

Interrogating Child Rights Teaching in Bindura Schools – Zimbabwe

Spikelele Mtetwa¹ and Tendai N. R. Gwanzura²

¹Bindura University of Science Education, (BUSE), Bindura, Zimbabwe

²University of Zimbabwe, College of Health Sciences, Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe

E-mail: ¹<spikelelem@gmail.com>, ²<nom.gwan@gmail.com>

KEYWORDS Awareness. Home. School Curriculum. Training

ABSTRACT This paper assessed the extent to which child rights have been incorporated into the school curriculum as a way of curbing child abuse in Mashonaland Central Province. It sought to assess pupils' awareness of their rights at school, home and the community, examine the views of teachers on children's rights and also determine the extent of integration of children's rights in the school, home and community. A survey research design was employed where data was gathered using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study discovered that despite the teaching of children's rights in Social Studies, AIDS education lessons and guidance and counselling sessions, children's rights are not properly mainstreamed into the school curricula. The study also discovered that children's rights are grossly violated in the community and in homes; hence there is need for a comprehensive rights education of children by teachers and the community at large to curb all forms of abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the teaching of children's rights in educational settings has become increasingly prominent as a way to ensure that children participate in issues affecting their well-being. Despite the increasing championing of educating children about their rights as advocated by human rights activists, organizations and other stakeholders, there has been an unprecedented increase in child abuse which warrants the need for teacher and pupil awareness of children's rights (Mutepfa et al. 2014). This awareness is critical in assisting children to develop strategies to identify and report or avoid any violation of their rights. Schools should also act together with parents in educating children about their rights and the idea of educating children about their rights should not be mistaken with observations of miss-educated delinquent pupils.

Hitherto, the position of children in the African society has been typified by deplorable powerlessness and submission to authority. Global waves have brought to question advocating the principle that children are neither parental property nor noble causes, but worthy persons with rights of their own that are independent of their parents or the country (Knutsson 1997; Collins 2017; Jamieson 2017). In its own right,

Zimbabwe has shown flirtations with the commitment to uphold the principles of children's rights and an obligation to provide for those rights (Verhellen 1994; Mutepfa et al. 2014). This is against the backdrop of a cultural setup where it is nearly impossible to define what a child is without making reference to the cultural value system (Mutepfa et al. 2014). In the same vein, the community has considerable authority and influence over parents, meaning in principle that the wider society is able to protect or expose children to abuse, neglect and exploitation (Shumba 2002; Dailey 2016). Hence, the question of child rights is smeared with cultural connotations. It becomes elusive to separate child as a concept from society in general. Embracing child rights education inevitably leads to social reproduction of an illegitimate Zimbabwean child alien to dominant societal ideology (Dailey 2016; Collins 2017; Jamieson 2017). Hence it becomes difficult for child rights education in borrowed robes to become a legitimate child in the Zimbabwean educational system. Societal views on child rights are important as they determine how children are treated and their roles as members of the social order (Quennerstedt 2016). Essentially children spend most of their time in school and receive most of their socialisation in academic and family settings (Pillay 2014). It is

therefore expected that the school be at the forefront of not only educating children but the community as a whole on issues pertaining to children's rights. Growing consensus the world over recognises education on human rights including child rights as essential in contributing to liberated, just and tranquil societies. Regrettably, Zimbabwe has not taken a serious initiative of incorporating children's rights into the school curricular yet education in human rights is in itself a fundamental human right and a responsibility.

In the face of increasing child abuse cases (Mutepe et al. 2014), it becomes benevolent to explore ways in which the society is handling issues of children's rights. Bindura being tormented by high cases of child abuse as such was chosen as the research site. High rates of abuse indicate a non-conformation to the rights that are supposed to bring freedom, peace and fairness in societies. This study thus investigates the state of child rights inclusion in teaching in Bindura.

Literature Review

Philosophical Underpinnings

This paper is guided by a humanitarian philosophical framework that children are young human beings; growing to become adults as such they evidently have a moral status. Children are entitled to be treated like normal human beings. Children should be considered as rights-bearing citizens. What makes children a special case for philosophical consideration is their combination of humanity and their youth, or, more exactly, what is thought to be associated with their youth (Hanna 2014).

Conceptualization

The term Child Rights has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars; hence Covell et al. (2010) assert that the definition of children's rights is a contested terrain. While those in the legal profession restrict the definition to processes involving children in the criminal justice system and granting them representation in civil and political structures in society, for school psychologists, definitions centre on psychological safety, and for social workers definitions revolve around fairness and equal op-

portunities in accessing state resources to ensure their care and protection (Popvoski 2006).

The Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1924) treat children's rights as human rights that are specifically adapted to the child taking into account certain considerations such as, age specific needs, his/her fragility and other specificities (Steiner 2000). Hanna (2014) observes that children's rights should ensure the provision of necessities for the development of the child and provide for the protection and assistance of the children, based on certain considerations such as age and degree of maturity. Observing children's rights also entails protecting the children against all forms of abuse which include but are not limited to sexual abuse and labour exploitation (Quennerstedt 2016).

