

**PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS REGARDING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR POLICY FOR
THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER
PREGNANCY: A CASE STUDY OF OSHIGAMBO INSPECTION
CIRCUIT IN NAMIBIA**

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ABSTRACT

Learner pregnancy is a worldwide problem. There are many consequences associated with learner pregnancy such as restriction in educational opportunities, reduction of quality of life, exposure to sexually transmitted infections, social discrimination and complicated labor and abortions. Regardless of the effort made by the government of the Republic of Namibia and other non-governmental organizations to prevent learner pregnancy among learners, learners still get pregnant. The guidelines of the “School policy on learner pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform (MBESC,1994) has been implemented in schools since 1994, yet many learners continue to fall pregnant every year, become young mothers and fail to complete their school career (Ministry of Education,1994). However, this study focussed on the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MoE, 2012).

This study investigated how teachers and parents perceive the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy.

A qualitative research design was used to gain more understanding of teachers and parents’ perceptions of the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. The target population for this study was teachers and parents of pregnant learners and or learner - parents in secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

The sample comprised of 24 participants from six purposefully selected secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. The six secondary schools, which were selected based on criterion one, which is that the school should have either high or low learner pregnancy. The term “school with high learner pregnancy rate” refers to

schools which have annually recorded five or more cases of learner pregnancies. The term “schools with low rate of learner pregnancies” refers to schools which have annually recorded three or less cases of learner pregnancies.

Data were gathered using documents analysis and standardized open-ended interview questions. The data were inductively analysed.

The findings highlighted the need for a combined effort to be put in place, which would address pregnant learners and or learner - parents’ problems at home and at school. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education should revisit the Policy to address issues such as the dress code, walking distance of pregnant learners, accommodation and health. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education should establish an educational program that provides teaching-learning support to pregnant learners and or learner - parents.

Finally, the findings revealed the awareness of the problems teachers and parents in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in Oshikoto political region experience in implementing the provisions of the Policy and these findings will hopefully be benchmarks when developing ways and strategies to address similar problems elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Dr. Shekutaamba V.V. Nambala for his inspiration.

DECLARATION

I, Tobias Iimene, declare hereby that “Perceptions of Teachers and Parents Regarding the Implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy”: A Case Study of Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in Namibia”, is a true reflection of original research and initiative and that this work, or any part thereof, has not been submitted before for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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APRIL 2015

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS WORK

AIDS:	ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME
BOFWA:	BOTSWANA FAMILY WELFARE ASSOCIATION
CA:	CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT
CEDAW:	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
EFA:	EDUCATION FOR ALL
FLE:	FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION
GRN:	GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
HAMU:	HIV AND AIDS MANAGEMENT UNIT
HIV:	HUMAN IMMUNE VIRUS.
MBESC:	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE
MDGs :	MILLENEUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS
MoE:	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MOHSS:	MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
NAMCOL:	NAMIBIA COLLEGE OF OPEN LEARNING
NGOs:	NON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS
NPC:	NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

OVC:	ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN
PACT:	PEER APPROACH TO COUNSELING BY TEENS
YWCA:	YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
UNAM:	UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA
UNICEF:	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
UPE:	UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION
USA:	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
SADC:	SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMEN COMMUNITY
SARDC:	SOUTHERN AFRICAN DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
STDs:	SEXUAL TRANSMITTED DISEASES
STIs:	SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation of the Study

There are many social problems, which prevent learners from continuing with their education. Some of the problems are learner pregnancy, early marriage, ignorance of the importance of education, and HIV/AIDS (Catholic AIDS Action, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2008; Munyakho, 1992; UNICEF, 2011).

The problem of learner pregnancy is a major concern in many countries (Aislinn, 2010; David, 2010). Learner pregnancy is a constraint in the elimination of gender disparities in education (Hubbard, 2008).

The importance of education has been cited (Hubbard, 2008) as a critical factor not only in the development of nations, but also in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015. The Millennium Development Goals adopted by more than one hundred nations, including Namibia, at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, aims to achieve the following eight goals by the year 2015:

- (a) To eradicate poverty and hunger;
- (b) To achieve universal primary education;
- (c) To promote gender equality and empower women;
- (d) To reduce child mortality;
- (e) To improve maternal health;

(f) To combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases

(g) To ensure environmental sustainability;

(h) To develop a global partnership for development

In Namibia, learner pregnancy takes place among learners before the age of completing basic education or before they turn the age of eighteen (Ministry of Education, 1998).

A Number of learners engage in unprotected sex and as a result fall pregnant and become young mothers. Learner pregnancy is fuelled by, among others, peer pressure, lack of knowledge in teenagers on how to protect themselves. Both boys and girls may be pressurized by their peers to involve in premarital sexual activities, but girls are the ones mostly affected (Ministry of Education, 1998; National Planning Commission, 2010).

Learner pregnancy is considered a health risk and has therefore negative effects such as social, health, physical and educational problems (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Collins, 2008; Ministry of Education, 1998; Rathus, 2006; Santrock, 1997).

Pregnant learners and mostly learner parents experience financial problems in taking care of their babies, as in most cases they are not employed (Hubbard, 2008; Levine & Levine, 1996; Ministry of Education, 1998; Sargeant & Cowin, 2011). Girls are mostly negatively affected by learner pregnancy. It was found that shame and stigma are the problems face pregnant learners, as they assume that everyone is talking about them (Hubbard, 2008).

In the olden days in most traditional societies, morality was above all, and seen as a social affair, and a communal concern. For their stability and maintenance of law

and order, traditional societies put emphasis on social morality. In the African context, morality has been concerned with the norms that guide human conduct. In other words, central to morality are the norms that serve as guidelines to moral actions (Bennaars, 1993).

It is against this background that, traditionally, pregnancy among unmarried women has been a concern in the community of Aawambo. It was something forbidden, unacceptable and condemned by community. It was immoral and punishable. Prior to the arrival and influence of the missionaries, unmarried people who engaged in sex and fell pregnant were burnt to death. People believed that it is a violation of traditional values and norms of the community if unmarried people engaged in sex.

It was viewed wrong in the sight of the invisible Supreme Being known as “Kalunga ka Nangombe” (God of the ancestors) the provider of rain, blessings and good luck to the obedient people and bad luck to the offenders and deviants. Punitive measures were taken against those who engaged in unauthorized sex and became pregnant. Death penalty was the norm among the Aawambo.

On the basis of the above, oral tradition tells us that in the olden days when a person behaved in the appropriate way, he/she was rewarded for it. Similarly, improper conduct was punishable. In the process, punishments and rewards became mechanisms for social control and techniques to compel members of the community to conform to the norms of community. Kasenene (1998) authors that errors in behaviour did not pass uncorrected and unhindered. Therefore, in the context of Aawambo, girls who fell pregnant were thatched with grass and set alight to perish. The aim of such severe punitive measures was to prevent the high frequency occurrence of teenage pregnancy in society, and also to eliminate irresponsible and unauthorized sexual conducts among the youth. In other words, such punishment

was used to promote self-control among girls in compliance with the adage “when you educate a woman you educate a nation” and to maintain morals, norms and values in community. It was believed that without morals, norms and values there would be chaos. Therefore, people believed that morals guide people to do right and good things for their own sake and for the sake of their society (Mbiti, 1991).

Still to this day, in the context of Aawambo, where Oshigambo Inspection Circuit is situated, it is considered and perceived as immoral and unethical to engage in sexual activities before marriage. On the other hand, it was and still is a taboo to talk about sex in public with children. Historically, in the context of Aawambo community, it was not common for a girl to fall pregnant before marriage. Falling pregnant before marriage was a sin and an embarrassment to the community and to the family.

Contrary, morality in contemporary Africa tends to differ radically from traditional Africa. Such change should be attributed to two factors, namely Christianity and education. From the very beginning, Christianity has waged a constant war against African moral traditions. Such warfare has been considered as having negative impacts on African personality, taking into account that traditionally moral matters were an integral part of communal life in Africa. Christianity required an African person to refuse to accept African traditional morality. This implies that an African Christian has become a displaced person in his or her own community. In addition, education, the second factor, has enforced such alienation from African traditional morality (Bennaars, 1993).

African traditional norms have been overpowered by modern influences such as the globalization processes and mass media. The globalization process enables people from different countries with different cultural values, norms and beliefs to interact. In addition, the media tend to glamorize learner pregnancy among learners and

thereby misinfluence learners to consider having a baby at young age as a normal and acceptable practice.

Therefore, girls of today are advised to have safe sex, which means that as long as they use condoms and other appropriate preventative measures, for example, there is no problem. Indirectly it is as if they are allowed to engage in sex before they get married. Hence, school girls face conflicting and confusing messages from family, school, church, and friends and (print and electronic) media.

Sex engaged into without informed decisions can adversely affect the whole life of the pregnant learners. Once a learner falls pregnant, she becomes a parent. Being a parent, she faces a very difficult future (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Hubbard, 2008; Levine & Levine, 1996; Ramya, 2007). Learner pregnancy among learners is a great concern for many reasons, for example, the learner – parents are likely to suffer socially and emotionally. In addition, they are at risk of medical complications, such as premature labour. Therefore, learner pregnancy has vast negative impacts on most pregnant learners and learner - parents. Most learners who fell pregnant are less likely to finish school despite the policy that encourages re-entry in the school system, and as a result more likely to live in poverty. In short, learner pregnancy among learners is viewed as one of the factors that contribute to the creation of poverty in society (Ramya, 2007).

It is against this background, that it is noted with great concern how negatively learner pregnancy among schoolgirls has affected their lives as it (pregnancy) interferes with their education. Most pregnant learners find it uncomfortable to stay in classrooms once the pregnancy starts to show, and as a result, they opt to drop out of school.

On the other hand, it is frequently a struggle for most pregnant learners to get money for “Namibia College of Open Learning” (NAMCOL) to further their education. They end up facing a difficult life. Consequently, they may become socially isolated from their peers (Bennaars, 1993).

The high trend of learner pregnancy among schoolgirls is a great concern in Namibian schools, despite the fact that hospitals and health centres dispense contraceptives at no cost. Learners continue falling pregnant and drop out of school. Very few pregnant learners return to school and even fewer after giving birth. Most of them drop out of school (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Levine & Levine, 1996). Most pregnant learners and learner - parents live a poor life (Collins, 2008). Gutman (1987) viewed learner pregnancy as having a critical link in the cycle of poverty because many young mothers leave school with little education.

People in any given community have their own culture of doing things. Culture for many communities is interwoven with religious beliefs. In respect to the Aawambo, where Oshigambo Inspection Circuit is situated, religion does not only refer to Christianity. Even before the arrival of Christianity, the Aawambo believed in a supreme spirit, known as “Kalunga ka Nangombe” (Mushaandja, 2006).

The community organized itself in such a way that all sexual active girls had to attend the traditional wedding ceremony known as “olufuko” (initiation ceremony) under the traditional priest known as “Namunganga” (Master of initiation ceremony). In “olufuko” sexual active girls undergo certain stages and are ordained into adulthood and womanhood status by “Namunganga”. Contrary, falling pregnant before taking part in “olufuko” was regarded as a shameful event and “oshipwe” (a mischance).

“Olufuko” was a mechanism set up by Aawambo community to ensure stability and for purpose of controlling and directing its members. “Olufuko” was an important process, because it served as a preventative measure of teenage pregnancy among girls. Its primary objective was to prevent teenage pregnancy. Therefore “olufuko” served as a preparatory process of girls for adulthood. It served as a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. Through the “olufuko” process, girls assumed adulthood and parental responsibilities. Once they were ordained into adulthood in “olufuko”, these girls were regarded as women and once they fall pregnant, it was culturally acceptable. It is believed that “olufuko” like other similar African rituals, introduced a young person into adulthood. In other words, when initiation ceremony is over, women are ready to get married (Mbiti, 1990; Mbiti, 1991). Therefore “olufuko” promoted the culture of self- control and responsibility. In short, “olufuko” aimed at curbing teenage pregnancy among girls and imbibed them with a sense of increased responsibility, forward planning and adulthood.

Adherence to cultural values was stronger among the Aawambo community, even before the introduction of Christianity. It was a crime to engage in sex before marriage. It still is a “crime” to deviate from the customs and norms laid down by one’s community (Bennaars, 1993). Through such laid down norms members of society were made to conform and comply with socially and morally acceptable and approved behaviour. Bennaars (1993, p.23) illustrates that: “Like the family, the peer group, the school, these being other agents of socialization, religious institutions tend to train their members into compliance, into morally and socially acceptable behaviour”. Similarly, Mushaandja (2006) describes the Aawambo to have been and are still, to a certain extent, inclined to uphold the virtues of uprightness, godliness and goodness.

Despite the fact that sexuality is a natural human process, Aawambo don't engage in direct sex –education, and don't talk about private body parts with their children; parents are not comfortable to talk about sex with their children and they are sceptical about sex education in schools. Their view is that distributing condoms to their children and giving them sex education is tantamount to encouraging the children to indulge in sexual activities. The parents are just in favour of abstinence and faithfulness in line with their cultural values and church doctrines. Similarly, many churches regard the use of condoms as unethical and do not approve of it (Catholic AIDS Action, 2009).

On the other hand, many teachers feel that pregnant learners set bad examples and should be requested to leave school when the pregnancy “starts to show”. Thus, stakeholders fail to reach a consensus on how to address the problem of learner's pregnancy.

Instead of addressing the problem, they engage in endless arguments and, thereby, exacerbate the issue.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of high rate of learner pregnancy has been a major concern in many countries and a constraint in the elimination of gender disparities in education, as well as in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education by the year 2015.

The Ministry of Education has taken steps towards developing policies to address the problem of learner pregnancy. In March 1994 the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture has drafted and implemented unpublished paper entitled “School policy on learner pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994).

The unpublished paper made the following provisions:

- (a) The learner mother was expected to take care of the infant for two years;
- (b) Attending continuing education classes in the afternoon, if so wished;
- (c) She should attempt to find a place at another school, where she was not known to have had a child, but the decision on whether to admit her was at the discretion of the principal.

The unpublished paper entitled “School policy on learner pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC,1994) has undergone revision processes until in October 2009,when Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia, approved the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy.

The approval of this Policy by Cabinet automatically paved the way for all schools to do away with the previous Formal Education Circular (Form Ed, Circular 5 / 2001) on learner pregnancy and to implement the new policy (MoE, 2012).The Cabinet of the government for the Republic of Namibia directed the Ministry of Education to implement the new Policy in all primary and secondary schools in Namibia, including both government and government-subsidized private schools.

In 2012 the Ministry of Education has issued the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy” for (Ministry of Education, 2012) to address learner pregnancy, which interrupts the education and learning process of learners.

The Policy made the following provisions:

- (a) To increase the learner education about sexual responsibility and sexual health to help prevent learner pregnancy;
- (b) To create a policy of inclusion and support for learners in cases where pregnancy has occurred;
- (c) To promote the continued education of pregnant learners, expectant fathers and learner - parents;
- (d) To promote shared responsibility for the pregnant learners, expectant fathers, and learner- parents between themselves, the extended family, the school and other line ministries;
- (e) To promote participatory decision-making amongst all stakeholders.

The policy has been divided into two sections, namely prevention and management. The management section has been further subdivided to address issues pertaining to both male and female learners, the families of the affected learners, the school and the government (MoE, 2012).

The Policy aims at minimizing some of the challenges faced by pregnant learners, such as school dropout which interferes with their education. The Policy aims at providing reproductive and sexual health education to learners. It advocates for fair and non-discriminatory treatment for pregnant learners / learner-parents and learner-fathers. The policy aims at decreasing the number of learner pregnancy and school dropout among learners due to learner pregnancy and to increase the number of learner-parents who complete their education. The ultimate aim of the Policy is to close the gap of gender disparities in education. The implementation of the Policy

must be implemented in compliance with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 2 which aims to ensure that by the year 2015 children on the globe are able to complete a full course of primary schooling (NPC, 2013).

The aim of the Policy is to prevent and manage incidences of learner pregnancy and stop any child missing out on an education in compliance with Article 20 (1 & 3) of the Namibian Constitution, which stipulates that “All persons shall have the right to education; Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen years, whichever is the sooner, save in so far as this may be authorised by Act of Parliament on grounds of health or other considerations pertaining to the public interest.” Similarly, the Namibian government is obliged by the Charter on the Rights of Children on the African Child, which obliged States Parties to take actions to achieve the full realisation of the right to education, including measures to encourage regular attendance and reduce dropout rates. “Children who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue with their education on the basis of their individual ability (Hubbard, 2008).

On the other hand, teachers and parents differ in their views on how the problem of learner pregnancy should be addressed. For example, while teachers implement some of the policy provisions, parents are of the view that the Policy is, in many ways, in conflict with their cultural and Christian values and do not support its implementation. This disagreement is more prevalent in rural areas where Christian and cultural values remain strong. Oshigambo Inspection Circuit is situated in the Oshikoto region of northern Namibia, which is one of most densely populated areas and it is a setting of one of the powerful and spiritually-culturally motivated denominations in northern Namibia. The Aawambo were and still are to a certain

extent subservient to cultural and religious norms and values. Therefore, because of these cultural-religious doctrines; they are reluctant to support the ideology of pregnant learners remaining in the same class with other learners. This situation is perceived that it might negatively influence other learners. Furthermore, the community advocates faithfulness among married couples and abstinence among the youth. They, therefore, advocate for punitive measures for learners who fall pregnant. The Policy advocates for the provision of support to pregnant learners and to allow them continue their schooling.

To a certain extent, the community feels that it is morally wrong and unacceptable to use condoms and the provision of sex education as some of the possible solutions to prevent pregnancy and other related sexual transmitted diseases (STDs). They not only regard it as an immoral and unacceptable practice, but also as an embarrassment to a pregnant learner, the school, the community and to her family. Therefore, the community believes that the right thing to do is to uphold the virtues of uprightness, goodness and morality. Despite these cultural-religious principles and the implementation of the Policy (MoE, 2012), many learners continue to fall pregnant year in and year out and consequently have to leave school.

It is evident that there is a communication gap among various stakeholders in the education system with respect to the implementation of the provisions of the Learner Pregnancy Policy.

It was found that in some cultures, parents still believe that those children between the ages of 12 to 18 years should not be educated on sexual issues. On the other hand, parents experience learner pregnancy as a very sad and painful occurrence (Losper, 2006).

Some teachers are of the opinion that learners are either ill-informed or totally ignorant about sex education because, parents do not educate their children about sexual related issues, while others are of the opinion that schoolgirls are ignorant about sexual related issues, despite the fact that a lot of information on the prevention of pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other sexual transmitted diseases (STDs) are made available to them (Losper, 2006).

Learner pregnancy is a serious matter that may seriously impact the future of pregnant learners and learner-parents. However, learners tend to be ignorant of the impact learner pregnancy has on them (Bodeed, 2013).The government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) has made many attempts to alter adolescent sexual behaviour, but no significant behavioural change occurred among most adolescent schoolgirls. Therefore Frost and Forrest (1995) are of the view that further intervention is required to reduce teenage pregnancy and school dropout due to teenage pregnancy.

Learner pregnancy in Namibia schools is considered a risk which has negative social, health, physical and educational effects on both pregnant learners, learners in general and the public at large (Ministry of Education, 1998; Ramya, 2007).

There are several negative consequences related to learner pregnancy. In an attempt to overcome them efforts are being made by the Ministry of Education and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).The Ministry of Education has introduced various educational programmes in schools such as “Window of Hope” , “My Future My Choice, Life Skills” and other supplementary programmes to empower both male and female learners with information, amongst others, on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and mutual respect in relationships, the right to sexual autonomy, empowerment on how to avoid placing themselves in situations of

sexual vulnerability, for instance, by accepting gifts from older men. However, regardless of all these programmes, material and human resources in place, learners still fall pregnant. It may look like learners are caught between policy makers, cultural beliefs and educational instructions. It is against this background that the researcher deemed fit to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of the provisions of the Policy. Thus a gap exists in our theory and practice on how learner pregnancy among learners should be addressed and key stakeholders (teachers and parents) seem not to be in agreement on how to address the problem. This gap calls for academic inquiry.

Against this background, this study investigated how teachers and parents view and perceive the implementation of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy” in a rural area in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in the Oshikoto political region of northern Namibia.

1.3 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How is the Learner Pregnancy Policy implemented in schools with relations to the pregnant learners and the learner -parents?
2. What role do teachers and parents play in the implementation of the Learner Pregnancy Policy?
3. What challenges do teachers and parents face in implementing the Policy?
4. How can the challenges in the implementation of the Policy be mitigated?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Regardless of the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy, many school girls ranging from 14 to 20 years of age leave school annually due to learner pregnancy (Ministry of Education, 2012; National Planning Commission, 2013).

This study attempts to provide unified guidance for teachers and parents in implementing the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy (MOE, 2012) to reduce drop out of school due to learner pregnancy. The study is significant in the sense that it will help parents and mainly pregnant learners and learner-parents in realizing the importance of returning to school and completing their schooling. The fact that several pregnant learners and learner-parents do not return to school after giving birth despite policy provisions encourage re-entry makes this study very important.

Furthermore, the study attempts to inform policymakers and policy implementers (teachers and parents) of some potential variables for effective continuous, uninterrupted education career even when learners fall pregnant. It is, therefore, hoped that the research findings of this study will shed light on the implementation strategies of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy (MoE, 2012)”. The research findings can help policy implementers (teachers and parents) enabling learners achieve goals that are globally valued but as yet unmet, that are the attainment of non-interrupted universal primary and secondary education, and the elimination of gender disparities in education. This study attempted to map out the strategies that can help policy implementers reducing and minimizing dropout rate of learners due to learner pregnancy in Namibian schools. The findings of the study are expected to create conditions in which

suggestions on how to minimize challenges faced by policy implementers could be made.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

In the Namibian society, sex education is a taboo in most cultures. In the context of Aawambo, where Oshigambo Inspection Circuit is situated, it is a taboo to talk about sex. People do not talk about sex or private body parts freely. Hence, participants were uncomfortable to provide reliable data.

However, an interactive communication guided by action—reaction principle was employed (Grant & Sleeter, 2007), an interpersonal caring relationship as well as a rapport by creating a climate of trust and support with the participants was also established. Berko, Wolvin & Wolvin (1995) point out that the successful interviewer must be a sensitive communicator. Hence, the most important thing to begin with in any conversation to achieve high achievement is to establish a caring relationship with participants. Such a prerequisite condition was put in place in order to close the achievement gap. Interpersonal caring relationship brought the stakeholders together, accepting each other and understanding the context under investigation. Participants freely provided the data needed. Berko, Wolvin & Wolvin (1995) and Grant & Sleeter (2007) believe that the effectiveness of any one-on-one communication depends greatly on the relationship between the people involved. The more the people trust each other, the more likely they are to share real feelings. Consequently, as a relationship develops, so does the ability of the participants to share information such as opinions, values and beliefs. This researcher managed to successfully establish, develop and maintain an interpersonal relationship with the participants.

