

Re-entry Policy Implementation Effectiveness: a Case of Secondary Schools in Lusaka, District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of this study was from an educational management perspective to explore the effectiveness of the re-entry policy implementation in public schools in Lusaka District, Zambia, and highlight the missing links between the stipulated re-entry policy of 1997 and the actual practice on the ground in terms of its implementation in secondary schools. This study was qualitative and employed a case study approach, and standard open-ended interviews were used to obtain data from the district education officers, headteachers, teachers, and parents to teen mothers. The study's findings imply that the re-entry policy implementation in the selected secondary schools is not practical to a high degree. The study findings further indicated that the policy is silent, and there is no awareness of the policy in secondary schools due to unclear policy goals and objectives. The study findings also indicated no sense of ownership of the policy by stakeholders responsible for implementing the policy. Further, the study concluded that secondary schools' policy implementation is not practical because there are no clear stated objectives, implementation and monitoring strategies, financial, human, and legal resources. Hence, this study recommended that the Ministry of General Education redesign the policy, including all stakeholders in the formulation process, and clearly state its goals and objectives to ensure future successful implementation.

INTRODUCTION

According to [FAWEZA \(2018\)](#), many young girls drop out of secondary school in Zambia due to early pregnancy and do not return after giving birth despite having the re-entry policy in place. Similarly, in cases where young mothers return after they give birth, they opt to move to another school or temporarily return and drop out entirely after a few months of schooling ([Ministry of General Education, 2009](#)). According to [Althabe et al. \(2015\)](#), almost one-third of girls were pregnant by age 19 9 ([Population Council, UNFPA, 2017](#)). The average among the poorest is 45% percent. In the same vein, one-quarter of babies in Zambia are born to mothers ages 15–19 years, with an additional percentage born to mothers aged 12- 15. Furthermore, the median age of marriage is 18 for women, often following an unexpected pregnancy ([Central Statistical Office of Zambia and ICF International, 2018](#)). The frequency of young girl's pregnancy is one reason for the country's low graduation rates at primary and secondary school, 77% and 27% respectively ([UNESCO, 2016](#)), and the high gender inequality in education in Zambia.

[Kelly \(2015\)](#), argues that young girls drop out of school in Zambia because of poor financial background and poverty. His study indicates that young girls from the most impoverished communities and backgrounds were less likely to attend school than boys. It has been previously supported by [Elimu Yetu Coalition \(2015\)](#), who found out that poor financial background is a plausible explanation of school disruption for the majority of girls who drop out of school in Zambia. According to [Mwansa et al. \(2014\)](#), schools' direct and indirect costs, including school fees, school uniforms, and other PTA levies, contribute to girls dropping out. [Mwansa et al. \(2014\)](#) indicated that the failure to raise money to pay for school fees contributed to most early pregnancies by young school-going girls. In addition, some of those who failed to raise the high school fees were assisted by older men who demanded sex in return.

Therefore, due to the above challenges of young school girl's education, the Zambian government adopted and introduced the re-entry policy for teenage school-going girls who drop out of school due to early pregnancy. Further, the re-entry policy is also in agreement with the 1996 Republic of Zambia Education National Policy ambitions to encourage girl child education and advocating the elimination of restrictive regulations that might impede girls participation and development as stated in the [Ministry of General Education \(1996\)](#) "educating our future" policy. Also, [Munachonga \(2005\)](#) indicates that Article 23 of Zambia's Constitution provides equality and non-discrimination and establishes the legal basis for the re-entry policy.

In the same vein, the re-entry policy for girls' education was formulated on the 1995 Beijing conference results, a summit at which the Women's Movement outlined its own goals and action plan for women's participation in all sectors society globally. The meeting demanded that girls who dropped out of school should be re-admitted because of pregnancy. Additionally, Zambia is a signatory to most international instruments that promote children's and women's rights. The country recognizes all children's education as a fundamental human right, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also acknowledges education as a right enshrined in the Education for All (EFA) program, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Platform for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to the international instruments, significant national policy developments in Zambia were initiated within the education sector, culminating in the development of the education policy of the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) in the document "Educating Our Future" (1996). Despite being a party and signatory to all of the conventions mentioned above and having various policy declarations in place, the Ministry of General Education's ability in Zambia to articulate and implement concrete educational policy interventions has been a matter of enormous concern.