The definition of children's rights is further complicated by the wide spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social, and political rights. Mangold (2002) thus notes that there are two general types of rights, which are Empowerment and Protection rights. The definite rights of the child that countries are compelled to implement can be divided into three categories or what Hammarberg (1990) has called the three Ps. *Provision rights* which refer to the child's right to be provided with basic social and economic needs such as health care (Article 24), economic welfare (Article 27) and education (Articles 28 and 29). *Protection rights* are the child's right to be protected from detrimental practices such as abuse and neglect (Article 19) and sexual exploitation (Article 34). *Participation rights* refer to the child's right to a voice in matters affecting them (Article 12) and to essential freedoms subject to reasonable restrictions such as freedom of expression (Article 13), freedom of thought and religion (Article 14), as well as freedom of association (Article 15) (Quennerstedt 2010).

Ultimately, it is important to emphasize that not only do children have basic rights but they also have the right to know that they have rights (Howe and Covell 2010). Under (Article 29), education is to be directed to the development of respect for human rights and under (Article 42), children (as well as adults) are to be made aware of their Convention rights. Under (Articles 29, 42), children have the right to know their rights and to develop respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. This third track of education is the one that points to the need for chil-

dren's rights education in schools which is the main focus of this paper (Howe and Covell 2010).

Negative and Positive Rights

Children's rights may be grouped into negative and positive rights. Negative, or non-interference rights, prevent the adults from violating children's autonomy, while positive, or integrative rights, impose a duty on the adults to provide for the protection of children (Ezer 2001). Negative rights are civil and political rights such as freedom of speech and right to identity, these rights mainly empower an individual. Positive rights include right to food, housing, public education and employment, these rights though empowering an individual also empower societies. The philosophical idea of positive and negative rights is cultural specific. In western countries where people are individualistic in nature they put more emphasis on negative rights which create distance around individuals. Africa and Asian countries emphasize positive rights since there is more collectivism and thus parents want to stay connected with their children. This has raised philosophical consideration of what kind of rights children have if they have any rights at all.

Indeed the idea of children as rights holders has been subject to different kinds of philosophical criticisms. John Stuart Mill in his conception of liberty argued that children should not be given the right to freedom but should be protected from their own actions (Ezer 2001). John Locke on the other hand argues that children are not rational individuals who can freely give their consent to civil government; children cannot be party to the social contract and/or rights-holding citizens (Ezer 2001). Thus, from a philosophical point of view, children should be given positive rights only. Negative rights on the other hand imply that fully rational, autonomous individuals can exercise free choice (Ezer 2001).

Challenges

Despite ratification of the United Nations Convention on Child Rights by most countries the world over, a lot of children across the globe continue to suffer from serious problems and infringement of their rights such as poverty, violence, inadequate access to healthcare and education (Mutepfa et al. 2014; Jamieson 2017).

Although the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has called for countries to establish effective programmes of children's rights education in schools, little has been done and there is little evidence of public knowledge that the Convention exists (Steiner 2000; Collins 2017). In addition, despite the fact that some African countries have set the precedent for children's rights to be respected and implemented across the African continent, little is known about the actual advancement of children's rights within sub-Saharan Africa (Covell et al. 2010). In this paper the word pupil and child shall be used interchangeably to mean the same thing, hence this paper sought to investigate children's levels of awareness on rights that protect them from any form of ill-treatment and disrespect among other things. Since children spend most of their time at school during term time, schools become central to the teaching of child rights education.

The advancement of child rights is hindered by many different aspects in Africa. One of the major challenges to the promotion of children's rights in African schools and communities is the lack of democracy plus a negative attitude towards child rights education (Mutepfa et al. 2014; Collins 2017). In South Africa, despite the existence of a well-crafted policy on children's rights, 35.4 percent of children encounter sexual abuse before adulthood and most of the children are exposed to other forms of abuse that are culturally related (Jamieson 2017). Thus, Dailey (2016) views culture as inimical to the observation of children's rights in many countries across the globe.

In Southern African countries, the promotion and observation of child rights is highly dependent on national economic stability. Mutepfa et al.'s (2014) study in Zimbabwe confirms this, where it was discovered that children's rights are more respected in affluent communities than in rural and poor ones. In this vein, Mutepfa et al. (2014) state that in Zimbabwe children's rights infringement is rife in rural areas due to poverty and cultural influence. Similarly, Jamieson's (2017) study in South Africa revealed that children in residential care participated less in issues affecting them and children from single parent families and orphans especially those in poor contexts were vulnerable to exploitation. Collins (2017) and Dailey (2016), thus comment that child protection is rhetoric rather than practical since the promotion of child rights and child

participation issues is marred by limited opportunities, age and gender discrimination and a token fashion appreciation of children's rights by responsible authorities. In addition, the migration of many adults to other countries has consequently resulted in an increase in cases of child abuse due to lack of parental guidance, supervision and care (Dailey 2016). Thus child rights realization in Africa is a tall order.

Awareness

Literature has also demonstrated that children's awareness of their rights is generally low in many developing countries due to a number of reasons. For instance, child rights teaching in developing countries is generally low due to low levels of knowledge among teachers about children's rights as is the case with India (Sathiyaraj and Jayaraman 2013). As a result, there will be very low levels of child rights awareness (Kiprotich and Ong'ondo 2014). Beliefs that children are not capable of making independent decisions, hence are never to be taken seriously (Mutepfa et al. 2014) and professionals who are supposed to work with children in advancing their rights but they themselves come from cultures that believe that children should defer authority to parents (Jamieson 2017). Where children's rights are perceived as a threat to teacher and parent authority, teachers together with parents are reluctant to make children aware of their rights (Howe and Covell 2010; Mutepfa et al. 2014). In addition, Mutepfa et al. (2014) state that in some cases, the children themselves, especially those in rural contexts do not take the initiative to be aware of their rights. This is in contrast to those in urban areas who are exposed to various information platforms and hence access rights information from the internet, television and radio easily (Mutepfa et al. 2014).