1.6 Definition of Terms

(a) **“Aawambo”** are the Namibian indigenous people settled north of the Etosha Pan, in northern Namibia. They belong to a greater Bantu family who migrated south from the upper regions of Zambezi. They are divided into eight ethnic groups namely the Aandonga, Ovakwanyama, Aakwambi, Aangandjera, Aambalantu, Ovaunda, Aakolonkadhi and Aakwaluudhi. They are the largest ethnic group in Namibia. They speak Oshiwambo which includes many dialects such as Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama and other dialects. Their staple food is a thick porridge “oshimbobo” made out of millet, while “ontaku” is their daily juice. Traditionally; their life was influenced by magic and African religion. They believe in “Kalunga ka Nangombe” god of the ancestors.

(b) **Learner-father** refers to a male learner who impregnated a female learner.

(c) **Learner-parents** refer to female learners who have become parents.

(d) **Secondary school** refers to both the Combined Schools with grade 0-10 and Senior Secondary Schools with grade 8-12.

(e) **Morality** is defined as “a set of norms that define, guide and regulate good and acceptable behaviours among human beings living together in society” Bennaars (1993, p.13)

(f) **“Olufuko”** is Oshiwambo word meaning wedding. It is an initiation wedding ceremony among Aawambo whereby girls often as young as fourteen years old were prepared for womanhood including marriage, pregnancy and caring for families. It was performed by an elderly man known “Namunganga” master of initiation ceremony. In “olufuko” process girls were turned into brides without grooms. Therefore, pregnancy before marriage, but after “olufuko” was socially acceptable. In “olufuko” girls were informed, educated and entertained with the view to appreciate and enhance traditional and cultural identity. In the African context, Mbiti (1991) authors that there are many stories, proverbs and legends among all Africans. They serve many purposes; some entertain, while others warn, some teach morals to prepare a young person for adulthood.

(g) **Parent** refers to a natural or adoptive parent or guardian of any learner, and includes any person taking care of or who assumes responsibility for any learner’s education (MoE, 2008).

(h) **The term “young mother”** used in this study means learner-parent

(i) **The term “teenage pregnancy”** used in this study means learner pregnancy

(j) **Toxemia** is a form of blood poisoning develops in pregnant women caused by bacterial infection. It is an abnormal condition of pregnancy characterized by hypertension, fluid retention and the presence of protein in urine (Gutman, 1987).

(k) **The term “pregnant schoolgirl”** used in this study means pregnant learner

(l) **The term “Policy”** used in this study refers to the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MoE, 2012).

(m) **Schools with high rate of learner pregnancy** refer to schools which have annually recorded five or more cases of learner pregnancies.

(n) **Schools with low rate of learner pregnancy** refer to schools which have annually recorded three or less cases of learner pregnancies.

(o) **Sexual active girls** refer to the girls of the age group of 12 to 14 years old and above.

1.7 Summary

This chapter provided a preview of learner pregnancy among learners in schools. Attention is given to the research questions which seek to understand the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy”. The statement of the problem, the significance of the study and the limitations of the study are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study is based on the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the implementation of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy”. It was undertaken in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit, in the Oshikoto region in northern Namibia. In this chapter, attention is paid to the study of various relevant literatures which led to a better understanding and insight of the problem.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The extent to which individuals learn to behave is primarily demonstrated by integrated cognitive theories, motivation theories and social learning theories. One which is relevant to this study is the control theory of Glasser (1986), which posits that people’s behaviour in any given situation is based on previous experiences and personal needs. This implies that the actions individuals make to any given context depends on their behaviour, culture, personal experience and the social context in which they live. Furthermore, the control theory shares with cognitive theory of Bandura (1986) based on their assumptions that a person’s behaviour and environment interact in a mutual manner, because the cognitive theory puts emphasis on behavioural change through modelling, while control theory puts emphasis on influencing behavioural change. The view underpinning control theory is that making choice is linked to one’s social environment. This simply means that some individual learners make choices because of peer pressure, which is one of the

contributing factors of teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls in Namibian schools. Control theory has influenced people's understandings and choice-making processes.

This study is embedded in control theory of Glasser (1986) which illustrates how people, as social beings, make choices as driven by psycho-social needs or desires. All human behaviours are an attempt to satisfy their needs (Glasser, 1986). Control theory gives a framework for understanding how humans choose behaviours to claim control over their world. Human behaviours include all feelings that influence people to react (choose actions) to any given situation. This theory is concerned with the behaviours people choose as an attempt to control their lives. It is noted that behaviours are made up of three components, namely, what people feel, what people think and what people do. When a person starts depressing about something, he/she is actually trying to control a situation where he has lost control. In this context, awareness of how people work to bring into use control is paramount. Awareness enables people to control their feelings. For example, when a person is depressed, he can choose to do something.

Doing something productively helps to improve the situation. This theory informs that opportunities abound to improve lives. Therefore, in the context of this study, pregnant learners and or learner-parents have to take well informed decisions in compliance with the policy provision which encourages mutual consultation to safeguard their future. The Policy encourages pregnant learners to continue with their education until four weeks before the expected due date and for re-entry after giving birth. The policy provision encourages learner – parents to come to school after giving birth provided that the infant is well cared for. Control theory emphasizes that people either choose to surrender to the situation or to do something which may improve their situations. In this respect, a pregnant learner or learner –

parent has the choice to make: either to leave school or to continue with her education.

In any relationship, people have common pictures (wishes) also referred to as experiences in minds. These pictures require constant sharing. People behave to satisfy the experiences in their minds. Negotiation and compromise are the main components in relationship. Therefore, success in a relationship depends on sharing mutually in satisfying pictures. To contextualize to this study, both school, parents and pregnant learners and or learner-parents should negotiate the education of the pregnant learner and or learner-parents, which is in line with the provisions of parental involvement in the policy. Through mutual negotiation, people develop a creative reorganization process, a process whereby minds attempt to find usable ideas and behaviours. This simply means that, through productive school-family involvement, pregnant learners and or learner-parents can be assisted to continue their education as provided by the Policy.

On the other hand, the control theory does not mean that all misery is chosen. In this regard, a learner may fall pregnant because of other factors such as rape; therefore, such occurrence cannot be associated with choice making process.

The study seeks to understand the perceptions of parents and teachers on the implementation of “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy” in schools. Since teenage pregnancy is a psycho-social phenomenon, this study draws upon this theoretical framework to find out the perceptions of parents and teachers on how they perceive the implementation of Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools.

Byer, Shainberg & Galliano (1996) state that girls from unhappy families might perceive motherhood as the way to escape from their unhappiness, move into an adult role, and feel loved by their boyfriends. From this theoretical perspective, people's behaviour is driven by their basic needs at a given time (Hartey, n.d.). The control theory focuses on personal choice, personal responsibility and personal transformation. Therefore, people's behaviours are inspired and motivated by what people want most at any given time. When framed as a theory of behaviour, the control theory influences and motivates the internal goal setting and choice-making process on how people react to the given situation.

It is against this background that an understanding of control theory influences policy-makers and policy implementers (teachers and parents) to address high pregnancy rate and drop out of school among schoolgirls in Namibian schools. Hence, behavioural change is required to address the discrepancy between desired outcome (completion of secondary education) and current status (high pregnancy rate and school dropout among learners due to learner pregnancy).

Klein (1989) illustrates how control theory integrates motivation to influence a salesperson who takes some corrective actions to attain the set goals, that is, to increase the outcome and to decrease the discrepancies. An understanding of control theory, sometimes called choice theory, influences people to gain control of their lives. People by nature almost always have choices, and it is believed that the better the choice, the more they are in control of their lives. Relating to academic achievements, the more learners make well informed decisions, the better they commit to their studies and complete their secondary education uninterrupted. It is believed that the application of control theory influences people (policy-makers, policy - implementers and learners) to make effective choices rather than ineffective

and self-destructive ones (Hartey, n.d.). Meaning to say, people can achieve what they want in ways that are responsible when they appropriately apply control theory.

In a classroom context, teachers negotiate the subject- content and teaching methods with learners. Learners' basic needs help shape how they are to be taught. Teachers ensure that all assignments meet some degree of learners' basic needs (attainment of basic competencies). Cooperation and active learning process enhance power of learners to control their learning process. Hence, control theory, integrates satisfaction theory (Hartey, n.d.). It implies that control is not a need, but it is a way of how people function to fulfil their needs.

Learner pregnancy in Namibian schools should be dealt with as a challenge and stakeholders should implement fully the provisions of the Policy. Therefore, the better people make wise choices, the more they control their lives. People would have to take time to figure out behaviours that are more effective in their lives, to avoid making unwise and self-destructive choices.

In conclusion, it is believed that the understanding of control theory influences people to control their lives. Therefore, Hartey (n.d.) states that control theory in people's lives would influence them to spend their energy in addressing the problem rather than blaming it. Therefore, stakeholders in the Namibian education system need to take collective efforts to collectively address the problem of high dropout among learners due to learner pregnancy, rather than engaging in endless arguments. In other words, an intervention is required to address the problem of dropout of school due to learner pregnancy in schools.

2.3 The Negative Impacts of Teenage Pregnancy

2.3.1 Social problems

The existing literature on learner pregnancy among learners reflects the negative impacts learner pregnancy has on the social and personal well-being of young mothers and the society at large. Losper (2006) perceived learner pregnancies or unplanned pregnancies of learners as contributing factors to girls drop out of school. Similarly, Byer, Shainberg & Galliano (1999) found that pregnant learners and learner-parents experienced difficulties in completing their schooling. One of the challenges facing pregnant learners is the physical changes, which make it difficult for them to be in school. In addition to the physical changes, fellow learners may tease the pregnant learners, therefore, making it difficult for them to attend to their schoolwork. Consequently, they opt to leave school and experience an educational deficit.

It is a fact that without access to education, young mothers miss the knowledge and skills needed to advance their status. Therefore, socially, learner pregnancy contributes to a less-educated society. The learner-parent's future and that of her baby is thus affected negatively.

2.3.2 Health problems

Learner pregnancy is a health risk for pregnant learners. Their bodies are not yet ready enough to carry the pregnancy. Consequently; they are at risk of premature complications which may lead to death. Gutman (1987) authors that health problems during pregnancy occur more often for girls under fifteen years than for women aged twenty to twenty four. The strain of pregnancy often leads to increased high blood pressure. Toxemia and problems during labor and delivery are common when the

pelvis is not completely grown. It is noted that even under best conditions and with best care, pregnancy is not good for the teenagers and their babies. It is noted with great concern that death rate is sixty percent higher among pregnant teenagers under the age of fifteen than among older girls and women.

On the other hand, learners may contract HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections and Diseases (Ministry of Education, 1998).

2.3.3 Economic problems

Most pregnant learners and or learner- parents experience challenges in taking care of their babies, as in most cases they are not employed. It is a fact that it is difficult for an uneducated person to get a (well paying) job, because both government and private sector need trained people. Sargeant and Cowin (2011) found that with the emergence of a 'knowledge economy' there is little call for unskilled labour. The unskilled work that is available is subject to casualisation, and not well paid. Hubbard (2008) found that pregnant schoolgirls are at great risk of leaving school and, therefore, missing out on job opportunities. If they get employment, they earn low incomes because they occupy underpaid and undervalued work positions. Therefore, such condition may lead to prostitution to earn money to support the child (Ministry of Education, 1998).

2.3.4 Psychological problems

Psychological problems also known as mental disorder can affect everyone. The causes of psychological problems are not yet known, but the contributing factors including chemical imbalances in the brain, childhood experiences, heredity, illness, prenatal exposure and stress. People suffer from psychological problems experience stress, neurosis, hypochondrias, somatization disorder, factitious disorder,

schizophrenia, paranoia, depression, mania, manic-depression, delirium, dementia and narcissism. These psychological problems are characterized amongst others, by anxiety, internal tension and conflicts. Lloyd (2013) authors that Psychotherapist provides treatment by means of counseling services and information sharing to work on behaviour, skills development and thought processes. However, medical treatment can also be helpful.

Pregnant learners and or learner - parents experience psychological and emotional burdens such as stress, depression and anxiety. Psychological disorders can have negative impacts on the well-being of the affected one, even life threatening. It is noted that, some pregnant learners or learner – parents opt for committing suicide, if they do not get any support from relatives or friends (Ministry of Education, 1998). To prevent suicide, the Policy obliges schools to provide psychological support and encourage pregnant learners not to leave school, but to remain in school until time comes for giving birth (MoE, 2012).

2.4 Policy Implementation and its Challenges

The problem of learner pregnancy among learners is a major concern in many countries, and a constraint in the elimination of gender disparities in education. Equally, learner pregnancy is constraint in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education and gender equality in education by the year 2015(Hubbard, 2008).

In Namibia, learner pregnancy has been a major concern, ever since the attainment of the independence of Namibia in 1990. Unfortunately, there was no policy in place to regulate pregnancy in school.

However, in March 1994 the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture has drafted and implemented unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform (MBESC, 1994).

The unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform (MBESC, 1994) made the following provisions that:

- (a) The learner mother was expected to take care of the infant for two years;
- (b) Attending continuing education classes in the afternoon if she so wished;
- (c) She should attempt to find a place at another school, where she was not known to have had a child, but the decision on whether to admit her was at the discretion of the principal.

The unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994) has undergone revision processes through extensive, intensive and multi-disciplinary consultations with people from all the thirteen regions of Namibia until in 2009, when Cabinet approved the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. The approval of this Policy by Cabinet automatically paved the way for all schools to do away with the previous Formal Education Circular (Form.Ed.Circular No: 5 of 2001) on learner pregnancy and to implement the new Policy (MoE, 2012). The Cabinet has directed the Ministry of Education to implement the Policy in all primary and secondary schools in Namibia, including both government and government subsidized private schools.

The Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy differs slightly from the unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on

Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994). Despite the differences which exist in the provisions of the unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994) and of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MoE, 2012), the unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994) remains the forerunner of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MoE, 2012). Similarly, the unpublished paper entitled “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994) forms the baseline of the Policy. Therefore, this study made references to the previously unpublished paper “School Policy on Learner Pregnancy in Namibia: Background to reform” (MBESC, 1994). Hubbard (2008) authors that the new Policy reflects many of the principles developed in the previous draft which was drafted in the 1990s.

The new Policy shares some of the sentiments of the draft policy. Like the draft policy, the new Policy emphasizes flexibility and acknowledges that different families and communities have different attitudes to learner pregnancy. Therefore, the new Policy is designed to address the challenges that pregnant learners and learner-parents face.

The Policy allows pregnant learners to remain in school until four weeks before the due date without requiring them to leave; if a pregnant learner and her family would not be comfortable for her to remain in school once the pregnancy becomes visible, she may leave at that stage. Similarly, the Policy allows learner-parents to return to school shortly after giving birth if they wish, provided that the family, the school and the caregivers are satisfied that she and the baby are in good health, and that the baby

will be suitably cared for when she (learner – parent) is at school. The Policy makes provision that learner-parent may stay at home for a period of one calendar year, if the family and learner-parent feel that she should stay.

On the other hand, the Policy does not make provision for a leave of absence for learner-fathers. The lack of such provision is based on the reason that their (learner-fathers) biological role with respect to pregnancy and the baby is different from that of the learner – parent (mother) who gives birth and breastfeeds. The Policy places learner – fathers in better position to assist with future financial support after completion of their education (Hubbard, 2008).

The Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (MoE, 2012) provides that:

- (a) To increase learner education about sexual responsibility and sexual health to help prevent learner pregnancy;
- (b) To create a policy of inclusion and support for learners in cases where pregnancy has occurred;
- (c) To promote the continued education of pregnant learners, expected fathers and learner-parents;
- (d) To promote shared responsibility for the pregnant learners, expectant fathers and learner-parents between themselves, the extended family, the school and line ministries;
- (e) To promote participatory decision-making amongst all stakeholders.

This study focussed on the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the implementation of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy” (MoE, 2012).

The starting point for the implementation of the Policy is Article 20 (1 & 3) of the Namibian Constitution, which stipulate that “All persons shall have the right to education and Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen years, whichever is the sooner”. Article 20 (1) must also be read together with Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution which complies with several international conventions which guarantee equality and freedom from discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. Similarly, the implementation of the Policy must be implemented in compliance with the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, Article 65 A (d,e,g,h, & p) which stipulates that “a teacher must respect the dignity and constitutional rights of every learner without prejudice, including the right to education, equality of culture and the right to privacy; must promote gender equality and refrain from any form of discrimination including on the basis of HIV/AIDS status or health; must promote a sense of responsibility among learners towards themselves, their school and their community; and may not discriminate against any learner on the basis of physical or mental impairment or disability, but assist every learner to reach his or her full potential” (MoE,2004).

The implementation of the Policy should be implemented in compliance with the Namibian Constitution and International Conventions such as the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child; United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women(CEDAW).

The government of the Republic of Namibia is obliged by the Namibian Constitution and International Conventions to ensure that learners who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue with their education on the basis of their individual ability (Hubbard, 2008).

The implementation of this Policy is the acknowledgement of the government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) that change has come in the education of girls (female populace).Therefore, the views of teachers and parents which tend to support punitive actions against pregnant learners deserved to be studied to understand how teachers and parents perceived the implementation of the Policy.

The implementation of the Policy is the response of the government of the Republic of Namibia to the World Declaration on Education for All adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. The Jomtien Conference obliged signatories to ensure access to education for girls and women and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation (Hubbard, 2008). Similarly, the implementation of the Policy is a response of the Namibian government to the call of the International Conventions on the right of the child. The ultimate goals of the International Conventions, including the Namibian Constitution is to ensure access to education and to provide quality education for girls and to remove all obstacles that prevent them from obtaining equal opportunity with boys (Hubbard, 2008)

The Policy has two main aspects, namely prevention and management of learner pregnancy in school. These aspects require effective implementation, for the

Ministry of Education to make a difference in the education of pregnant learners and learner – parents; that is to increase the number of learner – parents completing their education and close the gap of gender disparities (MoE, 2012).

The prevention aspect of learner pregnancy should start at home. The home should provide reproductive and sexual health education (MoE, 2012). However, it is acknowledged that not all learners have stable home environments. Therefore, in this respect, the school is obliged to prevent learner pregnancy through the provision of sex education, creating of safe environment where learners would be protected from sexual harassment and other related immoral practices.

The Policy places a very strong emphasis on prevention, through sensitization programme to empower learners with life skills, knowledge and understanding on how to prevent learner pregnancy. Therefore, to reduce learner pregnancy, the Policy encourages learners to abstain from sexual activity, to freely communicate on values such as gender equality and respect for individual autonomy. The Policy makes provision for facilitation of effective access to contraceptives (MoE, 2012).

For effective implementation, it should be carried out in collaboration with the line ministries in accessing contraceptives and achieve human capacity building. Therefore, it is anticipated that the implementation of the provision of the Policy on the prevention aspect of the Policy is the primary mechanism for reducing the incidence of learner pregnancies, as the saying goes “prevention is better than cure”. Therefore, teachers, parents, government of the Republic of Namibia, non-governmental organisations should collectively shape the behaviour of the Namibian youth.

On the other hand, the management aspect of the Policy should not be overlooked. The management of learner pregnancy is very critical if Namibia wants to reduce gender disparities, to attain universal primary education for both boys and girls, and to achieve the MDGs and to achieve objectives of the Namibian Vision 2030. The management aspect of the Policy requires stakeholders to co-operate together. Therefore, the views of teachers and parents on the implementation of the Policy are of great importance.

The management aspect of the Policy should be executed democratically and non-discriminatory. The Policy ensures equal treatment between pregnant learners and male learner who is responsible for the pregnancy. But due to the biological differences between the male and female learner, the pregnant learner would be excused from school for a period as determined by her health status and the needs of the infant. However, provision should be noted that the leave of absence for the pregnant learner is not punishment. Similarly, it should be understood that allowing learner father to remain in school does not necessarily mean that his parental role is ignored. Therefore, school should ensure that pregnant learner and learner father understand their different roles and responsibilities during the time of pregnancy and after delivery.

The pregnant learner has direct responsibility to inform Life Skills teacher or any staff member whom she trust most about her status. Therefore, in this respect, the Ministry of Education ensures that Life Skills teacher is employed in each school setting. The importance of revealing information on pregnancy enables the Life Skills teacher to give information pertaining ante-natal care to the pregnant learners. The school management is obliged to sensitize learners to develop a culture of openness. For effective implementation, effective communication is required

between pregnant learner and Life Skills teacher or any designated staff member and the line ministries, in this context, mainly the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

The implementation of the management aspect of the Policy is democratic; therefore, pregnant learner has wide choice to choose to continue with her schooling before and after giving birth or to take leave of absence until delivery of the infant. It should be understood also that the viewpoints of both Life Skills teacher and parent / guardian of the pregnant learner are not overlooked in decision making process. The implementation of the management aspects should be done in a transparent manner which could promote open door policy between school and community. On the basis of this provision, pregnant learner is expected to remain in constant consultation with her teachers to receive school activities, assignments and to obtain information to complete her assignments successfully, not to lag behind. The school is obliged to provide information to pregnant learner to enable her completing the assignments. Similarly, the Policy stipulates that schools must confront learner pregnancy by rendering support to learners. Learners need support to continue with their education until the time of confinement and beyond, provided the welfare and health of the baby is ensured. The rendering of support to pregnant learners and or learner-parents must be done in compliance with Article 65 A subsections (h & p) of the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 which stipulates that “teacher may not discriminate against any learner on the basis of physical or mental impairment or disability, but assist every learner to reach his or her full potential; may not in any form, humiliate or abuse a learner physically, emotionally or psychologically” (MoE, 2004).

Despite the provision of the Policy which allows pregnant learners to continue with their schooling or learner - parents to return to school, it is yet not known how many of them actually resume school after they have delivered. Losper (2006) found out

that, some of them who do return to school after giving birth struggle to cope with the workload of school as well with problems such as stigmatization and discrimination against at home or school. It was found that stigma and shame are some of the challenges face pregnant learners and learner - parents (Hubbard, 2008).

The available best knowledge indicates that there is no research study conducted yet on the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. It is against this background that there is a dearth of research evidence on the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. The study seeks to find out how teachers and parents perceive the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. Since both teachers and parents are co-partners in education; their perceptions on the implementation of the policy are of great importance. This study seeks to find possible modalities on how to minimize many challenges faced by teachers and parents in implementing the Policy. The findings of the study, therefore, would create conditions on how to reduce drop out of school among pregnant learners and learner - parents.

The Policy promotes the well-being of the stakeholders in education system and protects and safeguards them from unjust practices. The Policy protects the concerned parties against discrimination and stigmatization. In short, the Policy is non-discriminatory. In addition, the Policy provides learners with a Code of Conduct for learners to abide to. The Code of Conduct for learners aims to promote morality and self-control among learners. Therefore, the Policy discourages pregnancy among learners through appropriate preventative measures. On the other hand, the Code also regulates the type of support the pregnant schoolgirl should get from the school

management, her family and the person who impregnated her. In this context, the Policy obliges schools to provide information to assist pregnant learners and or learner-parents to obtain financial support for the child from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family.