Therefore, several policy analysts in Zambia have noted that a notable feature of the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) situation is the proliferation of policy papers and lack of implementation as [Munachonga, \(2005\)](#) indicted. So it can be argued that recent policy-making in the Zambia education system has been formulated based on the global influence and ad hoc. Hence, little research has been taken locally as the case with the re-entry policy implementation for girls education to understand the missing links between the stipulated policy and the implementation effectiveness on the ground in schools. Although there are numerous studies on the re-entry policy ([Munachonga, 2005](#); [Mwansa et al., 2014](#)), little has been researched on the effectiveness of the re-entry policy implementation in secondary schools from educational management using the 6Ws of management because most research is conducted from a social-cultural perspective. Thus, the study aimed to fill the gap in literature from an educational management perspective using the following specific research questions:

1. How effective is the re-entry policy in secondary schools?
Hypothetical assumption
 - The re-entry policy is correct; however, it lacks effective implementation, leading to an increase in adolescent mothers' enrollment back to secondary schools.
2. What is the level of awareness of the re-entry policy in secondary schools?
Hypothetical assumption
 - If well outlined and explained to stakeholders responsible for implementing the policy in secondary schools, the re-entry policy guidelines, goals, and objectives can close the gap between the stipulated re-entry policy and the ground's practice concerning its effectiveness implementation.

3. How can the re-entry policy implementation be improved to ensure effective implementation in secondary schools?

Based on the literature review above and proposed hypothesis, the conceptual framework below was formulated :

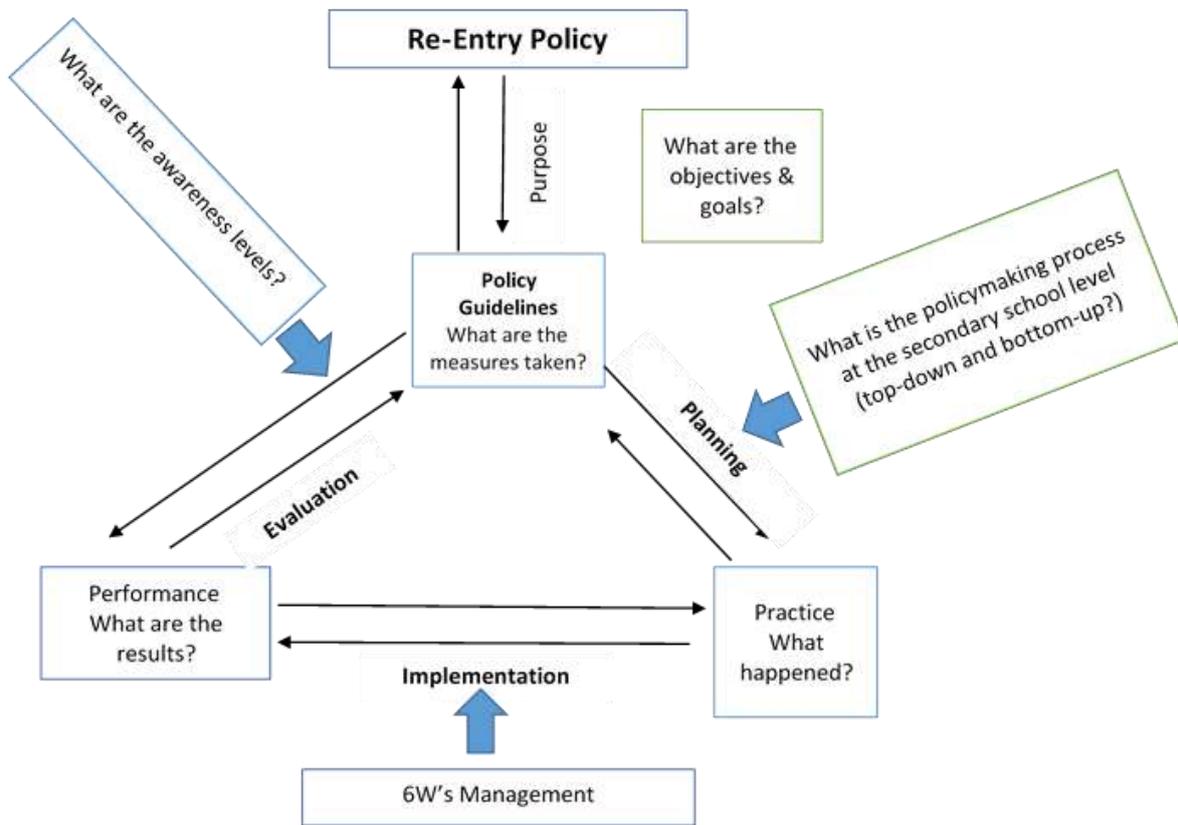


Figure 1. Overview of the Conceptual Framework

Literature review

Besides, the measures of effective policy implementation varying depending on the community expectations, as [Yang and Holzer \(2006\)](#) suggested in their geophysical position. Also, [O'Toole \(2000\)](#) suggested that the re-entry policy implementation can be measured effectively using [Yang and Holzer, \(2006\)](#) effectiveness triangle conceptual framework. Hence, how the formulation was formulated will determine whether the policy implementation is effective. Therefore, this conceptual framework was modified for this study with the presumption that some reasons for the success or failure of policy implementation are well understood. However, the evidence to date only illustrates the implementation of policies from a cultural perspective about the re-entry policy for girls in schools in Zambia and not from an educational management perspective. Thus, this study identified why the implementation of the re-entry policy is not successful from an education management perspective.