Gap

The unprecedented increase in child abuse cases both worldwide and at national level has led many scholars to question the relevance and existence of the framework on children's rights in Zimbabwe (Mutepfa et al. 2014). It is yet to be seen that cases of child abuse may be eradicated if all stakeholders are equipped with full knowledge on children's rights these stakeholders include children themselves, schools and the community at large. The paper advances that children are young human beings growing to be

adults and therefore an awareness of their rights in the face of growing cases of abuse will help them defend their rights and those of others. This underlines the power of the idea of rights. Ultimately teachers also emerge from the community so child rights teaching is also informed by the things they see, they also function in a particular social context and hence have a responsibility to make society better.

Research Aim

This paper interrogated child rights teaching in one of Zimbabwe's provincial capitals, Bindura with the aim of establishing the nature and extent of child rights integration into the school curriculum in the face of the growing child rights violations countrywide.

Objectives

The paper sought to:

- a) Assess the level of pupils' awareness of their rights at school, home and the community.
- b) Examine the views of teachers on children's rights.
- c) Assess the extent of integration of children's rights in the school, home and community.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A survey research design was used in this study in order to enable the researcher to collect data from a large pool of respondents and at the same time capture a broad range of opinions on child rights teaching in Bindura. The study sample comprised of four schools which were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was most appropriate for this study because it enabled the researcher to locate schools where child abuse was prevalent. The choice of Bindura as the area of research focus was inspired by the reported increase in child abuse cases there. This enabled the researcher to choose a contextually relevant area to collect the required information concerning child rights. The Ministry of Education specifically referred the researcher to the particular schools, as child abuse reports from that area have aroused the interest of regional education administrators.

Stratified random sampling was also used to locate study respondents. The strata were made in line with the four schools in the sampling frame. Two primary schools and two secondary schools were included in the research and these became the sub-groups in the research. In each school, pupils were stratified into equal groups of males and females and the same was done for teachers. A random sample was done proportionally from the different sub-groups. Stratified sampling technique was justified by feasibility factors considering that the schools were reliably positioned to be strata in their own right and gender proved to be another salient stratifying factor in the sample. This enabled to get proportional responses from all schools and both genders and access rare extremes of the teachers and pupils population. A total of 12 teachers and 30 pupils were sampled respectively from each of the four schools. Therefore, the targeted research participants were a total of 48 teachers and 120 pupils.

Instruments

The data for this study were collected using two sets of questionnaires, one set administered to pupils and one set administered to teachers. Once the pupils completed the questionnaires they were collected by the researchers on the same day. The teachers' questionnaire was given to one senior teacher at each school who then distributed to fellow members. The researcher collected the questionnaires after a week. Prior to the administration of the survey, the researcher gave an introductory seminar on child rights, which included the purpose of the research, the confidential and anonymous nature of the data and instructions for completing the questionnaires. This procedure was done during the visit to all the four schools participating in the study. Using the same questionnaires, the researcher also interviewed 9 pupils and 4 teachers in order to have deeper understanding of the issues under study.

Measures

Data collected was quantitatively analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20 (SPSS v20). The Chi-Square test was also used to test teachers and pupils responses. Furthermore, data was qualitatively analysed using content analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought and was granted permission by the school principals of the selected primary and high schools in Bindura. The participants were informed on the purpose of the research and possible risks. By so doing the ethic of informed consent was adhered to. Participation in the research was voluntary; the participants had the discretion to withdraw from the research. More so, confidentiality was respected as the questionnaires were numerically identified and had no names of the respondents. Participants in qualitative interviews were also asked not to mention their real names so as to protect them.

Reliability and Validity

The questions asked in the questionnaire were clearly articulated with no ambiguities so as to observe content validity. Zero order level of competence was initiated to ensure that the questionnaires could be understandable to the least educated reader for both the teachers and the school children. A pretest was done with 4 teachers and 9 pupils to ensure that this level had been reached.

Limitations

The results are valid in environments with the same setting as the one that has been researched. In addition, it was going to be appropriate to probe the teachers further on the nature and depth of child rights training they received at teacher training using for example in-depth interviews. However, this could not be done as teachers preferred the questionnaire. Future studies can carry on pursuing such by way of engaging different methodologies and assuming a nationwide scope. Positively, this study strengthens established literature on child rights in that it emphasises the need for a rights based education as confirmed by teachers engendering the teaching of rights in various topics.

RESULTS

Response Rate

Out of a total of 48 questionnaires distributed to teachers, 38 questionnaires were complet-

ed and returned, which represented a response rate of seventy-nine percent and for the pupils out of a total of 120 distributed questionnaires, 98 were successfully completed and returned by pupils. Data analysis proceeded since the response rate was acceptable since Fleiss et al. (2013) state that a response rate which is above sixty percent is acceptable. Forty-nine questionnaires were successfully completed by primary school pupils and forty-nine questionnaires were also successfully completed by pupils from the two secondary schools chosen.