2.5 Perceptions of parents and teachers and the mitigation of the challenges

This study aims at finding out how teachers and parents perceive the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy, and how to minimize drop out among learners due to learner pregnancy.

The Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy promotes an equal access to education. Yet, learner pregnancy among learners prevents pregnant learners and learner - parents from completing their schooling (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Collins, 2008; Ministry of Education, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2010; NPC, 2009; Ramya, 2007).

The existing literature reviewed reveal the bad effects learner pregnancy has on pregnant learners. Women who have a baby in their teens are subsequently likely not to complete school and are likely to rely on various forms of public assistance than women who delay child-bearing (Maynard, 1997).

Moreover, young (teen) mothers often drop out of school and fail to gain employment (Gutman, 1987). Furthermore, it is noted with great concern, that the high trend of learner pregnancy among learners between the ages of 13-17 years is a challenge in Namibian schools (Iyambo, 2011). In addition to school dropout due to learner pregnancy, literature reveals how learner pregnancy is a risk and a health hazard for young mothers (Ministry of Education, 1998; Ramya, 2007; Rathus, 2006).

2.6 Summary

The Policy allows pregnant learners or learner - parents to continue with their schooling. The parents, on the other hand, demand pregnant learners to leave school as they are presenting a bad influence to the rest of the school community. The Policy aims to promote the continued education of pregnant learners or learner-parents.

However, existing literature reviewed indicate how learner pregnancy among learners is a major social problem. Many learners drop out of school every year due to learner pregnancy, despite the provision of the Policy which allows pregnant learners to remain in school until four weeks before labour and return to school. Yet, pregnant learners leave school once the pregnancy starts showing. Physical changes are one of the challenges that make it difficult for pregnant learners to be in school.

The reviewed literature on learner pregnancy only reveals the negative consequences of learner pregnancy among learners. None of the literature reviewed reveals the positive impacts learner pregnancy has on pregnant learners and learner - parents. Learner pregnancy, in schools, has become a challenge that prevents pregnant learners and learner- parents from completing their universal primary education (UPE) and secondary education uninterrupted (Ramya, 2007).

Finally, to the best available knowledge, no study was conducted yet, which focussed on the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy. This lack of research evidence makes this study very important. Thus this gap calls for academic inquiry.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and gives an explanation on the way the research was conducted. It further sheds light on the research milieu with reference to the sampling composition and data gathering.

The sample of this study comprised of 24 participants from six purposefully selected secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. The six secondary schools were selected based on criterion one which is predicated on the fact that the school should have recorded either high or low learner pregnancy rates during the year 2012- 2014.

To meet the ethical requirements for research approval was obtained from the Regional Director of Oshikoto Education Directorate to conduct the research in the six selected secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Aspects of autonomy, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were piously observed.

3.2 Research Design

Design is a strategic framework, a plan that guides a research activity to ensure that sound conclusions are reached (Mushaandja, 2006). It is evident that the aim in research design is to plan and structure a given research project to maximize the validity of the research findings. Research design implies that research is planned (Mouton & Marais, 1996). Similarly, Kumar (2011) states that research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions. This implies that the plan is the complete scheme of the research.

Therefore, the research design is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer research questions. The research design serves to identify procedures and logistical arrangements required to undertake a study and to emphasize the importance of quality in these procedures to ensure their validity, objectivity and accuracy (Kumar, 2011).

Through research design, the researcher conceptualizes an operational plan to undertake procedures and tasks required to complete this study. The research design helps to ensure that the procedures are adequate to obtain accurate answers to the research questions.

The main focus in this qualitative research design was to understand the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Namibian schools. Qualitative methodology is the way how to collect descriptive data, people's own words and people's behavior. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) found out that qualitative methods are used for program evaluation and policy research. Qualitative methodology is a way of approaching the empirical world. A qualitative research design was used in this study to gain understanding of teachers and parents' perceptions on the implementation of the "Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy". The nature of the research questions as stated above, called for qualitative case study design. A case study is characterized by a very flexible and open-ended technique of data collection and analysis (Kumar, 2011). The advantage of qualitative research is that it describes and analyzes people's social actions, beliefs, ideas, feelings and thoughts and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The case in this study is a group of secondary school teachers and parents of pregnant schoolgirls and or young mothers in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

This study, therefore, was concerned with collecting in-depth information and capturing teachers' and parents' personal experiences to understand learner pregnancy in schools. The qualitative research design in this study helped me to understand what participants really thought, felt and perceived about the research problem.

The understanding of social phenomena is context bound and the context of this study is secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in Oshikoto Education region.

Oshikoto Education region is a vast region with eight circuits. Oshigambo is one of the circuits which recorded more cases of learner pregnancies in Oshikoto region. Due to the vastness of the region, the researcher determined to conduct the research in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. It was practical impossible for the researcher to research the whole Oshikoto region. It was not even the intention of the researcher to conduct the research in the whole Oshikoto region.

3.3 Population

According to Best & Kahn (1998, p.12) "a population is any group of individuals who has one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher".

The target population of this study was teachers and parents of pregnant learners and / or learner – parents in secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. The population of this study comprised of all teachers and parents from 14 secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Oshigambo Inspection Circuit is one of the six inspection circuits in the Oshikoto Education region, located 20 km north-east of Ondangwa.

3.4 Sample and sampling strategies

It was impossible and, indeed, not necessary to study everything about teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls in schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) found out that the researcher's own purpose will determine which settings and groups will be the most interesting and yield the most insights. The researcher chose whom to study, where and why. Thus the sampling!

The sample of this study comprised of 24 participants from six purposefully selected secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. The six secondary schools, which were purposefully selected based on criterion one, namely, that the school should have either a high or low teenage pregnancy. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001, p.433) purposeful sampling is a "strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest".

On the other hand, the snowballing strategy was used to get to know the parents of pregnant schoolgirls and or young mothers.

In contrast to the probabilistic sampling of quantitative research, a qualitative research sample comprises of a few but information-rich respondents studied in their context and in-depth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Mushaandja, 1996). The researcher selected three secondary schools with high learner pregnancy rates and another three secondary schools with low rate of learner pregnancy among learners out of the 14 secondary schools; in total the study targeted 6 secondary schools in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

The information was obtained on pregnant schoolgirls from the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit's records, namely, dropout reports and trimester returns.

The selection of the sample of this study was guided by the following criteria:

(a) Six principals of secondary schools, three of them from schools with the highest rate of teenage pregnancy and another three principals from schools with low rate of teenage pregnancy.

(b) One teacher-counselor or Life skills teacher per secondary school.

(c) Two parents of pregnant learners or learner – parents who remain in school or who dropped out of school due to learner pregnancy.

The sample comprised of 24 participants from six purposefully selected secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

3.5 Research Instruments

Multiple methods were used to gather research data. The researcher analyzed documents to provide information on the prevalence of pregnancy among schoolgirls. In addition, the researcher employed the standardized open-ended interview schedule, whereby participants were asked the same questions in the same order. The standardized open-ended interview offered an opportunity to ask the prepared questions, and also to probe responses of the participants about the new ideas that may emerge during the interview process.

The participants elaborated on what they said and / or provided explanations and clarifications of their responses. Through such process, an in-depth knowledge was gained and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied. Qualitative interview, which Taylor & Bogdan (1998) refer to as non-directive, unstructured, non-standardized and open-ended interviewing was used. Qualitative interviewing calls for a flexible research design. Through in-depth interviewing, the researcher gained an understanding of the informants' perspectives on the implementation of the Policy in Namibian schools.

The researcher piloted the interview questions to identify possible shortcomings and gaps in the data collection instruments. The shortcomings identified were rectified.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The six (6) secondary schools and participants selected were based on the criteria of high and low pregnancy rate in schools.

To obtain access to the research site, the researcher obtained the written permission from the Ministry of Education, Oshikoto Regional Education Directorate.

Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from participants before personal interviews were conducted. Central to qualitative research is an understanding of people from their own frames of references and experiencing reality as they experience it (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, the researcher empathized and identified with people studied in order to understand how they see things. In qualitative methodology, the researcher studies people in the context of their past and situations in which they find themselves (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher got to know the respondents personally and experience what they experienced. He learned how people expressed their views on the concepts such as love, suffering and frustration. In this study, what Taylor & Bogdan (1998, p.8) termed “the inner life of the person” was learned and practiced.

The researcher showed respect to the participants, made them feel safe, comfortable and valued. He listened actively to them, maintained eye contact with them and made appropriate gestures such as nodding his head. He also picked up what Biber & Leavy (1997) called markers and asked the participants to elaborate on markers to give more additional information. In this process, rapport was created, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. The interview questions were read to individual participants and responses were written down in a Notebook.

Interviews with teachers were conducted in English, while parents were interviewed in the local language, Oshiwambo which is their first language. The research was conducted in Oshigambo which is Oshiwambo populated area and parents are Oshiwambo speaking people. It was unethical to interview parents in English.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Taylor & Bogdan (1998, p.141) “in qualitative research, data collection and analysis go hand in hand”. Through the in-depth interviewing process, sense was injected into the data. The researcher tracked emerging themes, read field notes and developed concepts to interpret the researched data.

Although, the researcher did an interim data analysis while in the field, most of the data analysis was done after field work. Interim analysis helped to make decisions in the data collection process and identify emerging topics and patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Inductive data analysis process was used as recommended by Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009). The data were inductively analyzed.

The researcher analyzed the data by organizing them into their categories and grouping them into themes. The information was triangulated, verified and organized after it was collected from the interview and documents analysis. Triangulation involves checking findings against other sources to increase credibility and quality (Patton, 2002).

The researcher transcribed, coded and analyzed the data using content analysis. Content analysis refers to analyzing interview transcripts or documents to identify core consistencies and meaning (Patton, 2002).

Different colours were used in the process of analyzing the data to identify themes and patterns and the data analyzed inductively (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001),

whereby categories and patterns emerged from data rather than being imposed on data prior to data collection.

The findings highlighted the need for a combined effort to be put in place, which would address pregnant learners and or learner-parents problems at home and at school.

Finally, the findings brought to the fore the problems teachers and parents experienced in implementing the Policy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in Oshikoto political region. These findings will hopefully be useful when developing ways and strategies to address similar problems elsewhere.

3.8 Ethical considerations

To meet ethical requirements for this research, the researcher tracked down settings and individuals. First and foremost the researcher obtained the written approval from the Ministry of Education, Oshikoto Regional Education Directorate.

He undertook a task to gain access to private situations (schools) and (homes).

Participants were informed that permission to conduct the research has been obtained from the Regional Director of Oshikoto Education Directorate, the copy of the permission letter was shown to them and he negotiated consent for the study with each individual participant. Snowball sampling technique was applied to access private settings (homes). The researcher won the trust of both teachers and parents of pregnant schoolgirls and or young mothers and a request was made to them to identify other resourceful participants (pregnant learners and or learner – parents and also the parents of pregnant learners or learner-parents) to the researcher. Through Snowballing sampling technique the researcher gained access to the intended participants.

Upon obtaining the informed consent from the selected school principals and participants themselves, the researcher guaranteed the principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Gay, 1987; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

To comply with the ethical research requirements, the aspects of anonymity, autonomy, privacy and confidentiality in the course of conducting this research were fully respected and practiced.

3.9 Summary

Chapter three offers the way in which the research was conducted. It covers the research milieu with regard to the data gathering and sampling composition.

The techniques of sampling were being highlighted. It offers the compliance to the research ethical requirements. This study was done in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in the Oshikoto region.

Finally, the findings exposed the challenges experienced by teachers and parents of pregnant learners and or learner – parents in implementing the Policy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in the Oshikoto region.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study conducted to find the perceptions of teachers and parents on the implementation of the “Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy” (MoE, 2012). The researcher analysed the information which was obtained from the documents (trimester return and drop out reports) in the office of the Inspector of Education responsible for Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. The results guided the researcher to purposefully select six secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit, three of them with a high rate of learner pregnancy and the other three with low rate of learner pregnancy.

The trend of learner pregnancy is consistent and likely to continue if no interventions are made. The phenomenon was investigated in six different secondary schools viz; Ombuga SS (alias), Teevo SS (alias), Sakeus Zako SSS (alias), Ekango SS (alias), GwaMvula SSS (alias), and Ashipembe SS (alias) in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit in Oshikoto region. For the sake of confidentiality, the names of the schools are not the schools’ real names. Each school was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect the identity of the participants of the study in terms of the research ethical consideration (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Gay, 1987).

The schools were arranged into two layers (Patton, 2002): the first layer consists of the first three secondary schools with high pregnancy trend in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit, and the second layer consists of three secondary schools with a low trend of pregnancy. He used inductive analysis (Gay, Mills & Airasian 2009; McMillan &

Schumacher, 2001) whereby categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on data prior to data collection.

The researcher presents the analysis of data according to the research questions and interview questions. He presents the analysis of the case data of the six principals, twelve parents and six Life Skills teachers. In the first section, this thesis presents the case data of three principals of secondary schools with a high trend of teenage pregnancy. In the second section, he presents the case data of three principals of three secondary schools with low trend of pregnancy. The analysis of data of six individual Life Skills teachers, and six individual parents of pregnant schoolgirls/young mothers are presented in the same order.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data of Individual Principals

The researcher focuses on the analysis of the case data of the six principals according to the research questions and interview questions. He presents the responses of principals descriptively on how principals perceive the implementation of the Policy.

1 What are the factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit?

Principal # 1 of Ombuga SS (alias) a semi-rural and semi-urban school attributed learner pregnancy to multiple factors. The factors include poverty among the community, as most of the learners come from low-income families. Poverty has the potential to lead female learners into temptation of indulging in sexual practice to satisfy their material needs. Ignorance among female learners plays another significant role as many female learners do not know how to protect themselves from becoming pregnant. Another factor is orphan-hood as many families are child-headed families, whereby there are no parents to provide parental guidance to the

children. Principal # 1 remarked how most of the learners lack the sense and principles of Christianity; therefore, it is difficult for them to abstain from coitus. Another factor contributing to learner pregnancy is the lack of cultural and traditional norms among learners.

What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?

Principal # 1 listed the negative consequences of learner pregnancy. It is noticed that pregnant learners many a times are sick. Due to the condition of pregnancy, pregnant schoolgirls, time and again, go to the hospital. In the process, time for study is lost, and the end result would be low performance or even failure. It is understood and noticed that opportunity of continuing school is likely to cease, because, many female learners drop out of school due to learner pregnancy, despite the fact that the Policy allows them to continue with their schooling. Principal #1 has learnt and observed that in most cases pregnant learners suffer emotionally; they lack peace of mind; and, consequently, they withdraw from participation in various school activities.

On the other hand, learner pregnancy among learners put extra monetary burden on the family, by simultaneously looking after the baby and the young mother. The family is obliged to expand its budget to cater for the pregnant learner/learner-parent and the baby when s / he is born. This monetary extension brought stress and loss of peace of mind to the parents.

2 Is there any of the school boys or male teachers who impregnated learners in your school?

Principal #1 of Ombuga CS responded that there is no a case of such nature reported and recorded in Ombuga SS.

3 The Policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners or learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family. How do you find this Policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

Principal # 1 expressed his views that the school has an obligation to see to it that teaching and learning is taking place. In addition, the school engages in a programme of sensitizing male and female learners on the parental rights, duties and responsibilities they would have to assume as a parent. Sensitization empowers both male and female learners to take sensible and informed decisions.

The school has also sensitized the community through the parents meetings on the danger of learner pregnancy. The school can facilitate the process of accessing assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy to support the pregnant learner and or learner-parents.

4 Apart from implementing a policy on learner pregnancy to accommodate learner-parents in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these learner-parents?

Principal # 1 is of the opinion that Life Skills should be strengthened to reduce learner pregnancy in school. The MoE should introduce public education to empower members of the community on how to assist pregnant learners and or learner-parents. Principal # 1 suggested the MoE should conduct research on how to reduce learner pregnancy among schoolgirls.

5 What challenges do you face in implementing a policy on learner pregnancy among learners in your school?

Principal of Ombuga SS indicated many challenges facing school principals in implementing the Policy. Principal # 1 experienced sickness among pregnant learners, indicating that many a times, pregnant learners need medical attention. The principal has to take such sick pregnant schoolgirl(s) to hospital. At Ombuga SS, there is no GRN vehicle. Therefore, the school principal has to make use of his own vehicle to take the sick pregnant learner (s) to hospital. In addition to the use of the private vehicle, time of teaching and doing other administrative work is lost and wasted in the process by the school principal. Similarly, the pregnant schoolgirl(s) lost time of studying and doing school related activities. If and when a pregnant learner(s) is / are admitted to hospital during examination period, the school principal is obliged to take examination question papers to the sick pregnant schoolgirl in hospital. The principal is expected to understand that the performance of such pregnant schoolgirl who writes examinations in hospital may not be satisfactory due to her condition. Poor performance pulls the school backward and school would lose the better ranking position from cluster level to regional level, if not nationally.

On the other hand, teachers of pregnant learners are challenged to give extra activities to the pregnant learner when she comes back from hospital, to accumulate the required Continuous Assessment marks (CA), otherwise, she lags behind. The time of delivery presents a challenge to the school. In case delivery takes place during national examinations, the school may not be ranked at the position it was supposed to be ranked. Principal is of the view that, in case the pregnant learner may not complete the examinations due to pregnancy, the incompleteness of examinations

pulls the school back in terms of performance. The principal felt, therefore, that pregnancy has bad effects on the reputation of the school. It is noted that many pregnant learners display bad/negative attitudes. They do not do their schoolwork on time. The school is obliged to provide counselling services to the pregnant learners to adhere to the school policy.

6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate these challenges

The principal of Ombuga SS expressed the need for external intervention to address the challenges. The line ministries such as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and agencies such as the office of the Regional Councillor as well as HIV and AIDS Management Unit (HAMU) should intervene to provide social services such as food and clothes to learner-parents and their babies. The intervention of the line ministries such as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Health and Social Services in providing support would make a great impact on the lives of pregnant learners and learner-parents.

Such intervention is needed to address the state of poverty of learner-parents. On the other hand, it is noticed that public education is a necessity. The public should be sensitized to educate young girls on how to delay sex. Principal # 1 understands public education requires the participation of all stakeholders, such as community leaders, spiritual leaders, politicians and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner-parents?

The principal felt that teachers are individuals, with individual characteristics. It is noticed that the majority of them lack the know-how to relate to pregnant learners and learner-parents. However, few of them know how to deal with pregnant learners

and learner-parents. They treat them in a humane manner by assisting them, giving them advice to accept the situation and motivating them to focus on schoolwork.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

Principal # 1 stated that pregnant learners and learner-parents are not discriminated against. However; some learners do tease them.

9 How do the pregnant learners perform academically?

It has been observed that most of the pregnant learners perform below average. It is attributed to the fact that they do not study for the whole academic year. Their study schedules are interrupted by pregnancies.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Principal # 1 noted how pregnant learners face a state of embarrassment, because they are laughed at by fellow learners. They are called names and teased. In relation to this, the 2002 Rundu study found that male learners and teachers teased new mothers, such as by referring to them as “mothers” (Hubbard, 2008).

On the other hand, learner pregnancy caused economic hardship in a sense that pregnant learners do not have sources of income, yet they need money for hospital visits and other basics.

11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

Learner pregnancy is perceived as one of the enemies of education. Pregnant learners in most cases perform poorly. Most of pregnant learners and learner-parents drop out

of school and, as such, lose opportunities for tertiary education. Some pregnant learners and learner-parents contracted HIV/AIDS which has a lifelong negative effect on their lives and of their babies.

12 What impacts does learner pregnancy have on the life of pregnant learners?

Learner pregnancy has negative impacts on the life of pregnant learners. It has the potential to doom the life of the pregnant learners or learner-parents. Pregnant learners may be infected with HIV/AIDS, and, in return, learner pregnancy may impact the community too, as Gutman (1987) authors that learner pregnancy has become a critical link in the cycle of poverty. This refers to the fact that there are young girls with babies whose mothers had babies in their teens. Sometimes most of these mothers are school drop out with little education and little chance to earn an adequate living now or in future.

Namibia needs skilled and well educated workforce to take part in the development of the country towards the realization of vision 2030. But, pregnant learners and learner-parents may, due to pregnancy, lose such opportunity. It is understood, therefore, that learner pregnancy has negative impacts in the development of the country at large.

13(a) What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

Principal informed the researcher that Ombuga Secondary School put a programme in place to address the problem of learner pregnancy among learners. This initiative aims to reduce pregnancy trend at the school. The school organizes separate meetings for boys and girls. School boys are addressed by male teachers, while

schoolgirls are addressed by female teachers on sexual activities. These meetings are conducted trimesterly. The Life Skills teacher, on the other hand, has a programme in place to meet all learners every Friday, to advise and empower them with knowledge, skills and understanding on how they should act and behave. Learners are encouraged to listen to sex education over the radio. Learners are encouraged to go to church regularly to understand and comprehend the Christian principles and doctrines.

In the section below, the researcher presents the perceptions of principal #2, the principal of Teevo SS (alias). Teevo SS is a rural secondary school in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

1 (a) What are the factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo inspection circuit?

The principal of Teevo SS disclosed that there are many factors contributing to teenage pregnancy in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. It is noticed that parents neglect their social responsibilities and duties of guiding their children. Therefore, learners lack parental guidance. Most of the female learners lack the do's and don'ts. Due to the lack of do's and don'ts, these learners find themselves at cuca-shops where they face many temptations. They find themselves consuming alcohol and as a result engage in sexual activities with their boyfriends. It is assumed that under the influence of alcohol, these female learners indulge in unprotected sexual coitus. It is noted that ignorance is high among schoolgirls despite the fact that information on reproductive health is made available. It is also noticed that most of schoolgirls misunderstand and misinterpret the concept of democracy. They understand and claim that, it is their democratic rights to have sex.

1 (b) What are the consequences of teenage pregnancy?

Principal # 2 shed light on the negative consequences of learner pregnancy on the lifelong learning of pregnant learners and learner-parents. Due to learner pregnancy, most pregnant learners and learner-parents lose their bright future. Pregnant learners and learner-parents become parents and assume parental responsibilities, while they are not employed to earn income to sustain themselves and their babies. Therefore, some pregnant learners resort to illegal abortion, while some learner-parents resort to baby dumping. They indulge in these illegal actions to run away from parental responsibilities. Sometimes, Principal # 2 felt, they resort to these dirty actions because of stigmatization. They suffer from isolation, shame and stress. They are teased and mocked by fellow learners. Pregnant learners and learner-parents experience a state of lack of peace of mind; therefore committing suicide is seen by some as the only option.

2 Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated learners in your school? If yes, the Policy makes proposals on how to deal with male learners and teachers who make learners pregnant, how do you find this Policy provision?

There is no such case at Teevo SS.