Policy: In this conceptual framework, the term policy is defined as the guidelines, rules, and laws that advocate against gender disparities in the Zambian education system, as suggested by [Chen et al.\(2014\)](#). The concept of policy, therefore, can be described as the ability to exercise control over the issue addressed in a given geographical area concerning specific groups (adolescent mothers, parents, headteachers, teachers, district educational officers), and mechanisms (awareness of the re-entry policy) for effective implementation of the policy. Hence, in this study, policy refers to the re-entry policy for young school going mothers, which states that young girls who get pregnant while in secondary school should be allowed to continue to take leave and go to deliver, then after delivery can return to school as per the directive from the Ministry of General Education in Zambia.

Practice: To measure the effectiveness of the re-entry policy implementation in this study, in this conceptual framework, practice refers to examining the methods that administrators responsible for implementing the policy adopted in the policy planning process of policy formulation as indicated by ([Baker and McLelland 2003](#)). Further, according to [Pradhan et al. \(2014\)](#), the planning process must involve multiple approaches such as the top-down or bottom-up formulation process, meaning the adaptation planning should take place in an interface of the top-down and bottom-up approach. Hence, these sovereign adaptations require an enabling policy environment for implementing the re-entry policy as in this context.

Performance: The performance indicators in this conceptual framework measure whether the re-entry policy aims have been achieved by implementing the plans/practices as indicated by ([Baker and McLelland 2003](#)). Likewise, the evaluation of the re-entry policy implementation's effectiveness examines how key stakeholders (headteachers, teachers, district educational officers) adjust and evaluate their degree of policy effectiveness, knowledge, and understanding as suggested by ([Chen et al. 2014](#)) and provides input for policy improvement. Also, a feedback loop exists between performance and practice and practice and policy. Therefore, in this conceptual framework, performance depends on the critical administrator's vulnerability and adaptive capacity in enforcing the policy implementation success to the intended beneficiaries. Further, it is also essential to understand that district administrators and school leaders' adaptive capacity for policy implementation differ in geographic backgrounds, social and political environments, and educational systems ([Adger et al. 2005](#); [Smit and Wandel 2006](#)). Finally, the re-entry policy implementation performance feedback contributes to changes to enhance objective policy achievement by future or delegated policy implementations ([Baker and McLelland 2003](#)).

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of the re-entry policy implementation in this conceptual framework is measured by understanding the purpose for which the policy implementation takes place. Proper preparation leads to ethical practices and results in better performance that provides feedback for policy-makers and decision-makers and leads to implementation success. Therefore, the implementation of the re-entry policy depends on the administrators from the district and school level responsible for the implementation. Similarly, the policy implementation effectiveness is typically influenced by the values, opinions, ideas, and priorities of policy implementing stakeholders. Therefore, the effectiveness of the implementation of the re-entry policy relies on the views and perceptions of the headteachers, teachers, and district education officers in the implementation process and dictates whether or not the policy will be successful in schools. Because administrators responsible for implementing the policy can disagree with the policy personally and contextual or even disregard and never enforce the policy. Therefore, when implementers are qualified and committed to using their discretion, as indicated by [O'Toole \(2014\)](#), it becomes possible to effectively implement the policy objectives and implement the policy effectively.

Further, evaluating the re-entry policy's implementation effectiveness in secondary schools helps raise essential questions like; is the re-entry policy effective? What is the level of awareness of the policy? What needs to be improved for the policy to be effective in secondary schools?

METHODS

This study utilized a case study design to explore the re-entry policy implementation effectiveness in Lusaka District secondary schools, Zambia. Because of the nature of the research problem, this study could only be best approached employing a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative approach was suitable because it is "typically used to answer questions regarding the dynamic existence of phenomena, often to describe and analyze the phenomena from the participant's point of view" ([Leedy & Ormrod, 2013](#)). Therefore, the choice of qualitative methodology was informed by the constructivist worldview. Therefore, it was critical in helping the researcher understand how various participants construct their realities about implementing the re-entry policy. The population in this study consisted of two (2) district education board secretariat officials, two (2) head teachers, four (4) teachers, four (4) current pupils, four (4) young school-going mothers, and four (4) parents or guardians to the young school-going young mothers in the district of Lusaka. The study participants were twenty (20) participants, and all were picked from the selected two secondary schools in Lusaka District. The research used a purposive sampling technique in choosing the study sample because it regarded the

small population of variables: the young school-going mothers, district educational board secretariat officials, headteachers, teachers, pupils, and guardians to young school-going mothers. In the same vein, purposive sampling, also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling, is a sampling technique in which researchers rely on their own decision when choosing members of the population to study. The study tools used in this study were: semi-structured interview guide, document analysis, and focus group interviews.

