my goal of going further with my education **(Zimbabwean pregnant learner 2)**. P 8: KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW.doc - 8:6 (20:20) Codes: [New Goal Setting after Pregnancy]

I want to show people that I can become something in life, especially my mother who has forgiven what I did **(Zimbabwean pregnant learner 3)**. P 8: KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW.doc - 8:3 (30:30) Codes: [New Goal Setting after Pregnancy]

...even though I am pregnant I know that after birth I will still proceed with my schooling and then I will achieve my goal and there is no problem with becoming pregnant **(SA Pregnant Learner 3)**. P 4: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW.doc - 4:15 (21:21) Codes: [New Goal Setting After Pregnancy]

Based on these reflections of the past, the pregnant learners set for themselves new goals which directed new perceptions to and actions in education. The new goals were to face the future and proceed with their education and to prove that they can become something in life.

A Canadian case study conducted by Burdell (1998) found out that teen mothers could successfully be trained to become good decision makers on both their career and sexuality issues. This approach

came to named “curriculum of redemption” whereby pregnant and parenting teenagers are motivated to regain their self-esteem, and empowered to take new perspectives and initiatives to life, through career focused education (pp. 217). Such strategies proved that the teen mothers could redeem themselves from any past mistakes, destigmatise their situation and change their lives altogether. The findings by Burdell (1998) seem to concur with the observation from my study which revealed that some of the pregnant learners in the current study were also able to take new decisions and set new goals in order to ‘redeem themselves’ from their past mistake. The fact that they chose to continue with their schooling despite negative perceptions from the public could also be an indication that new goal setting after pregnancy could have become a motivating factor to work hard at school and regain their self-esteem.

Studies by Duncan (2007) and Key, Barbosa and Owen (2001) which were conducted in America seemed to agree with my findings as they found out that teenage motherhood had actually become a motivating factor for some parenting teenagers to pass high school and enroll into college or university. Duncan (2007) found out that some American teenage mothers were eager to re-enrol in high school and proceeded to college so that they could be self-reliant than depend on welfare grants. Such teenage mothers were found to be closer to and proud of their babies, such that pregnancy and early motherhood seemed to have opened a maturity page in their lives.

Research studies by Grant and Hallman (2006) and Hof and Richters (1999) in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively revealed that pre-pregnancy school participation and performance were influential factors for teenage mothers who dropped out of school. In both studies, pregnant and former pregnant learners whose school performance had been poor before pregnancy were found to drop out of school more than those who had been academically performed well. The conclusion from both studies was that pregnancy was not always the primary reason to drop out of school. Most teenage mothers were found to have left school even before they got pregnant if their academic performance was poor. Grant and Hallman (2006) further concluded that rather than pregnancy being the cause of dropping out of school for the teen mother, it was their poor school participation and dropping out of school, which caused pregnancy.

While the findings by Grant and Hallman (2006) and Hof and Richters (1999) indicated that positive goal setting could start before a teenager fell pregnant, our study revealed that most pregnant learners had been “wakened up” to positively re-define their educational aspirations after falling pregnant. They expressed the wish to “go to university”, “write and pass their ‘A’ level examinations”, “prove that they can do something in life” and “look after their baby even if I do not get married”. The statements were reflections and redefinitions of new goals based on their current pregnancy than pre-pregnancy situation.

Teenage pregnancy as a negative master status

Despite the new will to succeed, pregnant learners confronted negative perceptions and treatment within and outside the school which included low success expectations from teachers, negative labelling from the community as sexually loose, unsuitable infrastructure, hateful speech, and inadequate service provision from staff and school management. The following statements summarise the demotivating factors to the educational aspirations of pregnant teenagers:

...school girls who are pregnant do not pass. It can be just a waste of their parents’ money in these difficult times **(Zimbabwean female teacher 3)** P 7: F.G. Interview.doc - 7:19 (44:44).Codes: [Negative labeling of pregnant teens]