Child Rights Knowledge

Out of 98 pupils, sixty-one percent revealed that they have heard on child rights and they have heard about child rights between the years 2013 and 2014 as shown in Table 1. However 13.4 percent did not indicate when they first heard about child rights issues. Thirty-nine percent of the pupils indicated that they have heard about child rights between the years 2003-2012. The statistics shows an accelerated interest in child rights education from 2010 upwards as the country is trying to keep abreast with global trends on child rights issues. Probably the increasing pupils' awareness of child rights issues could be due to exposure to the internet and various media such as televisions and radios where such information is readily available. Most pupils suggested that that they are acquiring child rights knowledge from teachers, school public awareness lectures and workshops.

Children were asked about when they heard about child rights. All children had heard about children's rights and sixty-one percent of them had heard it between 2013 and 2014. Table 1 illustrates this and significant number of them that is, 13.4 percent did not indicate anything. The high number of children who heard about

Table 1: When did you hear about child rights?

<i>Year</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
2003	1	1.0
2004	1	1.0
2007	1	1.0
2008	4	4.1
2009	3	3.1
2010	8	8.2
2011	4	4.1
2012	2	2.1
2013	25	25.8
2014	33	36.0
Total	84	86.6
No response	13	13.4
Total	97	100

their rights between 2013 and 2014 could have been influenced by the increase in awareness campaigns and the availability of child rights information on various media such as the internet, television and the radio which are increasingly becoming available to children.

Pupils' Child Rights Awareness

Children in primary schools and secondary schools are mostly aware of their right to education, with 61.2 percent and sixty-seven percent respectively responding in the affirmative as shown in Table 2. This revealed that the children are mostly aware of the rights that pertain to their learning. This could mean that teachers ensure that children get informed that education is a right not a privilege to them.

Primary school pupils' knowledge of survival or provision rights (such as right to health; 33%, shelter; 43%, clean water; 10% and clothing; 16%) is less than fifty percent and this is also true for secondary school pupils as shown in Table 2. For participation rights, awareness is evidently low in both primary as well as high school pupils. Very few children are aware of the

Table 2: Distribution of type of rights known by primary and secondary school pupils

<i>Item</i>	<i>Primary</i>		<i>Secondary</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Education	30	61.2	33	67.3
Clean water	5	10.2	8	16.3
Clothes	8	16.3	20	41
Health	16	33	11	22.4
Shelter	21	43	23	47
Freedom	4	8.2	6	12.2
Identity	5	10.2	8	16.3

right to identity and freedom with less than twenty percent responding in the affirmative as shown in Table 2. Although the right to an identity was mentioned by a small percentage, a predominant factor that emerged amongst most teachers and pupils was that pupils who didn't have birth certificates were denied the right to an identity leading them to have no confidence in what they do. The reason for the low rating of awareness of identity as a right could be that parents do not make an effort to educate children about this and culture could be the influencing factor here.

Teacher Training and Child Rights

Teacher training seems to impart knowledge of child rights in teachers for both primary and secondary school teachers. This is attested to by the high rates of 16 out of 19 primary school teachers (84%) and 15 out of nineteen secondary school teachers (80%) who agreed that child rights teaching was an essential component of their training. This could mean that child rights are prioritized by teacher training institutions hence the training of teachers.

Table 3 highlights that although teachers were trained on children's rights; the training was mainly for the survival and development rights which relate to health, education and food as represented by the high frequencies of seventy-six percent for education, thirty-seven percent for health and thirty-seven percent for food.

Table 3: Essential elements of children's rights taught at teacher training

<i>Rights of children</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Education	29	76
Health	14	37
Shelter	5	13.2
Food	12	32
Clothing	4	10.5
Identity	2	5.3

Table 4: Were children's rights an essential component of your teacher training according to type of school

<i>School type</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Primary	16	84	3	16
Secondary	15	80	3	17

Interviewed teachers stated that the training they received in survival and development rights is very relevant in that these are the rights which contribute to a child's well-being resulting in the child succeeding in his or her academic studies. The mode of training is vital, as in the conventions it must be a practical training that can then help educate the pupils as well. Therefore teacher education does not mean children are being fully taught of their rights but it does show that there is a lower chance of children's rights being infringed as teachers are aware of them.

Table 5 shows that teacher training on children's rights has an association with whether a teacher is primary or secondary trained, Chi-square (1) = 4.500, $p = 0.034$ at ninety-five percent confidence level. Results provide sufficient evidence that at five percent significant level, primary school teachers are more trained in children's rights than secondary school teachers. Primary school trained teachers incorporate children's rights into the school curriculum more than their secondary counterparts presumably because of the vulnerability of the primary school pupils. Descriptive statistics show that all primary teachers were trained on children's rights compared to seventy-eight percent of the secondary school teachers. This shows the difference in prioritisation of child rights in primary and secondary school.

Table 5 also shows that children are being taught their rights but there is ambiguity on the specific rights taught and the methods being used to teach them. The aspects not shown are however vital to the education of pupils.