3 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and or learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find this policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

The principal explained that the policy provision is not realistic in its approach. The school sometimes does not know who impregnated the learner(s). It would be impossible for the school access the man responsible for pregnancy. In addition, Principal # 2 perceived it as an extra burden to the school to go to the man and demand the payment and support. In his view as he perceived it, it is the responsibility of the family to demand support from the man responsible for pregnancy and or the father of the baby. Principal # 2 articulated that there is an element of culture in asking support or payments, therefore asking the payments should be dealt at traditional authority level. However, the school should provide information on the criteria for state maintaince grants and how to apply for the state maintaince grants.

4 Apart from implementing a policy on learner pregnancy to accommodate learner - parents in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these learners – parents?

Principal # 2 shared sentiments how he viewed the Policy. It is seen as encouraging learners to practice sexual coitus without trepidation. The policy is seen as not helping learners, but rather destroying the future of pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is against this background that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration

with other policymakers, is called upon to design a new Special Academic Programme for pregnant learners and learner-parents, respectively.

5 What challenges do you face in implementing the Learner pregnancy Policy in your school?

Principal # 2 highlighted the challenges he experienced in implementing the policy. The policy requires the school to help pregnant learners, but it does not provide the guidelines on how the school should go about it. Pregnancy entails different developmental changes. How best does the principal/school know the expected date of a pregnant schoolgirl in his/ her school?

The principal # 2 felt that his knowledge is limited in this respect. The policy allows pregnant learners to be in school, but there is no medical personnel stationed in the school to provide medical assistance to pregnant learners. Pregnancy is commonly understood as a complicated condition that can pose health risks. He elaborated on the particular case whereby one pregnant learner experienced a miscarriage at the school. The school could not give appropriate assistance apart from taking the pregnant learner to Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital. "It was a bad experience" he said.

Another challenge Principal # 2 experienced is on time management. Too much time is lost due to pregnancy. Pregnant learners are absent too much, due to sickness and other related issues like visiting hospital for antenatal check-ups. Time for teaching and learning is lost. On the other hand, teachers do not like to have pregnant schoolgirls in their classes, because most of the time, pregnant learners sleep too much during teaching and learning process. They move in and out of classrooms due

to unstable condition of pregnancy. Therefore, absenteeism is one of the challenges facing principals in implementing this policy.

There were other challenges that the principal has identified like learners writing on the chalkboard and depicting pregnant women. Principal # 2, therefore, feels obliged to sensitize the school community to discontinue such practice.

In summary, the researcher learnt that Principal # 2 was finding it difficult to implement the Policy on learner pregnancy. Therefore, he felt that there is a need for the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to design a new Special Academic Programme for pregnant learners and learner-parents, respectively.

6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate these challenges

Principal # 2 believed that the Policy should be reviewed and amended to address the situation on the ground. Principal # 2 would like to see medical practioners stationed in school to attend to problems which would face pregnant learners. It should not be considered that the present policy is cast in iron, but, like society, it should be dynamic and adaptable to changing circumstances.

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers?

According to Principal # 2, pregnant learners and learner - parents are treated equally. The teachers provide regular counselling services to pregnant learners and learner-parents. The teachers provide information to the learners not to offend pregnant learners and learner-parents.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

According to Principal # 2, pregnant learners and learner-parents school enjoy equal treatment; however, some learners do tease and isolate them to some extent.

9 How do the pregnant schoolgirls perform academically?

Principal # 2 is not satisfied with the performance of pregnant schoolgirls. "They perform very poorly" he said. The principal attributed their poor performance to their low self-esteem and little hope for a bright future. He further articulated that some learner-parents never terminate their sexual relations with boyfriends who impregnated them. This demonstrates that they do not concentrate on their school work, and the possibility of getting a second pregnancy is not unheard of.

Principal # 2 also expressed a concern of contracting HIV and the possibility of dropping out of school.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do the pregnant schoolgirls face?

Principal # 2 noticed how pregnant schoolgirls face the state of embarrassment, because they are laughed at by fellow learners. They are called names and teased.

On the other hand, learner pregnancy causes economic hardships, the pregnant learners do not have a stable source of income, yet they need money for hospital and other basics.

11 How does teenage pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

Learner pregnancy has affected the schooling of pregnant learners negatively. Pregnant learners, in most cases, perform poorly. Most of pregnant learners and learner-parents drop out of school and, as such, lose the opportunity for tertiary education. Some pregnant learners and learner –parents may contracted HIV/AIDS which has a lifelong negative effect on their life and of their babies.

12 What impacts does teenage pregnancy have on the life of teenage pregnant schoolgirls?

Learner pregnancy has negative impacts on the life of the pregnant schoolgirls. It has the potential to doom the life of the pregnant learners and learner-parents. Pregnant learners may be infected with HIV/AIDS, and, in turn, teenage pregnancy may have an adverse impact on the community too. Namibia needs skilled and well educated workforce to take part in the development of the country towards the realization of Vision 2030. But, pregnant learners and learners-parents may lose such opportunity due to pregnancy. It is understood therefore that learner pregnancy has negative impact on the development of the country at large.

13 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

Principal # 2 stated that the school holds regular meetings to empower learners with relevant information on how to prevent and manage learner pregnancy. Regular meetings were held with parents/guardians of pregnant learners and or learner-parents.

In this section, the responses of principal #3, the principal of Sakeus Zako SSS (alias) are presented.

1 What are the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit?

In the view of Principal # 3, there are many factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. He attributed learner pregnancy to socio-economic development of Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Some learners in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit live in semi-rural and some live in semi-urban areas. Learners, therefore, exchange and share diverse information derived from the different media and environments they are exposed to and live in. It is felt that they may practice and experiment what they have seen on the TV. Peer pressure is also viewed as one of factors that contribute to learner pregnancy in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Principal # 3 is of the view that most schoolgirls are not well motivated to take well informed and sensible decisions. Due to lack of motivation, they lack the ability of saying No means No. The other factor noticed is the lack of parental control.

Another contributing factor to learner pregnancy is the lack of information on sex education. Since some pregnant learners were impregnated by working members of society, it was assumed that poverty is a driving force which may lead learners to engage in sexual activities to earn a living.

In summary, the main contributing factors to teenage pregnancy are the socio-economic developments of Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?

Principal # 3 has nothing to share in this respect.

2 Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated schoolgirls in your school?

It was learned from principal # 3 that there was no case whereby a male teacher impregnated a schoolgirl. However, some schoolgirls were impregnated by fellow learners.

3 The learner pregnancy policy makes proposal on how to deal with male students and teachers who make learners pregnant, how do you find this policy provision?

Principal # 3 stated that one incident has happened whereby one male learner impregnated a fellow learner. The learner father was allowed to remain in school in compliance with the provision of the Policy. But the two appeared to enjoy their companion as they walked together like a couple. However, Principal # 3 expressed dissatisfaction with such status quo. He described it as disturbing and giving bad influence to the rest of the student body. Principal, therefore, recommends that in such instances it is advisable to separate the learner-parent from the learner father, as they badly affect the discipline of the school.

3 The Policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner- parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find this policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support learner-parents?

Principal # 3 fully agrees with the policy provision which states that school should provide information to the pregnant learners on how to apply for state maintenance. But, asking support from the father/man responsible for the pregnancy is not

practical possible, because the Policy does not give guidelines on how schools should deal with such cases.

Principal # 3 felt that intervention in family matters by demanding support and maintenance from the impregnating father has the potential of causing conflict and disagreement between these parties. Who will defend the principal or school in case a conflict erupts? The policy does not give guidelines in cases of potential conflict. The policy does not put measures in place to handle the situation and defend the school. Principal # 3 understands that the issue of asking support is entirely the responsibility of the family of the pregnant learner.

4 Apart from implementing the policy on learner pregnancy to accommodate learner –parents in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these learner-parents?

Principal # 3 was of the view that the MoE should reinstate the two years' time frame for breastfeeding. The MoE should introduce a platoon system for pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers to be taught in the afternoon. The MoE should introduce a Special Academic Programme for pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is understood that this suggestion is in tandem with Byer, Shainberg & Galliano (1999, p.390)... "Programs for adolescents that combine educational strategies with educational support can greatly improve the school completion rate".

The rationale behind this program rests with the fact that pregnant learners and learner-parents need special treatment. They need accommodation and special time when and where they can be given special messages and information.

4 What challenges do you face in implementing the policy on learner pregnancy?

Principal # 3 shared the multiple challenges experienced in implementing the policy on learner pregnancy for prevention and management. The policy allows pregnant learners to come to school, but how best does the pregnant learner(s) know the developmental changes of the pregnancy? How best do the pregnant learners know the delivery time? This is poignant considering that pregnant learners give birth at school. One such case happened at one of the schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. How best will the school or principal be able to give the required assistance? It was found that the Ministry of Education hardly liaises with the Ministry of Health and Social Services to station medical personnel at schools who can render medical service to pregnant learners. Principal # 3 found it difficult to implement this Policy. He felt that there is a need for the MoE to work with line ministries to station health workers in schools.

It is noticed with dismay that some pregnant schoolgirls absent themselves too much from school due to various reasons. Similarly, they are absent at study sessions. They frequently ask to be released from attending study sessions to reach home early and get some rest. Young mothers, on the other hand, ask to be released to feed their babies.

Another challenge which faces school principal # 3 is time management. Pregnant schoolgirls manage time poorly, as most of the time they come late to school. Late coming is attributed to their physical conditions as they cannot run. Late coming contributes to poor performance. In return, poor performance pulls the performance of the school backward. The poor performance of the school pulls back the circuit and the region at large.

The policy allows pregnant schoolgirls to continue their schooling. Yet, the policy makes no provision on a dress code. The dress code for pregnant schoolgirls presents a challenge to the school management. The normal school uniforms become smaller and tight, yet the policy does not give an alternative. Pregnant learners, on the other hand, are shy to put on maternity clothing.

In summing up, it was established that the main challenges facing Principal # 3 were the social well-being of pregnant learners and ineffective time management.

6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate these challenges

Principal # 3 believed that law-makers and policy-makers should recommend outfit for pregnant schoolgirls. The Government of the Republic of Namibia should introduce a platoon system for pregnant learners and learner-parents to attend classes in the afternoon. Alternatively, the government should make accommodation available near school (sick bays). Pregnant learners need three months maternity leave. Pregnant learners and learner-parents should be allowed to come back to school after two years' time frame of breastfeeding.

In sum, it can be concluded that more interventions are needed for an improvement in the implementation of the policy.

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner-parents?

Principal # 3 is of the view that teachers are individuals with peculiar differences. Some teachers accept pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers. They treat them as humanely as possible. Some display a sense of humour towards both pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers.

However, some other teachers do not consider pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers as people needing special attention. They consider them as disloyal to Christian principles.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

Not really, because both teachers and learners are made aware and understand the stipulations of the Policy.

9 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Principal # 3 expressed his dissatisfaction with the performances of pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is noticed that most of them are still in love affairs with the men who impregnated them. It is viewed that they are in school only because the policy makes such provision, but in actual fact they do not have clear understanding for the reason to be in school and consequently lack of understanding and motivation has badly affected their academic performances.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Principal # 3 remarked that pregnant learners often become embarrassed, because they are laughed at by fellow learners. They are called names and teased.

On the other hand, they experience economic hardships and they lack sources of income, whereas they need money for hospital visits and other basics.

11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

It is noticed that learner pregnancy has negative effects on the schooling of pregnant learners and learner-parents. Some of them drop out of school completely. Some pregnant learners ask to be released to go home in order to reach home early and get some rest. Learner-parents, on the other hand, ask to be released to go home to feed their babies. Pregnant learners and learner-parents lose time for study and in most cases do not concentrate in lessons. Their performances drop due to pregnancy. Therefore, it can be safely stated that pregnancy has negative effects on the schooling of pregnant learners and learner-parents.

It is undisputable that learner pregnancy among learners causes interruptions in their teaching -learning programme

12 What impacts does learner pregnancy have on the life of pregnant learners?

It is understood that learner pregnancy holds negative impacts on pregnant learners.

13 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize teenage pregnancy in your school?

Principal # 3 found that it is difficult to curb or minimize the trend of pregnancy at school. It is understood that some girls give birth while in Grade 8, which gives a prediction that some become pregnant while in Grade 7. However, meeting programmes are put in place, whereby learners are addressed by various stakeholders. The school arranged and invited personnel from the MOHSS, spiritual leaders and NGO's to sensitize learners on sexual related issues.

In summary, Principal # 3 has strategic plans of action in place to tackle pregnancy prevalence in his school.

In this section, the responses of the principals of schools with low learner pregnancy trend in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit are presented.

The sequence of principals continues and the first principal in this category is referred to as principal # 4.

The Ministry of Education has implemented the policy on learner pregnancy, yet a significant number of school girls continue to fall pregnant year in and year out.

1 What are the factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo inspection circuit?

The principal of Ekango SS (alias), a rural school, believed that there are many contributing factors to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Principal # 4 attributed learner pregnancy among schoolgirls to the lack of parental guidance. Parents leave children alone unattended. Parents spent a lot of time in cuca-shops. Parents, therefore, fail to provide proper guidance and protection to their children. Due to lack of parental guidance and supervision, some children are influenced by their peers. Peer pressure drives some schoolgirls to engage in sexual coitus. The lack of parental guidance and motivation influenced some schoolgirls to develop low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. Ignorance is one of the contributing factors that contribute to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Despite the fact that schoolgirls know the dos and don'ts, they engage in unprotected sexual coitus.

To summarize, the researcher learned and found that principal # 4 identified the lack of parental guidance as the main contributing factor to learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit and in Ekango SS respectively..

1 (a) What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?

Principal # 4 asserted that experience has shown how schoolgirls who happen to fall pregnant lost their education opportunities. This argument tallies with Byer, Shainberg, & Galliano (1999, p.390)... "Incomplete education is a common outcome of adolescent pregnancy". In summary, it was learnt that learner pregnancy among schoolgirls is tantamount to self-destructive when it comes to education.

1 (b) Your school is one of the least schools with low pregnancy rate in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. How did you manage to keep the pregnancy trend at a low level in your school?

Principal # 4 shared information on how the school keeps the pregnancy trend at low rate. It was learnt from principal # 4 that the school has strategic plans in place. One strategy is to hold motivational talks every school term, to sensitize learners on sexual reproductive health. The impacts of teenage pregnancy on the life of pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers occupy the central part of the talks. In summary, the school principal has the potential to devise strategies to implement the Policy.

2 Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated schoolgirls in your school?

Principal # 4 was adamant that at this school, no case was reported whereby a male teacher impregnated a schoolgirl. However, there was a case whereby a male learner impregnated a fellow learner.

- 2 (a) If yes, the learner pregnancy policy makes proposal on how to deal with male students and teachers who makes learners pregnant, how do you find this policy provision in its approach?**

The school left this case in the hands of the family of the pregnant learners.

- 3 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find this policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the learner-parents?**

Principal # 4 perceived this proposal as unrealistic. Principal # 4 had this to say “it is not the school's business”. To summarize, the school principal believed that the policy requires new interventions to be reviewed and amended.

- 4 Apart from implementing the policy on teenage pregnancy to accommodate young mothers in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these young mothers?**

The principal of Ekango SS is of the view that the MoE should provide special grants to young mothers to buy balanced food and to look after their babies. Her argument was in line with Byer, Shainberg & Galliano's (1999, p.390) who states..."social cost of adolescent childbirth can include: a need for public assistance for young families." In addition, the MoE should introduce a comprehensive compensatory teaching programme to reach pregnant schoolgirls when out of school due to pregnancy.

5 What challenges do you face in implementing the policy on learner pregnancy among learners in your school?

Principal # 4 pointed out the challenges she experienced in implementing the Policy. This principal was of the view that despite the fact that some parents were aware of the Policy stipulations, they never report incidences of pregnancies to the school authorities when these occur in their families. Principal # 4 noticed how difficult it was to deal with pregnant learners and learner-parents. They do not show respect to teachers. They give rise to disciplinary problems. In addition, principal # 4 was of the view that the presence of pregnant learners serve as an encouragement to other learners (non-pregnant schoolgirls) to follow suit. Principal # 4 experienced disciplinary problems among pregnant learners and learner-parents.

6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate the challenges

The principal # 4 believed an intervention of the policy makers is highly recommended to revisit the policy.

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner parents?

Principal # 4 attested to how pregnant learners and learner-parents are treated in Ekango SS. The school treat pregnant learners equally with other learners. More importantly, pregnant learners are excused from attending study sessions inside classrooms in the afternoon with other learners, due to lack of ventilation. They are allowed to study in an open space under the trees. The initiative and rationale is to expose them to fresh air. It can be safely concluded from principal # 4 that she is considerate and has initiatives to maintain and sustain the well-being of pregnant schoolgirls.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

Pregnant learners are not discriminated at all. They are treated in accordance of the provisions of the Policy and that of the Namibian Constitution which guarantee equality and freedom from discrimination.

9 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Principal # 4 noticed that, in most cases, the academic performance goes down during early pregnancy. She attributed this to worries and stress. However, when the school addresses and counselled the pregnant learner(s) the performance tended to improve.

To summarize, it was learnt that pregnant schoolgirls require special attention and motivation.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do you see facing the pregnant learners?

Principal # 4 noticed how pregnant schoolgirls suffer emotionally. They experience embarrassment. They are laughed at by fellow learners. They are called names and teased. Pregnant learners also suffer economically. It is a matter of public notoriety that they lack a dependable source of income, while regrettably they need money for hospital visits and care and other basics.

11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

Principal # 4 felt that pregnancy has bad effects on the schooling of the pregnant learners. Pregnant learners lack peace of mind. They suffer emotionally. Consequently, it has negative effects on their school performance. In summary, it is

evident that teenage pregnancy has the potential of termination the school career of pregnant learners and learner-parents.

12 What impacts does learner pregnancy have on the life of pregnant learners?

Learner pregnancy has negative impacts on the life of the pregnant learners. It subjects pregnant learners and learner-parents to HIV/AIDS.

13 What kind of actions do you implement to keep the trend of pregnancy in your school at a low level?

Principal # 4 asserted that the school has a programme in place. Meetings for learners and parents are regularly held in schools to enlighten learners on reproductive health related issues. It was learned how the school works hand in hand with health personnel from Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital and Oshigambo State Clinic. They talk to learners on reproductive health and sex education. Principal # 4 perceived this approach as helpful. To summarize, the school has plans of action in place and maintains constant link with other stakeholders.

In this section, the data analysis of Principal # 5 is presented, the principal of Ashipembe SS (alias). Ashipembe SS (alias) is located in a rural area. This data analysis reveals how principal # 5 views the implementation of the policy on pregnancy among learners in Namibian schools.

The Ministry of Education has implemented the policy on pregnancy, yet a significant number of school girls continue to fall pregnant year in and year out.

1 What are the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy in Oshigambo inspection circuit?

Principal # 5 emphasised the fact that there are multiple factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. Principal # 5 pointed out that there is a lack of proper education on pregnancy. The education system does not provide adequate sex education. Most schoolgirls at the transitional grades, namely, Grades 7&8, do not know at which age a person can become pregnant. He articulated that the Grades 7 & 8 learners are not enlightened on the hormonal changes. Therefore, it is understood that lack of sex education contributes to learner pregnancy among schoolgirls. In addition, poverty in society does contribute to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls. Schoolgirls entered into sexual agreements, in some cases with working force, because they are driven by monetary and material needs. Similarly, some schoolgirls do live with their grandmothers (senior citizens) who cannot afford to satisfy their monetary and material needs. Therefore, they tend to be tempted to engage in unprotected sexual coitus to satisfy their partners who in turn provide gifts of many kinds.

It can safely be concluded that the main contributing factor to teenage pregnancy is the lack of adequate sex education and poverty; therefore, an intervention is required.

1 (a) What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?

Principal # 5 pointed out that dropping out of school is the most and imminent consequence of teenage pregnancy. Dropping out is attributed to the fact that most of learners come from low-income families. Therefore, once pregnancy occurred in the family, the family could lose hope and give up education of the pregnant schoolgirl. The future life of pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers is very faint. It is noticed

that even the young mothers who came back to school hardly reach tertiary education. Furthermore, it was noted how pregnancy caused extra monetary burden to the parents of the pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers. Parents assume new social responsibilities of looking after the pregnant learners. “Grandparents might assume much of the responsibility for raising a child at a time in their lives when they would enjoy freedom from parenting duties (Byer, Shainberg & Galliano, 1990, p.390)”.

They have to make money available for hospital visits and other basics. It should be noted that most of the parents are senior citizens who depend on social grants only. Yet, they have to take care of both the young mother and baby. In conclusion, principal # 5 described the consequences of teenage pregnancy as a lifelong burden.

1 (b) Your school is one of the least schools with low pregnancy rate in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit. How did you manage to the pregnancy trend at low level in your school?

Principal of Ashipembe SS managed the pregnancy trends and keep it at minimum by exposing learners to My Future My Choice and Window of Hope. He articulated that learners at Ashipembe SS (alias) are given accurate and relevant information about sexual issues. The two programmes are in full operation at the school. The Window of Hope is offered by a trained teacher. Most importantly, the facilitator who facilitates My Future My Choice is of the same age as learners (peer facilitator). They speak, therefore, the same contextual language. They share, exchange and express thoughts in mutual atmosphere.

Furthermore, the school has meetings’ programmes to sensitize and enlighten learners on life skills issues, sexual health related issues, sex education, pregnancy

and HIV. Further, learners are made aware of the consequences of learner pregnancy, that is dropping out and dead-lock future. He articulated that learners are addressed separately in terms of gender. It is evident that topics on learner pregnancy and dropping out of school feature in the parental meetings. Parents are sensitised and tasked to spearhead the campaign against learner pregnancy among schoolgirls.

2 Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated schoolgirls in your school? If yes, the Policy makes proposals on how to deal with male learners and teachers who make learners pregnant, how do you find this policy provision

According to the school principal # 5, there is no such case reported and recorded in Ashipembe SS (alias).

3 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find this policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the learner-parents?

Principal # 5 perceived the provision of the Policy difficult to effectively implement.

He stated that it is not an easy thing for the school to approach the man as the school does not have the platform. However, he is of the view that the school can only assist pregnant learner by means of providing information on how to apply for the state maintaince. He spoke from experience that some parents do not want to reveal the personal particulars of the man responsible for pregnancy for reasons only known to them.

However, some parents are frank in disclosing information and they come to notify the school on the pregnancy which occurred in their family. In this respect, the school gives advice to the parents on the stipulations of the policy. To summarize, the implementation of the provision of the Policy on accessing support from the man responsible for the pregnancy is found to be challenging.

4 Apart from implementing the policy on learner pregnancy to accommodate learner-parents in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these learner-parents?

Principal # 5 is of view that pregnancy has emotional effects. It is noticed how pregnant learners suffer from embarrassment. The MoE should, therefore, provide professional counsellors to render counselling services to pregnant learners and learner-parents.