Most of these girls who become pregnant will fail school anyway because they are the stubborn ones; so to go to their home and try to help them is a waste of time **(SA male teacher 1)** P 2: F.G. Interview.doc - 2:24 (62:62). Codes: [Negative labeling of pregnant teens]

On their part, male teachers felt constrained to assist a pregnant or former pregnant learner because it was viewed with suspicion in the community. The following extracts represent how most male teachers felt constrained to give individual assistance to pregnant or former pregnant learners:

As a male teacher I am not comfortable working with pregnant learners because people are suspicious. Some people would think that if you are helping a pregnant or a learner with a baby, you

have something behind this, like you could be involved in that pregnancy (**SA male teacher 4**) P 2: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 2:10 (90:90) Codes: [Male Teacher Capacity to Handle Learner Pregnancy]

...teachers can also ask for sex from a girl with a baby because they know that such girls know all about it, they are easy targets because they are of loose morals who cause improper association with teachers (**Zimbabwean female parent 6**) P10: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 10:8 (24:24) Codes: [Male Educator Capacity to Handle Learner Pregnancy]

There were widespread claims that pregnant learners socially contaminated the school environment because they were sexually immoral and undisciplined children who therefore lowered the school's reputation and educational standards:

A school with many teen mothers can lose its reputation in the community. I remember our next door school was once nicknamed a 'maternity ward' by people because there were too many pregnancies there (**Zimbabwean male educator 2**) P 7: F.G. Interview.doc - 7:48 (128:128). Codes: [Negative labeling of pregnant teens]

If you check you find that the schools with such girls do not even perform well...We cannot maintain good standards at a school if learners are mixing with people in maternity. This thing is killing education (**SA male SGB member 1**) P 1: F.G. Interview.doc - 1:2 (5:5). Codes: [Negative labeling of pregnant teens]

Elsewhere, surveys of how the enrolment of pregnant learners was viewed over time also revealed that in most American communities, teachers, principals and district education administrators felt that schools should not be in business of caring for babies and pregnancies (Ladner, 1987; Weiner, 1987; Kelly, 1998; Burdell, 1998; McGaha-Garnett, 2007). In Botswana, studies by Chilisa (2002), Bayona and Kandji-Murangi (1996), Meekers and Ahmed (1999) and Hubbard et al. (2008) found that communities opposed the re-enrolment of former pregnant teenagers into school on the ground that formal schooling should be exclusively meant for children.

Therefore, from the current and other studies, it seems that the patriarchal nature of societies the world over could be the basis upon which the reproductive role of women also contributes to the subordination of women in the public spheres..

Responsiveness of stakeholders to policy on mainstreaming pregnant teens in formal education

In their social action or action science theory, Argyris and Schon posit that there is a split between policy (espoused theory of action) and practice (theories-in-use) (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Argyris, 1990; Al-Kazemi & Zajac, 1999; Malen, et al., 2002). In this regard, action science theory postulates that the existence of an official organisational policy (espoused theory of action) may not always imply that the organisation's stakeholders are guided by and comply with the policy in their actual actions (Al-Kazemi & Zajac, 1999; Argyris & Crossan, 1993; Argyris, Pitman & Smith, 1985; Anderson, 1997).

Documentary study of policy revealed that both South Africa and Zimbabwe meet the international expectations and standards on policy frameworks that seek to extend educational access to all children, including pregnant teenagers. Both countries have Constitutional Bills of Rights and Acts of parliament that give equal educational rights to all citizens. Further, there are policy circular guidelines on prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in schools (MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35, 1999; DoE, 2007). We interpreted these to be relevant policies, which action science theorists call the espoused theories of action (Al-Kazemi & Zajac, 1999; Malen, et al., 2002; Anderson, 1997) which could benefit pregnant teenagers to realise their educational aspirations.