Observing Child Rights in Schools, Homes and Communities

There are variations between teachers and pupils responses on observing and reporting of child rights as shown in Table 6. In terms of reporting incidents of rights infringement, results indicate that only in schools are the re-

Table 5: Association between school type and incorporation of children's rights into the school curriculum

<i>School type</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Primary	18	100	0	0
Secondary	14	78	3	22
Total	32	89	6	11
<i>Test statistic</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	
Pearson Chi-square	4.500	1	0.034	

Table 6: Reporting and observation of children's rights at home, school and community levels

<i>Category</i>	<i>Community</i>		<i>Homes</i>		<i>Schools</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Reported (Teachers)	7	18	4	11	27	72
Observed (Children)	15	40	35	92.1	35	92.1

Chi-square (2) = 6.345, 0.022 at 5% significant level

ports made but not much is done in this regard at home and community level. The demographics are probably influenced by the training received and the experience teachers have gained in dealing with children. In schools, teachers are aware of child rights and are closely monitored therefore there are higher incidents of both reporting and observing. Teachers revealed that reporting of incidents of child abuse was highest in schools with seventy-one percent attesting to this perception. Eighteen percent of teachers (7) said there is reporting of rights infringements in communities and only eleven percent (4) said there is reporting in homes. Therefore, abuse of children is most likely to go unpunished at home and community level as there are less avenues of monitoring.

However, in terms of observing rights, ninety-two percent of pupils indicated that the home and school were observing the rights of children whilst in the community only thirty-nine percent said it does. A significant difference was noted between reporting and observing of abuse cases and providing sufficient evidence at five percent significance level that the reporting and observation levels were different at community, school and home. Chi-square (2) = 6.345, 0.022. In terms of observing and reporting child rights violations, both teachers and pupils concurred that the schools were observing and reporting children's rights. However, a significant discrepancy was noted between teachers' and pupils'

responses which indicated teachers saying that child rights are least observed in the homes whilst pupils stated that their rights are least observed in the community as shown in Table 6. This reveals conflict of interests and priorities between the teachers and the children.

Most girls remarked that, elders looked down upon their rights because of biased cultural beliefs and patriarchy. Pupils living with both parents confirmed that their rights were being observed in the home with a response rate of fifty-eight percent noting that their rights were observed to a large extent as their parents were providing enough of their needs. The same applied to those living with single mothers.

For those living with their guardians a staggering seventy-four percent said their rights were not observed at all whilst twelve percent and fourteen percent said their rights were observed to a large extent and to some extent respectively. As such there is discrepancy between parental child rights observance and guardians which can be attributed to attachment. A total of fifty-five percent of children say their rights are being observed to a large extent whilst ten percent said to some extent rights were observed. An average of thirty-five percent pupils living with parents or guardians said their rights were not being observed at all. This is a contradiction to ninety-two percent who had said their rights are generally observed at home.

Teacher's and Children's Understanding of Child Rights

The majority of primary school children showed lack of understanding as to what child rights meant and so was the case with secondary school children. When asked about her understanding of child rights, one girl stated that, "*Aaah handiaziwe nekuti handisati ndambonzwa nezvawo.*" (Aah I don't know them because I have never heard about them). The school children only proved to be aware of child rights and lagged on understanding them showing that awareness of rights did not translate to understanding them. In stark contrast, the teachers displayed evidence of adequate training on the topic as the majority understood what children's rights were and what they entailed. As such it was evident that the teachers are the defaulting part as they are not being vigilant in imparting child rights education to children because of their self-interests as remarked by one teacher who said, "*Nyaya yema child rights inonetsa kudzidzisa vana nezvayo because once van-goaziva, tatopinda dambudziko rekushaya discipline.*" (Once these children get to know of their rights, we get in trouble because they become in-disciplined) (Table 7).

Incorporation of Children's Rights in School Curriculum

There is no formal inclusion of child rights teaching in the school curricular as it was noted that pupils were taught about child rights as part of a topic in a Social Studies subject in primary schools. In secondary schools child rights is taught as a topic in Guidance and Counselling classes or AIDS awareness lectures. Hence, there appears to be fragmentary, partial and inconsistent inclusion of the child rights issues in children's curriculum. This serves as a great disservice to the school children in as far as child rights awareness and understanding is concerned.

Teachers argued that child abuse is an international problem hence there is need to include the teaching of child rights in the school curriculum. This helps to keep children well informed, which will help them to make appropriate decisions when at home, school or in the community. The extent of child rights inclusion in the school curriculum is therefore not clear and this explains school pupils little understanding of child rights in totality.

Children said learning about children's rights at school would sensitise them on abuse, enlighten them on measures they can take in the event of abuse and make them informed citizens to spread child rights issues in their homes and the community at large. The school children also remarked that understanding of child rights in general will make them responsible citizens who respect other people's rights. Other pupils said the school environment gives children room to ask questions and teachers are reportedly less frightening than the police as noted by one secondary school boy who said, "*Mateacher edu ari a bit friendly than vabereki vedu kana mapurisa saka kana ndiine mubvunzo, ndinotobvunza mateachers than vabereki..... mdara wangu anotyisa.*" (Our teachers are friendlier than our parents and the police), so if I have a question, I ask my teachers rather than my parents.....my father is scary). Teachers are more acceptable and accessible to the children than the police who are perceived as objects of fear by children. All children felt the school curriculum should include children's rights. Girls in particular emphasised the need for child rights knowledge to empower them, reduce unwanted pregnancies and school dropping.

Possible Ways of Protecting Children

Teachers and pupils also came up with various recommendations on ways to improve the ways in which children's rights are upheld. These are highlighted below:

Table 7: Comparison of children living without parents and with parents in observing children's rights

Pupil guardian status	Not at all		Some extent		To a large extent		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
With parents	30	31	11	11.0	57	58.0	98	100
Without parents	72	74	12	12.0	14	14.0	98	100

Chi-square (2) = 4.830, p 0.032 at 5% significant level

Home

Parents or guardians should be involved in educating children about their rights and encourage them to report such cases of abuse to elders they trust. Parents or guardians should also create productive relationships with their children's teachers so they cooperate in assessing as well as safe guarding the wellbeing of the children. At one primary school teachers identified poverty as very serious in the farm compounds resulting in parents failing to provide basic needs for their children thus making them vulnerable to child rights violations. Thus, a correlation between child rights violation and poverty is discernible.

Schools

School rules and regulations as well as codes of conduct should promote and mirror children's rights. Teachers should teach about children's rights and child abuse and the need to report such cases so that perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Community

Workshops should be held in churches and communities as well as awareness campaigns about children's rights especially in rural areas. Village heads need to be educated about children's rights as most of them make controversial decisions when presiding over cases involving child abuse. The initiatives should be in sync or at least show a contextual and cultural appreciation of the environmental milieu. Village heads and chiefs should be empowered by an Act of parliament to impose stiffer penalties on people who violate children's rights and handing over the cases to the police.

DISCUSSION

Children's participation in issues affecting them is progressively rising to prominence as noted by Viviers and Lombard (2012), Mutepfa et al. (2014) and Dailey (2016). In the same vein, this study discovered a progressive improvement in terms of child rights awareness where in Bindura, sixty-one percent of the pupils acquired general knowledge about child rights between the period 2013 and 2014, compared with Kipro-

tich and Ong'ondo (2014), only twenty-four percent who had gained knowledge about child rights during the 2003-2012 period. This increase in the number of children who have gained knowledge on child rights may be positively correlated to an increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse (as noted in Mutepfa et al.'s 2014 study in Zimbabwe). This implies that more cases of child abuse are now being reported as children are able to recognise any infringements to their rights. However, the media stills lags behind in terms of information dissemination on child rights related issues and this is a worrisome trend considering that it is the major channel through which the community at large acquires information. The lag in the media has left the communities being havens of unreported child rights violation. This tallies well with Viviers and Lombard's (2014) assertion that communities downplay child rights issues rather than prioritizing children's obligations. However, there is need to enhance the confidence of children through emphasis on not only children's obligations, but rights as well. Children need to be respected as well, a view which Dailey (2016) asserted.

The study also established a disinterest from teachers in teaching a full child rights package. This corroborated with Mutepfa et al.'s (2014) assertion that schools wilfully choose not to emphasize on children's rights for fear of failure to manage and control them. As such, most pupils indicated a lack of understanding of what child rights encompassed as shown in Table 2. The right to education and shelter were the most acknowledged in both primary and secondary school. This revealed uniformity in teacher training, ideology and conduct in both settings. It is salient to acknowledge that pupils were more enlightened to provision *and development rights*, such as the right to education, access to shelter, food and fair treatment in schools. However, the same cannot be said for participation rights (Covell et al. 2010) such as right to identity and freedom which showed low consideration. This is also true in terms of knowledge of negative rights as primary school pupils showed a five percent awareness of the right to freedom compared to a sixty-two percent awareness of the right to education.

Covell et al. (2010) mentioned that full education of rights is seen by pupils showing an adult like understanding of the nature of child

rights. This is not the case with the pupils in the current study. Despite children's understanding of positive rights, primary school children lack full understanding of the meaning of child rights whereas secondary school pupils showed vague understanding of the same rights. Devoted education is therefore lacking and should be rectified in order to curb abuse reflecting that children in this study lacked the agency demonstrated by those in Mutepfa et al.'s (2014) study, who devised their own means of participating in making decisions affecting them. Thus when children are helped to be knowledgeable and aware of their rights, they grow up in society with the ability to protect and respect their rights and those of others (Ezer 2001; Collins 2017).

Table 4 shows that eighty-four percent of teachers were trained on children's rights and this is very important since it shows that pupils are learning about their rights from teachers who are knowledgeable. This is critical since child rights teaching requires qualified professionals who know how to disseminate such sensitive information effectively without causing negative effects such as delinquency in children. However, how teachers are taught and their level of training is not assessed but the results show that they are mainly taught about children's provision and development rights. Both teachers and pupils identified the same rights in the current study with almost similar percentages of recognition as seen in Table 2. This indicates that these are the same rights that pupils are learning and that children are being taught to some extent. The importance of teacher training is emphasized by one of the teachers in the study who pointed that the teaching of child rights should be done with great caution since it can send the wrong message to children as noted also in Dailey's (2016) study who argues that some analysts believe that educating children about their rights can subvert parental authority. The teaching of child rights thus has to incorporate the teaching of responsibilities that come with rights. This reservation however may lead to some rights such as the right to freedom not being taught to pupils resulting in them not being fully educated. Considering the above mentioned fact, in Bindura, child rights teaching seem to be a rugged terrain fraught with malleability in execution so as not to frustrate the self-interests of the teachers and authorities. Rights are only taught to the best extent possible so as

not to infringe on the teaching process. Teachers can use other pedagogical ways to engender child rights even in the absence of a full curriculum. This shows that the rights that are being taught in schools in Bindura are cosmetic and superficial, tailored in a way that is less threatening to the hegemony and control of teachers on the school life of pupils.