5 What challenges do you face in implementing the Policy on learner pregnancy among learners?

Principal # 5 perceived the applicability of the policy with community members to be challenging. How practical is it for the school to implement fully the policy? How best can the school make the community understand the reality on the ground? He articulated how one parent in a parental meeting accused the school that the school encourages learners to practice sexual intercourse, because learners continue to fall pregnant.

Principal # 5 noticed the language barrier as being the stumbling block in the full implementation of the policy. Parents do not understand English, the language in which the Policy is written. The language spoken in the community where the school

is located is only Oshiwambo. However, the school has done its best by interpreting the content of the Policy for the parents to have an understanding thereof.

5 Suggest what should be done to mitigate the challenges

Principal # 5 suggested the introduction of public education, to educate the community members on the reality on the ground. The MoE should make public education materials (leaflets and booklets) available. The Policy should preferably be written in all indigenous languages.

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner-parents?

Principal # 5 made it clear that teachers at this school are sensitized on learner pregnancy. Therefore, discrimination against pregnant learners and learner-parents is a matter of the past.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

Principal # 5 informed the researcher how the school sensitized its members, namely, learners, teachers and institutional workers, to be sympathetic with pregnant learners. Therefore, discrimination has no room in this school.

9 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

According to Principal # 5, pregnant learners perform below average level. There is, therefore, little hope for them to pass at the end of the academic year. They were all in Grade 10 in the 2012 Academic year.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do the pregnant learners face?

Principal # 5 noticed how pregnant learners face a state of embarrassment, because they are laughed at by fellow learners. They are called names and teased.

On the other hand, pregnant learners face economic hardships, the pregnant learners do not have sources of income, yet they need money for hospital visits and other basics.

11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

It is stated that teenage pregnancy has negative effects on the schooling of pregnant schoolgirls. It is noticeable in this school that pregnant schoolgirls do not perform to the satisfaction and expectation of the school. Generally, it is noticed that most of the pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers never reach tertiary education or even Grade

Learner pregnancy has many negative impacts on the lives of the pregnant learners and learner-parents.

The lives and future of pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers are ruined and doomed. They hardly will complete their schooling. They experience monetary hardships. They do not have sources of income to support their babies. They are, by nature, required to give motherly love to babies and still they are required to attend classes. In most cases, this is not easy to handle. They are likely to drop out of school due to such circumstances.

12 What kind of actions do you implement to keep the trend of pregnancy in your school at low level?

The school exposes learners to “My Future My Choice and Window of Hope” programme. Meetings schedules are in place to shed light on life skills issues.

These are responses of principal # 6, the principal of GwaMvula SSS (alias).

The Ministry of Education has implemented the Policy, yet a significant number of school girls continue to fall pregnant year in and year out.

1 (a) What are the factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit?

There are multiple factors contributing to teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls. They include peer pressure among the schoolgirls. Learners lack the ability of differentiating between what is right and wrong, the do's and don'ts and ignorance, despite the fact that they are provided with information on human reproductive health. They do not care. Some teenage girls lack the understanding of the importance of education. They lack the vision to visualize how pregnancy can adversely affect their lives. Most of the families in society live below the poverty line. Therefore, poverty drives schoolgirls into sexual activities to get material things such as cell phones and other gifts.

Orphans lack effective parental supervision. Some of them do live with their grandparents who cannot control them. Therefore, some of them tend to indulge in sex work. It has been observed that the societal structures are non-functional. Parents are reluctant to take their social responsibility. Religious institutions do not do their social duty of taking care of the image of God. Therefore, the lack of morality and

ethics is very high in society. Consequently, passion killing becomes a common practice in society. It happens because love relationships between partners are materially driven.

1 (b) What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?

GwaMvula SS has adopted the policy of talking to female learners on how pregnancy can adversely affect their education. The school encourages them to delay sex. The Life Skills teacher too talks regularly to learners about learner pregnancy.

In summary, it is universally accepted that school dropout is one of the consequences of learner pregnancy. Therefore, learners should be empowered with knowledge and understanding to advocate abstinence.

2 (a) Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated learners in your school?

At GwaMvula SSS no case has been reported of a male teacher impregnated a learner.

2 (b) If yes, the teenage pregnancy policy makes proposal on how to deal with male students and teachers who makes learners pregnant, how do you find this policy provision?

However, a case of a Grade 8 boy in 2012 who impregnated a Grade 9 girl was reported and recorded in GwaMvula SS. The school allowed them to continue with their schooling.

3 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find this policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

There is no way for the school to ask support and payment from the man responsible for pregnancy or the father of the baby. The school cannot intervene in family matters. The school can only involve once it is approached by the parent for advice. Alternatively, the school can only involve if a male teacher has impregnated a learner. The provision of the Policy is unrealistic in this regard.

4 Apart from implementing the policy on teenage pregnancy to accommodate young mothers in schools, what else do you suggest the Ministry of Education (MoE) can do to assist these young mothers?

It has been observed that most of the pregnant learners and learner-parents hardly pass their examinations. Their performances drop. The dropping of academic performance is attributed to stress which they experience. They study under pressure of many challenges including long walking distances. The principal of GwaMvula SS understands that the Policy does not help pregnant learners at all.

Very few students who come from well off families slightly manage to pass the examinations. The MoE should adopt the policy of suspending pregnant schoolgirls from continuing their schooling, but their places should be reserved for the next academic year regardless of age.

5 What challenges do you face in implementing the Policy on pregnancy among learners?

Absenteeism is the biggest challenge to the principal, teachers and pregnant learners. It leads to them missing tests and other school activities. The missing of tests has direct contribution to incomplete Continuous Assessment marks (CA). Pregnant learners do not perform academically well.

6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate these challenges

It is suggested that pregnant learners should not come back to school before delivery. Their places must be reserved and guaranteed to come back the next academic year after delivery.

7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner-parents

It depends on individuals, some teachers treat pregnant learners fairly, while some teachers do not disregard them.. Pregnant learners do not mostly do their school work. The school expects them to do their school work as others do. Therefore, the school demands hard work.

8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?

The principal informed the researcher how the school community is sensitized on learner pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Therefore, pregnant learners are not discriminated against at all.

9 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Pregnant learners do not perform academically well. They experience many challenges such as sickness, lack of concentration and tiresome. As such, these challenges affect their performance adversely.

10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do the pregnant learners face?

Pregnant learners generally experience poverty, poor academic performance, disease and stigma.

11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?

Learner pregnancy negatively affects the schooling of pregnant learners. Pregnant learners and learner-parents experience poverty as they lack sources of income, stigma, stress, poor academic performance, diseases, lack of attention as most of them are impregnated by 'sugar daddies' and they lack peace of mind.

Sadly, it is against this background that most of the young mothers opt for dropping out of school.

12 What impacts does learner pregnancy have on the lives of pregnant learners?

Learner pregnancies have negative impacts on the life of pregnant learners and learner-parents. They are vulnerable to diseases as most of them are impregnated by 'sugar daddies'. The possibility of getting the second pregnancy can't be ruled out.

13 What kind of actions do you implement to keep the trend of pregnancy in your school at a low level?

The principal informed the researcher how the school addresses the problem of learner pregnancy. Female teachers talk to female learners on various issues pertaining motherhood. However, the Life Skills teacher gives information to both boys and girls on sex education and sexual health.

The teachers tell teenage girls how women are disadvantaged in society. Skelton & Francis (2009) refer to global group bound by common inequality. One of the aims of Millennium Development Goals is to attain gender parity by 2015. However, gender inequalities weigh more heavily on females than males in a number of ways (Skelton & Francis, 2009).

To summarize, it is commendable how teenage schoolgirls are empowered with knowledge to be able to make sensible and informed decisions. Teachers prepare teenage schoolgirls to cope with physical and emotional challenges of growing up and give them an elementary understanding of human reproduction. Schoolgirls are encouraged to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life (Skelton & Francis, 2009).

Teachers' perceptions on the implementation of the Policy

The researcher presents the results obtained from the six Life Skills teachers interviewed. The next information is the responses of individual Life Skills on how they perceived the implementation of the Policy on learner pregnancy. This is the second layer (Patton, 2002) of respondents. There are six Life Skills teachers who participated in this research, and they are referred to as teacher # 1, teacher # 2, teacher # 3, teacher # 4, teacher # 5 and teacher # 6. The identity of the schools and the teachers are all aliases and they remain anonymous.

The following responses are from Life Skills teacher # 1 from Ombuga SS (alias) a semi-rural and semi-urban school in Oshigambo inspection circuit.

1 The Learner Pregnancy Policy makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?

Life Skills teacher # 1(Ombuga SS)

Teacher # 1 appreciates the approach of the MoE. She felt that learners are given access to education in accordance with the philosophy of towards education for all (MoE, 1993). The given opportunity to pregnant learners and learner-parents to come back to school enables them to support their babies in future. This approach gives better hope for future. It is understood that pregnant learners and learner-parents will participate in socio-economic development of the country. Namibia needs well educated and skilled men and women.

Therefore, it is understood that pregnant learners and learner-parents have the potential to contribute to the economic development of the country. They will contribute to the attainment of Vision 2030. Teacher # 1 is of the opinion that this approach relieves the government from high unemployment rate among the youth and in society at large.

In sum, the teacher described the policy as an appreciated approach, which tallies with the policies of education for all and inclusive education.

2 In your opinion, do you think, a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?

Teacher # 1 felt that this is a difficult situation to handle. It is a coincidence which happened unplanned. Learner-parents never planned to have pregnancies. It is very challenging to carry dual responsibilities of being a learner and a parent simultaneously. The learner-parents have to look after the baby, yet she is required and expected to concentrate on studies. Therefore, teacher # 1 felt that to cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time is a heavy burden.

In sum, it is noted that to cope with the situation depends entirely on the kinds of support system and motivation the young mother received from the immediate family and societal members.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Teacher # 1 is of the view that performance depends on individuals. It depends on how best the person is intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Therefore, the performances differ from one person to another and the performance of pregnant learners ultimately depends on the kinds of support and motivation they receive.

4 What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Teacher # 1 understands that there are many challenges facing pregnant learners and learner-parents. Teacher # 1 highlighted the following challenges: the pregnant learners and learner-parents face the lack of care-givers for their babies; there are no people to take care of the babies and learner – parents do not have sources of income to recruit baby sitters; some learner-parents are orphans and vulnerable; orphanage and vulnerability presents a challenge to learner-parents; they cannot afford to sustain and maintain their babies.

Consequently, due to inability to provide basics to their babies, babies suffer from sickness and malnutrition. Poverty prevails. There is no money to buy the basics. In some cases, the father of the baby is unemployed. Teacher # 1 understood that to maintain the baby is too challenging a task and responsibility to the young mother.

The main challenge facing learner-parents is poverty. Poverty is contributing to non-affordability of taking care of the baby.

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?

Teacher # 1 asserted that young mothers are individuals. Some of them behave appropriately, while some of them show rudeness and no respect towards their teachers. Such undesired behaviour could be attributed to stress and shamefulness. It is noticed that many a time pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers are stressed and lack peace of mind. On the other hand, some teachers ill-treat pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers. Teacher # 1 believed that such unprofessional conduct of teachers may lead to illegal abortions.

It is highly and passionately recommended that pregnant learners and learner-parents should be treated with "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 2002, p.50).

6 What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant schoolgirls?

Teacher # 1 noticed how difficult it is to teach the topics on pregnancy in a class where there are pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers. The teacher under such condition is not comfortable to talk about teenage pregnancy and its consequences. Due to cultural norms, the teacher is not free to express the views, despite the fact that the teacher is work-shopped to teach topics on sexuality education. Culturally, it is a taboo to call some sexual parts by their scientific names. Pregnant learners or learner-parents withdraw from participating on the topic. On the other hand, learners in the classroom tend to have a judgemental look at the pregnant learners or learner-parents.

To draw down the curtain on this section, it is emphasized that cultural values and the way the teacher was brought up present a challenge to the teacher in teaching pregnancy and related topics in the presence of pregnant learners and learner-parents.

Culture influences how people communicate ideas, feelings, attitudes and values. Kelly (2008, pp.222-223) has this to say ..." From culture to culture, there is great diversity in the way people communicate, especially about sex-related matters".

7 In your capacity as the Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant schoolgirls?

The teacher noticed how fellow teachers experienced the problem of constant absenteeism. It is noticed that pregnant learners and learner-parents absent regularly for various reasons. Some pregnant learners are absent to go to hospital for antenatal

check-up and for other reasons related to pregnancy. Learner-parents absent themselves also to take babies to hospital or to look after babies as there are no care-givers.

Absenteeism complicates the assessment process. Learner pregnancy among schoolgirls has the potential of keeping pregnant learners behind in terms of assessment marks. In some cases pregnant learners can give birth during the examination period and as a result she may not physically fit to sit for the examinations. Learner pregnancy among schoolgirls presents not only a challenge to the teachers, but to the entire school too. It may directly or indirectly pull back the school in terms of performance.

In summary, Teacher # 1 highlighted how pregnancy contributed to absenteeism among pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is undisputable that absenteeism negatively affects the overall performance of the school. Therefore, learner pregnancy should be avoided at all cost.

8 Being a Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and their fellow learners.

Teacher # 1 noticed that treatment is scaled out on a 50/50 % basis. Some teachers and some learners discriminate against pregnant learners. They use derogatory language towards pregnant learners, while learners gossip about pregnant learners.

To conclude, teachers and learners need to be sensitized on the Policy and other ministerial policies such as the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Policy to empower them with knowledge, skills and understanding.

- 9 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic is it for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the learner-parents?**

Teacher # 1 is of the opinion that schools can create a room in collaboration with social workers to meet the father of the baby and discuss why supporting learner-parent and the baby is needed, or his family in case the father does not work. The support enables the pregnant learners and learner-parents to proceed with education. Teacher # 1, therefore, is adamant that it is realistic for the school to ask a father of the baby to render support.

- 10 You are the policy implementer. State the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.**

Teacher # 1 never assesses the status of the household of families of pregnant learners. It is required to assess the living standard of the household where the pregnant learner(s) comes from, but Teacher # 1 never assesses the status of the household of families of pregnant learners, due to transport problem.

- Suggest what the MoE should do to rectify the shortcomings.**

The MoE should talk to MOHSS to provide milk to the learner-parents to feed babies, while they are at school. It is generally accepted that learner-parents lack sources of income.

11 Does MY FUTURE MY CHOICE exist in your school?

Teacher # 1 revealed that this program is put on hold due to the review of the manual which is underway.

12 Apart from allowing pregnant schoolgirls to continue with their schooling, what else can the Ministry of Education (MoE) do to help pregnant schoolgirls to complete their education career?

Teacher # 1 is of the opinion that the MoE should introduce holiday classes for both pregnant learners and learner-parents. They should be taught the lessons they missed due to pregnancy related issues.

13 In your opinion, what factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school and in general?

Teacher # 1 identified and singled out many contributing factors to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls:

- (a) Poverty: Most pregnant schoolgirls frequently engage in sex with older men, called 'sugar daddies'. The 'sugar daddies' promise to provide gifts. These gifts include money, cell phones and other items that are regarded as fashionable. Due to such promises, schoolgirls practice unsafe sex.

Teacher #1 felt that schoolgirls are sexually abused by their counterparts. Schoolgirls assent to sexual abuse because of multiple fears. They are afraid both to be dumped and lose an income, to be beaten or even to be killed.

- (b) Myths about sexual activities: There is a myth among youngsters that one cannot become pregnant during first coitus/sexual intercourse. The myth is

also exacerbated by the folly that one cannot get pregnant once one takes a wash or shower immediately after sexual coitus. Believing on such myths, some schoolgirls make insensible choices by engaging in unsafe sex.

- (c) Negative parental role modelling: Some parents, especially single mothers do practice love affairs in the sight of their kids. On the other side of the coin, some parents encourage their girls to engage in prostitution to earn a living.
- (d) Lack of parental support: Some parents never support their girls economically, socially and psychologically. Parents never talk to their girls about hormonal change and dating.
- (e) Alcohol abuse: Alcohol plays a role in teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls as some schoolgirls spent much time in cuca-shops. There, they consume alcohol and, as a result, they end up engaging in unprotected coitus. They lack self- control.
- (f) Informal settlements: It is a fact that some learners in the Oshigambo Inspection Circuit do live in informal settlements. Due to environmental settings, some learners are tasked to serve as she-been tenders. These schoolgirls are exposed to variety of temptations, including frequent sex with 'sugar daddies'.
- (g) Accessibility to contraceptives: It has been regrettably observed with dismay that some schoolgirls do not have access to contraceptives. Nurses refuse to render contraceptive services to schoolgirls without their parents' consent. This is worsened by the fact that schoolgirls loathe visiting hospitals in the company of their parents. With regard to condom use, it was noticed that girls have negative attitudes towards condoms although these are easily available. It was observed that there was an inconsistency in condom use among schoolgirls.

- (h) Technological influences: Teacher # 1 remarked on the strong role the media plays in influencing sexual activities among schoolgirls.
- (i) Rape: Some schoolgirls are raped and impregnated by unknowns or even by their caretakers, acquaintances, family, friends or other public figures.
- (j) Peer pressure: Teacher # 1 is of the view that some schoolgirls take wrong choices to appease their friends. Teacher # 1 felt that schoolgirls need to be educated in understanding the dangers that come with getting pregnant. It is important to know that pregnancy is accompanied by the risk of dropping out of school and other negative consequences.
- (k) Poor discipline: There is a lack of discipline among some schoolgirls attributed to the lack of morality.

In conclusion, schoolgirls are vulnerable to multiple factors contributing to teenage pregnancy. It is honestly and genuinely expressed that most schoolgirls cannot handle this situation of vulnerability. To immunize/normalize the situation societal structural intervention is required. There is a need for joint intervention to reduce adolescent pregnancy rate. Society, therefore, has to agree on how to reduce the adolescent pregnancy rate among schoolgirls. It is posited that well-planned and carefully executed programs of sexuality education lowers the adolescent pregnancy rate (Byer, Shainberg & Galliano, 1999).

14 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school?

Teacher # 1 stated that the school has mechanisms in place to address the learner pregnancy problem among learners in the school. There are programmes of meetings. There is an information sharing meeting every Friday. Every month, the school organizes activities on sex and alcohol abuse. The teacher revealed that

information is presented in multiple forms, such as poems, songs and story-telling. Furthermore, the school has a teenage pregnancy awareness week spearheaded by the Life Skills teachers. In these forums, the school invites health workers to provide relevant and useful information to the school community.

Needless to conclude, the school has appropriate strategies. It is hoped that these strategies will help to minimize the prevalence of teenage pregnancies in the school.

The following responses are from teacher # 2, the Life Skills teacher in Ekango SS.

1 The Learner Pregnancy Policy makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about young mothers coming back to school?

Teacher # 2 is of the view that the policy is appreciated, because it allows pregnant learners and learner-parents to continue with their education.

2 In your opinion, do you think, a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?

Teacher # 2 felt that it hinges on conditions. Learner-parents can cope, provided they are counselled. The more pregnant learners and or learner-parents are supported, the better they cope with being learners and parents.

In sum, it is learnt that to cope with being a schoolgirl and a parent depends on how well she is supported. Therefore, teacher # 2 is of opinion that the student body be sensitized to accept pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers as their fellow learners.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Teacher # 2 asserted that pregnant schoolgirls perform dismally. The teacher perceived pregnancy as having negative impacts on the performance.

4 What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Teacher # 2 perceived many challenges facing pregnant learners. They are amongst others:

- (a) Absenteeism: Pregnant learners become absent from school due to multiple reasons related to pregnancy. They suffer from pregnancy related sicknesses and fatigue due to long distances between home and school. Owing to regular absenteeism, their school performance drop dismally.
- (b) School dropouts: School dropout is one of the common challenges facing pregnant learners. Teacher # 2 attributed school dropout to multiple reasons such as shame, uncomfortability with being seen with a big tummy, loss of friends, isolation and loss of hope.
- (c) Lack of finance: Pregnant schoolgirls lack sources of income to address their basic needs. They need money to buy balanced food, to pay transport to hospitals, to buy maternity clothes, to mention a few.
- (d) Lack of understanding on pregnancy developmental stages

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?

Teacher # 2 asserted, pregnant learners are individuals, therefore, they behave differently. Teacher # 2 remarked that most of the time many pregnant learners appear to be emotionally disturbed, confused and lack peace of mind. It is generally

noticeable that they appear to be aggressive towards their fellow learners. They show a sense of contempt and rudeness. Teacher # 2 felt their behaviours are not good and they do not display good examples.

6 What challenges you face in teaching pregnant learners?

Teacher # 2 viewed pregnancy as an extra burden to the school. Pregnant learners require counselling services. Due to the lack of infrastructure and the sensitivity of pregnancy and its confidentiality, the school has to find time in the afternoon to provide counselling services. However, pregnant learners do not understand the importance of counselling. As such, they rarely come forth voluntarily.

In addition, the teacher perceived high absenteeism as one of the common challenges teachers face in teaching pregnant learners. Absenteeism places an additional burden on the teachers to find additional teaching time to teach pregnant learners who were absent. Otherwise, they will lag behind and never accumulate the required Continuous Assessment (CA) marks.

To conclude, it was found that pregnancy among learners not only presents a challenge to the teachers concern, but it is also a challenge to the entire school.

7 In your capacity as the Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?

The most severe challenge facing teachers in teaching pregnant learners is high absenteeism. Due to absenteeism, pregnant learners lose time for teaching and learning. They miss school activities. On the other hand, teachers are challenged to find additional time to teach pregnant learners in order to cover the subject matters missed.

8 Being the school Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and their fellow learners?

Teacher # 2 felt that pregnant learners do not discriminated against; they are treated equally as other learners. But due to their physical conditions, they are even given special treatment; for instance, they are exempted from performing some activities, such as physical education and athletics. In addition, they are encouraged to report any unusual development to the staff members. Staff members, on the other hand, are sensitized on how to deal with pregnant learners.

9 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic is it for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the learner-parents?

The teacher is of the view that school intervention might reduce pregnancy trend, because, father(s) might not be freely amenable or pleased to be called to schools where they are suspected of having impregnated learners. An intervention of this kind is likely to discourage men in having love affairs with schoolgirls.

In summary, teacher # 2 is supportive of the schools' intervention.

10 You are the policy implementer. State the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.

The intervention of the school in family matters by asking support from the man who is responsible for the pregnancy is identified as a shortcoming. Schools are obliged

to implement this stipulation, but it is practically impossible. The stipulation is perceived as beyond the school's control.

Suggest what the MoE should do to rectify the shortcomings.

Teacher # 2 has no suggestions to make.

11 Does My Future My Choice exist in your school?

The teacher asserted, the programme exists, but it is put on hold, because there is no facilitator.

12 Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the MoE does to help pregnant learners to complete their education career?

The teacher is of the opinion that the MoE should provide social grants to the learner-parents as it does to OVCs. The grants will enable learner -parents to sustain their babies. In addition, the MoE should expand sex education to reduce learner pregnancy.