However, from the narrations of both policy duty and rights bearers³ at both schools, it appeared that there was inadequate knowledge on policy by most of the study participants. At both study sites, community representative members of school governing boards indicated that they knew little about policy on management of pregnancy in schools. The following statements illustrate their ignorance of policy on school girl pregnancy:

³ Policy duty bearers are people who have the duty or responsibility of formulating and implementing policies that benefit members of society. Policy rights bearers are intended beneficiaries of formulation and implementation of policies (UNCHR 1989). In this study teachers and parents are the duty bearers and learners are rights bearers.

We have not ever discussed this policy and what to do with the pregnant learners in the meeting (**SA male SGB member 3**). P 1: F.G INTERVIEW.doc - 1:10 (13:13) Codes: [Knowledge of learner Pregnancy Policy]

We have not discussed the policy with the school head but I know that it is the right of every child to education (**Zimbabwean male SDC member 1**) P 6: F.G.INTERVIEW.doc - 6:20 (7:7) Codes: [Knowledge of Learner Pregnancy Policy]

Teachers at both schools also said they had not seen the schoolgirl pregnancy policy on paper, although they knew about it. The following statements indicated inadequate staff development by school management on policy related issues in general:

I haven't seen that policy in the school... Yes, I have heard about it that learners are allowed to continue when they are pregnant, but I haven't seen where it is documented (**SA female teacher 2**). P 2: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 2:49 (5:6) Codes:[Knowledge of Learner Pregnancy Policy]

There is a policy which allows the pregnant to continue learning till delivery time and come back... but I do not have its details because I have not seen it on paper. I just know that in compliance with the Ministry on girls who fall pregnant, (**Zimbabwean male teacher 3**). P 7: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 7:3 (15:15) Codes: [Knowledge of learner Pregnancy Policy]

Because of the direct effect on their daughters, we expected that parents of pregnant and former pregnant learners would know more about the policies on mainstreaming of pregnant learners in school. However, they revealed that nothing substantial was explained to them by school management. In South Africa, where mainstreaming of pregnant learners is more practised, parents indicated that they had not discussed the matter with school management when their daughters fell pregnant. One female parent who showed that she was prepared to discuss any problem with school management, but had not received such an opportunity disclosed that:

...we were not called to school to discuss that our daughter is now pregnant.... May be they can call us if she causes a problem at school or if she is sick
(SA female parent 5) P 3: F.G. Interview.doc - 3:30 (48:48). Codes: [Knowledge of Learner Pregnancy Policy]

The current study therefore revealed that those who knew the policy had made informal observations that pregnant learners were not expelled from school. Related studies by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004), Mncube (2007), and Mncube and Harber (2008) which investigated policy conceptualisation by community representative members in SGBs at South African schools indicated that apart from school principals, the other stakeholders in SGBs had little knowledge on policy related issues. In Zimbabwe, an earlier UNICEF sponsored study which was conducted by Runhare and Gordon (2004) found out that most Education Officers (EOs) and school principals lacked adequate knowledge on the policy circular on the admission and management of girls who could fall pregnant while at school (MoES Policy Circular Minute P. 35, 1999).

Therefore, what was narrated by most participants of this study, that they had neither seen nor discussed the policy guidelines on management of pregnancy in schools may not be an isolated research finding. This lack of adequate policy dialogue with and dissemination to policy implementers and the intended beneficiaries is therefore one reason for the identified split between policy and practice, to the extent that school policy on inclusion of pregnant and former pregnant teenagers in formal education was more of a political symbol (Hess 1998; Jansen 2001, 2002)

The role of the school environment in responding to educational needs of pregnant learners

Most studies that investigated causes of school dropout among pregnant teenagers indicated that interaction patterns within the school was a major causal factor for their decision to either quit or continue with schooling (Lloyd & Mensah, 2006; Mensah et al., 2001; Brindis & Philliber, 1998). Mensah et al. (2001) found out that high school boys made pregnant teenagers uncomfortable in the school because of acts of abuse like bullying, mocking, domination and hate speech. Gordon (1995) and Dorsey (1989, 1996) studied causes of poor performance among female students in Zimbabwean high

schools. All the studies revealed that male teachers and boys contributed to the poor performance by girls, especially in mathematics and sciences due to poor attention given to girls by teachers, physical, verbal and sexual harassment of girls by male teachers and boys.