Collins (2017) notes that rights come with responsibilities and it is important that teachers enlighten the children on this, failure of which would have devastating consequences. This was demonstrated by the fact that after the study was conducted; students revolted against their teachers accusing them of abusing their rights, thereby refusing corporal punishment and refusing to do their homework. The problem escalated to the extent that this researcher was called back to the school to explain to the students clearly that rights also entail responsibilities. This clearly endorsed the argument that the teaching of child rights should be done with absolute caution since it can result in unnecessary denial of responsibilities by children.

Table 2 showed that primary schools have incorporated child rights learning to a larger extent than secondary schools. The researcher found that primary schools had included rights in their social studies topic whilst in secondary schools rights training was included as part of a guidance and counselling class (Ntinda et al. 2014). This cannot be viewed as incorporation into the school curriculum because to maintain consistency with the Convention on children's rights, education should not simply be added to a particular classroom or subject. Rather, it should be incorporated into the curricula across subjects and grade levels and provide the core of school mission statements, behaviour codes, and school policies and practices (Howe and Covell 2007). There is therefore great need for policy makers to ensure that Child rights become all-encompassing in schools. As of late in Bindura, child rights education though acknowledged as necessary is often marginalised.

The study also showed that child rights are observed more in school as compared to communities and homes. This is in unison with the study by Radford et al. (2010) where they discovered that the home is a place where harm to children is greatest. Statistically about ninety-two percent of school pupils indicated that child rights were being observed at school and this

also corroborates with the seventy-two percent of teachers who claimed that child rights are being observed at school as compared to homes and the community at large. The effective implementation in schools can be attributed to the level of understanding that teachers have about child rights.

The study also demonstrated that homes and communities are sites where children's rights are grossly violated. Issues of child rights are not accepted easily by community members and elders because of pre-existing cultural structures which regard children as an investment. Traditionally, children's places in Africa exist at the bottom of the family hierarchy and thus, parents are hesitant to grant children their rights (in the contemporary sense of the word) since they believe that children will neglect their duties. As noted by some of the girls in the current study, elders were accused of looking down upon the rights of girls because of their beliefs. These beliefs have resulted in girls suffering most abuse in the community and at home. This is corroborated by Mutepefa et al. (2014) who state that the number of rape cases and child marriages are experienced more by the girl than the boy child in Zimbabwe and parents and elders being the major culprits. The issue of child rights is not prioritized in many societies as noted by Dailey (2016) who notes that children are not treated as adults as they are viewed as not capable of leading independent lives and making autonomous decisions. Hence although rights can be taught, there is always a cultural veil that implicates the full appreciation of child rights. In addition, the concept of rights in the study area was always viewed using a cultural lens especially among the teachers. As such, rights are much a legal precept as they are a societal obligation.

The study also established that eleven percent of teachers said rights infringement could be reported at home whilst ninety-two percent of children said rights are likely to be observed at home. This may imply that teachers are fully aware of the situations at home or that the pupils are not keen to be open about the circumstances at home. The latter is demonstrated by the fact that when pupils were further asked to what extent their rights were observed only fifty-eight percent said their rights were being observed in the home to a large extent or some extent. These statistics are contradictory and prone to splintered interpretations. For example,

one can question the efficacy of the questionnaire in gathering information that involves social aspects and may be prescribe interviews as a way of triangulating the thoughts of the respondents. Alternatively, it can be stated that the pupils were unable to tell when their rights were being observed or when they were not. As such teachers stand on a privileged ground to assess the situation since most abuse cases are discovered at school. In Bindura, this study noted that child rights violation has strong affinities with poverty. Hence strategies of child rights awareness programmes should also directly or indirectly take into consideration the variable of poverty.

Further analysis of the results indicated that children living with both parents report the observation of child rights at home more than those staying with either one parent or a guardian. The results reveal that guardian status is associated with knowledge levels of rights violations. Orphans were found to lack in having their rights observed compared to children with both parents. The economic challenges currently faced by Zimbabwe and the effects of HIV/AIDS have resulted in a lot of children becoming orphans and in parents migrating to other countries in search of employment opportunities. This exposes their children more to abuse by relatives, guardians and the community in general. This was shown by seventy-two percent of pupils living without parents who said their rights are not observed at all compared to fifty-eight percent of pupils living with parents who said their rights were being observed. However, the degree of observation is hard to determine as children are not sure themselves when abuse starts or when it ends. In this vein, Viviers and Lombard (2012) assert that the realization of children's rights is noted in different contexts, which is the case with the communities and schools around Bindura as highlighted in this study.

CONCLUSION

The promise and rhetoric of embracing rights based education is appealing. However, the concept is riddled, enmeshed and constrained by structural aberrations that stand threatened by a full throttle inclusion of rights based education. The established political economy stands to sustain shocks by such an initiative. This is

has been the reason why teachers are not wholeheartedly teaching rights based education. Since the idea of child rights is viewed as foreign in many African countries, the teaching of child rights may therefore be met with hesitation. Thus there is need to educate members of the community and parents on issues of child rights and the benefits of these to the community as a whole. Teacher training in children's rights is positively correlated to pupil awareness. From the results teachers have taught survival and development rights which they have been trained to teach. This is a clear indication that child rights teaching can be engendered through other themes in the existing curriculum. There are negative consequences to not having child rights fully taught as pupils will not fully understand them as revealed in the study; there are limits because there is no syllabus, so teaching is not thorough. Teachers know that this must be taught as they have received training and so they are challenging the policymakers to do something about it, as they respond to demands from the environment.

Comprehensive teacher training on child rights is essential if pupils are going to be able to stand up for their rights in the home, community and at school. The confusion and inconsistencies shown by pupils' responses on the issue of rights observance in the home is clear indication of the need for a full rights based education so that pupils understand, interpret and apply full knowledge of their rights wherever they are. Evaluations consistently have found that when elementary school aged children are educated about their rights in a rights-respecting classroom or school; they show an adult-like understanding of the nature of rights as entitlements to fair treatment and the responsibility to respect the rights of others. In contrast, it has been reported that when children do not learn about their rights, they tend to understand rights simply as freedoms and they do not appreciate that rights and responsibilities are linked.

As a result of the sudden increase in the number of child abuse cases, teachers and school pupils have strongly encouraged the inclusion of child rights in to the school curriculum. Teaching of child rights is paramount since it helps children to be well informed and this helps them to make appropriate decisions when at home, school, and community at large. Inclusion of rights based education becomes an im-

portant stride to make if the education sector is to keep abreast and align with changing global trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings, there is need for several actions to be taken if child rights' teaching and observation is to be properly implemented not only in schools but in homes and communities as well. The Zimbabwean government should properly mainstream child rights in the education curricula at both primary and secondary levels. Furthermore, the government should put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate child rights teaching in schools. Non-governmental organizations and the media need to partner with the government in implementing community awareness programmes that teach the public on the importance of observing children's rights.

REFERENCES

- Collins TM 2017. A child's right to participate: Implications for international child protection. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1): 14-46.
- Covell K, Howe BK, McNeil JK 2010. Implementing children's human rights education in schools. *Improving Schools*, 13(2): 117-132.
- Dailey AC 2016. Children's transitional rights. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 12(2): 178-194.
- Detrick S 1999. *A Commentary on the United Nations Rights of The Child*. Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Ezer T 2001. A positive right to protection for children. *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal*, 7(1): 1-50.
- Fleiss JL, Levin B, Paik MC 2013. *Statistical Methods for Rates and Proportions*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Hammarberg T 1990. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child-and how to make it work. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 12(1): 97-105.
- Hanna W 2014. Mankind Owes to the Child the Best that it has to Give. From <[http://www.hiramicrobrotherhood.com:www.hiramicrobrotherhood.com/#!\"Mankind-owes-to-the-child-the-best-that-it-has-to-give\"/c1whk/cC4E6CA3A-5343-4D15-9C2D-900624C78A5B](http://www.hiramicrobrotherhood.com:www.hiramicrobrotherhood.com/#!\)> (Retrieved on 1 November 2014).
- Howe BR, Covell K 2010. Miseducating children about their rights. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 5(2): 91-102.
- Jamieson L 2017. Children and young people's right to participate in residential care in South Africa. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1): 89-102.

- Kipotrich A, Ong'ondo C 2014. An assessment of the level of awareness about children's rights among educational children in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, 4(2): 279-287.
- Knutsson KE 1997. *Children: Noble Causes or Worthy Citizens*. London: Arena and Ashgate Limited.
- Mangold S 2002. *Transgressing the Border Between Protection and Empowerment for Domestic Violence Victims and Older Children. Empowerment as Protection in the Foster Care System*. Boston, Massachusetts: New England School of Law.
- Mutepfa MM, Maree JG, Chiganga G 2014. Towards respecting children's rights, obligations and responsibilities: The Zimbabwean case. *School Psychology International*, 35(3): 241-252.
- Ntinda K, Maree JG, Mpofu E, Seeco E 2014. In school psychosocial support services for safeguarding children's rights: Results and implications of a Botswana study. *School Psychological International*. SAGE, 35(3): 280-293.
- Pillay J 2014. Advancement of children's rights in Africa: A social justice framework for school psychologists. *School Psychology International*, 35(3): 225-240.
- Popvoski V 2006. *International Criminal Accountability and the Rights of Children: From Peace to Justice Series*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Quennerstedt A 2010. Children but not really humans? Critical reflections on the hampering effect of the 'Three P's'. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 18(4): 619-635.
- Quennerstedt A 2016. Young children's enactments of human rights in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 24(1): 5-18.
- Radford L 2012. *Rethinking Children, Violence and Safeguarding*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Sathiyaraj A, Jayaraman K 2013. A study on child rights awareness among the primary school teacher in Tiruchirappalli District of Tam. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3(6): 1-3.
- Shumba A 2002. Teacher conceptualization of child abuse in schools in the new millennium. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17(4): 403-415.
- Steiner HJ 2000. *International Human Rights in Context Law Morals*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Verhellen 1993. Children's rights and education: A three track legally binding imperative. *School Psychology International*, 14: 199-208.
- Viviers A, Lombard A 2012. The ethics of children's participation fundamental to children's rights realization in Africa. *International Social Work*, 56(1): 7-21.

Paper received for publication on April 2015
Paper accepted for publication on December 2016