13 In your opinion, what factors do you think contribute to pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school and in general?

The teacher perceived vulnerability as one of the core factors contributing to pregnancy among learners. It is the norm of the Namibian society that some learners are vulnerable, because of multiple reasons. Some schoolgirls live below the poverty line. Consequently, they frequently engage in sex with 'sugar daddies' for monetary and material needs. Orphans should not be overlooked. Some schoolgirls are heading their families. In such situations, there is absolutely no parental control or whatsoever. Therefore, such orphans are exposed to vulnerability. Some orphans do

live with their grandmothers, who cannot effectively control them, therefore they also fall victims to pregnancy.

Cultural norms: Cultural norms are a burden to teachers despite the fact that they are work-shopped to teach sexuality education. Due to the fact that many sexual parts are not allowed to be called by their scientific names, teachers tend to omit some topics on sexuality education. Teachers feel, it is a taboo to talk about sex with the children. However, it is contended that running away from the reality on the ground, leads schoolgirls to make insensible choices which directly end up in pregnancy among schoolgirls. It is also stated, as a matter of fact, that many pregnancies among schoolgirls come as a consequence of a lack of understanding. It is felt that, there is lack of community awareness campaigns. It is contended that lack of community campaigns and involvement in sex education contributes to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls. Therefore; the teacher felt that ignorance is destructive, and knowledge is power. As such, joint society intervention is needed.

14 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school?

Teacher # 2 asserted that there is no plan put in place. Pregnancy is not regarded as a challenge at this school.

The next responses come from teacher # 3, the Life Skills teacher in Teevo SS.

1 The Learner Pregnancy Policy makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?

Teacher # 3 identifies and hails the ministerial approach as an appreciated one. It is only through education that one can get a better future. The approach of allowing pregnant schoolgirls to come back to school after delivery is fully supported and appreciated.

In conclusion, the approach is appreciated and embraced because it gives schoolgirls the opportunity to complete their schooling.

2 In your opinion, do you think, a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and parent at the same time?

It is felt that coping depends on individuals. It depends on how well the pregnant schoolgirl is counselled and supported. It is understood that the more a pregnant schoolgirl receives a support system at home, the better she copes with dual responsibilities. On the other hand, it is viewed that coping depends on the morale and dedication of the young mother(s). Teacher # 3 expressed the opinion that pregnancy should be perceived as an obstacle like any other obstacles facing learners.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

It is found that performance depends on individuals, but pregnant learners show sense of dedication to schoolwork. It is generally expected that they learnt a new

lesson from the mistake made. The adage goes, once beaten, twice shy and, as such, it is found that their performance is relatively good.

4 Challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Teacher # 3 identified poverty as the main challenge facing pregnant learners. It is noticed that pregnant learners need money to buy their basics, yet they lack a source of income. Monetary constraints are seen as the major challenge facing pregnant learners.

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and fellow learners?

It should be understood that pregnant learners are individuals. They therefore, behave differently. Some of them are respectful to teachers and are on good terms with other learners. On the other hand, some of them isolate themselves from the rest of the student body.

6 What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant learners?

Teacher # 3 finds it difficult to teach topics on sexual activities and learner pregnancy. The teacher attributed this difficulty to culture. Culturally, many sexual parts are not allowed to be called by their names. Although teachers have the knowledge about learner pregnancy, teacher # 3 noticed that the lack of sex education materials in Namibian schools presents a challenge to the Namibian teachers. In addition, pregnant learners feel offended, and as a result they withdraw from participating in classroom activities.

To conclude, it comes clearly that culture influenced the way people handle sexuality related issues. It came to light that teaching topics on sexuality is in conflict with their cultural norms and, therefore, is not acceptable.

7 In your capacity as Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?

Teachers experience disciplinary problems. Pregnant learners and learner-parents do not show respect to their teachers, as in most cases they disregarded the teachers' instructions.

8 Being the Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and fellow learners?

Teacher # 3 noticed that both teachers and fellow learners talk too much about pregnant learners. Pregnant learners feel uncomfortable, because they are not treated in a friendly manner by their fellow learners and by their teachers.

9 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic is it for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mothers?

The school intervention in the family matters is considered realistic. It is felt that the teacher-counsellor has the duty to intervene. Teacher # 3 concludes that intervention reduces stress on pregnant learners.

10 You are the policy implementer. State the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.

Teacher # 3 is of the view that pregnancy brings about sickness such as dizzy, swollen feet and vomit which leads to absenteeism. However, the policy never provides educational compensatory programme for both pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is found and noticed that absenteeism contributes to low performance. Therefore, pregnancy has negative impacts on the CA marks. The Policy allows pregnant learners to continue their education, yet they suffer from stress and stigmatization.

The policy allows pregnant learners to continue their education, yet the Policy does not regulate the dressing code of pregnant learners, as their normal school uniform become smaller. The Policy allows pregnant learners to proceed with their education, yet the Policy does not consider the distances between home and school. The Policy allows pregnant learners to continue their education, but the Policy does not provide accommodation in schools to reduce long distances. The Policy allows pregnant learners to continue their schooling, yet the Policy fails to station health workers in schools. The policy requires schools to intervene in family matters by asking support from the man responsible for pregnancy, yet the Policy never provides guidelines on how this is to be done.

All things considered, the policy should be applauded, however, for allowing pregnant learners continue their education.

Suggest what the MoE should do to rectify these shortcomings.

Teacher # 3 suggested that the MoE should introduce an educational programme only for pregnant learners and learner-parents. The teaching process should be offered on part-time basis.

11 Does My Future My Choice exist in this school?

My Future My Choice does not exist in this school.

12 Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the MoE does to help pregnant learners to complete their education career?

The teacher has nothing to suggest.

13 In your opinion, what factors do you think contributing to pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school and in general?

Teacher # 3 associated learner pregnancy with lack of condom use and other contraceptives. It is presumed that teenage schoolgirls engage too much in sexual activities at a very tender age. There is lack of parental guidance. It is also noticeable that there is no strong parental support and supervision. The lack of strong parental support is attributed to the fact that some parents share cuca-shops with their offspring. Orphanage plays a role in learner pregnancy, because some of the families are child-headed families. These learners can be easily victimized due to multiple reasons.

In summary, the common factors have been mentioned several times. It came across that learner pregnancy is attributed to multiple factors. It should be stated that to

holistically address these problems, it requires the intervention and involvement of different stakeholders in society.

14 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in your school?

The teacher asserted that the school has meeting programmes to share information on pregnancy and its consequences.

The following are the responses from teacher # 4 of Sakeus Zako SS (alias). Sakeus Zako SS is one of the semi- rural and semi-urban secondary schools in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

1 The Policy on learner pregnancy makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?

Life Skills teacher # 4 commended the initiative of the Ministry of Education (MoE). However, she maintained that it is not healthy. Many schoolgirls no longer bother preventing pregnancies. The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS is very high. The approach is appreciated, yet pregnancy is a critical condition which requires medical experts. Pregnancy is not an easy matter to handle. It is understood that some teachers are too young and never experienced this state of affair. As such, they lack the appropriate approach to handle pregnant learners.

To summarize, it is understood that the ministerial approach allowing pregnant learners and learner-parents to come back is appreciated. It is perceived that the approach enhances the policy of inclusive education and the policy of education for

all. It is hoped that pregnant learners and or learner-parents utilize such opportunity to complete their schooling. It should be viewed that pregnancies come as a result of either being ill-informed or ignorant about sex, because parents did not talk to their children about sexual related issues. The lack of parental guidance could be attributed to cultural norms.

2 In your opinion, do you think a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?

Life Skills teacher # 4 perceived that pregnant learners and or learner-parents cannot perform well due to dual responsibilities. Pregnancy has negative impacts on the academic performance of the pregnant learners and or learner-parents.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

It is found that pregnant learners perform below average. Pregnancy has affected their performance adversely.

4 What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

It is understood that pregnant learners are faced by multiple challenges including stigmatization, monetary problems, stress and long walking distances between home and school. These challenges negatively impacts on the academic performance of pregnant learners.

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?

It is a fact that pregnant learners are individuals with different characteristics and, most of the time, pregnant learners lack peace of mind. They suffer from stress and depression. Life Skills teacher # 4 observed that pregnant learners find themselves to

be physically in school, because the policy so allows, but they do lack the zeal, commitment, understanding and the requisite vision and mission.

6 What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant learners?

There are multiple challenges identified by Life Skills teacher # 4 in teaching pregnant learners and or learner-parents. The most severe one is sleeping. It is noticed that pregnant schoolgirls do sleep a lot in classes. They miss a lot, because they might be physically in the classroom, but mentally absent. They hardly concentrate on the subject taught in the classroom. It has been observed that they frequently disturb classes with moving in and out of classrooms to spit and even to vomit, especially when the pregnancy is at an early stage. Absenteeism is one of the other challenges identified. Pregnant learners are absent regularly due to pregnancy related problems. They lack peace of mind. Therefore, most of them prefer to be alone. They tend to regret and have self-pit thinking that people are talking about them. Consequently, they resolve to isolate themselves and withdraw cooperation and collaboration.

It is heart-breaking to conclude that pregnant schoolgirls/young mothers do suffer emotionally.

7 In your capacity as a school counsellor, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?

The respondent has nothing to share.

8 Being the Life skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and fellow learners?

Teacher # 4 said that mostly the fellow learners talk too much about pregnant learners. Pregnant learners feel bad, because they are not treated in a friendly manner.

9 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and or learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic is it for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

It is arguable whether the policy is realistic or not realistic. Its workability depends on the attitudes of the man responsible for pregnancy. In actual fact, asking support is the responsibility of the family of the pregnant learner.

10 You are the policy implementer; state the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.

Teacher # 4 expressed that pregnancy brings about sickness which leads to absenteeism, yet the policy never provides additional educational programmes for both pregnant learners and learner-parents. It is found and noticed how absenteeism contributes to low performance. Therefore, pregnancy has negative impacts on the Continuous Assessment (CA) marks.

11 Does My Future My Choice programme exist in your school?

The programme is under review.

12 Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the MoE does to help pregnant learners to complete their education career?

It is suggested that the MoE should give a time frame to pregnant learners to rest after delivery. When pregnancy occurs, the pregnant learner should go home until delivery. She should at least come back after six months after delivery. Pregnant learners and learner-parents should resume school in January of the next academic year to accumulate the CA marks uninterrupted, particularly in the case of JSC and NSSCO/H.

13 In your opinion, what factors do you think contributing to learner pregnancy in your school and in general?

Pregnancy prevalence is attributed to lack of information among the youth. Learners are not well informed in order to make sensible decisions. The lack of understanding and ignorance lead to frequent unprotected sexual intercourse/coitus. Life Skills teacher # 4 perceived ignorance, inconsistent use of condoms/ femidom and inaccessibility to other contraceptives as contributing factors to pregnancy among learners. Consequently, some pregnant learners tend to illegally abort babies, although there are no statistics available on how many learners abort babies. Life Skills teacher # 4 shed lights that some pregnant learners went the regrettable and fatalistic extra mile to dump babies, although no statistics are available.

14 What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

Life Skills teacher # 4 recommended that the school put up programmes to educate learners on the pros and cons of coitus, such as mistimed pregnancy and the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other deadly Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI).

The following are responses from Life Skills teacher # 5 from GwaMvula SSS, a semi-rural and semi-urban secondary school in Oshigambo Inspection circuit.

1 The policy on pregnancy among learners in schools makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?

Life Skills teacher # 5 described the policy as an appreciated approach. It enables young mothers to study and would be able to assume responsibility of taking care of their babies. However, Life Skills teacher # 4 is of the view that learner-parents should satisfy the following conditions: There should be a care-giver who takes care of the baby; the learner-parent (s) should be physically fit and the family of the learner-parent(s) should be satisfied with the arrangements. In addition, it is expected that the learner-parent (s) should come back to school after a specified time frame, at least, one month after delivery. Contrary, Life Skills teacher # 4 is of the view that the whole term maternity leave is too long. Such long duration of time negatively impacts on the learning process of the learner-parent (s). It has been observed that learner-parent (s) lags behind with their education and school assignments.

2 In your opinion, do you think, a pregnant learners and learner-parents can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?

Speaking from experience, Life Skills teacher # 5 felt that coping depends on individuals. Experience has showed that some pregnant learners and learner-parents perform well, while some withdraw from participating in class activities, absent too much, sleeping too much in classrooms and do not study at all.

Once again, it is noticed that the performance of learner-parents depends on multiple reasons as well. The family background and how well the family is set up, influences the performance of pregnant learners in school. The learner-parent from a supportive family performs well, because she has a peace of mind. She is assured that the baby would be well taken care of. In contrast, learner-parents from poor family backgrounds rarely perform well, because they are stressful, lack sources of income to sustain the babies, they are hopeless for the future. Therefore, some tend to get second or third pregnancy. These consistent pregnancies are attributed to lack of vision, lack of hope and lack of motivation among schoolgirls. However, few of them focus on study and perform well.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Life Skills teacher # 5 shared the sentiment that performance depends on individuals. There are no unique cases. It should be understood, however, that the performance of a pregnant schoolgirl or young mother depends on multiple factors. Some pregnant learners and learner-parents perform below average, because of natural changes taking place in their bodies. Many a times, it is noticed that pregnant learners and learner-parents suffer from depression and stress. Sometimes, in the case of learner-parents, their hormones release milk unexpectedly. This state of affair causes

embarrassment, shame and worries, which in turn, negatively impacts on the performance of the learner-parent.

4 What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Life Skills teacher # 5 shared the sentiment that there are multiple challenges facing pregnant learners such as stigmatization. They lose friends; suffer from isolation, shame, worries and depression. Financially, they lack affordability to sustain and maintain their babies and school needs. Due to the lack of affordability, some learner-parents tend to neglect their babies, or even resort to prostitution or dump those babies. They resort to neglect or dump their babies, because pregnancy was mistimed. HIV/AIDS cannot be ruled out. The pregnant learners and or learner-parents are vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS. Academically, it has been proven and recorded that pregnant learners and or learner-parents do not do better.

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?

In most cases, Life Skills teacher # 5 noticed how badly they behave. Their unwanted behaviours are attributed to the state of shyness, moody, anger and laziness due to pregnancy. It is due to such conditions that most of them withdraw from participating in class activities.

1 What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant learners?

Life Skills teacher # 5 identified multiple challenges he faces in teaching pregnant learners. Culturally, it is taboo to call sexual parts by their scientific names, therefore, the teacher finds it difficult to express and apply scientific terminologies in the teaching process. It is therefore, due to the sensitivity of the topic that the teacher

chooses the appropriate terms to apply in the class. Similarly, pregnant learners do not participate in learning processes, particularly, when the topic is on HIV and teenage pregnancy. Another common challenge is absenteeism among pregnant learners. Absenteeism affects their CA marks adversely. In addition, late coming presents a challenge to the teachers and pregnant learners too. It is found out that some pregnant learners walk long distances from home to school, and due to their conditions, they cannot run. Sometimes, they come late because of visiting hospital for antenatal check-up and other pregnancy related problems. Speaking from a parental perspective, it was found that some parents do not give moral support to their kids to accept the situation and concentrate on studies.

6 In your capacity as the Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?

Pregnant learners do not participate in class activities, because they are ashamed. They are absent from time to time.

7 Being the Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and their fellow learners?

Teacher # 5 informed me that teachers in this school are sensitized on how to deal with pregnant learners. Pregnant learners are treated like any other learners. They are not discriminated against, but they even exempted from participating in some school activities, such as sports and physical education. The teacher feels that pregnant learners have no reason to drop out of school, unless they are shameful of the big tummy.

No one should lose sight that learners are individuals. There are some people that show no respect to pregnant learners.

8 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learner and or learner-parent to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic it is for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

Teacher # 5 is aware of the Policy, however, he expressed his reservations on the Policy which requires schools to intervene in family matters, yet, and the Policy makes no guidelines on how schools should implement such provision. Teacher #5 expressed his concerns on the legal protection, as to who is going to defend the school, in case the father sues the school. The proposal is perceived as having potential for exposing the school to litigation. The teacher, therefore, due to legal implications, teacher # 5 felt that the school can only facilitate in by providing information on how to apply for state maintenance, but not necessarily go to the man responsible for pregnancy. In addition, the teacher noted that there are elements of culture and people from one culture to another that understand and handle things differently. Therefore, it is understood that asking support should rest with the family of the pregnant learner.

9 You are the policy implementer; state the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.

Life Skills teacher # 5 perceived the matter of asking support from the man responsible for pregnancy as being unrealistic. The Policy does not stipulate the national time frame as to when learner-parents should come back to school. The Policy lacks the input of teachers, who are the implementers thereof. Last, yet important still, the Policy deserves review from time to time.

Suggest what the MoE can do to rectify the shortcomings.

Life Skills teacher suggested to the MoE, to be culturally sensitive. People and cultures are different. People within their cultures have their own way of handling issues affecting their cultures and families. The MoE should embark upon a study to find people's views and concerns. The study should target Life Skills teachers. In addition, the MoE should consult and go to the people in the field and hold workshops.

10 Does My Future My Choice exist in this school?

My Future My Choice does not exist. It came to light, however, that the new programme is underway. Life Skills teachers will be trained, once the new programme is finalized.

11 Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the MoE does to help pregnant learners to complete their education career?

Teacher # 5 suggested to the MoE to provide assistance to pregnant learners by exempting them from paying school fees and other school related dues. The MoE should provide food and clothing for babies and young mothers. In addition to material support, the MoE should put more emphasis on sex education and moral education .The MoE should introduce Skills Development Programme for learner-parents, because it has been noticed that most of them never come back to school after delivery.

Day Care Centre: The MoE should introduce Day Care Centres for learner-parents and their babies. In these centres, young mothers should acquire full sense of

responsibility for their babies. They must get involved in motherhood responsibility, which creates bonds between learner-parents and babies.

Inclusive Education: The MoE should provide boarding to all secondary schools in order to apply the policy of inclusive education. The MoE, with line ministries, should allocate land and give tenders to individuals to build hostels. This approach enables the MoE to give education equitably and fairly to all.

Nearby relatives: The idea of relatives who stay closer to schools to accommodate pregnant learners is not functional. To accommodate a person unbudgeted for is a burden to the relatives. It should also be taken into account that most of the community members lack sources of income. This practice should not be considered as a solution to the problem of accommodation for pregnant learners.

12 In your opinion, what factors do you think contribute to pregnancy in your school and in general?

Life Skills teacher # 5 viewed learner pregnancies among schoolgirls as a consequence of multiple factors, including lack of parental guidance. It has been noted that parents do not carry out their social responsibility of upbringing their kids in line with cultural values. Some parents do not talk to their children repeatedly, and never motivate them to be focused and visionary. In this respect, family background and stability in the family plays a role on how the child should behave. The saying goes "The best education starts at home". Most schoolgirls engage in sexual activities at tender age. It is assumed that they practice unsafe sex for reasons known only to them. Ignorance, lack of condoms and inaccessibility of contraceptives contributes to learner pregnancy among schoolgirls. It should be noted that the new concepts of orphanage and child-headed family play a role in the prevalence of

learner pregnancy among schoolgirls. Child-headed family lacks parental supervision and, consequently, they tend to make insensible and destructive decisions.

13 What plans of actions do put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

Information was obtained that the school principal has programmes of addressing learners on life skills issues. The school motivates learners to be focused and prioritize their goals. The school encourages parents through parental meetings to guide their children in life skills matters. The Life Skills teacher talks to learners regularly on the pros and cons of learner pregnancy. Learners are encouraged to make well informed decisions.

The following are responses from the Life Skills teacher # 6 from the alias Ashipembe SS, a rural secondary school in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

- 1 The policy on pregnancy among learners in schools makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?**

Life Skills teacher # 6 appreciated the ministerial approach for allowing pregnant learners to continue with their education. It is understood that the approach promotes equality, equal access to education and it promotes inclusive education.

2 In your opinion, do you think, a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?

Life Skills teacher # 6 thought that coping with dual responsibilities depends on individuals. To cope with dual responsibilities depends on how well the person is motivated. It also depends on how supportive the family is morally, materially and monetarily. It is thought that the more the learner-parent is supported, the more she would likely to cope with dual responsibilities and the better she would perform academically.

3 How do pregnant learners perform academically?

Performance is perceived as influenced by multiple factors. Therefore, it differs from one individual to another. Academic performance depends on how well is pregnant learner motivated, how well she is supported, how well she is goal directed. Some pregnant learners perform well, while others perform dismally.

4 What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?

Life Skills teacher # 6 noticed the lack of concentration in class activities. Pregnant learners many a times sleep in the class. Stress, stigmatization and shyness are observed among pregnant learners. Therefore, in most cases, although not seasonally cold, they put on jerseys to hide their tummies. These challenges are identified as stumbling blocks in their studies.

5 How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?

Life Skills teacher # 6 observed that pregnant learners are individuals. The way they behave depends on individual stereo-types. Some of them behave well and act

politely towards teachers and fellow learners. Some do not give disciplinary problems. However, they show shyness and, as such, are not free.

6 What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant learners?

Life Skills teacher # 6 expressed sentiments that are challenging to teach topics on sexual issues. Life Skills teacher # 6 found how difficult and sensitive it is to teach pregnancy and its consequences, its risk of contracting HIV and other sexual transmitted infections. Sometimes, learners laugh at the pregnant learners in the class. To protect and safeguard the pregnant learners, teachers tend not to share information in depth.

Pregnant learners feel offended, and some resort to drop out of school. Once they drop out of school, teachers feel the guilt and suffer emotionally. The Life Skills teacher # 6 experienced how emotional it is to teach pregnant learners.

7 In your capacity as the Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?

The Life Skills teacher # 6 asserted that she noticed how fellow teachers were not happy with teaching pregnant learners. Teachers are angered and disappointed by low performance of pregnant learners. Teachers shared the sentiment that pregnant learners sleep too much in the class. They lack full concentration in the teaching-learning process. In addition, pregnant learners are absent too much from school due to multiple pregnancies related reasons.

8 Being the Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and their fellow learners?

Life Skills teacher # 6 remarked that treatment depends on individuals' stereo-types. Some teachers are empathetic and treat pregnant learners with high sense of empathy. Most teachers at Ashipembe SS treat pregnant learners in line with empathic neutrality (Patton, 2002). In contrast, some teachers use derogatory statements that hurt pregnant learners.

It has also been learned that some learners join the fray and throw derogatory statements to pregnant learners in class. Learners tend to discourage pregnant learners from participating in class.

9 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How realistic is it for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father the child to support the young mother?

Life Skills teacher # 6 remarked how difficult it is to intervene in family matters. The teacher is of the view that what the school can do is only to facilitate and provide advice. The schools can advise the family of the pregnant learner to approach the man to support the learner-parent and baby.