The observation from these earlier studies that boys were more involved in abusing and harassing female learners was also confirmed by the current study. From what the pregnant and former pregnant learners themselves said, it appeared that they encountered different types of abuses in the school which ranged from loss of friendship, isolation, mockery, negative labelling, being used as examples of bad behaviour and being given nicknames. Mainstream male learners were largely blamed for such hate speech as illustrated by the following extracts:

The other children verbally abuse her by laughing and cracking jokes about her pregnancy. You hear boys asking how it feels to have sex or how she had sex with her husband or boyfriend last night (**Zimbabwean mainstream female learner 5**). P 9: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 9:15 (52:52) Codes: [Hate Language]

Some of us who are also girls feel disturbed by what boys say always to them. You hear someone always using an example of pregnancy where it does not fit. Even teachers they hear it that this is not fair but they do not act (**SA mainstream female learner 1**) P 5: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 5:20 (55:55) Codes: [Hate Language]

During focus group discussions, we detected that in the process of explaining an issue, some of the boys ended up being abusive in their language. This is illustrated by the South African male learner who seemed to confirm the allegation that some learners diverted topics in class as way of embarrassing pregnant learners. His statement seemed to be a complaint that the educational rights and needs of pregnant learners should not be protected and guaranteed by the school:

When there is a pregnant girl in class, some of us are not able to speak out our mind in class. If you

speaking something against teenage pregnancy in the country, let's say in LO (Life Orientation), the girls think that you are attacking them (**SA mainstream male learner 2**) P 5: F.G. Interview.doc - 5:10 (13:13). Codes: [Hate language]

In a related way, a Zimbabwean boy brought in the issue of bride price to mock pregnant learners in the presence of researchers and to also raise the complaint that pregnant learners should not be enrolled into school:

The pregnant girl should remain home with her mother for her mother to take care of the pregnancy not the teachers. *Lobola* (bride price) is paid to the mother not teachers so she should look after her pregnant child (**Zimbabwean mainstream male learner 1**) P 9: F.G. Interview.doc - 9:3 (16:17).

Such negative sentiments seemed to emanate from entrenched gender bias in society which resulted in the pregnant girl child getting only basic access to schooling, but being denied the full rights within and through education (Subrahmanian, 2005). In this regard, according to Subrahmanian (2005), the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of achieving gender parity in education, or mere access by 2015 is meaningless unless this is complemented by equitable educational participation and outcomes, which are regarded as the rights within and through education respectively.

While studies by Gordon (1995), Dorsey (1989), and Mensch et al. (2001) pointed to male stakeholders within the school as perpetrators of abuse and harassment against female learners, the current study revealed a different dimension to their findings. There was a revelation which seemed to indicate that female teachers at both schools used abusive language to pregnant learners more than their male counterparts. This was raised mainly by pregnant and former pregnant learners whose views are illustrated by the following complains:

I would not like to go to school in this situation because I know I will be made ashamed by teachers and other children; especially female teachers, they will teach about you all the time.... You can find a person like a boy can greet you and say how is your baby today? (**Zimbabwean pregnant learner 1**). P 8:

KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW.doc - 8:4 (28:28)
Codes: [Gender bias]

With teachers, it is the lady teachers who give us more problems. They can shout at you for a small thing and start to talk about being pregnant and babies to silence you among other students. The male teachers, they don't bother (**SA formerly pregnant learner 3**) P 4: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW.doc - 4:51 (67:67)
Codes: [Gender bias]

Added to these concerns, a disturbing observation on hate language against pregnant learners was that despite that policy guideline on management of pregnancy in schools for both countries pointed out that schools should put in place measures to eliminate any forms of stigmatisation and hate language (DoE, 2007; MoESC Policy Circular Minute, P.35, 1999); this was ignored by the schools. It appeared from gathered data that some teachers, instead of playing a leading role in this respect, did in fact exacerbate the situation.

The home and community response to educational needs of pregnant learners

The school is a microcosm of the larger society which mirrors the socio-cultural patterns of how the whole society is structured and functions. To feminists, the school reproduces gender inequalities and the patriarchal nature of society; to structural functionalists the school promotes the core-values of society and to conflict neo-Marxists, the school reproduces the exploitative nature of capitalism (Swingewood, 2000; Marginson, 1999; Blackledge & Hunt, 1985; Astiz, 2007; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Likewise in this study, it appeared that the school and the home both depicted and reproduced the attitudes, expectations and treatment of pregnant learners that conformed to the cultural values and beliefs of the wider community on teenage pregnancy.

Results from the study indicated that once a learner became pregnant, she lost her social and child rights in the family, at school and in the community in general. This was more pronounced in the Zimbabwean community where there was concealment of teenage pregnancy by the family. Such concealment was illustrated by one Zimbabwean pregnant learner, who expressed that she would have left school if other people had seen her pregnancy:

I had to keep it as a secret and fortunately I did not get sick. I finished writing when I was about five months pregnant and quickly left home. If it was going to be long I would have left school because what would people say seeing my tummy? (**Zimbabwean former pregnant learner 1**) P 8: K.P. Interview.doc - 8:17 (11:11).

As expressed by one Zimbabwean teacher, concealment of pregnancy resulted in suspension of school attendance during pregnancy:

...it is better to come back after delivery because a teen mother is just normal unless someone knows her (**Zimbabwean male teacher 3**) P 7: Focus Group Interview.doc - 7:79 (149:149).

Parents at the Zimbabwean school supported the idea of concealing pregnancy by suggesting that pregnant teenagers should re-enrol at another school where they are not known and therefore less stigmatised. In support of concealment of her daughter's pregnancy, a mother of one former pregnant learner revealed that her daughter had to transfer to another school because:

It's better at another school; because at this new school, teachers and other children do not talk about her; may be only those who know it can talk but not much (**Zimbabwean female parent 6**) P10: Focus Group Interview.doc - 10:45 (71:71).

Within the family, teenage pregnancy can result in loss of privileges that children should get from parents as one former pregnant learner narrated her ordeal:

Being pregnant or having a baby can be trick. Even if you get a chance to go to school, you cannot ask for any favours from parents. You are like an adopted child... (**Zimbabwean former pregnant learner 2**). P 8: KEY PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW.doc - 8:13 (5:5)
Codes: [Loss of Child Rights]

It would seem that society's negative perceptions to teenage pregnancy and single motherhood pressurised the family in this regard because:

...in the community, the girl loses her pride, nobody trusts her and people talk about her behind whenever

she appears. A pregnant girl is seen in society as a social problem. Even her younger sisters can have more power than her in the family (**Zimbabwean female teacher 1**). P 7: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 7:57 (79:79) Codes: [Loss of Social Status]

Consequently, the loss of social status and roles by pregnant and former pregnant learners also extended into the school where teachers reported that:

Even the school admin is not truthful with this policy because you find that if a girl was a school prefect or head-girl and then becomes pregnant, she is automatically demoted (**Zimbabwean male teacher 3**). P 7: F.G. INTERVIEW.doc - 7:63 (108:108) Codes: [Loss of Social Status]

The observation that pregnant and former pregnant teenagers lost social and childhood rights, was not unique to this study. Earlier studies by Weigand (2005) and Brindis and Philliber (1998) found out that unlike other marginalised groups like the disabled and minority ethnic groups, teenage mothers have not yet gained self-advocacy on their rights and concerns due to negative societal views. Therefore, most challenges for the mainstreaming of pregnant learners within the formal school system may not be fully attributed to a particular school's structural and functional roles, but are the micro-representations of the larger society's socio-cultural perceptions to teenage pregnancy and early motherhood. Society seems to implicitly condone denial of full educational rights to pregnant and former pregnant teenagers as a social control mechanism to teenage pregnancy and single motherhood (Kelly 1998; Burdell 1998; McGaha-Garnett 2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Data from this study revealed that there appeared to be a strong relationship between how pregnant and former pregnant learners were perceived and treated in the community at large and other micro-institutions of the community like the family and at school. The relationship seemed to be founded on the socio-cultural beliefs on the ideal type of marriage and motherhood, which were the common denominators upon which, pregnant and former pregnant learners were judged and treated in the school. The current therefore concurred with Argyris and Schon's action science theory that

governing values to actions in a formal organisation are socio-culturally constructed than directed by official organisational policy (Argyris & Schon 1974; Al-Kazemi & Zajac 1999). In this case, the cultural values and beliefs seemed to overshadow the capacity of the schools to uphold and implement the official policy guidelines on the mainstreaming of pregnant learners as outlined in the white paper policies on management of school girl pregnancy (MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35 1999; DoE 2007). This implies that even with well crafted policy guidelines on management of learner pregnancy in schools, positive changes may not be guaranteed at the school level without policy provisions being understood, accepted and advocated by communities within the school neighbourhoods. We therefore conclude that policy alone does not change things, but can be a political symbol which falsifies reality. For example, in the USA, Burdell (1998) identified a “curriculum of concealment” whereby pregnant and parenting teenagers were only accommodated by schools as a window dressing to Title IX legal obligations (pp. 212).

In view of the prevalence of teenage pregnancy the world over and the fact that education is a basic human right, we recommend that formal schools should redefine and broaden their roles so as to empower all stakeholders to identify and accommodate the needs of children who might fall pregnant while at school. In view of inadequate policy conceptualisation by most participants of this study, we further recommend that the departments of education and schools in both countries adopt an all-inclusive consultative approach to policy formulation processes and implementation. Finally, teacher education curriculum should include teenage pregnancy as one of the contemporary educational problems for study and basic counselling skills should be taught to all teachers.

References

- Argyris, C. 1990. *Overcoming organisational defences: Facilitating organisational learning*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Argyris, C. & Schon, D.A. 1974. *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Astiz, F.M. 2007. The Challenges of Education for Citizenship: Local National And Global Spaces. *Comparative Education Review*, 52(1), 1-8.
- Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2004. *The practice of social research*. (6th ed), Oxford: O.U.P.
- Bleckeledge, D. & Hunt, D. 1992. *Sociological Interpretation of Education*. London: Routledge.
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform and Contradictions of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Chigona, A. & Chetty, R. 2008. Teen mothers and schooling: Observations from two case studies, *South African Journal of Education* 28, no. 2; 261 – 281.
- Department of Education, 2007. *Measures for the prevention and management of learner pregnancy*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Dorsey, B.J. (1996). *Gender inequalities in education in the Southern African region: An analysis of intervention strategies*. Harare: UNESCO
- Dorsey, B.J. (1989). *Socialisation, gender, academic achievement and aspirations of secondary school pupils in Zimbabwe. Occasional Paper 3*. Harare: Human Resources Research Centre.
- Drew, C.J, Hardman, M.L & Hart A.W. 1996. *Designing and conducting research: Inquiry in education and social sciences*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gordon, R. 2002. *A preliminary investigation of the causes and consequences of schools pregnancy and dropout in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Grant, M. & Hallman, K. 2006. *Pregnancy-related school dropout and prior-school performance in South Africa: Policy research session working paper no. 212*, New York: Population Council
- Hancock, D.R. & Algozzine, B. 2006. *Doing case study research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hebert, J.P. & Beardsley, T.M. 2002. Jermaine: A critical case study of a gifted black child living in rural poverty. In *Qualitative*

- research practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. ed. S.B. Merriam and Associates, 201-232. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leevy, P. 2006. *The practice of qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hess, F. 1999. *Spinning wheels: The politics of urban school reform*. WashingtonDC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Hof, C. & Tichters, A.1999. Exploring Intersections between Teenage Pregnancy and Gender Evidence: Lessons from Zimbabwe, *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 3, no.1; 51 – 65.
- Jansen, J.D (2001). Image-ining teachers: Policy images and teacher identity in South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education* 21, no. 4; 242-246.
- Jansen, J.D (2002). Political symbolism as a policy craft: Explaining non-reform in South African Education after apartheid. *Journal of Educational Policy* 17, no.2; 199-215.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. 2000. *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Manzini, N. 2001. Sexual initiation and childbearing among adolescent girls in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. *Reproductive Health Matters* 9, no. 11; 44-52.
- Marginson, S. 1999. After Globalisation: Emerging Politics of Education: *Journal of Education Policy*, 14(1), 19-32.
- McMillan, J.M. & Schumacher, S. 2006. *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry (6th ed)*. Boston: Peason Education.
- Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, Policy Circular Minute P.35. 1999. *Discipline in schools: Suspension, exclusion, expulsion and corporal punishment*, 1-7.
- Ministry of Education Sport and Culture. 2004. *Primary and secondary education statistics report 2000-20004*. Harare: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).
- Muranda, Z. 2004. *Dissertation writing: Concepts and practice*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Panday, S., Makiwane, M., Ranchod, C., & Letsoalo, T. 2009. *Teenage pregnancy in South Africa- with a specific focus on school-going learners*. Child, Youth, Family and Social Development, Human Sciences Research Council. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education
- Richter, M. S. & Mlambo, G T., 2005. Perceptions of rural teenagers on teenage Pregnancy. *Health SA Gesondheid* 10, no. 2; 61 – 69.

- Runhare, T. & Gordon R. 2004. *The comprehensive review of gender issues in the Zimbabwe education sector*. Harare: UNICEF http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_2952.html. Retrieved on 13 July 2007
- Sadie, Y. 2001. Post-Beijing initiatives by governments : A comparative assessment of South Africa and other SADC states. *Agenda* 47; 65.
- Seamark, C.J. & Lungs, P. 2004. Positive experiences of teen motherhood: A qualitative study. *British Journal of General Practice* 54, no.1; 813 - 818.
- Smit, B. 2002a. Atlas.ti for qualitative data analysis. *Perspectives in Education* 20, no. 3; 65-75.
- Smit, B. 2002b. Atlas.ti for quality in qualitative research: A CAQDAS project. *Education as Change* 6, no. 1; 130 -145.
- Somers, C L Gleason, J H Johnson, SA & Fahlman, M.M. 2001. Adolescents and perceptions of a teen pregnancy prevention program. *American Secondary Education* 29, no. 3; 51 - 66.
- Stromquist, N. P. 2005. The impact of globalization on education and gender: An emergent cross- national balance. *Journal of Education*, 35, 7 -37.
- Subrahmanian, R. 2005. Gender equality in education: Definitions and measurements. *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, no. 4; 395-407.
- Swingewood, A. 2000. *A Short History of Sociological Thought*. Hampshire: Palgrave.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2001. *Human development report 2000: Zimbabwe*. New York: Author.
- UNESCO. 2000. *Final report on world education forum: Dakar, Senegal, 26 - 28 April 2000*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2004. *EFA global monitoring report 2005: The quality imperative*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2005 South Africa: MDG Country Report. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2006. *Education for All Monitoring Report 2007*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNICEF. 2002. *Lessons and implications from girls' education activities: A synthesis from evaluations*. New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF 2003. *The state of the world's children 2004: Girls, education and development*. New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF. 2004. *Quality education and gender equality: International conference in education, forty seventh session, background paper for workshop*. Geneva, UNICEF.

Runhare, T. & Vandeyar, S.: Mainstreaming of Pregnant Learners in Formal Education

UNICEF. 2008. *The state of the world's children 2009*. New York:
UNICEF