Additionally, a voice recorder was used as a supplementary to the interview guide. The interview guide and focus group interview guide consisted of questions on exploring whether the re-entry policy implementation in secondary schools is effective? What are the policy levels among the administrators, and how can the re-entry policy for young school-going girls be improved to ensure successful implementation in secondary schools?

Data were analyzed from the information recorded in the face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and documents. Further, data were classified into major themes and sub-themes and later critically analyzed. Expressions were then infused in major views to gain more in-depth insight into the subject matter by comparing and contrasting cases and producing new knowledge. Finally, qualitative data were analyzed by triangulating emerging themes and was subjected to the cross-case analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview Findings from Head Teachers

The results of the study reviewed that district educational officer lacked a clear policy guideline about, what is the role of the district educational board secretariat in the implementation of the re-entry policy at the district level and what disciplinary measures should the board take to handle and discipline teachers or headteachers who do not adhere to the re-entry policy guidelines. In the same vein, the results showed that district educational board secretariat officials had left the responsibility to headteachers in secondary schools to decide how to implement the re-entry policy. The results show that some of the headteachers were not adhering to the existing guidelines of the policy. This non-compliance to the re-entry policy guidelines by the headteachers could be attributed to the policy's ambiguity or non-policy management systems put in place by the district board. In addition, the headteachers' interview findings highlighted some of the difficulties concerning implementing the re-entry policy effectively in secondary schools. For instance, HT 1 and 2 both stressed the lack of clear policy guidelines about what to do when the pregnancy is exposed, lack of policy ownership due to non-inclusive participation of key stakeholders during the formulation of the re-entry policy. Also, HT 1 responded that the policy is not achieving its intended goal, and more so, the aims of the [Ministry of General Education \(1996\)](#), 'to pursue knowledge and skills, manifest excellence in performance and morale uprightness.'

Similarly, the findings from HT 2 expressed the view that there is a need for all other administrators responsible for the policy implementation to be involved in policy formulation and implementation. HT 2 felt that the Ministry of General Education should consult widely and incorporate all other relevant stakeholders' views in the education sector before introducing or implementing any policy. This involvement of stakeholders could allow them to participate in coming up with any educational policy actively. Also, HT 1 believes that the involvement of teachers and headteachers can provide a sense of ownership and effective participation in the implementation of any policy. Further, HT 1 also responded that this public participation is crucial in policy implementation and observed that she is not part of any processes and felt left out.

It is essential to have some symposiums so that headteachers and teachers or the stakeholders discuss policies and give their contributions before it goes up to be initiated. Yap because most of the time you find some of these policies that we are required or supposed to be implemented, they are brought to us, and we are told they came from us but wondered when we discuss that and when they went up there. [HT 1, interview, July 2019].

Also, when HT 2 was asked how effective the re-entry policy is, HT 2 said the following:

When a teenage girl in secondary school is impregnated, she is accorded an opportunity to report back to school with her parents, the boy, and his parents, and both families are requested to sign the form provided by the school to accept the responsibility of the unborn child and the teen mother. The boy and his parents approve the way as an indication to financially and materially support the mother. After that, the girl is given a transfer letter to look for a new school [HT 2, Interview, July 2019].

Interview Findings from Teachers

The interview findings gathered from teachers highlighted some of the challenges in implementing the re-entry policy effectively. Hence, the teachers interviewed highlighted that they do not know the policy guidelines, the purpose of the policy, and their role in implementing the policy. Further, the findings from T 2 indicated that the school headteacher or district educational board secretariat officials have not formally communicated to them on what is the intention of the Ministry of General Education to introduce the policy without stipulating a clear framework on how the policy will be implemented. The following is what T 2 further told the researcher:

The Ministry of General Education or DEBS has not provided us with the policy guidelines or direction to report when we discover a pregnancy. In most cases, you see these cases to the headmaster's office, and the headmaster says if you are ok having a pregnant pupil in your class, you can allow her (T 2, interview, July 2019).

Nonetheless, T 3 also showed that secondary schools did not adequately sensitize the pupils on preventing early teenage pregnancies. Therefore, the school headteachers and teachers had the role of preventing premature pregnancies, but this was rarely done. Additionally, it was indicated that some teachers faced many problems when teaching young mothers, which has resulted in most teachers having a negative attitude towards the re-entry policy. Therefore, the school headteachers are required to be alert and be able to address the problems faced by the teachers, as stated in the following words by one of the teachers:

You see, some teen mothers view their teen motherhood as more prominent than being a pupil. Those breastfeeding spend less time than in class because they will ask for permission to go home and breastfeed their babies. After all, the school does not allow them to come to school with their babies. (T 1, interview, July 2019).

T 4 also revealed that the re-entry policy had no backing from headteachers and teachers from its formulation and implementation. The Ministry of General Education and DEBS had not implemented robust measures to support young school-going mothers materially and economically. As a result, some young mothers did not report back to school because they felt they had lost track of school activities, and getting back to school was viewed as a waste of time for them. The findings also show that DEBS and headteachers did not sensitize teachers about the re-entry policy guidelines and objectives. Also, the findings revealed that this is a common problem with all secondary schools in Lusaka District. Therefore, teachers in the district had limited knowledge about the re-entry policy guidelines and objectives or its existence. T 4 indicated to the researcher about the re-entry policy sensitization:

I have no adequate information about the re-entry policy guidelines or objectives. So how do I tell my pupils things I do not know? I get information on the re-entry policy from hearsay. It has not been officially communicated to me by the school headteacher (T 4, interview, July 2019).

The findings reviewed that the re-entry policy implementation in secondary schools is not practical, and there is a non-compliance attitude concerning the re-entry policy implementation by district educational officers, headteachers, and teachers. In this vein, the non-effectiveness of the re-entry policy to achieve its intended goal is due to a lack of policy guidelines.

Interview Findings from District Educational Officials

The interview findings with educational district officials reviewed the difficulties concerning the re-entry policy's awareness levels at the district level. The district educational officials interviewed highlighted some challenges concerning the re-entry policy's awareness at the district level; lack of knowledge of the policy guidelines and implementation framework. Although many appreciated its value, they were also concerned about the awareness levels among the headteachers, parents, and teachers. In the same vein, EDO 2 emphasized that the policy's unawareness at the district level was a big issue resulting in the secretariat having difficulties in implementing the policy. Further, EDO1 suggested that if the policy awareness level was increased among district educational officers, headteachers, teachers, and relevant stakeholders, the importance of educating girls could be realized. The district educational officials interviewed allotted that the low levels of awareness about the re-entry policy are related to how the Ministry of General Education introduced the policy. EDO 1 indicated that the introduction of the re-entry policy was non-inclusive and impractical, and the Ministry of General Education could have done more consultation. EDO 1 highlighted that all educational players' engagement was necessary for effective policy formulation and implementation.

The re-entry policy is vital in secondary schools though it is not working, and I do not know why. It has not come out well, but it is essential because it allows teenage girls to continue their studies. However, the way it was brought up needed more sensitization (EDO 1, July 2019).

Interview Findings from Parents of Teen Mothers

The interview findings from teen mothers' parents revealed that most young school-going mothers' parents were unaware of the re-entry policy guidelines. In addition, the study results show that because the teachers and headteachers did not notify the parents that their children had a second chance to return to school after giving birth, they received a suspension letter from the secondary school instead. PTM 1 told the researcher the following:

It is painful. It pained me when I learned from my eldest sister that my daughter had an opportunity to return to her school, and, in the same grade, she stopped when she got pregnant. I immediately went to the headteacher, and I was given a transfer letter. So currently, we are looking for her a new school (PTM 1, July 2019).

Simultaneously, the findings from PTM 2 revealed a common practice among most secondary schools regarding the refusal of re-admitting back young mothers but instead opt to provide them with transfer letters to other secondary schools within or outside the district. However, this study shows that a new secondary school place for pregnant young mothers is so hard to find because other headteachers do not want their pupils to associate with young school-going mothers because they are regarded as bad examples and influences to current young school-going girls. Additionally, the results from PTM 3 indicated that she was not aware of the re-entry policy's existence as she has two girls who got pregnant while at secondary school and dropped off after delivery. Therefore, PTM3 decided to surrender one of them to the man responsible for the pregnancy. The man was the one paying her daughter's school fees from the casual works he did. Further, PTM 4 told the researcher that she felt comfortable educating a boy child than a girl, and this was what she said:

It is better to educate a boy because most girls get themselves pregnant and bring more problems to feed her and the baby at the same time. I continued taking her to school just for formality because she is my daughter, and there was nothing I could do (PTM 4, interview, July 2019).

Focus Group Interviews Findings from Current Pupils

The findings reviewed that most current pupils were unaware of the re-entry policy and its guidelines because the headteachers and teachers have never communicated to them on the re-entry policy from the focus group interviews conducted. Further, one of the participants in the focus group interview indicated that the re-entry policy is silent and said the following:

You see, the problem here is that no one knows about the re-entry policy if it exists in our school because these days, I see big posters in town on my way to school, but our headteachers and teachers do not talk about it in our weekly Monday morning assemblies. Therefore, very few pupils are aware of the re-entry policy's existence despite having the policy in place. (FDG 1, CP 1, and July 2019).

Nevertheless, to determine their awareness levels, current pupils in the FGDs, one and two were asked whether they knew about the re-entry policy guidelines regarding pregnant young mothers returning to school after giving birth. The researcher's collective findings from the two FGDs conducted were that most of the current pupils did not know that the re-entry policy guidelines contents because the re-entry policy was a secret or not talked about by their headteacher's teachers, respectively. Most importantly, early teenage pregnancies among school-going pupils were not discouraged or discussed in strong terms either by the school or the community they come from; thus, most teen girls indulged in sexual activities. Above all, the findings from FDGs 1 and 2 demonstrated that the current pupils appreciated introducing the re-entry policy in secondary schools despite having limited information concerning the policy.

FGDs Findings from Young School going Mothers

The FGDs findings from the young school-going mothers revealed that the majority of them were unaware of the re-entry policy guidelines because their former school heads and teachers did not notify them when they got pregnant; instead, they were told not to report back to school or go to another secondary school were they allowed immoral behavior since they choose to be mothers. For example, one of the young mothers told the researcher:

One of the annoying things is to know about the policy after being home for two years now, and I only saw the advert from the Ministry of General Education on Muvi Television that I have a second chance to attain my education. I almost thought it was possible to take my former headteacher and secondary school to court since they denied me an opportunity to further my studies, but it is to let because I have even lost the desire to go back to school now. After all, I have to look for a job to support my child since my child's father refused responsibility. (TM 1, FGD 1, July 2019).

Besides, the teen mothers' findings indicated that most of them did not discuss issues of them going back to school with their husbands or parents because their in-laws will suspect them of not wanting the marriage but school. TM 1 told the researcher that:

I now live with my father and mother-in-law since my husband is still going to school and am expected to take good care of the family as a woman, do the cooking, wash and prepare for my husband. So I cannot tell my parents or in-laws that I want to go back to school because right now, they only focus on my husband to complete school and get a job later so we can have our own home. (TM 3, FGD 2, July 2019).

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of the re-entry policy

The remarkable result to emerge from the findings of the study about the effectiveness of the re-entry policy was that the implementation of the policy in the selected secondary schools was not effective because, in the formulation stage of the policy, headteachers and teachers were not involved or consulted; hence, affecting the implementation effectiveness of the policy in schools. The results also emerged from the findings highlighted that stakeholders' involvement was significant to the teachers and headteachers as they are directly responsible for implementing the policy; thus, they needed to feel part and parcel of the policy formulation process. These results of the analysis then agree with the study by [Munachonga \(2005\)](#), who stated that "participation of relevant stakeholders responsible for the implementation of any policy is an essential requirement if individual such as headteachers and teachers are to feel that they are part of the change and not just being asked merely to implement changes developed by others." Also, the study's findings showed that another reason why the re-entry policy

implementation is not effective is that the District educational officials, headteachers, and teachers learned about the policy through the medium of memoranda and circular. Hence they did not gain or feel the sense of ownership of the policy, which is crucial if a policy is to be genuinely effectively implemented, and this result finding agrees with [Munachonga \(2005\)](#).

Contrary to the findings of [Munachonga's \(2005\)](#) views of headteachers about the implementation process, the study's findings can also be applied to teachers, pupils, and parents of young school-going mothers, the critical stakeholders of the re-entry policy in this context. Hence, this finding highlights that headteachers, district educational officials, and teachers were not involved at the initial stage of the re-entry policy formulation and development process. From the findings, it is evident why the re-entry policy implementation is not practical because the headteachers and teachers did not maintain a good relationship with the parents for effective communication of the policy existence, goals, and guidelines. As a result, some parents' negative attitudes towards young mothers could be reduced. The findings of the excellent relationship between the school management and the public demonstrate a similar pattern of results obtained by [Price and Moolenaar \(2015\)](#), who stated the following:

If it is to serve the community, the school must solicit the parents of the pupils' cooperation. No headteacher can be successful if he does not look beyond his school's four walls and is contented with organizing and directing its internal activities only. [Price and Moolenaar \(2015\)](#) indicate that every opportunity that presents itself in touch and keeping in touch with the pupils' parents is significant. It will add to the school's effectiveness, make its scope more comprehensive, and enable the parents and teachers to pull in the same direction ([Price and Moolenaar, 2015](#)). Further, in assessing the policy's effectiveness, it was brought to light that the re-entry policy implementation is not effective in the selected secondary schools because the schools did not receive any financial support from the MoGE and DEBS on locals sensitization meetings of the re-entry policy. Such as funds meant for photo-copy the circular for the parents during the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). Therefore, the lack of funding for the selected secondary schools to conduct sensitization activities is one of the significant limitations of the re-entry policy implementation's effectiveness in the secondary schools discovered from the findings.

It is also essential to highlight that secondary school headteachers and teachers could prevent early pregnancies among their young, school-going pupils in public secondary schools if they implement the re-entry policy effectively. It is essential to understand the re-entry policy's prevention aspect stipulated the policy guidelines, which is considered the policy's main focus, hoping that fewer and fewer young school-going pregnancies would occur among the pupils in secondary schools. Hence, the headteachers and teachers should develop strategies and mechanisms to ensure that pregnancies were prevented through pupils' adequate sensitization. Similarly, the above ineffectiveness findings of the re-entry policy in secondary schools attest to the survey carried out by [FAWEZA \(2009\)](#), which indicated that the introduction of the re-entry policy in secondary schools was a measure and initiated by NGOs and international donor agencies to promote girl-child education globally and prevent early pregnancies in secondary schools. From the standpoint of view above, an important question associated with cases where prevention measures failed, and pupils became pregnant, and the findings reviewed that for effective implementation of the policy. The headteachers and teachers were tasked to manage the situation by supporting pregnant young school-going mothers, expectant fathers, and parents of the young mother to help young mothers continue their education. This process should involve the school, the pregnant young mother, the expectant father, and their parents. It was likely that each situation should be independently assessed and evaluated because pupils had different personal needs. Each case should be assessed with sensitivity according to the pupil's health, financial situation, and options for childcare, the timing of the delivery about the school calendar, and the newborn child's needs. However, the results highlighted no collaborative effort from relevant headteachers, teachers, and parents of young mothers.

On the other hand, the study established that the re-entry policy implementation is not effective as the headteachers and teachers in the selected secondary schools did not promote linkages between comprehensive sexuality education and health services. Moreover, it did not develop the pupil's confidence to access services and did not ensure pupils have education and skills to avoid early pregnancy. Awareness should be centered on gender equality in secondary schools, pregnancy

prevention, and support for girls' rights. The study findings so reviewed that the re-entry policy is not sufficient because there was a lack of training for teachers by the MoGE and DEBS on handling issues of the re-entry policy and teen pregnancies. It was shown from the unawareness levels of the re-entry policy among the pupils and young mothers. The pupils did not know anything about the re-entry policy. Hence, there is a missing link between the stipulated re-entry policy guidelines and the policy on the ground. Also, many teachers did not have strategies on making sure that they provided a conducive learning environment in class for the young school-going mothers to continue learning because the school or Ministry of General Education and DEBS did not teach them how to handle such issues. Despite being in Zambia's capital city, these results ties well with the previous study by [FAWEZA \(2016\)](#) on the re-entry policy implementation in rural parts of Malawi, Mozambique Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The study highlighted the main challenge for the implementation of the re-entry policy is due to lack of training for teachers on how to implement the policies, or developing support mechanisms or resources in schools for the implementation, difficulties in arranging activities, in allowing young school-going mothers to breastfeed, lack of monitoring. Others were related to cultural norms preventing parents and the community from supporting and appreciating the policy or perpetuating stigma and discrimination from friends, teachers, and the community.

Awareness Levels of the Re-entry Policy

It is clear from the results, and it is clear that there is an absence of awareness of the re-entry policy in the selected secondary schools in the Lusaka District. Further, the findings showed limited sensitization given to the pupils and parents on the policy. As a result, most young mothers did not report back to school after getting pregnant and did not know if they could continue their education. This finding provides evidence that limited awareness about the re-entry policy in the selected secondary schools results from the lack of ownership of the policy among headteachers, teachers, parents, pupils, and relevant stakeholders, as indicated by [Samati \(2013\)](#). Further, Clear implementation guidelines in collaboration with communities and school administrators should address the cultural norms that led most young school-going mothers to drop out of secondary school when they become pregnant.

In the same vein, an important question associated with unawareness of the re-entry policy in the selected secondary schools showed that in most cases, the re-entry policy was rarely mentioned or brought to the attention of current pupils who were not pregnant by the headteachers and teachers. Therefore, the above finding supports the notion that there was low sensitization of the re-entry policy amongst the current pupils. As a result, the re-entry policy implementation is not practical because its goal is not being enhanced to prevent early pregnancies among secondary school pupils. It is why most of the current pupils had limited information about the re-entry policy guidelines. Furthermore, the results that emerged showed that the lack of awareness of the re-entry policy in the selected secondary schools resulted from a lack of dissemination of the policy circular and guidelines formally by the Ministry of General Education and District Educational Board Secretariat of the schools. Consequently, the study showed a need for DEBS to deliberate effort in disseminating the circular and policy guidelines to secondary schools and relevant stakeholders to enhance the policy's implementation effectiveness.

Similarly, the findings suggest a need for the re-entry policy to be effectively disseminated among all relevant stakeholders to be effectively implemented and achieve its desired objective. The findings suggest that the policy gives a second chance to the young girls to continue their education because it is not all girls that get pregnant out of their own will. Some are victims of abuse; as such, they deserve a second chance. Likewise, the findings indicate that if well utilized, the chance given to young mothers would lessen gender disparities in secondary schools where one finds more boys enrolled than girls because of girls dropping out after falling pregnant.

The study results also highlighted that most teachers perceived re-admission as an avenue of empowering girls to have an economic stance once they complete their education. The study further showed that the responsibility of awareness to be effective it is better for the Ministry of General Education to partner with NGOs and the Ministry of Gender because the nature of their activities, which are related to the re-entry policy awareness, is based on the grassroots levels and the Ministry of Gender and NGOs have good networks for creating awareness of the policy to the public at large. This awareness by NGOs and the Ministry of Gender could bring about local support for the policy, which was essential in bringing about effective policy implementation. The partnership between the churches, government,

traditional establishments, and some NGOs was necessary to undertaking activities meant to create awareness about the re-entry policy among all the relevant stakeholders. The government's role in coordinating this initiative and taking charge of the process is crucial and desirable. Further, the study's findings highlighted that the re-entry policy's unawareness is a common problem in the selected secondary schools. It implies that the headteachers and teachers' inability to effectively communicate the re-entry policy to all targeted groups were one of the primary reasons why the policy is not achieving its intended objectives at a reasonable level.

Ways in which the re-entry policy implementation could be improved

The study's findings established that one way to effectively improve the policy implementation in the selected secondary schools was for the Ministry of General Education to properly outline the policy guidelines clearly to all immediate stakeholders responsible for the implementation process. The results also showed that this would help the headteachers and teachers understand the re-entry policy objectives very well. In the same vein, the study results showed that the Ministry of General Education should disseminate clear objectives and well-outlined implementation strategies and precise monitoring and evaluation strategies to the secondary schools through DEBS. It will help the re-entry policy achieve its desired results because most headteachers and teachers do not know about the policy guidelines. Finally, the study results showed that one way to effectively implement re-entry policy is by creating monitoring and follow-up procedures to be followed by the District Educational Board Secretariat.

The study findings are inconsistent with what has been found in the previous study by the [Centre for Study of Adolescence \(2018\)](#) study which found that there were no mechanisms put in place by the Ministry of General Education and DEBS to monitor the implementation of the re-entry policy in secondary schools in Lusaka District, Zambia. Although these findings support the notion that there is a need to create monitoring and follow up procedures on the re-entry policy implementation by the Ministry of General Education and DEBS, however, the study results emerged from the findings showed that the responsibility of creating monitoring and follow up procedures should be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders of the policy to develop a sense of ownership. Further, from the results, it is clear that another way the re-entry policy implementation can be improved to achieve its objective is by establishing guidance and counseling units to unearth the root cause of teen pregnancy's critical problem. It means the Ministry of General Education employing more counselor teachers in secondary schools to handle issues to do with early pregnancy prevention education.

Similarly, the findings concerning how the re-entry policy can be improved to enhance its effective implementation; the study results showed an urgent need for the Ministry of General Education and headteachers at secondary schools to create a safe environment for girls' schooling in secondary schools. It means that a safe environment was critical in enabling young girl's education to take place. Further, another finding suggested for the re-entry policy implementation to be effective, and there is an urgent need for secondary schools to mainstream teen mothers into the school system. The results showed that young school-going mothers should be treated like ordinary pupils, and the re-entry information should be included in the prescribed in the lower and upper secondary school curriculum. In the same vein, the other finding showed that another way to improve the re-entry policy implementation there is an urgent need to introduce sensitization campaigns to the target group of the policy and those responsible for implementing the policy in secondary schools. The study results further highlighted that the Ministry of General Education should partner with the Ministry of Gender and NGOs to carry out these sensitization campaigns in the communities because the Ministry of Gender and NGOs have an excellent grassroots network in the communities are in a better position to carry out the sensitization of the re-entry policy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result and discussion, this study concludes that the implementation of the re-entry policy is not practical, and there is no awareness of the policy implementation guidelines. However, to improve the effectiveness of the policy implementation in secondary schools, the Ministry of General Education should frequently involve headteachers, teachers, and parents when formulating and developing an educational policy. In addition, there is a need to redefine the re-entry policy guidelines

goals and objectives to deal with the challenges of the re-entry policy unawareness among all the stakeholders. Further, this research has limitations that may provide scopes for future research works. This research work's findings cannot be generalized; hence, future studies should apply this model with larger random samples or samples from districts or provinces in Zambia. Future studies can also incorporate a mixed-method research approach into the proposed framework that may help future studies develop a more holistic theoretical framework for effective educational policy implementation in Zambia.

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