10 You are the policy implementer; state the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy.

Life Skills teacher # 6 identified the following shortcomings of the Policy on pregnancy. The provision of the Policy that school should intervene into family matters by asking the support from the father of the baby to support learner-parents

meet criticism. The Policy dictates schools to approach the man/father of the child, yet the Policy fails to provide guidelines on how schools should implement such provision.

Life Skills teacher # 6 identified time frame as one of the shortcomings of the policy in implementing it.

Schools are required to take examination question papers to pregnant learners and learner-parents who are in hospital for delivery/labour purposes. Life Skills teacher # 6 shared the sentiment that pregnant learners and or learner-parents cannot concentrate on the examination question papers, while in the maternity ward. In such conditions, the pregnant learner or learner-parent is stressed and sometimes in pain.

Suggest what the MoE should do to rectify these shortcomings.

Life Skills teacher # 6 suggested that the MoE should introduce a grace period for pregnant learners and or learner-parents to write their examination after delivery.

11 Does My Future My Choice exist in this school?

Teacher # 6 has stated that the programme of My Future My Choice has existed in their school, but it is on hold. The programme of My Future My Choice is on hold because it is under review.

12 Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the MoE do to help pregnant learners to complete their education career?

Life Skills teacher # 6 is of the view that the MoE should strengthen sexuality education. Learners should be sensitized on pregnancy and its impacts. They should be sensitized on the dangers of HIV/AIDS.

13 In your opinion, what factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your school and in general?

Life Skills teacher # 6 identified multiple factors contributing to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls and in general. These factors include peer pressure, engaging in sex to show femininity and poverty plays a role in the learner pregnancy among learners. Some schoolgirls engage in sex to address their monetary and material needs.

Orphanage and Vulnerability: Some learners are child-headed family. They live alone without parents to take care of them. Such unfortunate situations expose them to temptations which could lead to teenage pregnancy.

According to teacher # 6, schoolgirls tend to spend time at cuca-shops. It is understood that regular attendance of cuca-shop has direct influence to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls. It has been observed that these schoolgirls consume alcohol excessively. They are thus unable to control their sexual activities and, therefore, end up practicing unsafe and unprotected sex due to alcohol. Teacher # 6 expressed an unfortunate scenario whereby pregnancy comes due to rape.

14 What plans do put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

Life Skills teacher # 6 also explained how the school addresses the plight of teenage pregnancy. The school puts up school based programmes. The topics on teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS enjoy priority. The message is expressed and communicated by means of drama, poems, story-telling and songs. The school enlightens learners on the pros and cons of teenage pregnancy. Their school times and organizes video-shows on teenage pregnancy frequently.

15 Parents' perceptions on the implementation of the Policy.

Presentation and analysis of data

The research presents the research findings on the implementation of the Policy. The perceptions of parents on the implementation of the Policy are presented.

These are the responses of the six selected parents from the three secondary schools with high learner pregnancy trend .The researcher used Snowball sampling technique to locate potential respondents who would nominate and identify other respondents who meet the eligibility criteria and could contribute to this study. Snowball sample is a non-probability sampling technique which is used to locate members of the population. In this study, the researcher used Snowball sampling technique to get access to the potential respondents who could potentially contribute to this study.

The following responses are from parent # 1, a parent from Ombuga SS (alias).

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

At Ombuga SS, Parent # 1 expressed the sentiment that pregnancy has affected her family negatively. Pregnancy brought monetary problems to the family as the mother of the young mother does not have an income. Parent # 1 was obliged to generate money by means of selling marula nuts, brewing "ombike" a local brewed liquor to sell. The pregnancy brought about monetary needs as money was needed for hospital, clothes and other basic needs for the pregnant learner. The parent concluded that pregnancy has negatively affected the family's economy. In addition to monetary effects, pregnancy has emotional effects too.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The parent consulted the school to allow the pregnant learner to continue with her education. The school allowed the pregnant schoolgirl to continue. The pregnant learner remained in school until the time of delivery. The learner-parent resumed school after giving birth.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 1 confessed that she was not aware of the Learner Pregnancy Policy. She only took her own bold initiative to go to school in order to humbly request the school to allow her daughter to continue her education.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

The parent of the 18 years old young mother communicated that despite the fact that she lives below the poverty line, she took on the extra social responsibilities to take care of both the baby and the learner-parent. Parent # 1 paid school fees for her daughter and provided other basic needs. Parent # 1 took care of the baby, while learner-parent was in school.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent #1 attributed learner pregnancy to technological advancements. Technological communication devices, such as cell phones contribute much to learner pregnancies. Parent # 1 explained that with the aid cell phone, the daughter could communicate with her boyfriend in her presence by sending texts messages.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 1 thought that it is a realistic demand and need for schools to intervene. Parent # 1 asserted that families experience monetary difficulties and lack of

accessibility. The families may not have an access to approach the man who impregnated the schoolgirl. On top of that, the school should intervene, because pregnancy disturbs the school progression of the girl.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 1 suggested that schoolgirls should make use of contraceptives or taking family planning.

The following responses come from Parent # 2, a second parent from Ombuga SS.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 2 stated that pregnancy has affected severely the economy of her family. Pregnancy has economic and emotional effects taking into account the money to provide basic needs of the learner-parent and the baby, as the father of the baby was not employed. Another concern was about the daughter whether she will be able to write the national JSC (2012).

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The daughter continued her schooling. Parent # 2 was, however, concerned whether she would be able to write her JSC examination, because the hospital proposed an expected date to be in October 2012.

3 Do you know what the policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 2 is aware of the policy and its benefit. Parent # 2 stated that the policy has benefits to the pregnant learners, because the policy allows pregnant learners to continue their schooling. However, parent # 2 shared her reservations on the weakness of the policy. Parent # 2 asserted that the condition and stage of pregnancy determines the presence of pregnant schoolgirl in school. Therefore, the pregnant learner may write the examination or may not due to the condition of pregnancy which would determine whether she is able or unable to continue attending school during any stage of the pregnancy.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

Parent # 3 of the 17 years old girl in Grade 10 in 2012 said that the family sustained the girl in school, by providing in her basics needs as usual. In addition, the family is proactive to take care of the baby once s/he is born. The family is proactive to send their pregnant daughter to school after delivery.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 2 is of the view that there are multiple factors and temptations contributing to teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls. It is understood that schoolgirls do need money for personal use and materials, such as cell phones. It is, therefore, suspected that schoolgirls commit themselves to unprotected sex to satisfy their partners who in turn provide material support.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 2 states that asking support from the man responsible for pregnancy is not the responsibility of the school. It is the responsibility and duty of the family of the pregnant learner to approach the man. Parent # 2 stated that the family knows the basic needs of the learner- parent. Therefore, the family is the rightful unit to ask such assistance. The Policy is, therefore, unrealistic in this respect.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 2 suggested the effective use of contraceptives. However, she expressed concern that, despite the fact that Ministry of Health and Social Services(MOHS) is obliged to provide contraceptives, in most cases health workers from the MOHSS refuse to give contraceptives and family planning to learners not accompanied by parents. On the other hand, learners are ignorant. They do not want to use available contraceptives such as condoms.

These responses come from parent # 3 from Teevo SS.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 3 expressed that she was shocked to learn that her daughter was pregnant. The shock is mainly attributed to the fact that the daughter is a minor of 17 years in 2012. Pregnancy has badly affected the economy of the family. According to parent # 3 pregnancy has expanded poverty in the family. The family does not have a source of income, yet they have to find money for hospital and other needs. The family takes full responsibility of taking care of the baby. The parent # 3 also said that the father of the child never supports the young mother or baby at all.

2 After you learnt that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The family decided to keep the pregnant daughter at home upon learning that the daughter is pregnant. The rationale is to avoid illegal abortion which was at high prevalence at this school. The family sent the young mother back to school only after delivery.

3 Do you know what the policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant schoolgirls? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

The family was aware of the policy and its stipulation which allows pregnant schoolgirls continue their education.

4 In what way are helping your daughter to complete her education?

The family assumed social responsibility to finance the education of the young mother. Parent # 3 also borrowed money from extended family to provide basic needs to the learner-parent and the baby.

5 What factors do you think contribute to teenage pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 3 attributed teenage pregnancy to the following factors:

- (a) Poverty: It is assumed that schoolgirls do need variety of materials which they cannot afford to buy. They commit to sexual intercourse to earn a living.
- (b) Alcohol abuse: Schoolgirls make it a culture of going to cuca-shops. At cuca-shops, girls are tempted so much and are influenced by boyfriends to consume alcohol. It is understood and suspected that under the influence of alcohol, girls do not control their sexual behaviours.
- (c) Lack of parental guidance: Nowadays, very few parents sit around the fire to transmit oral history and counsel their children. Parents stay at cuca-shop almost every evening.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 3 expressed his opinion that the policy is unrealistic in its approach. The matter of asking support from the man responsible for pregnancy is entirely a family matter. Parent # 3 felt that the school has no role to play at all. This is the responsibility of the family to ask for any kind of assistance, including the payment for virginity "ofuto".

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls?

To prevent or reduce learner pregnancy, Parent # 3 has suggested the implementation of the following strategies:

- (a) Parental guidance should be strengthened; and
- (b) School should provide information on reproductive sexual health and guidance to learners on how to prevent pregnancy.

(c) Provision of health services and information to empower family life on pregnancy prevention, provision of the Contraceptives such-- as condoms or fermidom and family planning in collaboration with MOHSS.

Perceptions of Parent # 4 from Teevo SS on the implementation of the Policy

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 4 from Teevo SS expressed how pregnancy has affected her family. Pregnancy has brought hardship and extra social responsibility. Parent # 4, a single mother, has no source of income, yet she has to find money for hospital, because the pregnant learner has to regularly visit hospital for antenatal check-up and other pregnancy related issues. Pregnancy has psychologically affected the family. The health of the pregnant learner was unstable. Therefore, it was a great concern to the mother.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The pregnant learner continued with her education, but in the process, she felt uncomfortable to remain in school. Consequently, she chose not to continue her schooling, but to dropout school.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 4 never heard about the Policy.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

Parent # 4 stated that the wish to assist the young mother to continue education is there, but there is no money to provide milk and other basic needs for the baby while the mother is at school. The parent has little hope for the future of her young mother.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 4 attributed learner pregnancy to indiscipline among the youth. The youth abuse alcohol at cuca-shops. Learner pregnancy is attributed to temptations and poverty as learners need variety of materials, which they cannot afford to buy. They commit to sexual activities in exchange of materials such as money and cell phones.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

The Parent # 4 felt that the Policy is realistic because the man violated the schooling of the girl. The father of the baby should assume duty to participate actively in parenting and more importantly to support the mother of the baby morally, emotionally and financially.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies

The implementation of measures to prevent and reduce the cases of learner pregnancies requires collective involvement of school (MoE), line ministries such as Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS), Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare , Non-government Organisations (NGOs) and other agencies such as HIV and AIDS Management Unit (HAMU) in providing information on sexual and reproductive health.

On the other hand, parents must actively engage in the prevention process of learner pregnancy. Through joint engagement learners would be made aware of the benefits of abstinence, the appropriate use of contraceptives such as condoms, fermidom and other available contraceptive devices and the risks of engaging in sexual activities.

Perceptions of parent 5 from Sakeus Zako SSS (alias) on the implementation of the Policy

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 5, a grandmother of a 19 years old granddaughter in Grade 12 expressed how she felt upon learning that her granddaughter is pregnant. Pregnancy has affected the grandmother' psychologically. The grandmother worried about the health of the granddaughter taking into account the danger of HIV/AIDS and other STIs. She went as far as taking her granddaughter to Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital for an HIV test. Luckily enough, the results showed negative. The grandmother rationalized why she was worrisome as she has lost four of her own daughters due to HIV/ AIDS.

2 After you learnt that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

According to the grandmother, the granddaughter continued her education uninterruptedly. She gave birth on 01 January before the new academic year commences. She started the new academic year as others did in January. The grandmother takes responsibility of taking care of the baby, while the learner-parent is in school.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant schoolgirls? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 5 has expressed her appreciation for the Policy. The Learner Pregnancy Policy allows pregnant learners and learner-parents to complete their education unlike in the past whereby pregnant learners were requested to leave the school. Parent #5 advised that pregnant learner(s) should make use of the opportunity provided by the MoE to study and make a difference in their lives. However, on the other hand, Parent #5 has expressed her concern on affordability, that many a time parents lack sources of income to maintain learner-parents and their babies. It is also noted that some of the fathers of the babies are not employed or self-employed, and consequently cannot support their babies.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

Parent # 5 paid school fees and other school related fees to enabling learner-parent continues her education. Parent # 5 bought milk and provides other basic needs for the baby. Parent # 5 carries responsibility over both learner-parent and the baby.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent #5 pinned down these to the fact that schoolgirls are interested in sexual activities in exchange of materials such as money and cell phones. The use of alcohol by learners contributes significantly to learner pregnancy.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 5 has appreciated the Policy, but she felt that the provision requiring school to ask support from the man responsible for the pregnancy is practical impossible for the school to ask support from the man/father of the baby. The issue of asking support is the matter of the family of the pregnant learner and or learner-parent in

compliance with the set norms of Oshiwambo culture. The Oshiwambo culture dictates that payment and other supports should be made through traditional leaders only. The traditional leader(s) should mediate and facilitate the payment process.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 5 has suggested the strengthening of parental guidance, but the concern remains that youth of today do not want to be guided. They defy parental teaching; regard it as outdated and out fashioned wisdom.

Perceptions of parent # 6 from Sakeus Zako SS on the implementation of the Policy

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

The pregnancy has negative financial effects on the family as the man who impregnated the schoolgirl is not employed. He could not provide support of any kind, therefore all material and monetary supports come from the family of the pregnant learner.

All material and monetary supports come from the family.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The young mother continued her school until such time she found uncomfortable to remain in school. Thereafter, she dropped out of school and resumed school after giving birth.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 6 had little information about the Policy. However, she is aware of the provision of the Policy which allows pregnant learners and learner-parents to remain in school.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

The family took full social responsibility towards the young mother and baby.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 6 attributed learner pregnancies to ignorance. It is noticed that youth ignore and defy parental guidance. Youth are tempted by variety of temptations including money and material possessions. They spend great deal of time in cuca-shops which expose them to situations of sexual vulnerability. Under such situations, learners could accept gifts from older men in return of engaging in sexual activities.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 6 felt that the school can only intervene by providing information to the pregnant learner on how to get assistance (maintaince) from the father of the baby.

The full responsibility of asking the support remains with the family of the learner-parent in collaboration with the traditional leader(s.)

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 6 understands that learners require parental guidance to concentrate on their studies.

This category consists of responses of the parents from schools with low pregnancy trend in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

Parent 1 from Ekango SS:

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 1 in this category, expressed disappointment because the family hoped their 15 years old daughter to succeed in her schooling and it was very painful. She is even physically immature, and the grandmother is worried whether she will deliver naturally on her own. As a consequence, the grandmother consulted Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital in advance for possible operation. The family wanted and hoped that their daughter would complete her schooling successfully uninterrupted. But due to the fact that the grandmother is a senior citizen, and cannot take care of the baby, the young mother dropped out of school in the hope that she would resume her schooling once the baby grown up.

The family provided counselling service and guidance to the young mother to accommodate herself in the situation she found herself. The family takes social responsibility over the young mother and the baby.

- 2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?**

The learner-parent continued her school whilst the pregnancy was small. In the process, she found uncomfortable to remain in school. She dropped out of school, due to learner pregnancy. It was the wish and hope of parent # 1 that the young mother would continue school once the baby grown up.

- 3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant schoolgirls? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?**

Parent # 1 from Ekango SS did know about the Learner Pregnancy Policy.

- 4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?**

Parent # 1 rendered counselling service to her granddaughter. However, she rendered encouragement not to leave school.

- 5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?**

Parent # 5 attributed learner pregnancy to temptations. Media such as TV, radio, newspapers and other communication devices influence teenagers to engage in sexual intercourse. On the other hand teenagers are ignorant and they disregard cultural norms and parental guidance.

- 6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?**
- 7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?**

The grandmother felt the policy is realistic provided that assistance is sought by the school in consultation and coordination with parents of the pregnant learner. The payments must be demanded by the family to assist the young mother in continuing her education.

- 8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies**

Parent # 1 suggested to the MoE to sensitize schoolgirls through meetings. The schoolgirls should be made aware of the bad consequences of pregnancy.

The perceptions of parent # 2 from Ekango SS on the implementation of the Learner Pregnancy Policy

The data analysis of parent # 2 from Ekango SS is presented below and her reaction indicated on how she perceived the implementation of the Learner Pregnancy Policy in Oshigambo Inspection Circuit.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

According to parent # 2, the grandmother of the learner-parent, pregnancy brought monetary burden to the family. The family assumed new social responsibility of taking care of the learner-parent during pregnancy and after giving birth. Parent # 2 has to look after the baby, while learner-parent is at school.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

Initially, the grade ten learner-parent was not willing to return to school. But, thereafter, she succumbed to the parental advice. Finally she agreed to return to school.

3 Do you know what the policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant schoolgirls? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 2 has the information on the Policy. She thus approached the school to allow the pregnant learner continues her schooling. The grandmother of the young mother took care of the baby solely at her own cost as the father of the baby never supported both the baby and the young mother.

4 In what way are helping your daughter to complete her education?

The grandmother takes care of the baby, and provides the basics to the young mother to go to school.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 2 attributed learner pregnancies to multiple factors including peer pressure, indiscipline and lack of morality among the youth contribute to learner pregnancy. Schoolgirls do not refrain from sexual coitus, and consequently they fall pregnant.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 2 has shared sentiments that schools cannot intervene in private family matters. Demanding the payments and the provision of other related supports are solely the duties and responsibilities of the family of the young mother in accordance of Oshiwambo culture.

It is the duty and responsibility of the family of the young mother to demand payment or support from the man responsible for pregnancy.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls!

The grandmother was of the view that parents should provide guidance to their children. Children should be encouraged to keep themselves away from sexual activities and behave well in accordance with Oshiwambo cultural values.

These are responses of parent # 3 from GwaMvula SS.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 3 has shared the sentiments that pregnancy brought disappointment to the family. Pregnancy came at a wrong time. Parent # 3 described pregnancy a burden to the family, as the man responsible for pregnancy is not employed and does not support the pregnant schoolgirl. Parent # 3 stated that despite the fact that she lacks sources of income, she has to find money for hospital visits and other basics.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

Parent # 3 upon has advised and encouraged the pregnant schoolgirl to continue schooling. Pregnant schoolgirl gives cooperation as she was willing to continue schooling.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

Parent # 3 has little information about the Policy. She asserted that she heard that once a learner falls pregnant; such learner should no longer be expelled from school

as it was the case in the past. The parent is of the view that the Policy is appreciated, because it allows pregnant learners continue their schooling.

However, the parent expressed and shed some light on the weakness of the Policy. She pointed out that when labour time comes, the pregnant learner has to leave school. Consequently, pregnant learner would miss classes and even examinations. Such pregnant learner or learner-parent would leave lagging behind.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

The family carries the social responsibility of paying school fees, school uniforms and other school related materials. Parent # 3 provides regular counselling service to the pregnant learner to accept the situation of pregnancy and to concentrate on the studies.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 3 has associated learner pregnancy to peer pressure among schoolgirls.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent understands the policy is realistic. The school can approach the man responsible for pregnancy in diplomatic and professional manner.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 3 has suggested that the following strategies should be implemented to reduce learner pregnancy:

- (a) Schoolgirls should be encouraged to use contraceptives to avoid becoming pregnant.
- (b) The MoE should expel pregnant learners from school to serve as an example to others
- (c) The MoE should introduce a time frame as to when pregnant learner has to leave school and when to return to school. The Policy should dictate that pregnant learners should leave the school once she falls pregnant and be back to school in three months' time after giving birth.

These responses come from teacher # 4 from GwaMvula SSS.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 4 expressed her dismal disappointment. She expected her daughter to study successfully. However, the pregnancy which occurred in the family did not bring additional financial problems.

2 After you learned that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The pregnant learner continues her schooling uninterruptedly.

3 Do you know what the policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

The mother is aware of the Policy, thus she encouraged her daughter to continue her schooling. The Policy benefits pregnant learners and learner-parents by allowing them to continue with their education. This provision enables them to be able to take care of their babies in future.

4 In what way are helping your daughter to complete her education?

Parent # 4 pays school fees and provides other related basic needs. Parent # takes care of the baby while learner-parent is at school.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 4 has attributed learner pregnancy among learners to ignorance, alcohol abuse and lack of vision.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner- parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 4 stated it frankly that the school has no role to play in asking support from the man responsible for pregnancy. It is unrealistic for the school to demand payment from the father of the baby. The payment and the provision of support should be asked by the family of the pregnant learner in compliance with the principles of Oshiwambo traditional authority. In the culture of Aawambo, payment for virginity and the provision of other related supports are paid through traditional leader(s).

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls!

Parent # 4 has suggested the following strategies to reduce learner pregnancies: Meetings for learners should be organized to provide information on life skills and appropriate use of contraceptives. To educate learners about the benefits of

abstinence and the danger of engaging in sexual activities. Parents should provide guidance to their children at family level around the fire as it has been done in Oshiwambo culture. The youth should appropriately use condoms and other available contraceptives.

In this section the researcher present the analysis of the data collected from parent # 5 from Ashipembe SS. This is how parent # 5 perceived the implementation of the Policy.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

Parent # 5 indicated that pregnancy brought monetary hardship. The family is obliged to find money for hospital visits, maternity clothes and other basics for the pregnant learner during pregnancy and after giving birth.

Monetary hardship was mainly attributed to the fact that the man responsible for the pregnancy did not support and never ever supported the pregnant learner/ learner-parent and the baby. Parent # 5 of the 21 years old daughter, a Grade 10 learner, described this pregnancy as a bad, painful and worrisome event.

2 After you learnt that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?

The family has motivated the pregnant learner to continue school. She took note of the motivation. She has agreed to continue with her education. She had the necessary courage and commitment. Parent # 5 has described this young mother fortunate, because she gave birth one week before August 2012 holiday. On 05 September

2012, she started the school term as per the school calendar. She is regarded fortunate, for the fact that pregnancy never interrupted with her school progressing.

3 Do you know what the Policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant schoolgirls? If yes, what benefit is the policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?

The parent has no idea whatsoever of the Policy.

4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?

The family took extra social responsibility by taking care of the baby, while the learner-parent was in school. The family is responsible for the maintenance and wellbeing of both learner-parent and baby. The family made everything possible to keep the learner-parent in school.

5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?

Parent # 5 has attributed learner pregnancy to technological advancements. Parent # 5 is of the view that advanced technological devices such as cell phone, jukeboxes and TV contribute to learner pregnancy among learners, on the ground that some learners avail themselves in cuca-shops.

It is felt that modernization and technological advancement influence youth and lead them to succumb to multiple temptations.

6 The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 5 does not know whether the provision of the Policy which stipulates that school should ask the man responsible for the pregnancy to financially support the pregnant learner is realistic or not. Parent # 5 has nothing to share on the provision of the Policy.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among schoolgirls!

The family has nothing to suggest.

The following responses come from parent # 6 from Ashipembe SS.

1 How has the pregnancy affected your family?

According to the parent of a Grade 10 pregnant learner has described pregnancy a bad incident. She lamented: "Current generation is ignorant and stubborn".

- 2 After you learnt that your daughter was pregnant, did she continue with her education or after birth, will she continue with her education?**

Parent # 6 of the pregnant learner was not aware of the Policy. Due to the lack of information; Parent # 6 was of the opinion that the young mother would only be able to continue her school after giving birth. Regrettably, the young mother did not listen and consequently she succumbed to the temptations and got a second pregnancy.

- 3 Do you know what the policy of the MoE is regarding pregnant learners? If yes, what benefit is the Policy to the education of the girls who fell pregnant?**

Parent # 6 made it clear that she lacks the knowledge on the Policy, however, the Policy sounds better. She, however, shared a concern and worry that despite the provision of the Policy allowing pregnant learners to come back to school, they are ashamed to return, mingle and be among fellow learners.

- 4 In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?**

The parent stated it clearly that she is ready to take care of the baby once born, while the learner-parent would be in school.

- 5 What factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your circuit?**

Parent # 6 has attributed learner pregnancy to multiple factors including peer pressure, perceptions of 'democracy', ill-founded as they may be, as many schoolgirls claim to have rights to do as they wish. It is stated that alcohol abuse

among youth also contributes to learner pregnancy. It has been observed that learners have also become she-been trotters and imbibe alcohol abnormally, beyond limit and uncontrollably with untold consequences, like unplanned pregnancies and rapes. Ignorance among the youth and lack of discipline contributes as well to learner pregnancy among learners.

6 The Policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners and learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?

7 Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?

Parent # 6 has expressed her feelings and opinions that the Policy is unrealistic. It is not the duty and responsibility of the school to ask the payments or whatsoever support. The payment and assistance should be obtained in accordance of cultural norms of Aawambo.

8 Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize learner pregnancies among learners!

Parent # 6 has suggested that the schoolgirls should refrain from sexual activities. Learners should be made aware of the danger of pregnancy. Learners should be made understand that the end results of learner pregnancy are poverty, diseases and even death (Gutman, 1987). The learners should be encouraged to appropriately use contraceptives to prevent learner pregnancy and STIs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Principals responded to the research questions and interview questions. Participants identified the challenges they experience in implementing the Policy. On the other hand, participants identified the major contributing factors to learner pregnancy and the negative impacts they have on pregnant learners. The findings of this study brought to light the challenges facing pregnant learners who remain in school or learner-parents who have returned to school. These challenges require serious consideration and urgent attention of the Ministry of Education and the line ministries. Therefore, this is the conviction that this study has reached its objectives.

The factors that contribute to learner pregnancy including poverty, peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, lack of sex education and ignorance. Some principals have attributed learner pregnancy to the lack of Christian principles and the influences of media such as TV and radio. Principals identified dropping out of school as the most common consequence of learner pregnancy among schoolgirls. It was mentioned that pregnant learners drop out of school for many reasons, including stigmatization, sickness, stress and diminished hope for future.

It was learned, that most pregnant learners and learner-parents experienced monetary burden to fulfil their basic needs.

According to some participants, these were the reasons that some pregnant learners opted for illegal abortion and baby dumping, while some opted for committing suicide. Principals identified the challenges facing pregnant learners. They experienced how these challenges prevent pregnant learners to perform

academically. The Policy makes provision for the pregnant learners to remain in school. The Policy requires school to treat pregnant learners and learner – parents in accordance of Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution which stipulate that “All persons shall have the right to education” Yet the Policy fails to pay attention on the challenges facing both the school and the pregnant learners. The challenges include absenteeism, late coming, and ineffective usage of time and school dropout. These challenges have negative impacts on the learning process of the pregnant learners. Absenteeism and late coming to school have direct influence on poor academic performance of pregnant learners. Poor academic performance would lead to loss of hope and eventually to school dropout.

Similarly, principals experienced almost the same challenges as pregnant schoolgirls do. Principals also experienced the shortcomings and challenges in implementing the Policy. The Policy obliges schools to allow pregnant learners remain in school, yet the Policy overlooks the health and well-being of the pregnant learners. The Policy makes no provision for the stationing of medical personnel in schools to take care of pregnant learners and to provide medical services. The Policy obliges schools to treat pregnant learners and learner-parents indiscriminately in accordance of the Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution, which stipulates that “All persons shall be equal before the law”. Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution should be read in connection with Article 65 A subsections(d & e) of the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, which provides that “ teacher must respect the dignity and constitutional rights of every learner without prejudice, including the right to education, equality of culture, and the right to privacy; teacher must promote gender equality and refrain from any form of discrimination including on the basis of HIV/AIDS status or health reasons” Yet, the Policy makes no provision on dress code for pregnant schoolgirls.

Principals experienced challenges in the implementation of the Policy. The shortcomings include lack of guidelines on how to implement the Policy with regards to time on task by teachers and pregnant learners and or learner-parents. The presence of pregnant learners and learner-parents being perceived as an encouragement to other learners to follow suit remains a concern, as some learners may want to experience how it feels to have a child of their own.

Principals have suggested the strategies on how the MoE can mitigate these challenges and shortcomings.

Teachers on the other hand, described the policy as an appreciated move. However, teachers identified weaknesses in implementing some provisions of the Policy. Teachers experienced absenteeism among pregnant learners due to pregnancy related problems. The school curriculum determines the number of school activities to be written by learners to accumulate continuous assessment marks (CA), but in most cases pregnant-learners and learner-parents miss out these activities. Missing the written activities would require the teacher to find additional suitable time for pregnant learners to write to accumulate the CA.

Furthermore, disagreement with some of the provisions of the Policy has been experienced by teachers and principals in implementing the Policy. Teachers disagree with the provision of the Policy which requires school to ask support from the man responsible for the pregnancy of pregnant learners. Teachers felt that asking support is the responsibility of the family of the pregnant learner(s). They argue that what school can do in this regards is to provide information to assist pregnant learner(s) to obtain financial support from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family in compliance with Oshiwambo culture. Some principals are also of the

view that it is the duty and responsibility of the family to ask the father(s) of the baby (babies) to support the baby (babies) and young mother(s).

Some teachers felt that it is their duty and responsibility to ask the father(s) of the baby (babies) to support the baby (babies) and the young mother(s).

The common contributing factors to learner pregnancy were also identified.

All parents interviewed applauded the ministerial approach. They were pleased with the provision of the Policy which allows their pregnant girls continue their schooling. However, it was found out that parents differ on the thematic school-family intervention. Few felt it was the duty of the school to ask monetary support from the man responsible for pregnancy/father of the baby. On the other hand, most of them felt that it is not the duty and responsibility of the schools to ask support and other payments. They mentioned that payment of virginity and other support must be asked by the maternal family of the pregnant schoolgirls/young mothers. It has been and should be done in accordance with the traditional principles. However, they argued, the school can assist in this respect in terms of advice.

5.2 Discussion

The discussion is based on four themes:

- (a) School-family intervention;
- (b) Family related matters;
- (c) School related matters; and
- (d) Strengths and weaknesses of the policy.

5.2 (a) School-family Intervention

The findings from participants brought to the fore two camps with divergent schools of thought. The findings from one camp revealed that the policy is realistic in its approach as far as demanding the support from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. Some participants felt it is the duty and responsibility of schools to demand payments from the man responsible for pregnancy /father of the baby.

Participants based their arguments on the fact that the pregnant learners were under the school's custody, nurturing and mentorship, therefore, the school should take actions to protect and assist those pregnant learners and or learner –parents. The provision of protection must be provided in compliance with Article 65 F, subsection (a) of the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 which stipulates that “teacher must take reasonable steps to ensure and protect the safety of learners in schools and hostels”. This is very important, considering that both pregnant learners and learner-parents are limited in their access to resources, especially financial means.

Some participants disagree with the provision of the Policy obliges schools to ask support from the man responsible for the pregnancy or the father of the baby. Some participants described the policy in this respect as being unrealistic. They are of the view that approaching the man responsible for pregnancy is practically impossible.

They argued that schools may not have the particulars of the man concerned. The schools may not know the man responsible for pregnancy/father of the baby. It was; therefore, felt that schools do not have a significant role to play and that this intervention in family matters may exacerbate inter-family and societal conflicts.

The conflict may erupt between the school and the man responsible for pregnancy /father of the baby. It is felt that there are also legal implications involved in the

suggested school-family intervention. It is against this background that participants were concerned about the protection and defence of schools in case the man responsible for pregnancy/father of the baby sues the school.

Despite their differences and disagreements on school-family intervention, all participants agreed on cultural involvement in facilitating material or monetary compensation. It was strongly recommended that the compensation for loss of virginity and other support should be regulated in accordance with Oshiwambo traditional and cultural principles and guidelines.

Most importantly, there was agreement among the participants that the schools can play an advisory role to pregnant learners through their parents, but not necessarily approaching the man responsible for pregnancy/father of the baby.

5.2 (b) Family related matters

This section presents the findings from parents' perspectives. These consist of the three categories of pregnant learners and learner-parents:

- (a) Orphans living with step-mothers;
- (b) Granddaughters living with grand-mothers; and
- (c) Last born girls of senior citizens.

The occurrences of pregnancies among these categories are attributed to the lack of proper and effective parental guidance. One elderly parent was at great pains when explain how difficult it is to control her granddaughter. The responses from parents revealed how badly pregnancies affected their families. It was brought to light that no parent expected her girl(s) to fall pregnant and have baby (babies) while in school.

Therefore, one parent described pregnancy as a shocking experience. Teenage pregnancy badly affects families in many ways. Teenage pregnancies affected families emotionally, as one parent expressed..." I was fed up, because I wanted and expected good results." The parent suffered emotionally and was traumatized because her granddaughter was a minor as she was 15 years old in 2012.

The parent felt she was even physically immature to deliver on her own.

Learner pregnancies certainly and bitterly disappoint parents and it destroys and shatters the hope of families. The occurrence of learner pregnancy in the family caused even more monetary problems and hardship. However, parents expressed appreciation for the provisions of the Policy which stipulate that schools should encourage pregnant learners to remain in schools.

Similarly, the Policy obliges schools to provide information to assist pregnant learners to obtain financial support from the man responsible for pregnancy.

Parents interviewed were elderly people who financially depend on pension grants. The pregnancies of the learners seriously brought about monetary burden upon these families.

Parents assumed social responsibility to keep their pregnant learners and learner-parents in school. Due to the lack of sources of income, apart from pension grants, these grandparents made extra efforts to generate money in order to deal with and handle the teenage pregnancy situation.

One parent even started to brew 'ombike', a local brewed liquor to raise extra income. The parent undertook such initiative to enable the daughter go back to school to complete her schooling.

All parents interviewed agreed that the pregnant learners and learner-parents needed to go back to school to complete their schooling in accordance of the provision of the Policy. They applauded the Policy which allows pregnant learners and learner-parents to continue and / or return to school for re-entry.

However, due to monetary burden to cater for the care-givers, some parents have ordered their pregnant girls or young mothers to take care of their babies until such time the baby has reasonably grown up.

In summary, the findings revealed that no single parent had expected his or her girl to fall pregnant and become learner-parent while still in school. Parents have suggested that in order to reduce learner pregnancy among schoolgirls, girls should endeavour to abstain from sex. Failure thereof or finding it impossible, it is advisable that they use contraceptives. They further felt that parents should intensify parental guidance and supervision. Parents have made suggestions within the Policy framework; therefore their suggestions deserve maximum attention and implementation.

Young mothers who could not afford to complete their schooling suffered from everlasting low status and low self-esteem. It is argued by some that low self-esteem is transferable to their babies/children (Gutman, 1987).

5.2 (c) School related Matters

Participants in this study have appreciated the ministerial move which allows pregnant learners continue their education and / or learner-parents to return to school after giving birth. It is understood that this provision guarantees the Constitutional right to education. The implementation of the provision of the Policy which allows pregnant learner to remain in school is an adherence of the Government of the

Republic of Namibia to the international conventions which guarantee the right to education to close gender gap in education by the year 2015.

Teachers and principals identified significant challenges and shortcomings in implementing the Policy. The identified challenges are absenteeism among pregnant schoolgirls, lack of concentration, school dropout and poor academic performances. Teachers and principals are unanimous that learner pregnancy has negative effects on the reputation of the school that emanate from poor academic performance. In case of Grade 10 and Grade 12 that pregnancies may adversely affect the ranking of the school. The National Planning Commission has found that the challenges in relation to education may hamper the country's ability to achieve all goals set for the Vision 2030 and the goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Similarly, it was found that Namibia has increased access to education, but the country falls short in terms of quality of education and responsiveness to the needs of the labour market (NPC, 2013).

It is, therefore, strongly suggested that the Ministry of Education (MoE) should work towards the establishment of accommodations of pregnant schoolgirls in all non-boarding secondary schools to reduce and eliminate walking distances.

It is a general feeling that the MoE should introduce special comprehensive compensatory teaching and platoon systems for pregnant learners and learner-parents.

On the topic of minimizing learner pregnancies among learners, both teachers and principals were in agreement that the prevention of learner pregnancy and sex education should be strengthened to close gender gap in education. The target for the MDG 2 is to ensure that by the year 2015 children, boys and girls alike are able to

complete primary education. According to National Planning Commission, Namibia has made considerable progress towards achieving universal primary education (UPE), but continues to battle with high repetition and drop out due to various reasons (NPC, 2013).

Participants believe that public education on these topics should be introduced and be taught.

It is understood that public education on sex education will empower parents to talk confidently with their children about abstinence from sexual activities, the use of condoms/femidom and other contraceptives, as well as on how to delay sex till they complete their tertiary education.

The general feeling was that pregnancy has the potential of destroying and damaging the good reputation of the school.

5.2(d) Strengths and weaknesses of the Policy

Participants in this study have appreciated the ministerial approach which allows pregnant learners continue their schooling and learner-parents to come back to school after giving birth.

The Policy allows pregnant schoolgirls continue their schooling, yet the Policy does not consider walking distances.

Similarly, the Policy fails to make provision of accommodation for pregnant learners.

The Policy allows pregnant learners continue schooling, yet it neglects to consider their health. Although pregnancy is generally considered a health risk (MoE, 1998; Ratus, 2006) no provision was made to station medical personnel in schools.

The Policy allows pregnant learners continue schooling, but no provision was made on dress code for pregnant learners.

The responses from some participants revealed how the presence of pregnant learners in schools seems to be regarded by some as an encouragement to other schoolgirls to follow suit.

5.3 Conclusions

The outcome of this study was the fact that the Policy gives wide choice to pregnant learners and learner-parents to continue with their schooling or to take leave of absence. In nutshell, the Policy allows pregnant learners and or learner-parents to complete their schooling.

The Ministry of Education has failed to provide special physical facilities as stipulated by the Education Act; Act 16 of 2001 which requires the provision of physical facilities to entertain learners.

The need exists for the Ministry of Education to provide sick bays to accommodate pregnant learners to reduce their walking distance to and from school. Through the provision of physical facilities and support programs pregnant learners would be assisted to complete their schooling. The Ministry of Education has failed to make provision for dress code of pregnant learners.

It has come to light that the remaining in school or coming back to school of pregnant learners and or learner – parents did not solve all the problems facing stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners) in education.

This study found out that pregnant learners and or learner – parents were eager to complete their schooling, but some families had monetary constraints to buy the basic needs of the pregnant learner(s) and or learner-parent(s) and the baby (ies). Due to monetary constraints some families could not afford to employ someone to

look after the baby/ (ies), while learner-parent is in school, consequently the pregnant learner and or learner-parent has to dropout school. On the other hand, some pregnant learners found it uncomfortable to remain in school. As a result they opted for dropping out of school.

5.4 Recommendations for improvement of the Education Sector Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy

These recommendations are directed to the Ministry of Education to ameliorate the status quo:

- (a) The Ministry of Education should review and amend the shortcomings of the policy on teenage pregnancy among learners in Namibian schools.
- (b) The Ministry of Education should make provision for a dress code for pregnant schoolgirls.
- (c) The Ministry of Education should introduce a platoon system and compensatory academic programmes to cater for pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers.
- (d) The Ministry of Education should work together with the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing and the Ministry of Finance to establish the Day Care Centres and accommodation or sick bays in non-boarding secondary schools to accommodate pregnant schoolgirls to reduce their walking distances to and from school. The Ministry of Education should work together with the Ministry of Health and Social Services to station medical personnel in secondary schools.
- (e) The Ministry of Education should work together with the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Ministry of Finance to introduce special grants for pregnant and young mothers to render financial support towards the educational needs of young mothers and to assist them in upbringing their babies.

- (f) The Ministry of Education should consider young mothers in its budget under the Education Fund to enable young mothers address and overcome monetary burden facing them.

5.5 Recommendations for further studies

Learner pregnancy among schoolgirls in Namibia remains a major concern. Regardless of the efforts made by the Government of Republic of Namibia and non-governmental organizations to prevent teenage pregnancies and to increase the number of learner-parents who complete their education, many schoolgirls still get pregnant.

The Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy provides guidelines for the prevention and management of learner pregnancy. Yet, no significant achievements have been realized. School drop-out among schoolgirls due to teenage pregnancy is on the increase.

Therefore, the effective implementation of the policy Education Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learners Pregnancy to prevent learner pregnancy and to reduce the number of learner pregnancies remain a major concern. It is found out that the following factors that are the low survival of students into secondary education, teenage pregnancy and high level of violence in schools and hostels remain challenges in Namibia. They should be tackled if Namibia wants to achieve universal primary education and equal access to education as required by Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (NPC, 2013).

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10. APPENDICES

10.1 Interview Questions

10.1.1 Parents:

1. How has the pregnancy affected your family?
2. After you learned that your daughter was pregnant did she continue with her education or after birth will she continue with her education?
3. Do you know what are the Policy of the MoE is, regarding pregnant schoolgirls?
4. In what way are you helping your daughter to complete her education?
5. What factors do you think contribute to teenage pregnancy in your circuit?
6. The policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How often does your daughter receive assistance from the man responsible for the pregnancy or his family?
7. Do you think it is realistic for the school to intervene in your private family matters by asking the father of the child to support your young mother and her child?
8. Suggest what should be done to prevent or minimize teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls?

10.1.2 Principals

The Ministry of Education has implemented the policy on Learner Pregnancy among learners in Namibian schools, yet a significant number of school girls continue to fall pregnant year in and year out.

1. (a) What are the factors contributing to learner pregnancy in Oshigambo inspection circuit? What are the consequences of learner pregnancy?
- 1 (b) Your school is one of the least schools with low pregnancy rate in Oshigambo inspection circuit. How did you manage to keep the pregnancy trend at a low level in your school?
- 2 Is there any of the boys or male teachers who impregnated learners in your school? If yes, the Policy makes proposals on how to deal with male students and teachers who make learners pregnant, do you think it is realistic in its approach?
- 3 The Policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant schoolgirls or young mothers to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family. How do you find the policy provision for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?
- 4 Apart from implementing the Policy to accommodate young mothers in schools, what else do you suggest the MoE can do to assist these young mothers?
- 5 What challenges do you face in implementing the Policy in your school?
- 6 Suggest what should be done to mitigate these challenges.
- 7 How do teachers in your school treat pregnant learners and learner-parents?
- 8 Are pregnant learners in your school being discriminated against?
- 9 How do the pregnant learners perform academically?

- 10 In implementing the Policy, what challenges do the pregnant learners face?
- 11 How does learner pregnancy affect the schooling of pregnant learners in your school and in general?
- 12 What impacts does learner pregnancy have on the life of pregnant learners?
- 13 (a) What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school? {For schools with high rate of pregnancy}
- (b) What kind of actions do you implement to keep the trend of pregnancy in your school at a low level? {For schools with low rate of pregnancy}

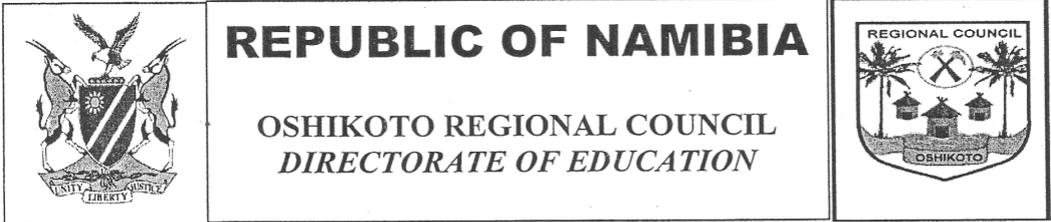
10.1.3 Teachers:

1. The policy on Learner Pregnancy makes provision for pregnant learners to continue with their schooling and to come back to school after delivery. How do you feel about learner-parents coming back to school?
2. In your opinion, do you think, a learner-parent can cope with being a learner and a parent at the same time?
3. How do pregnant learners perform academically?
4. What challenges do you see facing pregnant learners?
5. How do pregnant learners behave towards their teachers and their fellow learners?
6. What challenges do you face in teaching pregnant learners?
7. In your capacity as the Life Skills teacher, what challenges do your fellow teachers face in teaching pregnant learners?
8. Being the Life Skills teacher of this school, how are pregnant learners treated in this school by both teachers and their fellow learners?
9. The Policy makes proposals that schools should help pregnant learners or learner-parents to get assistance from the man responsible for pregnancy or his family.

How realistic it is for the school to intervene in private family matters by asking the father of the child to support the young mother?

10. You are the policy implementer; state the shortcomings you identified in implementing the Policy. Suggest what the Ministry of Education should do to rectify the shortcomings.
11. Does “MY FUTURE MY CHOICE” program exist in your school?
12. Apart from allowing pregnant learners to continue with their schooling, what else can the Ministry of Education do to help pregnant schoolgirls to complete their education career?
13. In your opinion, what factors do you think contribute to learner pregnancy in your school and in general?
14. What plans of actions do you put in place to minimize learner pregnancy in your school?

10.1.4 Permission Letter from Oshikoto Regional Director



Tel (065) 281900
Fax (065) 240315
Enq: Mr Lamek T. Kafidi

Private Bag 2028
ONDANGWA
20 June 2012

Mr Tobias limene
PO Box 346
ONDANGWA

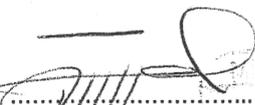
Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA: OSHIGAMBO CIRCUIT, OSHIKOTO REGION

Be informed that permission is duly granted to visit selected schools of your choice in Oshigambo Circuit, Oshikoto Region and carry out your research under the following conditions:

1. You have to make appointments well in advance with the concerned school principals.
2. The exercise must not interfere with the normal school programmes.
3. Any participation will be on a voluntary base.

Yours faithfully


MR LAMEK T. KAFIDI
DIRECTOR
OSHIKOTO REGION

20 JUN 2012
PRIVATE BAG 2028
ONDANGWA
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA