

**ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL POLICY ON DISCIPLINE
AND ATTENDANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LIBERIA**

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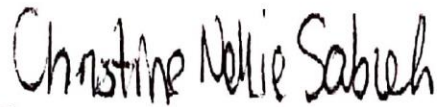
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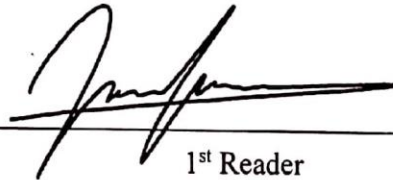
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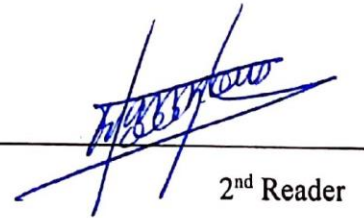
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Dedication

I am sincerely grateful to the Almighty God for his protection and guidance. I dedicate this project to my late parents for their love and care. I am thankful to my brothers and sisters for their constant support and sleepless dedication to my growth and education up to today. To my friends, each of whom has contributed to my life to become who I am today.

This research is also dedicated to the congregation of the Marist Brothers, specially the Brothers in Lebanon, who have contributed immensely and supported me during my stay in Lebanon.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|------------------|---|
| GOL | Government of Liberia |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| LERA | Liberia Education Reform Act |
| UNICEF | United Nation Children Education Fund |
| SGB | School Governing Board |
| UNDP | United Nation Development Programme |
| LISGIS | Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services |
| DEO | District Education Officer |
| EFA | Education for All |
| WAEC | West Africa Examination Council |
| PTA | Parents Teachers Association |
| UNESCO | United Nation Education and Scientific Cultural Organization |
| SMAART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-based |
| M & E | Monitoring and Evaluation |

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in the Barnersville community of Liberia. Questionnaires, interview guide and document analyses were the main instruments used. Five secondary schools were purposively selected to conduct the study. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24 version) and results were presented in tables and charts. One hundred and sixty-seven participants were sampled from five secondary schools. Participants included five principal participants, five vice principal participants, five dean of students participants and one hundred and fifty-two teacher participants. The findings established that schools had policy documents available but the policies were not effective. It was also found that lack of well-developed policy, lack of policy awareness, lack of parental support, absenteeism, students late coming to school, use of mobile phones, among others were the challenges faced by schools in the implementation of school policy. As a result of the challenges faced by schools, several approaches were adopted which included students roll-call, parental involvement, principal's communication, PTA meetings, etc. To address the disciplinary and attendance problems, the study recommended an establishment of a comprehensive policy on discipline and attendance. It was also recommended that school policies should be crafted by all stakeholders for ownership and there should be a collaboration in the implementation of the policies. The Code of Conduct should be issued to all teachers and students at the beginning of the school year, there should be policy awareness program and the policy should be supervised and reevaluated regularly. It was suggested that future research be carried in the following areas: the role of parents and community in the implementation of policies, the involvement of teachers and students in the implementation of school policies and implication of effective policy on student' academic performance.

Keywords: Effective policy, Discipline, Attendance, Secondary school, Liberia

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and background of the study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. This chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and research questions. Also, it dealt with the research framework, significance of the study, the scope of the study, delimitations of the study, definitions of operational terms, organization of the study and summary of the chapter.

Background of the study

School policy is a necessity for the proper functioning of a school and is essential for effective learning and the quality of school life (Najumba, 2013). From this perspective, effective school policy strategies needed to be sought to encourage responsible behavior and to provide all students with a satisfying and fruitful school experience by discouraging misconduct and absenteeism (UNESCO 2009). School, like any other legal institution cannot properly function without a policy designed to guide students' behaviors and activities within the school environment (Ibuh, 2009). That was why Hardy (2015) viewed that effective policies on discipline and attendance were of relevance and needed to be one of the most prominent tools used within every school's system.

Indeed, schools have policies for several reasons. Policies establish rules and regulations to guide acceptable behavior and ensure that the school environment is safe for students, teachers, parents, and school staff. School policies also help create a

productive learning environment. Meador (2015), defined policy as “an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives to guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous actions”.

According to Odukoya (2017), the importance of policy is not restricted to only education and that is why political leaders and governments worldwide assign an increasingly central role to effective policy implementation. Developing countries including Liberia, mindful of these have been developing educational policies to improve their educational systems. Odukoya (2017), contended that school policies play an important role because they put the school administration into a firm position to direct and coordinate the entire operation of the school system. To function effectively, according to Njoroge (2014), schools must have clear policies and procedures that guide the day-to-day operations and these policies must cover everything from attendance to student discipline and other code of conduct. Separate from that, the absence of a clear policy on discipline and attendance could even lead to chaos, severe disruptive behavior of students and reduction of the school reputation.

To achieve the espoused benefits of the school policy, Nwankwo and Apeh (2008) argued that formulating policy and its consequences, sensitizing students and outlining the benefits of working within them, is a critical up-front investment in the educational arena.

The Liberian Constitution of 1986

The Constitution of Liberia is the umbrella that guides all polices in Liberia and directs different ministries including Ministry of Education (MOE) on how they should operate. Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, which came into force

on 6 January 1986, stipulates that: “The Republic shall, because of the vital role assigned to the individual citizen under this Constitution for the social, economic and political well-being of Liberia, provide equal access to educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens to the extent of available resources. Emphasis shall be placed on the mass education of the Liberian people and the elimination of illiteracy”.

The Education Law of 1973 recognizes the right of every Liberian child to education. According to Free and Compulsory Education law of 2002, school attendance is compulsory for all children between the ages 6 and 20. The law compels parents to send their children to school or be fined by the government, and also prohibits the collection of tuition fees in Public Primary and Secondary schools.

Given the Constitution, the government of Liberia (GOL) has initiated various policies aimed at increasing enrollment and attendance of students because education is one of the major tools for eradicating poverty and preventing ignorance among citizens (Ministry of Education, 2010). While all these government initiatives continue to increase, research has indicated that not much has been achieved in terms of effective policy implementation on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia (UNESCO, 2015).

The MOE is the principal government agency charged with overseeing the planning and implementation of education and school policies and their dissemination to schools where they are interpreted and analyzed by the local schools. Although Liberian schools are governed by various educational policies which include: National Policy on Girls’ Education, Liberia Primary Education Recovery Program, Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia, Education for All (EFA), Inclusive Education, Free and

Compulsory Basic Education, Liberian Education Administrative Guide: Volume 4, and Code of Conducts for Teachers and Schools' Administrators, these policies are not governed by discipline and attendance policies for students (Nyepon, 2015).

Within the various policies designed and promulgated by the Ministry of Education, there is no portion allocated on the description of students' discipline and attendance procedures that should guide school administrators to deal with issues arising from these two components. The Education Reform Act of 2011 is silent about discipline and attendance policies' procedures in schools, saying instead, "students conduct shall be regulated by the policy guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Education." (p. 37). The National Education policy mainly emphasized in addition to academic competency; students' attainment of national literacy, marketable skills through computer literacy and development (Education Law, 2011). The Liberian schools' administrators receive the policy directives as state regulations, and they are expected to draw their interpretations at the local school level in order to formulate and implement their school rules and regulations (Education Reform Act, 2011). The above-mentioned ideas are well-articulated in articles 10 and 12 of the Act as follows:

Article 10, section 3 of the Education Reform Act (LERA) 2011 reads;

"School rules are a system of rules for conduct. The system should aim at developing self-discipline in students and creating a harmonious environment where effective learning and teaching can take place. Therefore, a comprehensive discipline policy should be drawn up by the school with input from teachers, parents and students. The basic belief of an "Educative Approach to Discipline" is that most students misbehave not out of willful decision to misbehave. They need guidance from administrators and teachers to steer them towards the appropriate response in school" (p. 6)

and Article 12 of the Education Reform Act (LERA) 2011 states that;

“Schools have the fundamental role to uphold students’ right to education. Schools should develop an attendance policy that promotes student’s regular attendance, positive student behavior, harmonious teacher-student relationship, a caring school atmosphere and close partnership between the school and home. Parents should also be informed of attendance policy formulated by the school, regulations and decisions as well as actions undertaken whether at the school level or by the Ministry of Education” (p. 15).

In line with the following sections above, the MOE allows schools’ administrators to formulate their local schools’ policies and use their own discretion to determine the appropriate disciplinary or attendance response to each incident of student misconduct or absenteeism. (National State policy on education, 2002, p. 1). By this guideline, Davies (2007), asserted that school policies needed to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based goals (SMART) for school administrators and teachers because they were formulated from the specific local events or in response to school’s issues or needs. Shaba (2006) in support of Davies (2007)’s assertion, further explained that the role of school administrators in professional activities, has been duly clarified to be capable to formulate and implement school policies. According to the Sbeha, in formulating and implementing school policies, school administrators and teachers in most cases are confronted with multiple procedures of everyday operation which include: to check teachers and learners’ punctuality, to ensure a culture of learning and teaching is taking place, to discourage absenteeism by learners and to maintain proper discipline in school.

Despite the presence of discipline and attendance policy documents and all efforts by schools and GOL to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to learn under a conducive atmosphere, there has still been limited evidence supporting the presence of effective discipline and regular school attendance in some Liberian secondary schools. In recent years, discipline and attendance have become a problem to Liberian schools' administrators, teachers and parents (Norman, 2012). According to Norman, learning institutions in Liberia have been plagued with cases of students' indiscipline and irregular attendance. Students' indiscipline and irregular attendance undermine the quality of education that the people of Liberia had long been searching (National PTA annual report 2016, paragraph 5). Parents and other stakeholders have voiced out their views regarding possible causes and also prescribed a number of solutions to the problem of students' indiscipline and irregular attendance. This was why UNDP (2010), concluded that it was necessary to design measures because if attempts were not made to address these problems as they arose, they might degenerate into uncontrollable stages with the country's educational growth and economic development endangered.

Historical background of Liberia

Liberia borders Guinea to the north, Sierra Leone to the west, the Ivory Coast to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The country is located on the West Coast of Africa with an area of 43,000 square miles (or 111,000 square kilometers) and is divided into fifteen political subdivisions or counties. It has a population of about 4,977,720 people and an annual population growth rate of 2.1% (LIGIS Census 2018).

Historically Liberia became an independent state in 1847 as a result of the fear of being colonized by the British and the French who have colonized territories once considered part of Liberia but, nowadays constitute parts of Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast (Dulleh, 2012).

Figure 1

Political map of the Republic of Liberia



The Liberia education system

The education system in Liberia, similar to that of the United States of America (USA), is made up of two years of pre-school, six years of primary education, three years of junior high education and three years of senior high education. The options for the tertiary education include four years of university or two years of vocational/technical

skills or teacher training programs. Public primary and Junior Secondary educations are free under the law (beginning at age 6), but students are expected to purchase school materials. The MOE under the law of 2001 makes education compulsory in Government-owned schools at the primary and secondary levels (grades 1-12), from the age of 6 to 20 years, but there has been negligence of enforcement of attendance. However, the current research was concerned with discipline and attendance in secondary schools.

Statement of the problem

Effective school policies on discipline and attendance play a very crucial role in the administration of a school (Nandekar, 2009). This was why Norman (2012) in his study on “The Perceptions of Liberian Public-School Principals about their Leadership Development Needs in Post-Conflict Liberia”, opined that policies were relevant and put school administrators in a firm position to deal with students’ behavior and the operation of the school system. However, students’ indiscipline and irregular attendance existed in various schools of Liberia despite the number of measures that were taken by the government to promote quality of education (Hardy, 2015).

Even though the GOL through the Ministry of Education ensured the formulation of national policy for schools, it remained the sole responsibility of local schools’ authorities to see to it that such state’s policies were translated according to school’s locality and setting and put into implementation (Education Reform Act, 2011). However, accumulated evidence demonstrated that schools’ policies had not been effectively implemented to reduce indiscipline and irregular school attendance (Daykey 2015). For instance, according to Daykey’s observation of school policy, the phenomenon showed itself in the habitual students’ indiscipline, students moving around

in the community during school hours and a high rate of absenteeism of learners from schools. The question was: Why were discipline and attendance policies not effective?

Hence, the current study examined the effectiveness of the school policies on discipline and attendance, approaches employed to implement the policy, challenges faced by the implementers and solutions to reduce students' indiscipline and irregular attendance. Moreover, exploring school discipline and attendance policy filled the gap that existed in the Liberian education literature, which had overlooked the importance of soliciting the views of school administrators and teachers about their use of school policy on discipline and attendance.

Research objectives

The study sought to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To find out if there existed discipline and attendance policies in schools.
2. To investigate if the school policies were effective.
3. To examine the approaches used in implementing the policies.
4. To find out the challenges faced by the schools in implementing the policies.
5. To recommend an effective school policy on discipline and attendance.

Research questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. Did policies of discipline and attendance exist in schools?
2. How effective were the school policies on discipline and attendance?
3. What were the approaches used in implementing the policies?
4. What were the challenges faced by schools in implementing the policies?
5. What are the recommendations for implementing effective policy?

The study framework

The study determined the relevance of effective school policy implementation in reducing schools' indiscipline among school students in Liberia. It was believed that improved school policy would be useful in reducing, if not total eradication of schools' indiscipline and poor school attendance. Also, it was hoped that if the challenges faced by the schools were properly managed and the proper strategies employed, it would equally improve school attendance and reduce indiscipline. Thus, the study investigated the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia.

Significance of the study

The importance of the study stemmed from its contribution to knowledge, particularly its generation of useful information to support future development in the formulation of national education policies on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia. After analyzing the data, it is hoped that the results of this study will:

- provide principals and teachers with information to develop strategies to support and promote the effective implementation of policies on discipline and attendance in secondary schools.
- help education policy makers, planners and the GOL to develop a new structure of framework on effective discipline and attendance policies in Schools.
- create awareness in parents, students and other stakeholders to understand and embrace the value of having effective school discipline and attendance policies in schools.

- This study has the potential to be significant to other Liberian researchers because there is currently a lack of research on the topic of effective school policies on discipline and attendance in Liberia.

Scope of the Study

The current study covered the subject of assessing the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. This study was a case study that was carried out in five secondary schools in the Barnersville community. The areas of concentration for the study were challenges faced by schools in the implementation of discipline and attendance policies, the approaches used in implementing the policies in Secondary schools and recommendations for implementing effective policy on discipline and attendance.

Delimitations of the Study

Liberia has a total geographical area of 43,000 square miles with a population of approximately 4,977,720 people (LISGIS, 2018). There are over 2,000 secondary schools across the country. The geographical dimension of the country and numerous secondary schools makes it impossible to study all the secondary schools in a single research study. This investigation was therefore, delimited to five secondary schools in the Barnersville community, located in Montserrado county, where the researcher restricted himself to study the problem of effective school policy on discipline and attendance both in government owned schools and private schools. This research was delimited to the sample population which included principals, vice principals, deans of students and teachers in the five selected secondary schools.

The Operational Definition of Terms

Policy: A policy is a set of ideas or plans that are used as a basis for making decisions, especially in schools, or organizations.

Effectiveness: The degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result; success.

Discipline: In this study, discipline would mean teaching the students manners on how to show respect to school authorities, to observe the school laws and regulations and to maintain an established standard of behavior.

Indiscipline: This is defined as lack of control in the behavior of a group of people. In other words, it is the inability of a person to live in accordance with school rules and regulations.

Attendance: Attendance is characterized as being present, punctual and being involved in the activities of the school.

Irregular attendance: This is a deliberate absenteeism of oneself from school for no just cause. Irregular attendance is further described as a failure of the students to be physically present in the school for reasons that are not recognized by the school authority.

Liberia: Officially the Republic of Liberia, is a country on the West African coast. It is bordered by Sierra Leone to its west, Guinea to its north, Ivory Coast to its east, and the Atlantic Ocean to its west.

Policy implementation: This involves the transition of the goals and objectives of the policy into an operating, ongoing program.

Organization of the Study

The research was organized into five chapters. Chapter one covered the introduction, background, specific objectives, research questions, research framework, the significance of the study, definition of key terms and its organization. Chapter two dealt with the review of related studies on educational policies on discipline and attendance. The researcher read through the various studies conducted by others and identified the knowledge gaps, which this study intends to bridge. Chapter three presented the research methodology, which included an introduction, design of the study, the study location, the participants, the sample and sampling strategy, the development of research instruments, procedures and adherence to research ethics. Chapter four reported the findings of the study in line with the research objectives and questions. Chapter five presented the summary, conclusions, implications, limitations, recommendations for practical actions and suggested areas for further research.

Summary of Chapter One

This chapter provided the reader with an introduction to the study. A statement of the research problem, key definitions of operational terms, conceptual framework, the research objectives and questions, and the significance of the study were presented and finally the structure of the research was also described. The next chapter embarked on the review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review was organized in relation to the research purpose which was to assess to the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia: Throughout the literature review, the research questions were followed and literature relevant to them presented. Because of the limited amount of research in this particular field (effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies) in Liberia, the literature reviewed was a combination of relevant studies and scholarly publications from different countries and very little from Liberia. Issues related to policy-making and implementation, approaches to implementing effective policy and challenges facing the effectiveness of school policies on discipline and attendance were discussed in order to cover issues investigated in other studies relevance to the current research questions.

Education policies and practices: Discipline and attendance

Students' discipline in Liberia

Student's discipline has a prerequisite to almost everything a school has to offer students (McGregory, 2006). Discipline in question has been, variously, defined by different researchers. Adesina (2015), defined discipline as teaching the students manners on how to show respect to school authorities, to observe the school rules and regulations and to maintain an established standard of behavior. While Egwunyenga (2010) defined the concept as the training that enables an individual to develop orderly conduct and self-control as well as direction. Peretomode (2011) explained that discipline involves the ability to have self-control, restraint, respect for self and respect for others. From these

definitions, the school has a primordial role to play in instilling discipline into their students.

Schools around the world scramble to ensure that students are molded to be disciplined, competent, innovative and responsible citizens (Kibaale, 2017). In Liberia, similar efforts are made at all levels of education, for example, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges as well as in universities. Different strategies to achieve the aforementioned goal have been formulated both at the national and school levels. Among others, the formulation and implementation of school discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools remain responsible for monitoring and curbing of students' behaviors.

However, since the end of the Liberian civil war in 2003, there has been an increasing concern among educators in Liberia regarding students' disrespect to school authorities. Research has consistently documented that school indiscipline reduces teaching contact hours as more time is devoted to managing misbehavior rather than on teaching (Norman, 2012). This appears to be the case in many secondary schools in Liberia, which are struggling with several challenges including, but not limited to students' disrespect for school authority, lateness to school and absenteeism (Norman, 2012).

In the Liberia context, Parents, teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders believed that students' discipline was an important ingredient in academic success and saw correction as part of the disciplinary strategies employed by schools (Khuluse, 2009). Thus, disruptions of any kind seriously impacted students' access to educational opportunities (The 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015). Though the MOE has

come up on several occasions with policies, namely the teachers' Code of Conducts and the School Management Manual for secondary schools, such policies are not explicit as to what should be done when discipline problem related to students arises in school.

Apart from scholarly articles and government's publications, Televisions and National Newspapers also reported that students in Liberia manifested a lack of discipline for the numerous reasons which included the following: parents' disengagement and lack of responsibility to the children's academic and behavioral attitudes, lack of educators' authority to maintain discipline, the centralization of authority and decision-making and lack of school-parents partnership. Other were the emergence of families with working parents, the over-mediation of violence, the exposure of students to social media and the incapacity of the school to promote positive behavior among learners. The rest were permissiveness of the responsible authorities at school to ensure learner discipline, the absence of adult models for students and peer pressure.

In any case, it is imperative for schools not only to put such policies, like discipline policy in place but also to continuously and consistently articulate the policy, update or revise the standard of expectations and procedures. Hence, policies must be specified and communicated to students, teachers and parents by any means deemed appropriate such as phone calls, school magazine, PTA meetings, and information sheets.

Students' attendance in Liberia

Attendance has been defined as the physical presence of the students in schools or classes. Sheppard (2009), explained further that attendance at schools is not merely being bodily present but including actual participation in the work and activities of the school.

Poor attendance has been identified as a major indicator of student detachment and

disengagement and may lead to students' permanently dropping out of school (Lan & Lanthier, 2003). Every student's absence jeopardizes the ability of that student to succeed at school and threatens the school's ability to achieve its mission and vision for society. Students who are not at school cannot receive instruction. Some students who are absent from school engage in unacceptable behavior (Reid, 2007). From a leadership point of view, attendance has most commonly been addressed as a policy issue (Railsback, 2004).

In the case of Liberia, the government policy on free and compulsory education was introduced in 2001 and reaffirmed in 2011 Education Reform Acts to encourage school enrollment and to fulfill the constitutional provision that obligates government to develop the minds of Liberian children. This Free and Compulsory Basic Education policy of 2011 makes attendance compulsory for all students. However, a problem exists, particularly at the secondary school level, regarding student attendance and the identification and effectiveness of potential solutions. All across Liberia and in some other countries as well, secondary schools are plagued with finding solutions for poor attendance among their high school student population (UNICEF, 2007).

Even though the Liberian schools' administrators have been charged with establishing policies and procedures that encourage and support attendance for the student population with a major emphasis being placed on the safety of all students and maintaining order so that teaching and learning process can take place effectively, there is a problem of irregular attendance of students which has become a persistent issue in secondary schools in Liberia, especially within the Barnersville community. In most cases, many of the students come late to schools in the morning. While many of them participate in collective morning assembly, they leave schools before closing time for

other unauthorized activities and in some cases too, a very little number of these students care to return to school (National Daily Observer, 2011). Though this absenteeism being exhibited by the secondary school students may be with genuine reasons, majority of them displayed this attitude for no justifiable reasons.

Considering the wide spread of students' irregular attendance in schools, government representatives, District Education officers (DEO), School principals, teachers, and individual parents have voiced out their concerns over the need to develop policies and practices to minimize the problems facing Liberian Secondary's schools today such as the dropout rate, drug abuse, and declining education performance (UNICEF Annual Report on Liberia Education, 2014). This increased number of poor school attendance arouses strong feelings in principals, teachers, parents, members of the educational administrators, politicians, and even the student population in the country (The 2004 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, p. 10). Attendance is the most significant in any school because an important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom and taking part in all class activities. When students are absent from school, arrive late, or play truant, they reduce their opportunities to learn. Furthermore, when students interrupt classes by being late or frequently absent from class, they interfere with other students' chances to learn. Perhaps most significantly, the habits of consistent and on-time attendance are habits that will serve students well in their future lives.

Possible consequences of irregular attendance

Rivers (2010), as cited in Henry (2007), indicated that the consequences of non-attendance were extensive, resulted in negative implications for multiple levels of

society. In the short-term, non-attendance can predict mal-adjustment, poor academic performance, school dropout, substance abuse, delinquency, and teen-age pregnancy. In the long-term, evidence reveals non-attendance as a predictor of poor adult outcomes, including violence, marital instability, job instability and adult criminality. Moreover, non-attendance comes with a negative effect on the community because of it correlates with delinquency, crime, and other negative adult outcomes. Several research studies have been conducted and found out that students' dropout from school is the most obvious result of non-attendance (Fabgenle 2014, Bradley 2015, Neal 2015).

Thus, the study sought to establish whether secondary schools of Barnersville community do encounter the same challenges in implementing policy on discipline and attendance and to propose a way forward in as far as overcoming these challenges is concerned.

Description of school policy and its management

School policy was defined by Schimmer (2013) as a system of rules for conduct aimed at developing self-discipline in students and creating a harmonious environment where effective learning and teaching can take place. Put it differently, school policies are disciplinary interventions in a document form for peaceful and effective encounters during teaching and learning. It is also stimulating to note that school policy is a formulation of effective school management, and as held by Schimmer (2013), every school discipline and attendance plan should be designed as an instrument of support and inclusion of students, and not that of removal and isolation and should be a proactive systemic in teaching, guiding, and supporting students to achieve already set behavioral

goals. School policy is the backbone of any proactive strategy to reduce the problem of behavior in school in general and classroom as well.

Even though there were several strategies in place to implement policy on discipline and attendance in secondary schools, there were still challenges faced by administrators and teachers. This study also geared towards investigating if these strategies were implemented effectively to reduce the challenges faced by schools during the implementation process.

Setting consequences within the policy environment

Good discipline certainly requires that students experience the consequences of their misbehavior. Consequences are things that come as a result of an action.

Determining consequences in the process of school policy implementation consist of stating what will happen if a student breaks a rule. Discipline and attendance policies should distinguish between categories of offenses. Minor infractions may be treated flexibly, depending on the circumstances, while nonnegotiable consequences are set for serious offenses. Actual criminal offenses may be reported to the police as part of a cooperative anticrime effort or other state authorities as deems necessary.

Teahingasleadership.org (2011) stated that while consequences are often framed as something used only after a rule has failed, they are more accurately viewed as part of the structure that makes rules work. A student needs to know, up front, what would happen if they should break a rule. They can then choose to follow the rule or break it to attract the consequences. Helping students realize this cause and effect relationship and their will power to choose, is one of the many ways managers of schools can empower their students and help them develop self-discipline. Self-discipline involves the

capacities to regulate oneself, to anticipate consequences, and to give up an immediate gratification to receive a long-term goal and this is one of the most behavioral skills school can teach their students.

Moreover, the U.S Department of Education (2014) has stipulated that schools that have effective discipline and attendance policies or code of conduct with clear, appropriate and consistently applied expectations and consequences are more likely to help students improve behavior, increase engagement and boost achievement. It further pointed out that a critical component of a strong and positive school climate is a school policy that sets high expectations for students' behavior and provides a clear, appropriate and consistent set of consequences for misbehavior. The Department has made the following recommendations about school policy which include: Setting high expectation for behavior and adopting an instructional approach to discipline and attendance, involvement of parents, students and school personnel, communicating regularly and clearly, ensuring that clear, developmentally appropriate and proportional consequences apply for misbehavior, creating policy include appropriate procedures for students to follow and due process for all stakeholders.

A rationale for school policy

Human life is sustained and maintained through the keeping of a series of rules and regulations or law by individuals. Such rules in the society exist everywhere in around the globe and the school cannot be an exception. According to Akpabio (2016), as cited in Obi (2004), immediately a student is properly admitted into a school, there arise automatically, a contractual relationship between the student or the parents or both and the school. Fayokun (2006) believed that those who have the lawful custody of students

must prescribe moral instructions and effect discipline on their training and education. Just like the school, there should be policy (rules and regulations) that will eventually work in the best interest of the students and the school community as a whole. Obi (2004), in support of this position added that schools do not only have the obligation to see that students are educated but also the responsibility to formulate policy for the proper execution of these duties. The researcher posited that the two basic ways for controlling students in the school are (a) policy and (b) punishment for violation of the policy.

Consequently, the school authorities have the power under the law to make reasonable policies governing students' conducts such as discipline and attendance and may punish students for violation of policy in a reasonable manner. Considering that most students in secondary schools are under the age of 18 years, gives the school authorities and teachers additional responsibility to create a policy on discipline and attendance to be able to control students' population. This, in the view of Obi (2004) means that school leaders have the legal backing of national educational policy that gives the school the power to create policy.

Regarding the reasons for students to obey school policy, Jones (2016)'s study in secondary schools in Nigeria offered among others, the following:

Personal security: Policy is intended to protect students. Specific rules, such as “no fighting and verbal abuse” are written to protect students against danger. Also, rules like “No late coming to school, be in class on time, no absenteeism, do not leave school without permission and attend all classes” are rules to govern students' academic

behavior. When policies at school are respected, students demonstrate an awareness of the policies and believe in values as being significant

Peer consideration: Besides self-preservation, obedience to school policies and procedures show students' respect for peers and consideration for their personal safety. Obedience of rules and regulations by students also portrays believe that education of their peers is vital. According to Jones, for example, the policy governing appearance is designed to minimize classroom distractions. When students dress in a manner that doesn't draw undue attention to themselves, it allows their classmates to focus on their study instead of clothing.

Respect for authority: When the policies in school are kept by students, it shows an understanding and respect for the governing authority at the school. Obedience to school policy also shows students' trust in their teachers and administrators and their decision even if they do not understand the purpose behind a specific policy.

Academic reputation: It is important to note that the reason for establishing a school is to make student learn and pass public examinations so that they can become useful citizens of the country. This brings to mind an essential reason for school policy, creating a good teaching and learning environment for students to excel academically. The author concluded that school policies can encourage social responsibility among students which can, in turn, improve academic performance, proper discipline and regular attendance.

Enhancing compliance with school policy in secondary schools

Biscobing (2016) explained the concept 'compliance' as either a state of being in accord with established guidelines, rules or specifications, or the process of becoming so.

Scholenfelder (2006) as cited by Ukpabio and Etor (2016) defined compliance as

conformity with or agreeing to something. Compliance thus, in this study would mean acting in agreement, accord or conformity with established guidelines, rule and specifications. Drawing from this, enhancing compliance with school policies would refer to those things that school authorities do to make students understand, conform to or agree with and act in accord with school policies. In other words, the measure they put in place to elicit positive response and acceptance from students toward school policies. When students agree with and conform to school policy, it becomes likely that they will obey it and carry out its precepts.

Ukpabio (2016), in his article about students' compliance with school policies (as cited in Hatter, 2016) offered some suggestions for enhancing students' compliance with school policies:

- Provide a framework of basic rules and regulations
- Explain the importance of policy to students
- Institute natural consequences for breaking school policies
- Utilize consistent expectations about the policy that school has instituted
- Listen to students 'needs to communicate their feelings
- Positively reinforce good behavior

Similarly, while finding remedies to the problems faced by schools in the implementation of discipline and attendance policies, the Ministry of education's report of (2011) proposed a classroom environment that is based on mutual respect where learners feel safe and affirmed. This, the ministry believed will decrease the need for disciplinary actions and develop a student's ability to practice self-discipline. By implementing a proactive approach, teachers were urged to put things in perspective

which could safeguard the culture of learning and teaching in their respective classrooms.

Teachers needed to look at simple issues such as:

- Preparing class lessons
- Exercising self-discipline
- Having extension work available
- Ensuring that teaching and learning happen consistently;
- Ensuring that learners are stimulated
- Establishing class rules and regulations with students
- Making a time available for conflict resolution management
- Affirming learners
- Providing a rationale for all classroom activities
- Building positive relationships with students

Policy making process

Policymaking is concerned with designing a set of decisions for guiding future decisions. This entails who does it (the actors) and how (the process). It is how decisions are designed to guide future administrative actions and implementation in the educational system (Odukoya, 2009). Policy-making, whether at the international, national, county, district or school levels, is an inevitable political process, because it entails developing definitions of a good society. The policy comes from several sources: international bodies, national governments, states, districts, and of course local school communities. A specific policy may communicate a way to move forward. It was in agreement with this view that Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2003) postulated that the following categories of people needed to be stakeholders in education policy making process:

Consumers of education: These are the students who enjoy the educational services provided in schools. (This should, however, include parents who may desire a particular type of education system for their children). They should contribute to the formulation of educational policies that affect their children.

Host community: Representatives of the community should be involved as schools are located in the community and need the community output during policy formulation.

Participants in education: These are the teaching and non-teaching staff. Their involvement and commitment to educational excellence justify their involvement in policy making and implementation. In this way, principals, teachers, non-teaching staff or, educational administrators, school inspectors, etc, should all be involved.

The government: Every educational policy to be initiated needs the government's support as all policies of the school work within the state regulations.

Stages of the policy making process

Every stage of a policy plays a significant role and gears towards effective implementation of the said policy. The policy, being it governmental or educational, is purposive and goal-oriented, as it is designed to achieve a particular objective, a guide for administrators and collaborators. Ukomadu (2018) as (cited in Neckache, 2014) recognized policy making as a process and not a one-time event. He argued that policy making is a dynamic process involving multiple of interactions, actions, decisions and reactions of the beneficiaries and citizens who are engaged in an implementation process. The policy-making process according to him, included the following as edited and paraphrased below:

Policy formulation: This involves identifying the problem, analyzing the problem, implications, rules and regulations related to the issue, as well as selecting the principles that are in agreement with the objectives. The formulation stage involves asking of questions, such as what are the cost implications? Who are the beneficiaries? What are the consequences of the policy? What are the best options for the policy? Is it in the interest of the people?

Policy promulgation: After formulating policy, it needs to be communicated to the various levels of the institutions where it is applicable for necessary actions. This is the stage a policy is adopted, legitimized and legally placed for implementation.

Policy education: After promulgating a policy, those whom the policy affects need to be properly informed, enlightened and educated on the policy for their understanding, cooperation and support. According to the author, workshops, seminars and conferences could be mounted for proper policy education. He revealed that when people properly understand a policy, they are better placed to support it or even to make constructive criticism of the policy.

Policy acceptance: When people understand a policy, they cooperate and support its implementation to achieve the set objectives. When they cooperate with the implantation authority or agency, the policy is said to be accepted. Active involvement of the people at the formulation state facilitates policy education and acceptance. Wide consultation and active participation of major stakeholders in formulating and implementing policy, enhances its acceptance and popularity.

Policy implementation: This is the stage a policy is put to test or task for formal execution. It is put into force or practice. The initial period of policy application is

usually a critical one for policy makers because if the policy fails to achieve its expected results, it then means that the policy maker did not work well to study the problem and the environment to come up with a good policy (Obiajulu and Obi, 2004).

Policy control: This is usually a strategy put in place to ensure that all institutions, departments, units or persons involved in the implementation of policy play their roles well. The managers are usually given the responsibilities of monitoring and supervising the policy implementation to ensure effective compliance with the conditions and specifications of the policy. Peoples' actions, assignments and conducts are strictly regulated for the attainment of the set objectives.

Policy evaluation: The policy is assessed against the set objectives. The objectives, the strategies, the programs and other important segments and elements of the policy are analyzed and evaluated. It is at this stage that the strength and weaknesses of the policy are noted. The entire performance of the policy is determined to see what to be improved or removed.

What makes an effective policy?

According to Hornby (2010), the word 'effective' refers to producing the results that are wanted or intended or producing a successful outcome. In the context of this study, effective policy implementation, would entail implementing a policy in such a way as to produce, attain or realize the goals and objectives of the policy. In essence, if a policy is effectively implemented, the designed and planned development goals and objectives are realized. Gustama (2013) further argued that for policies to be effective, they need to address genuine needs within an institution and be formulated in ways that are easy to follow and produce genuine results. School policies should be clear and

consistent, creating standards that apply to everyone in the school. This consistency signals to students, teachers, administration and everyone who forms part of the system and see that the policy is reasonable, justified and relevant. The researcher continued that several characteristics of a policy render it effective. He enumerated some as follow: Action-oriented, relevant, concise, unambiguous/well understood, timely and current and helpful in solving problems.

Factors affecting policy formulation and implementation stages

A great variety of factors can affect the formulation and implementation stages of educational policy. To better examine and understand the complex formulation and implementation stages as they apply to secondary school, Fabunmi (2005) pointed out that the formulation and implementation stages of Educational policy are influenced by the following factors:

- structure of society
- decision environment
- number of alternatives
- method of taking the decision

Furthermore, Odukoya, et al (2017) in their article on Formulation and Implementation of educational policies in Nigeria outlined the following as factors affecting effective implementation of educational policy. They include: dispositions of the Implementers, communication procedures at all level of authorities, bureaucratic structure, enforcement activity, environmental conditions, leadership style, resources availability and government Support.

Challenges facing the implementation of educational policies in Africa

The fate of many educational policies in Africa has been that of barren, unmethodical and dispassionate implementation and abandonment. Owolabi (2005), observed that the reason why educational policy implementation was recording low success rates in African countries was that the policies were not often justifiable on rational grounds and they ought not to have been made at all because poor policy choice was doomed to fail. The possible causes for educational policy implementation failure in African countries, according to Dialoke et al (2017), included:

- poor educational leadership
- poor programme management
- lack of accurate policy
- lack of policy evaluation
- inadequate teachers' formation
- corruption within the educational system
- inadequate skilled educational policy planners

Challenges of students' discipline in Africa

Ali (2014) as (cited in Yaroson (2004) explained that the problem of indiscipline permeates all facets of the life of man and has brought man down to the knees. School discipline according to Gaustard (2005) has two main objectives. The first is to ensure the safety of staff and students and the second to create an environment conducive to learning. Bear argued that both aims were equally important and needed to always be included in the school disciplinary policy. This was because any act of indiscipline

occasioned by students' misconducts involving disruptive behavior, absenteeism, late coming to school and criminal behavior defeat the goals of education.

Despite the effort of many African countries' government's commitment to providing resources, improving school conditions, and minimizing school indiscipline problems, cases of students' lack of discipline in schools continue to be a major problem in learning institutions. Most of the African countries continue to experience numerous incidences of students' indiscipline. For example, in Kenya, Nyabuto's (2014) study revealed that, typically, discipline-related problems manifested themselves in various ways, over time, such problems came out of control and took different forms of unruly behavior, such as late coming to school, disrespecting teachers and other staff, drugs and substance abuse, escaping classes, neglecting to do assignments, disruptive behavior, riots and violent strikes that may lead to grave misconduct or rape, or even result in death, or the destruction of school property. These problems were not only affecting students' academic performance in schools but also scared other students who aspired to gain an education.

In a study carried out in Mauritius, Belle (2018) found the following as causes for students' indiscipline in secondary schools: lack of effective policy, the parenting styles given to students, ineffective parental discipline, the dysfunctional family and the learner's attitudes. Other included educator's attitudes, the lack of principal's authority and leadership in disciplining students in schools and the peer group pressure among secondary school students.

Around Africa, students' indiscipline in schools has been a matter of great concern to school management and educators (Adams, 2003). In addition to the obvious

impact on the teaching and learning environment, Adam (2003), argued that lack of discipline or disruptive behavior can seriously disturb students' safety or readiness to learn, as well as future behavior in adult life.

Challenges facing effective policy implementation in secondary schools

Poor formulation and implementation of policy

The gap that often exists between policy formulation and implementation provokes inquiry for researchers to identify challenges facing effective policy implementation in secondary schools in Liberia. The difficulties of effective policy are traceable to the formulation and implementation stages. Loto (2019) in her study on the extent of implementation of student's handbook in the Philippines stated clearly that good planning ensured effective implementation of school policies. In the context of Liberia, difficulties facing effective policy implementation can be divided into two categories which include Internal and External factors.

i. School-based factors

School-based factors are challenges to the effectiveness of school policy formulation and implementation found within the setting of the school. The school administration has some degrees of control over such factors. Among others, they include: the poor formulation of policy, the implementation of policy, ambiguous policy statements, lack of collaboration among staff, lack of administrative supervision, lack of policy evaluation. Others were lack of communication between parents and school, lack of policy specialists, absence of appropriate stakeholders' involvement, lack of continuity

in commitment to policy and inadequate teachers' formation in dealing with policy issues.

ii. Societal-based factors

On the other hand, societal-based factors are challenges outside the school's boundary that may limit the effectiveness of school policy on discipline and attendance. The school authority may or may not have control over such factors. Among others, they include the following: constant political changes, the influence of politicians over school policy, assignment of school principals at a short interval, poor educational infrastructure, poor transport system, and high population of the school.

Lack of teachers' involvement

Teachers play an important role in achieving an effective policy. If there is a lack of teachers' consultation regarding policy in school, such policy may not yield any result. Most of our schools' policies fail because teachers actively resist policy-based change that they see as imposed from the outside without their input or participation, or they may blend old with new practices by selecting parts of the reform that make their job more efficient or satisfying without making fundamental changes in schools (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Teachers can ignore school policy when they fail to impact classrooms or when they do not have explicit connections to instructional practice, when they do not provide teachers with an opportunity to learn the policies and their instructional implications, and when there is a lack of programmes and resources aligned with the intention of the policies (Cohen and Hill, 2001).

Moreover, teachers are the agents and representative of the school administration in the classroom when it comes to implementing policy. So, policies should address the

changes that will make a difference in the education system where teachers take responsibilities (Balanskat, 2007).

Lack of students' involvement

One crucially important area within the school system, in which students should be actively involved, is the implementation of discipline and attendance policies. One major mechanism involving students' needs to be put into place to deal with students' discipline and attendance in schools which is the code of conduct: Through the MOE, schools are empowered to develop their own disciplinary and attendance policies, which are drawn up by the School Governing Board (SGB) which includes a student component. The code of conduct is essential for the successful management of discipline and attendance as it establishes the framework and consequences for misbehavior in such a way that all parties have clarity on where they stand with regard to discipline and attendance problems. "The purpose and importance of the code of conduct are to equip students with the expertise, knowledge and skills that they would be expected to demonstrate as worthy persons, to promote the civic responsibilities of the school and to develop the leadership of all students" (Liberia National Education Policy, 2009:5).

Imoh (2016), in a cross-sectional study on students' discipline in Public Schools in Sierra Leone after the civil war found out that since most school rules and regulations were formulated without students' participation, students did not own them. Maingi (2017) established that, the collapse of discipline in the school which later led to classroom disruption, was an indication of students disrespecting policy on discipline. When students do not understand the rationale behind rules, they are bound to break them (Maingi, 2010). Mukharjee (2005) confirmed these findings in his study on the standards

of discipline in Mexican secondary schools. He further observed that certain changes that signal maturity in the course of growth and development of teenagers made students indisciplined for they fault school rules and regulations.

Sithole (2008), also found out that student involvement in decision making especially in as far as formulation and implementation of school policy are concerned was debatable. The most popular approach was that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers and this led to students' protests (Sithole, 2008). Kiggudu (2009) supported these findings when he observed that although schools had written policies on discipline, attendance, alcohol, weapon, etc, students did not participate in their formulation. The researcher noted that some rules and regulations were lacking modifications and consistency in their implementation which raised students' anger leading to strikes. The researcher found out that despite rules and regulations specifying dos and don'ts, students still broke the rules and regulations.

Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) posited that although there were attempts to include students' views in decision making, such attempts were only empty talk and did not extend to core issues of school rules and regulations. Students were only allowed to participate in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature and accordingly, unable to participate in administrative issues such as formulation and implementation of school policies on discipline and attendance.

The school administration and effective policy

In an effort to reduce the occurrences of student indiscipline and irregular school attendance, institutions need a manual of procedures called policy. Policies set direction, reflect existing practices or establish new ones, and call for the allocation of resources to

further their goals. School leadership should be democratic, encouraging meaningful participation and building capacity for collaborators to direct their own vision within a shared framework and common purposes (Gale & Densmore, 2009). Schools' administrations have the choices about policy implementation; they can take charge of these choices - they can be proactive instead of retroactive (Raillis & Goldring, 2009). As in the case of Liberia, school leaders have been mandated to translate national policy to reflect local school settings. If indeed this was followed, why such policies had not been effective in their implementation to reduce indiscipline and irregular attendance? This current study sought to find out the answer.

Even though, the MOE initiates national policies which should be translated before reaching the students, many Liberian schools' discipline and attendance policies are rarely implemented exactly as intended because school administrators find it difficult for formulate clear policies that meet the needs of the community. At the level of the school, the law can be intentionally or unintentionally adapted to fit local conditions. Education leaders at the district and school levels are always faced with both interpreting and implementing their school policies. School administrators receive policy directives as national regulations, but they must draw their own interpretations (Norman, 2012).

Davies (2007), explained that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of educational policy in achieving the preferred states was in large part dependent on the leadership of the school level, where policies implementation begins. Leadership entails both articulating policies and creating new ones through a process of democratic deliberation. Getting the moral principles out on the table and getting them right is integral to getting policies and their intended objectives, procedures and practices to work (Burgess, 2007).

Lack of parental involvement

According to Anna (2013), total involvement of parents and their support also have a profound role in teaching and learning and the implementation of discipline and attendance policies. It has a significant effect on the quality of the students' experience about teaching and learning in the schools and also on their academic growth. There should be a co-operation between the parents and the administrators because each has a special and important role to play in the education of the child. The right of learners to basic education places the obligation on them to attend school regularly during school hours. Should a learner be absent, his or her parent or legal guardian must notify the school and explain the absence, or should a student display any sort of indiscipline in school, the admonition should have the parent informed. (Burgess, 2007).

Students' challenges concerning effective attendance policy

In Motlagomang (2012)'s study, learners' absenteeism were for be for a variety of reasons which negatively affected policy effectiveness. Generally, the behavior was a symptom of an underlying problems which included: the problem may be a personal crisis that the student had to deal with, the problem could be in the classroom and related to the teacher and other students or the learning materials. Other related problems came from the home, the neighborhood or the community. Some could be health-related, for example, hyperactive.

It is of great importance for school administrators to be acquainted with challenges that students encountered at home or community. To maintain proper discipline and regular school attendance and implement their related policies effectively, school leaders need to understand the school community and especially where students

come from and their circumstances. Many of the students come from difficult and stressful circumstances which they cannot cope with. Thus, policy formulation and implementation need to take into consideration all of these.

Students' challenges concerning effective discipline policy

The causes of student's indiscipline and irregular attendance problems can, in some instances, be traced to their inability to deal with certain circumstances. Hence, the need for a school counselor is necessary. Motlagomang (2012), conducted a study in South Africa on the challenges faced by secondary schools' principals in their implementation of school policy and found out that students were faced with numerous challenges both in school and at home. He identified the following as some of the challenges that faced students which included: the family conflict between parents and siblings, poverty in the home leading to stress and tension, Violence in the neighborhood and fear for personal safety in the home, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and inability to cope with the physical and emotional changes of adolescence. Some were peer pressure to rebel against the school, feelings of alienation and isolation, inadequately prepared teachers, teachers with negative attitudes, under-resourced schools in dilapidated conditions. Also, bullying and intimidation either within or outside of the school, being ridiculed in class, being different (accent, culture, religion) and then ridiculed or isolated at school and death or divorce in the family were identified.

As a result, students who have experienced any of the above situations may feel unhappy and frustrated in school. An unhappy or frustrated student is unlikely to be present in the school or focused in the class and as such, be more likely to display

disruptive behavior, have little or no motivation, low self-esteem, may lack concentration or become pathetic.

Approaches to implement discipline and attendance policies

Just as there are many causes of discipline and irregular attendance in schools, there are equally multiple preventions and early intervention strategies. The problem arises with assessing a specific school's environment or a specific student's discipline or attendance pattern and determining which one of the approaches to use since there is no complete formula to follow in dealing with students' discipline and irregular attendance problems. Mtsweni, J. (2009) in his study on the role of educators in the management of school discipline and attendance in South Africa provided some suggestions to combat the problem of discipline and attendance. With some cautions, they can be applied to the Liberian situation in their edited and paraphrased form below.

Well-developed policies

A school policy is indispensable in the effective management of attendance problems among students because it guides decision making, ensures the credibility of administrative structure and provides a code of conduct that guides students' attendance. So then, in every school setting, it is essential to have a well-developed school policy regarding student discipline and attendance. And, of equal relevance is that everyone, especially students, teachers and parents, must have an understanding of the attendance policy and that the policy is consistently enforced. Policy on discipline and attendance policy needs to be regularly updated to reflect the current circumstances of the community that the school serves.

When developing a new policy, it is crucial to know what the causes of indiscipline and irregular attendance are in the school or the community. This would include teachers', parents' and students' perspectives of discipline and attendance and influence from the community. Additionally, it is recommended for school to have a policy with clear definitions of excused and unexcused absences, type of problems that constitute indiscipline and procedures and consequences. In the context of the school, sound and reasonable attendance policy is relevant because it sets clear standards and high expectations for students. The goal is to foster self-discipline in students and personal investment in a positive school climate and community.

The involvement of parents in policy matters

Parents are the most influential when it comes to getting their children to school and preparing them to be discipline. Hence, it would seem then that developing a relationship with parents built on trust and respect is essential. School administrators need develop this relationship by involving parents to reduce indiscipline and irregular attendance in schools. One of the ways is to communicate with every parent through phone, mail, newsletters, or in person and this gets attendance improved. Another strategy is allowing parents to have a designated contact person to talk with about discipline and attendance problems

School environment

Students are motivated to succeed when they are surrounded by a positive school environment. As such, school professionals need to provide a safe environment that does not only recognizes student successes, but one that challenges their individual learning style regularly.

Incentive or reward programs

Studies show that schools that rewarding students for good behavior such as being discipline and attending schools regularly have improved discipline and attendance records. Students are rewarded when they have perfect attendance for a predetermined amount of time in class and respect for school rules and regulations. The rewards vary from school to school and it depends on what the school wants to achieve. Some schools enlist the help of the community by getting local restaurants to donate free meals to students, provide school materials like exercise books, uniform, tuition-free, etc,

Community involvement

The school is a social institution entrusted with the responsibility of continuing and supplementing the process of socialization begun at home. As an institution, the school has to have rules and regulations which facilitate socialization and effective learning. Since schools form part of the social structures that are found within communities and are, thus, influenced by both communities and the context of their environment, they do not operate in isolation. Hence, to understand what is happening in the school, one needs to also understand what is happening in the community that the school serves. Edwards (2008) confirmed that the community in which a school is located has a significant role in promoting school discipline and attendance. Community awareness about school policy to support the parents and students is very important in the implementation of policy on discipline and attendance in schools.

Although Mtsweni, J. (2009), proposed that well-developed policy, parental involvement, school environment, and community involvement help to reduce problem behavior and promote policy effectiveness, the study by Hausiku (2017) in Namibia on

evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation process of the inclusive education policy also revealed that the supervisory role of administration and policy evaluation play a significant part in promoting effective school policy.

Consistent policy supervision by administrators and teachers

The School leaders influence the success or failure that students may experience as well as the schools' disciplinary and attendance climate. The diverse cultures and complex histories of students have contributed to the necessity of a multi-faceted approach in understanding the causes and contexts of inappropriate behavior in schools. In view of this, the supervision of policy through follow-up of every aspect of students' behavior in school, by school leaders is imperative. Since the school policy serves as the guideline at the school, it is an essential cornerstone and it is indispensable. Without ensuring that the school policy is supervised and effectively implemented, the school cannot hope to achieve the desired students' discipline, attendance or achievement.

Moreover, Jacobs (2009) conceded that for the smooth operation of the school, policies needed to be emphasized and supervised. This implies that all the school stakeholders should be familiarized with the school policies, procedures, support services and resources. Administrative supervision matters greatly in achieving effective policy. Administrative supervision requires enhanced communication through protocol designed by the school.

For teachers to supervise school policy effectively, they need to be well informed of the policy. That was why Apte and Kamakar (2007) were of the view that effective supervision of school policy needed to be enhanced by professional development of teachers, where they are time to time, familiarized with professional skills for

communicating within the school community. That means, school management should make a sincere effort to develop an extensive programme for preparing administrators and teachers for the effective implementation of the school policy that improves discipline and attendance in schools.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of school policies

Policies are normally thought of as the strategic statements that provide a broader context for change and articulate a vision that motivates people to change and coordinates otherwise disparate efforts within the system and across sectors of education. Policies can also be operational: these are the action plans, programmes, or projects that provide the mechanism and resources by which the vision of the school is expected to be realized. Thus, Wagner et. al (2005) argued that the use of policy required monitoring and evaluation. The researchers explained that M&E played crucial role in unlocking the system and it needed to be an integral component of any planned policy for education. For him, it was necessary and if it were done frequently enough in the school setting, adjustments could be made in the implementation plan to increase the likelihood that the policy would ultimately succeed.

To follow the progress of policy implementation, James and Miller (2005) suggested that monitoring and evaluation should be factored into planning before a policy starts and they should provide an overview of the processes, tasks and outcomes that were needed to implement successful M&E of school policy. This included appropriate, realistic and measurable indicators which needed be used to monitor outputs and outcomes. They advised that major stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, etc) needed

to be identified and involved in making monitoring and evaluation decisions to avoid possible problems.

Knowledge gap

It is widely acknowledged that several studies have been carried out on policies formulation and implementation with a focus on discipline and attendance in the secondary schools, both local and international. Some of the studies have been carried out on; management of students' discipline in secondary schools, Student Discipline and Motivation and Maintaining discipline in schools. Effect of non-attendance on students' academic performance, administrative role in managing non-attendance and many more. The researchers, however, only attempted to establish the level of discipline and attendance in schools without paying specific attention how effective were the policies in dealing with discipline and attendance and this called for the current study. The question was how effective were the school policies in improving discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia?

However, a critical review of the above studies did not provide a clear answer to the question raised. Much as the researchers had studied the way school policies on discipline and attendance control the students' behavior in schools, a gap remained undiscovered on how the administration of school policies was effective in reducing indiscipline and irregular attendance. This study thus investigated the existing relationship between the effectiveness of school policies on discipline and attendance improvement in secondary schools in Liberia.

Moreover, these studies laid much emphasis on the issue of discipline and attendance without key attention on the role of effective school policies, yet it is the

effectiveness of policies that may enhance discipline and attendance as they remain a problem in our secondary schools in Liberia. Another pitfall evident from the studies reviewed was the failure to focus on the challenges facing school administration in implementing school policies and assessing if the policies in schools were effective. This study therefore intended at filling this gap.

Finally, it should be noted that most of the studies reviewed above were carried out in different geographical settings. For example, the studies by Ndeto (2013) in Kenya and Loto (2019) in the Philippines and many more, which are different countries from Liberia. In all the reviewed studies, there appeared to be a gap in terms of examining the effectiveness of school policies in improving discipline and attendance in secondary schools. As the result of this, there was a need to assess the effectiveness of school policies on discipline and attendance within the Liberian geographical sitting.

Conclusion of Chapter Two

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on the effectiveness of school discipline and attendance policies to set the research context, laid the foundation upon which this research is based, and defined the academic and research areas of relevance to the research focus. Research evidence has indicated that many schools around Africa and the world have made tremendous progress in maintaining effective policies on discipline and attendance. However, the literature reviewed has shown that Liberia were still far behind the process of effective policy implementation given the numerous challenges they faced. The next chapter dealt with the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. This chapter presented the methodology and the procedures necessary to attain the set objectives for the study. Thus, it discussed the research design, participants, sampling techniques, location of the study, research instruments, procedures, ethical issues and summary of the chapter.

The participants

Five secondary schools were selected for this study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the five secondary schools that participated in the study. The study targeted one hundred sixty-seven participants which included five principal participants, five vice principal participants, five dean of students participants and one hundred fifty-two teacher participants from the five sampled schools.

Participants demographic included gender, age, working experience and the highest level of academic qualification, were asked in this study. The inclusion of these variables in the study was appropriate because it revealed a full picture and enabled a clear understanding of the background characteristics of every participant. The researcher found it pertinent to present such information to understand what kind of participants the researcher interacted with. Some characteristics like gender provided a bearing on the way teachers handled disciplinary and attendance issues in the school setting. Work experience helped to determine the participants' exposure to disciplinary and attendance issues. The researcher solicited information on the academic qualification of participants

as it had an impact on the way they read, interpreted and understood the discipline and attendance procedures as well as drafting policies.

The participants' gender characteristics indicated that males made up 71% while females made up 29% of the total participants. This could be attributed to the fact that more males work in secondary school than females. Concerning the age range of administrator and teacher participants, the data showed that the majority of were the age range of 41-45. With their educational qualifications, 92.2% of the administrator and teacher participants had Bachelor qualification across the five schools. Regarding working their experience, the administrator and teacher participants had varying lengths of experience. However, the majority of them worked in their current schools between 6-10 years.

Research design

The research design for the study was a qualitative case study using a descriptive survey design which allowed the use of questionnaires, interview guide and documents analyses. Fouche and Delport (2011) defined research design as a plan which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed. A qualitative research design was deemed appropriate to this study because it facilitated adequate data collection and interpretation.

Study location

The main site of this study was the Barnersville community in the Southern part of Monrovia, the political capital of Liberia. According to Creswell (2013), the context of a study placed the case in its setting. Setting the location of this study confirmed

Creswell's (2013) observation that qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field where participants experienced the issue under investigation. The location was selected on the principle that no study of the same nature had been conducted in this area. Moreover, the community was favorable given that the researcher had spent quite a number of years there as a teacher and an administrator. Hence, he had some unique insight and experience of how schools were operated in the said community, and that made it more practical to gather relevant information related to the subject matter.

Research Instruments

The researcher used questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis guide for data collection. The instruments were developed by the researcher because of the absence of an existing questionnaire that addressed discipline and attendance policies effectiveness. The questionnaire was used to solicit qualitative and quantitative data, the interview guide was used to collect data from principal participants, vice principal participants and dean of students participants and the document analysis on discipline and attendance was conducted using a checklist to support the data collected from questionnaire and interview.

Questionnaire

A self-developed questionnaire titled Assessing the Effectiveness of Discipline and Attendance Policies Questionnaire (AEDAPQ) was administered to seek the opinions of the schools' administrators and teachers about the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. The survey consisted of Sections A, B, C, D, E and F. In all, there were 90 closed and open-ended items. Section A contained

items 1 to 5 required the participants to provide their demographical information and Section B, which contained items 6 to 9, was about policies availability. Section C which consisted of items 10 through 26 dealt with policy effectiveness; Section D, items 27 through 55 treated the approaches used in implementing the policy; Section E, items 56 through 76 was more about challenges faced by schools in implementing policy effectively.

Finally, section F, items 77 through 90 solicited for solutions to implementing effective policy. The questionnaire sections C, D and E made use of Likert Scale. In section C, the points from one to five represented serious, moderate, minor, neutral and not a problem, respectively. While in sections D and E, points one to five represented strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree, in that order. Selecting an appropriate Likert Scale for this research was very important to the results the researcher hoped to obtain. The reason for selecting this particular Likert Scale was to allow participants to make a choice and think about what they believe. Section F was a list of options that requested participants to recommend the way forward to implement effective school policy on discipline and attendance.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out if the schools had discipline and attendance policies in place, if the policies were effective, the approaches adopted in implementing the policy, challenges facing the effective implementation of the policies and recommendations to have an effective policy (**See Appendix A**).

The data churned out by the questionnaire were input into SPSS version24 to generate descriptive information such as the tables, charts, frequencies and percentages. While the tables and charts gave a summary of the variables measured, the frequencies

and percentages gave quantitative data on which analyses of various variables such as strategies for implementing school policy and challenges to implementing school policy were based. The outcomes of the analyses helped the researcher to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Interview guide

The study made use of an interview. According to Ogula (2005), an interview is a conversation in which one person; the interviewer seeks responses for a particular purpose from another person, the interviewee. In this research, a semi-formal interview was used to collect information from the principal participants, vice principal participant and dean of students participants who were directly involved in the implementation of school policies. Interviews were used to inquire about policy implementation and its effectiveness at the five schools, including approaches, challenges the participants faced and recommendation to improve effective policy. The items in the interview guide were designed in such a way that they provided the participants with the freedom to answer the research questions as efficiently as possible and with maximum flexibility. The interview schedule comprised of 18 items. Items 1 to 3 were about personal data, while items 4 to 18 were on the approaches, challenges and possible solutions to effective policy.

Content analysis was used to discuss the interviews the conducted. The analysis included bringing together the emerging themes that were given in the same or similar way by the principal participants, vice principal participants and dean of students participants. The results of the interviews were used to support the information generated from the questionnaires. (See **Appendix B**).

Document analysis

Documents such as discipline and attendance handbooks were consulted to obtain the kinds of policies used by the sampled schools and to find out if the policy documents had the essential components expected in a policy. The use of documentary review enabled the researcher to record some information connected to students discipline and attendance problems and the suggested strategies put in place to curb indiscipline and irregular attendance of students in schools.

There were other reasons for the review of the documents which were as follow:

- a. The policy documents were reviewed to have an understanding of what was expected from the administrator and teacher participants during the implementation process and to determine if the policy guidelines were closely followed as stated.
- b. The policy documents were used as a link to what was written on discipline and attendance and what actually happened in the working environment in the five schools.
- c. The policy documents were used as part of data collection method to have an additional perspective from which to view the research phenomenon and to evaluate the existing policies from the five schools related to discipline and attendance management.
- d. Finally, the policy documents analyses were meant to corroborate the information gathered from the questionnaire and interviews thus improving the trustworthiness of the findings.

By so doing, a checklist 15 items on discipline and a checklist of 16 items on attendance were designed to find out if the schools' policy documents had the essential elements for dealing with discipline and attendance matters. Also, the checklist was used to verify that the required elements needed in discipline and attendance policies to enhance smooth management of the school were available and clearly stated. The discipline and attendance policies were fully studied and with the use of checklists, the researcher noted down the essential elements that were found in the policies and other elements that were not stated in the documents. Thereafter, emerging themes from the checklists were brought together in tables to have an idea of what was available and what was not available in the documents across the five schools. (See Appendix C & D)

Procedure

The data was collected as follows:

- A total of 15 (fifteen) administrator participants (Principal, Vice principal and Dean of students) filled out the survey questionnaire that assessed the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies.
- A total of 126 (one hundred and twenty-six) teacher participants from the five schools filled out the survey questionnaire that assessed the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies.
- Face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with the principal participants, vice principal participants and dean of students participants from the five selected schools.
- The administrator participants made available the school discipline and attendance policies documents to the researcher for review.

Measures for Ethical Protection

Ethical principles are centered on four fundamental overlapping contemplations; that no harm is done to participants, that there is informed consent, that there is no invasion of privacy and that there is no deception, portraying something to be what it is not (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). It was paramount for the researcher to give serious thought to ethical aspects in every stage of this study because any action regarded as unethical could have jeopardized the study's authenticity. In connection to this, the researcher duly informed the participants in the study that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to omit answers to any particular questions if they so desired. This was in line with Trochim (2006) who argued that voluntary participation requires that respondents in the study are not pressurized into participating in the research. The study also considered the issues of confidentiality and informed consent.

Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were described. It also presented a detailed account of how the research work was carried out, survey development and administration. The researcher also described the procedures employed in collecting the data to arrive at answers to the research questions. The ethical measures which were taken into consideration before and during the research were also outlined. The next chapter presented the results and discussion that derived from the questionnaires, interviews and documents analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools. The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology. This chapter presented the results and discussion of the data that emanated from the questionnaires, interview guide and documents analyses about the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies.

Characteristic of the data

The data collection for this study was carried out by a research assistant in Liberia. There were 167 principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants in this study. Of the 167, 141 completed and returned their surveys, which constituted 84.43% response rate. There was a failure rate of 26 (15.57%) participants. Nevertheless, this response rate was considered very good to provide useful data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observed that a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% is good, while 70% rate is very good. This concurs with Bailey (2000)'s assertion that a response rate of 50% is adequate, while a response rate greater than 70% is very good. This implies that based on this assertion, the response rate in this case of 84.43% was therefore very good to make general conclusion.

Similarly, out of the fifteen planned interviews, three principal participants, three vice principal participants and four dean of students participants were interviewed which brought in total ten interviews. Also, the policies checklists on discipline and attendance were administered in the five schools as planned.

The following research questions were used throughout the study:

Question 1: Did policies on discipline and attendance exist in schools?

Question 2: How effective were the policies on discipline and attendance?

Question 3: What were the approaches used to implement the policies?

Question 4: What were the challenges facing the implementation of effective policy?

Question 5: What recommendations should be made to implement an effective policy?

Research Question 1: Did policies of attendance and discipline exist in school?

Research question one was: Did policies on discipline and attendance exist in school? The purpose of this question was to verify if the five secondary schools had policies in place and if the policies possessed the requirements to deal with discipline and attendance matters among students.

The existence of discipline and attendance policies in schools

From the data available, it was revealed that the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants from the five schools agreed that they had policy documents in place at their respective schools to deal with discipline and attendance. Information on the availability of policy documents was collected by the use of questionnaire, interview guide and content analysis of discipline and attendance policies. However, despite of the presence of school policy on discipline and attendance, indiscipline and irregular school attendance among students were still a problem in the sampled schools.

During the interviews with all the principal participants, it was confirmed that each school had a policy on discipline and attendance. Similarly, all of the dean of students participants that were interviewed agreed that effective teaching and learning could not take place if the school did not have the policy to guide the administrative affairs of the schools. However, they identified several common shortcomings and directly linked them to the challenges mentioned in the subsequent sections. These shortcomings included:

- a) The policies did not indicate how punishment should be directed to students

- b) Teachers were not given any training in terms of how to adapt to implement school policy concerning students' behaviors.
- c) Policies did not outline consequences when rules and regulations are broken
- d) Support from the Ministry of Education in terms of clear national policy structures on discipline and attendance to guide school administrators, is lacking.
- e) Awareness and understanding on the part of teachers, students and parents were lacking. By implication, this limited the effectiveness of school policy.

The interview results concurred with the document analyses, which also confirmed that all the schools had policies' handbooks on discipline and attendance. These results were also in agreement with document analysis guide which showed that the policies documents in the five schools lacked the essential elements. These included consequences if policy was violated, policy revision plan, policy objectives, strategies, roles and responsibilities, types of discipline, types of absences, procedure of complaints, etc. Table 1 below revealed administrator participants' and teacher participants' responses on the policy available across schools.

Table 1

Distribution of administrator and teacher participants' responses on whether there exist discipline and attendance policies in school.

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 141 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 141 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The results in Table1 showed that 141 (100%) of the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants agreed that there existed discipline and attendance policies in their respective schools. Even though there was a general acceptance amongst all participants that policies existed in schools, the question remained, were the policies effective to maintain discipline and attendance among secondary school students?

The findings illustrated in Table 1 were in agreement with those of other studies which revealed that schools ought to have discipline and attendance policies. For instance, Motlagomang (2012), investigated the challenges faced by principals in the implementation of discipline policy in secondary schools in South Africa. His results showed that in most of the South African schools, policies were available in the school system, yet, administrators were still faced with numerous challenges in dealing with students' discipline and attendance matters. The results also corroborated the findings of Ndeto (2013). In her study into the effectiveness of school rules and regulations in enhancing discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya, Ndeto indicated that even though Kenyan secondary schools had discipline and attendance policies in place, there were still problems confronting school principals concerning discipline and attendance in schools.

Similarly, Salifu and Agbenyega (2016) conducted a study on the effectiveness of discipline policy within Secondary schools in Ghana and discovered that though there were policies in schools, problems of discipline and attendance still existed because policies were not effective. The same situation was maintained by Kwayu (2014), when he carried out a study on the perceptions of secondary school students on discipline

policy in promoting acceptable behavior in Tanzania. He found out that even though there were discipline and attendance policies in several Tanzanian secondary schools, administrators were still battling with indiscipline problems which included lateness, absenteeism, alcoholism, cultism, fighting, cheating, bullying and many more among secondary school' students. The findings were supported by Ngwokabuenui (2015) who found the same problem in Cameroon in his study on students' discipline, types and causes. He observed that there were many discipline problems existed in schools in Cameroon despite the availability of school policies which were not effective.

The extent of participants' awareness on discipline and attendance policies

This section aimed to find out if the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants knew what the policy intended to address and if there were any policy gaps, which links the availability of discipline and attendance policies at their respective schools. Table 2 presented the views of the principal principals, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants' views on their awareness of the policy in their respective schools. The results showed that the majority of the teacher participants were not highly aware of the policies.

According to the interviews with principal participants, the following explanations emerged to clarify on why the majority of the teacher participants had limited knowledge about the school discipline and attendance policies.

Firstly, schools had no means to disseminate discipline and attendance policies booklets among students since there was no budget allocation from the Ministry of education. During the interview with the principal participants, he indicated that he had a

copy of the policy and stressed that every school teacher needed to have a copy of the policy to create awareness and to help them in taking decisions.

Secondly, the proper orientation of new teachers and students about school policies at the beginning of every academic year was lacking. It was believed that this method could help to create awareness among teachers and students about discipline and attendance policies.

Thirdly, communication with parents was limited, thereby limiting the cooperation of parents which could promote the effectiveness of school policy. When they are not aware of school policies, it becomes rare for them to follow the rules and regulations that guide their children education.

The last finding was that, the administrative structure was not well defined since school discipline and attendance policies lacked roles and responsibilities. Because roles and responsibilities were not clearly stated in policy documents, the procedures in dealing with discipline and attendance issues were difficult which contributed to a lack of policy awareness and ineffectiveness.

In the interview with one of the vice principal participants, when asked about his strategies of implementing school policies, it was obvious that the administrators had a limited teachers' and students' awareness on the different contents of school discipline and attendance policies. The administrator was quoted as saying;

“We do not receive funding from the Ministry of Education for mass production of school policies to disseminate among teachers, students and parents so as to be conversant with all the information written in the policy booklet. Also, most secondary school students are usually in

the adolescence stage where they develop a rebellious attitude towards that which is meant for their own therefore good and cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of helping school administrators to deal with school discipline and attendance matters”.

The teachers have a very essential role to play in the implementation of policy in the school environment. Loto (2019) argued that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers determine to a greater extent the rate at which school policy is implemented into the school environment because they use it daily. Enforcing discipline, attendance and keeping peace and order in school is the concern of all school teachers. They need to be empowered to see that the rules and regulations of the school are enforced and incorporated in every action of the students’ school life (Loto 2019, p.38).

Table 2

Distribution of Participants’ response to their awareness of school policies.

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Very highly aware | 19 | 13.5 | 13.6 | 13.6 |
| Highly aware | 5 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 17.1 |
| Moderately aware | 85 | 60.3 | 60.7 | 77.9 |
| Not aware | 31 | 22.0 | 22.1 | 100.0 |
| Total | 140 | 99.3 | 100.0 | |
| Missing System | 1 | 0.7 | | |
| Total | 141 | 100.0 | | |

Table 2 demonstrated that most of the participants, 85 (60.7%) were moderately aware of the different contents of their school discipline and attendance policies, followed by 31 (22.1%) who were not aware. The minority of the participants 19 (13.6%)

and 5 (3.6%) were very highly aware and highly aware of the content of the schools' policies in terms of discipline and attendance, correspondingly. Conversely, the majority of the participants being "moderately aware" of the various contents of the school policies was not the best option in the school system. Basically, contents of school policies were designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions, and all activities that took place within the boundaries set in day to day operation with regards to school discipline and attendance. It was imperative that school authorities ensured that all administrators, teachers, students as well as parents were made highly aware if not very highly aware of the contents of the school policies.

The findings in Table 2 were similar to the results of Loto (2019)' study in the Philippines when she found out that for school policy to be effectively implemented, there was need for total awareness among teachers, students and parents. Her argument was supported by that of Ogbiji, and Oko (2011) who carried out a similar study on the extent of awareness programme about school policies among private and public secondary schools in the Cross-River State of Nigeria. Their finding testified that a high level of awareness of school policy had a significant impact on achieving the effectiveness of school discipline and attendance policies

The same view about the importance of policy awareness was upheld by Loto (2019), who maintained that, without discipline policy being made "very highly aware" to teachers and students, there was limited assurance of achieving effectiveness. She argued that if teachers were made highly aware, aside from other school authorities, they were placed in the best position to orient the students because of their direct and daily contact with the students. Ideally, teachers are authorized persons to disseminate

information to students as well as with parents and as such, they should be very highly aware of every portion found in the school discipline and attendance policies. Teachers and other school authorities are tasked to discipline students because it is mandated by the government to teach them how to become a productive individual. As it is stated in the Liberian Education Reform Act of 2011 (Article VIII, Section 3) that all educational institutions shall teach the rights and duties of the citizen, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character and personal discipline.

Similarly, Fekadu (2018)'s study on the impact of school policy on students' perception toward promoting good behavior in Sabian secondary schools in Ethiopia, showed that teachers' and students' awareness and a better understanding of school policy (rules and regulations) would increase the effectiveness of policies in promoting discipline and attendance. Awareness of teachers on the different sections of the school policy is very paramount since they are the implementer of school rules and regulations. They are the connecting "bridge" of school to the community as they are responsible to teach and educate students and parents about the rules and regulations of the school. When the teacher starts to educate students on the rules and regulations of the school, he/she is also starting to build discipline awareness in them. It was in this connection that Nwankwo (2008) pointed out that good discipline was as a result of good teaching and to do this, awareness of school rules and regulations needed to start first with the class teacher.

Revision of discipline and attendance policies documents

To understand the availability of discipline and attendance policies, participants were asked about how often were their respective schools' policies revised. The principal

participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants were asked to provide their answers using the scale ranging from 4 to 1 in which 4 for 'Always', 3 for 'Sometimes', 2 for 'Rarely' and 1 for 'Never'.

The answer to this section was obtained through a questionnaire, interview schedule and policy checklists. While no two interviews were the same, reoccurring themes emerged through the 10 interviews. The information gathered from three principal participants and three vice principal participants through interviews indicated the schools lacked reevaluation plan. It was further revealed among all of the principal participants that activities such as monitoring of the policy like a monthly visit of the classrooms, meeting with the teachers, various deans, parents and students to track the progress of school discipline and attendance policies implementation were not carried out by schools' administrators.

From the document analyses across the five schools, one of the common limitations of the policies was revision. All the policy handbooks that were reviewed lacked supervision and revision plans. This showed that in all the schools under study, policies were not supervised or elevated which might have had an impact on the effectiveness of managing discipline and attendance policy.

The results shown in Table 3 were the responses of administrator participants and teacher participants on policy revision. Ninety-nine (70.2%) of the participants indicated that policies were not been revised. From this percentage, one can deduce that the current policies were outdated to meet the current needs of the community that the school serves and this calls for school administrators' urgent attention because the absence of policy

revision is capable of leading the implementation process into failure if not completely crash.

Table 3

Distribution of Participants' response to discipline and attendance policies evaluation

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Always | 3 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Sometimes | 11 | 7.8 | 7.8 | 9.9 |
| Rarely | 28 | 19.9 | 19.9 | 29.8 |
| Never | 99 | 70.2 | 70.2 | 100.0 |
| Total | 141 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Moreover, 28 (19.9) of the participants indicated that policies were rarely evaluated, while 11 (9.8%) and 3 (2.1%) of the participants indicated that policies were 'sometimes' and 'always' evaluated respectively. From the available statistics, one can infer that policies were not been monitored and consistently evaluated based on the majority opinion.

The findings of the study were in agreement with of that of Korbi (2014) who noted that policy effectiveness in most Tanzanian secondary schools were confronted with lack of monitoring or revision. He argued that monitoring and evaluation of school policy were pertinent and needed serious attention by schools' authorities because of their relevance in determining what works and what does not work concerning policy effectiveness.

Other researchers in separate studies have proven that evaluation was relevant to the implementation of effective school policy on discipline and attendance. For instance, Wester (2014)'s study on policy evaluation in ten secondary schools in Kenya confirmed

that schools had disciplinary problems because policy on discipline was not given due attention in respect to administrative supervision and evaluation. The same was reported by Pauline (2012) in Ghana. He investigated the challenges facing schools' administrators in secondary schools and found out that lack of evaluation, supervision and implementing changes in policies were the main source of discipline problems in schools in the country. His result is supported by Halley (2014), who also recommended in his study on the role of school administrators in the implementation of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in the Gambia, that schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education needed to evaluate policies regularly and come out with new ideas that would improve the learning environment of the 21st century youth around the world.

By extension, it was imperative to note that a school discipline and attendance policies aim to resolve a problem that has been defined as academically relevant to the school arena. Once a school policy is being programmed and implemented, this policy is or should be subject to systematic evaluation. During this final stage of the policy domain, the school administrators focus on the effects generated by the objective measures. In this view, it entails establishing whether the benefits and costs of the policy, including where applicable whether students have effectively changed or modified their behaviour in line with what is expected of them through the policy. In summary, policy evaluation involves the empirical testing of the validity on which the policy is based. Thus, the analysis concerns both the relevance of action and the scope of its practical application.

Conclusion of research question one

Research question one provided an answer to the availability of policy documents in secondary schools in Liberia. Results obtained from survey questionnaires, interviews and document review indicated that there existed discipline and attendance policies in all the sampled schools that were investigated.

According to the findings from the questionnaires as shown in Table 1, participants were all (100%) in agreement that there existed discipline and attendance policies in their respective schools. It was revealed that though policies existed in schools, they were outdated because they were not revised over a long time. While it was true that discipline and attendance policies existed in schools, majority of the teacher participants were moderately aware of the contents of the existing policies which could relate to teachers' inability to implement policies effectively. Also, it was reported that school policies were not regularly evaluated.

The general findings in this section were supported by the views of other researchers. For instance, Ndeto (2013) confirmed that though there existed discipline policy in Kenyan secondary schools just as the case in Liberia, there were problems of students' behavior in secondary schools. Similarly, the lack of policy awareness did not go in line with that of Ogbiji, and Oko (2011) who recommended that awareness of school policy had a significant impact on achieving its effectiveness and thus, awareness should be considered prominent among other administrative responsibilities. Next, the researcher investigated the extent to which the current policies were effective to minimize indiscipline and irregular attendance among Liberian schools' students.

Research Question 2: How effective were the policies on discipline and attendance?

Research question two was to determine the extent to which the policies were effective in dealing with discipline and attendance. Based on the data generated from the questionnaires and interviews, the majority of the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants indicated that the policies were ineffective. However, following the statistics, minority of the total participants held the view that the policies were highly effective, effective and less effective.

From the result shown in Table 4, a considerable number of administrator participants and teacher participants 97 (68.8%) expressed that policies were ineffective. Also, from the interviews that were conducted with the administrator participants, it was ascertained that some of them were not even sure whether school policies were effective or not effective. One dean of students' participant in an interview lamented on the situation as follow: "Our children today are difficult to predict in their behavior. They come to school early today and tomorrow they come late. One can hardly tell why they want to be in school". He strongly believed that the "job of an administrator is hard and such jobs need an individual with patience and skills so that you cannot quickly jump to conclusion on issues you are not sure of". He further concluded that patience is also required to reconcile individual differences among teachers and students or to calm parents when they are unhappy about some school issues regarding students' lateness, absenteeism and other discipline problems.

In schools where policy is ineffective, discipline and attendance remain a problem which at the result gives little chance to students in receiving an education that meets

their needs. Conversely, while the majority of the teacher participants articulated that school policies were ineffective, few administrators who were interviewed were consistent in their views that policies were effective. Table 4 below indicated participants' responses on the effectiveness of the policy.

Table 4

Distribution of Participants' response to discipline and attendance policies effectiveness

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Effective | 8 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| Less effective | 24 | 17.0 | 17.0 | 22.7 |
| Ineffective | 97 | 68.8 | 68.8 | 91.5 |
| Neutral | 12 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 141 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The data in Table 4 showed the responses of principals, vice principals, deans of students and teachers across the five schools. The data revealed that a significant number of respondents, 97 (68.5%) indicated that the school policies were ineffective, 24 (17%) participants showed that policies were less effective, 8 (5.7%) agreed that policies were effective, while 12 (8.5%) of the participants across the five schools were neutral. No participant across the five schools indicated "Highly effective".

Although all efforts have been made by schools to create discipline and attendance policies as authorized by the Ministry of Education, discipline and attendance policies ineffectiveness called for attention among parents and educators in Liberia (Norman, 2012). This was the same problem found in Kenya where students indiscipline become a problem to many state schools. It was in view of this that Githui (2013) needed to find a better remedy when he researched the influence of teachers' communication

strategies on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya. The same situation about school policy's ineffectiveness leading to increased cases of students' indiscipline and irregular attendance became rampant in South Africa. For example, according to Nene (2013), in her study conducted on "The challenges of managing learner discipline: the case of two schools in South Africa", there are reports of a sharp increase in the number of cases of learner indiscipline and attendance issues in schools.

Not limited to Kenyan's and South African's schools, there were cases of policies' ineffectiveness leading to students' indiscipline in secondary schools in Uganda. Ofoyuru and Okema (2011) investigated into the strategies of managing students' discipline in secondary schools of in Uganda and recommended that school policy on discipline and other areas like attendance needed to be made comprehensive and not just to prohibit corporal punishment but were to prescribe other strategies of managing students' discipline and attendance among young people.

The extent to which indiscipline was a problem in the schools

This section was to assess the status of discipline in secondary schools. This required the study to determine the frequency of the different forms of indiscipline that were prevalent in the five institutions. The perceived common forms were assessed by the participants on a five-point Likert scale with the choices: serious problem; a moderate problem; a minor problem; not a problem or neutral.

The majority of the administrator participants and teacher participants concurred that there was a lack of discipline in schools. Obtained from Table 5 are the responses of the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants. On whether physical conflicts among students was a problem in

schools, 56.8% of the all the participants felt it was serious, 34.5% indicated that it was moderate, while 8.6% felt that it was a minor problem. At the same time, 22.7% of the participants observed that stealing items among students on campus was a serious problem while 76.6 indicated that it was moderate problem.

On the level of vandalism, 57.4% of the participants felt it was a serious problem, 31.9% indicated that it was a moderate problem, while 10.6% agreed it was a minor problem. On issues related to drugs and substance abuse among students on campus, 53.2% of the total participants indicated that it was a serious problem, 6.4% felt it was a moderate problem, 22.7% showed that it was a minor problem, 14.2% was neutral while 3.5% felt that it was not a problem. When participants were asked to what extent the use of mobile of by students was problem, 83.7% indicated that it was a serious problem, while 16.3% felt that it was a moderate problem. Regarding physical abuse of teachers, 54.6% indicated that it was a moderate problem, while 45.4% felt it was a minor problem. Another common form of indiscipline was disrespect for teachers and other staff members rated 72.3% felt it was a serious problem, while 27.7% indicated that it was a moderate problem. Disrespect means arrogance and rudeness to other members of the teaching staff and other authorities.

In respect to the prevalence of disruptive behavior in class/campus, 87.9% indicated that it was a serious problem, 7.1% said it was a moderate problem, 2.8% felt it was a minor problem, while 1.4% indicated that it was not a problem. On whether there was problem of students' refusal of wear school uniform, 1.4% said it was serious, 33.3% indicated that it was a moderate problem, while 63.8% felt it as minor. When participants were asked to what extent were students bullying and intimidating other students, 41.8%

indicated that it was a serious problem, 22.7% indicated that it was a moderate problem, while 31.2% felt it was a minor problem. Finally, on whether there was a problem of irresponsible sexual relations among students, 49.1% indicated that it was a serious problem, 25.8% said it was a moderate problem, 18.3% observed that it was a minor problem, 3.5% said it was not a problem, while 3.3% was neutral.

Table 5

Distribution of participants' responses on the extent of indiscipline problems in schools

| Items | Serious | Moderate | Minor | Not a problem | Neutral |
|--|---------|----------|-------|------------------|---------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Physical conflicts among students on campus. | 56.8 | 34.5 | 8.6 | | |
| Stealing items among students. | 22.7 | 76.6 | | | |
| Damaging of school property (vandalism) | 57.4 | 31.9 | 10.6 | | |
| Drugs and substance abuse | 53.2 | 6.4 | 22.7 | 14.2 | 3.5 |
| Students use of mobile phone in school | 83.7 | 16.3 | | | |
| Physical abuse of teachers | | 54.6 | 45.4 | | |
| Disrespect for teachers and other staff | 72.3 | 27.7 | | | |
| Disruptive behavior in class/campus. | 87.9 | 7.1 | 2.8 | 1.4 | |
| Students refusal to use school uniform. | 1.4 | 33.3 | 63.8 | | |
| Students bullying and intimidating other students. | 41.8 | 22.7 | 31.2 | | |
| Irresponsible sexual relations among students | 41.8 | 22.7 | 31.2 | 3.5 | 0.7 |

Even though the participants' views were divided, the overall impression from the findings is that there existed a multiple of discipline problems that affected the implementation of effective discipline policy. Ndeto (2013) was also consistent with similar findings when she conducted a study on the effectiveness of school rules and

regulations in enhancing discipline in public secondary schools in Kenya, and found out that discipline problems such as disruptive behavior, vandalism, stealing, irresponsible sexual behavior, drugs and substance abuse and respect for teachers and other staff hindered the implementation of effective policy in schools.

Njeri (2015) was also consistent with the same opinion when she found out in her study on the assessment of discipline management strategies in technical and vocational education and training institutions in Kenya, that discipline and attendance problems varied from school to school, community to community and country to country

Furthermore, the principals and deans of students from the during the interview felt that “respect for authority was a crucial factor in helping to maintain a disciplined environment” in their schools. One of the principal participants summed up the idea of good discipline as: “adherence to certain basic values and principles”. He maintained that certain aspects were non-negotiable, such as adherence to the dress code, greeting staff and respect for authority. Based on their definitions of what constitutes good behavior, all the principals admitted to varying problems with discipline at their respective schools. One of the principal participants was quite explicit and viewed discipline as a major problem at his school. he went on to say that:

“Our learners are very disruptive and we experience many discipline problems. In fact, many of the teachers are feeling very frustrated with the bad disruptive behavior of the majority of our learners. Their attendance rate is declining day by day despite the fact that there is discipline and attendance policy in the school”.

During the interview with another vice principal participant, he explained that misconduct and irregular classified as being: “disruptive in class, not listening to and obeying teachers, not wearing proper school uniform, smoking, fighting, drugs and alcohol abuse, etc”. He reported that his sentiments as follow:

“This year has been an exceptionally difficult and challenging one thus far. Students have been involved in all sorts of non-academic behavior. These include stealing, smoking, fighting, drugs, late coming to school, escaping classes, absenteeism, not wearing the proper uniform and continuously disrupting classes”

From the two policy documents that were analyzed, it was realized that consequences, when policy was violated by students, roles and responsibilities, were not stated in the handbooks which are directly linked to the effectiveness of school discipline policy.

The extent to which irregular attendance was a problem in the schools

This section aimed to assess the extent to which some attendance related problems hindered the effectiveness of the attendance policy. The results of this section were based on the questionnaire, interview. A five-point Likert scale was used to solicit opinions from principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants on whether certain attendance related issues were a serious problem; a moderate problem; a minor problem; not a problem or neutral. The results showed that there were attendance problems across the sampled schools which limited the effectiveness of attendance policy. When participants were asked on the extent of students’ lateness to school, the majority of the participants (85.8%) articulated that it was serious problem,

while 14.2% felt that it was a moderate problem. This implied that consequences for the lateness was lenient or lateness to was ignored at schools.

Similarly, on whether there as problem of students' absenteeism, 44.0% indicated that it was a serious problem, 32.6% felt that it was a minor problem, while 23.0% felt it was a minor problem. When participants were asked about the prevalence of students escaping classes, 41.3% indicated that it was a serious problem, 27.7% said it was a moderate problem, 25.1% observed that it was a minor problem, 1.4% voiced that it was not a problem and 5.0% was neutral. Finally, regarding students leaving school without permission, 44% of the participants noted that it was serious problem, 30% said it was a moderate problem, 20% observed that it was a minor problem, while 6% indicated that it was not a problem. See Table 6 below for participants' responses on the attendance related problems.

Table 6

Distribution of participants' responses on the extent of irregular attendance problems in schools

| Items | Serious % | Moderate % | Minor % | Not a problem % | Neutral % |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Students coming to school late. | 85.8 | 14.2 | | | |
| Students' absenteeism. | 44.0 | 32.6 | 23.0 | | |
| Students' escaping classes. | 41.3 | 27.7 | 25.1 | 1.4 | 5.0 |
| Students leaving school without permission | 44 | 30 | 20 | 6 | |

Although there were divergent views among participants, the results shown in Table 6 disclosed that there were attendance problems faced by schools in their effort to implement effective policy on attendance. During the interview with the dean of students participants, they all confirmed that late coming to school, escaping classes, absenteeism, not attending classes, not doing homework and assignments were challenges they faced in schools. The findings were supported by researchers such as Mugabe and Maposa (2007) who found out that the common attendance problems among secondary schools' students in Zimbabwe included truancy and late coming to school. This was also confirmed by Norman (2012), in his study about the perceptions of Liberian public-school principals on their leadership development needs in post-conflict Liberia. His study revealed that many attendance problems such as lateness, escaping classes and absenteeism were an obstacle to the smooth implementation of school discipline policy in the Liberian education system.

From the two policy documents that were analyzed, it was realized that consequences, when policy is violated by students, roles and responsibilities, were not stated in the handbooks. For instance, what are the roles of the class teacher/teacher? In relation to attendance in the school setting, responsibilities of a class teacher/teacher among others are as follow:

- a. A class teacher who has reason to believe that a student is absent from a class without a valid reason must report such absence to the school authority.
- b. A teacher is responsible for making the class register, maintaining it accurately and reporting it to the school office for accountability.

- c. A class teacher must inform the school authority when a student is absent without explanation for three consecutive school days and must draw the authority's attention to repeated absences so that matters may be followed up with the parents in an appropriate matter.
- d. A teacher is a leader of his class and takes the responsibility of misbehavior of students. He/she must ensure that students are reminded of students' rules and regulations to maintain peace and order.

However, if roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, students and parents are not clearly identified and consequences for breaking rules and regulations are not clearly specified or stated, management of attendance would be difficult. In this study, sampled schools did not have roles and responsibilities spelt out in their policy handbooks, and consequences for violating rules and regulations were not stated, which might have been one of the reasons that affected attendance policy effectiveness.

Conclusion of research question two

Different aspects of policy effectiveness that were assessed revealed that some discipline and attendance problems hindered the effectiveness of school policy. There were a variety of responses on how effective were the discipline and attendance policies in the five sampled schools. According to the statistics provided, it was confirmed that discipline and attendance policies were not effective. Several behavioral problems which existed in secondary schools and hindered the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies were identified by participants. The principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants cited lateness, absenteeism, possession of mobile phones by students, fighting, irresponsible sexual

relations, bullying and intimidating other students and escaping classes. In the next section, the strategies/approaches used in implementing school policy on discipline and attendance were discussed.

Research Question 3: What were the approaches used in implementing school discipline and attendance policies?

Research question three was set to solicit information about the main approaches that were used by schools in the implementation of discipline and attendance policies in schools. Questionnaires and Interview schedule were used to solicit information from the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants.

Approaches used by schools to implement discipline policy

The findings derived from is section were based on the survey questionnaires and interviews with the administrator participants and teacher participants. The Information gathered showed that schools used different strategies to ensure effective implementation of policies that enhance discipline. This section presents data collected on the strategies and how they were implemented in schools.

It was revealed from the survey questionnaire that a number of approaches were used by schools to implement discipline. Even though various approaches were used, it was found that some of the approaches varied from school to school as each school had different ways of dealing with discipline and attendance problems. The results in Table 9 revealed that 75% of the participants strongly disagreed and 10% agreed with the statement that issuing of school policy booklets to students was one of the strategies used in schools

to implement discipline policy. 15% of the participants across the five schools were neutral and 4% disagreed. No participant strongly disagreed.

Regarding all students have disciplinary files to track students with behavior problems, the data revealed that 50% strongly agreed, 40% agreed and 10% of the participants were neutral. Followed by principal reminds student about school policy, 60% of the participants agreed while 40% was neutral. Also, Rehabilitation of students with psychological problems, 82% of the respondents agreed and 38% strongly agreed. Similarly, the creation of the disciplinary committee was identified as one of the strategies, 15% strongly agreed, 80% agree and 5% was neutral. The orientation of students in line with school discipline and attendance policies was also one of the strategies, 10% strongly agreed, 60% agreed and 20% was neutral. Half of the participants, 50% strongly agreed that the provision of guidance and counseling was used in their schools while 50% disagreed.

Furthermore, a significant number of participants, 70% agreed that PTA meetings were used in their schools as a means of implementing effective school policy on discipline and attendance while 30% was neutral. Relatively, 60% of the participants strongly disagreed that their schools used parental involvement as a strategy to manage school policy, while 20% agreed and 11% of the participants were neutral. The culture of punishment through suspension, expulsion as a measure in dealing with discipline and attendance issues was strongly agreed upon by 30%, while 61% agreed and 9% was neutral. Forty percent of the participants agreed that supervision and monitoring was one of the options adopted by schools to achieving policy effectiveness, 40% was neutral and 20% disagreed. Also, manual work as a strategy was strongly agreed upon by 25% of the

participants, 60% agreed and 15% was neutral. Finally, a policy awareness campaign was another strategy identified by participants to which 79% of the participants strongly disagreed, 15% agreed and 6% was neutral. See table 7 for the distribution of participants' responses.

Table 7

Approaches used in implementing school discipline policy

| Statements | SD (%) | D (%) | N (%) | A (%) | SA (%) |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Issuing of discipline policy booklets to students | 71 | 4 | 15 | 10 | |
| Disciplinary files are kept for all students | | | 10 | 40 | 50 |
| Principal reminds students about school policy | | | 40 | 60 | |
| Rehabilitation of students with psychological problems | | | | 82 | 38 |
| Creation of a disciplinary committee | | | 5 | 80 | 15 |
| The orientation of new students | | | 30 | 60 | 10 |
| Provision of guidance and counseling | | 50 | | 50 | |
| Frequent PTA meetings | | | 30 | 70 | |
| Parental involvement | 60 | | 11 | 20 | |
| Punishment through suspension, expulsion, etc. | | | 9 | 61 | 30 |
| Students' involvement | 78 | | 12 | 10 | |
| Policy awareness campaign | 79 | | 6 | 15 | |
| Supervision and monitoring | | 20 | 40 | 40 | |
| Manual work (clearing grass, cleaning, etc. | | | 15 | 60 | 25 |

Even though there were different responses among participants, the data in Table 7 revealed that there was a multiple number of approaches used by school implementing the policy. According to the interview with the principal participants, it was revealed that the school experienced a number of students who misbehave in class. Also, the one of the vice principal participants expressed concern over the fact that when students are not kept busy, they tend to be very disruptive, rude and arrogant to teachers and fellow students. Considering the challenges faced by the schools, administrators do not follow one strategy when managing the indiscipline of students in schools. However, for disciplinary action to be effective, a systematic procedure must be followed. Ndeto (2013), cited in Nyaga (2004) and Okumbe (2001) argued that effective disciplinary action should begin with a preliminary investigation, then a temporary suspension followed by an oral or written warning and finally dismissal from the school. This shows that there is a need for preventive measures to blend the process by all stakeholders (students, students and parents).

On the other hand, it was confirmed from the data gathered through the questionnaire that the following strategies were found to be limited if not completely absent across the five schools. They included: parental involvement, dissemination of policy booklets to students and teachers and the involvement of students in the management of discipline policies. Other like keeping students occupied for example, giving several assignments, corrective measures like cleaning classes, oral and written warning by the discipline dean followed by suspension of students with gross misconduct, withdrawal from immediate privileges, verbal warning of students, and classroom punishments like kneeling or standing were not utilized. These strategies to

combat indiscipline concurred with the views of Njeri (2015) and Nene (2013) who observed in their studies that issuing policy booklets to students, involvement of students in decision making, parental involvement, keeping students occupied, oral and written warning and denial of immediate privileges were strategies used by schools in Kenya and South Africa. According to their findings, such methods promoted the effectiveness of school discipline policy among secondary and technical institutions. However, it has to be noted that despite the implementation of many strategies in schools, students' indiscipline may not be completely eradicated.

Lack of students' involvement was confirmed by the principals during the interview who expressed concern that students' involvement in policy matters was not fully functional. Also, according to two of the principals, often they find that problems were brought to their office too late. In other words, there was not sufficient communication between school management, the teachers and students' representatives. It was further elaborated that they had a written policy, but it was merely a formal structure with no collaboration and co-operation from senior management and class teachers. Accordingly, this evidence made it difficult to deal with disciplinary problems in the investigated schools.

Approaches used by schools in implementing attendance policy

The study also sought to establish the approaches adopted in schools in curbing attendance problems among students. Participants were asked to identify some of the approaches from their own experience that they believed their schools adopted in curbing irregular attendance among secondary school students.

According to data presented in Table 8, it was cleared that different approaches to encourage attendance were employed by schools at different levels. However, there were no convergent responses towards each of the approaches. This could mean that each school had specific approaches at a given time that fit their school's context. From the data presented in Table 8, it can clearly be seen that most of the sample schools adopted a minimum number of measures to deal with attendance policy. For example, it was indicated that attendance policy booklets were not issued to all students to allow them to know what is expected of them while in school. Also, a positive school culture that promotes attendance in an environment that encourages students to come to school each day. If the school environment is not conducive for students, they become insecure to remain in school.

Relating to the importance of incentive program for regular attendance, schools are encouraged to regularly reward students during selected occasions such as morning assembly, PTA meeting and other students' gatherings and this will encourage other students to see that being in school regularly is rewarding. Of most important was the attendance policy awareness campaign through which administration sensitize students, teachers and parents about the attendance policy. When school stakeholders are not conversant with rules and regulations, it becomes difficult for them to accept and obey them. Other researchers such as Loto (2019), Al Mofarreh (2016), Ikechukwu (2013) supported the assertion that many policies met failures because stakeholders were not given education or awareness programs.

However, there were mixed feelings on the effectiveness of strategies from participants as some of them said the strategies put in place were not effective even and

other felt they were effective. Administrator participants and teacher participants' responses are summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Participants' responses to approaches used in implementing attendance policy

| Statements | SD (%) | D (%) | N (%) | A (%) | SA (%) |
|--|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Extra curriculum activities to encourage attendance | | 30 | 11 | 59 | |
| Attendance policy booklet is issued to all students | 70 | 10 | | 20 | |
| Punishment through suspension | | 35 | 20 | 45 | |
| School intervenes early if students' attendance begins to deteriorate | | 64 | 6 | 30 | |
| Adoption of PTA meeting to discuss attendance | | 15 | 15 | | 70 |
| Involvement of parents | | 65 | 10 | 25 | |
| The school adopted a program that promotes a positive school environment | | 20 | 45 | 35 | |
| Encourage parents to pay fees on time | | 30 | 10 | 60 | |
| A positive school culture that promotes attendance | 35 | | 30 | 35 | |
| Daily roll-calls track absenteeism | | | 15 | 85 | |
| Incentive program for regular attendance | 59 | | 11 | 30 | |
| Attendance policy awareness campaign | 78 | | 7 | 15 | |
| Principal's communication to remind students | | | | 100 | |
| Verbal and written warning | | 25 | 20 | 55 | |

According to the five schools as presented in Table 8, the top five strategies adopted by their schools were principal's communication, where 100% of the participants agreed that their school principals communicated to students frequently to remind them about attendance policy, followed by daily roll-calls to track attendance 85% agreed and 15% was neutral. Next was the adoption of PTA meetings to discuss students' attendance

issues, 70% of the participants agreed and 15% disagreed while 15% was neutral, followed by extra curriculum activities to encourage attendance, 59% of the participants agreed and 30% disagreed while 11% was neutral.

Altogether 60% of the participants agreed, 30% disagreed and 10% was neutral on the strategies about parents were constantly reminded to pay fees on time to avoid their wards been sent home, this was only applied to schools where fees are paid. In such schools, a student may miss school due to parent inability to comply with the school deadline for payment. The fourth ranking strategy was verbal and written warning, 55% of the participants agreed, 25% disagreed and 20% was neutral. The last of the fifth ranking strategies was punishment through suspension, 45% agreed, 35% disagreed and 20% was neutral.

On the statement of whether students were provided with a copy of the school discipline policy. The responses showed that 20% agreed, 10% disagree while 70% strongly disagreed. Regarding the issue of school intervening early if students' attendance begins to deteriorate, 30% agreed while 64% disagree and 6% was neutral. However, 25% agreed while 65% disagreed and 10% was neutral with the statement that schools involved parents in dealing with the attendance problems in school. On the other hand, as to whether schools school adopted a program that promotes a positive school environment, 35% agreed while 20% disagreed and 45% was neutral. Of the responses given regarding positive school culture that promotes attendance, 35% agreed, 35% disagreed while 30% was neutral. With the statement of whether schools used an incentive program for students who attend school regularly, only 30% of the participants agreed while 59% strongly disagreed and 11% neutral. Finally, when participants were

asked about their experience on attendance policy awareness, 15% agreed while 78% disagreed and 7% of the respondents were neutral.

Conclusion of question three

Research question three discussed the various approaches adopted by schools in implementing policy on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia. It was revealed from the questionnaire that different approaches were used by schools to deal with the problems of discipline and attendance. However, it was also confirmed that the approaches used by the sampled schools varied from school to school, given that schools were never the same as each school had specific characteristics that made it different from others. As mandated by the MOE, each school is required to develop her own rules and regulations or code of conduct because no two schools are identical, and it is not advisable to just copy another school policy, so, approaches were not the same.

Even though there were approaches adopted in all the sample schools to implement the policy, the problem remained that the approaches were not effective to reduce indiscipline and irregular attendance among students.

Research question 4: What were the challenges faced by schools in implementing policy on discipline and attendance?

Research question four assessed the challenges that were faced by the schools in the implementation of discipline and attendance policies. From the questionnaire and interview guide, it was established that school encountered problems in managing students' discipline and attendance through policy implementation. Here, challenges identified by the participants centered around late coming to coming to school,

absenteeism, possession of mobile phones, responsible sexual relations, drugs and substance abuse, bullying and intimidating other students, theft, disrespecting teachers and other staff, missing lessons, disruptive behavior in class/school, assaults and vandalizing of school property.

Sixteen items were given to participants to get their experiences regarding challenges faced by schools when implementing school policy on discipline and attendance. Their responses were assessed on a five-point Likert scale with the choices: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly agree (SA).

Table 9

Problems faced by the participants in implementing discipline and attendance policies

| Statements | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|--|----|-----|----|------|------|
| Students late coming to school | | | | | 100% |
| The high rate of absenteeism in the school | | 30% | | 70% | |
| Students disruptive behavior in classes/campus | | | | | 100% |
| Students leave school without permission. | | 70% | 5% | 25% | |
| Disrespecting to teachers and other staff. | | | | 100% | |
| Drugs and substance abuse | | 60% | | 40% | |
| Students possession of mobile phones | | | | 100% | |
| Irresponsible sexual relations among students | | 81% | 4% | 15% | |
| Lack of parental involvement | | | | 100% | |
| Lack of guidance and counseling services | | 25% | | 75% | |
| Students bullying and intimidating other students | | | | 100% | |
| Negative influence from the community | | 65% | | | 35% |
| Students miss classes because of school fees | | 60% | | 40% | |
| Transfer of indiscipline students to other schools | | 75% | | 25% | |
| Lack of dissemination of school policy booklets | | 20% | | | 80% |
| Lack of policy education | | | | | 100% |

From Table 9, all of the participants indicated that one of the most common challenges was found to be late coming to school with a percentage prevalence of (100%). This shows that a large percentage of the students were involved in late coming across the five schools. It is evident from the statistics that late coming was a serious challenge faced by schools. This implies that the consequence for late coming was tolerant or late coming was ignored at school. This also could mean that late coming increased at a high rate because there were no consequences in the policy specified which punishment was to be given to those who arrive late at school.

Late coming as it opposed to good time management is rampant in secondary schools in Liberia. Punctuality needs to be observed not only by students but also by teachers, principals and administrators and non-teaching staff in an educational institution. Mafabi, et al (1993) supported this assertion and argued that, for a school policy on discipline and attendance to be a success in the school environment, the school principal, administrators and teachers were expected to be an example of good time management. Despite this expectation, the practice in most secondary schools in Liberia was that, most of the school activities seemed not to respect the designated timetable and thus accepting lateness of students to schools.

Absenteeism is another major area raising concern in many institutions in Liberia. It was observed from the data collected that absenteeism was a challenge mentioned by the majority of the participants. It was indicated that 30% of the participants disagreed that absenteeism had a high rate, and 70% agreed. It is also noted that all the participants 100% believed that some students bullied and intimidated other students in schools. The implication was that this misconduct needed a serious attention. Similarly, all the

respondents 100% across the five schools agreed that lack of policy education was a challenge facing the implementation of school policy.

During an interview with one of the school's principal participants, he recognized that his school was not creating awareness among students, teachers and parents which meant that staff, students and parents did not know much about the policy contents.

Furthermore, parental involvement was also identified as important for the successful implementation of the effective school policy. Participants (100%) agreed that schools required the involvement of parents to enable them to achieve the set goal of reducing indiscipline and irregular attendance in schools. The participants left little doubt as to their views concerning the involvement of parents in the exercise of implementing discipline and attendance policies effectively. It is encouraged that parents need to be involved in all their children's education and also their discipline and attendance matters. During the interview, when one of the participant participants was asked about the approaches adopted by the school in implementing discipline and attendance policies, he identified parental involvement. He said, "We need parental assistance in the problem of discipline and attendance, but most of the parents are not cooperative and it seems they do not develop much interest in the children education". The sentiment of the participial requests a complete overhaul of the whole issue of discipline and attendance. Parents should be intimately involved in school activities because when they are involved, the children will feel secure and consequently abide by school rules and regulations.

In the context of Liberia, parents are obliged to be involved in their children's education. The Liberian Education Reform Acts, 2011, mandates parents to send their children to schools and also states that all learners, parents and teachers should

collaboratively accept responsibility for the organization and governance of schools, in partnership with the Ministry of Education. This implied that parents by law were compelled to participate in school's activities and make sure that proper discipline and regular school attendance exist. As parents, they have the authority and right to determine what is in the best interest of their children's education and as such, they own certain moral responsibilities to the school.

Moreover, the use of mobile phones by students in schools was listed as a challenge among participants. 100% of the total participants reported students coming to school with phones as a major threat to the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies. Mobile phones are very useful gadgets, but when illegally brought into the school, may be a source of severe indiscipline. A majority of students carry their mobile phones to school and enter in class with them. According to Atieno (2014) as cited in Kwajo (2011)'s study, indicated similar challenge when he observed that mobile phones was a source of great misconduct in schools, among them, viewing pornography, cheating in exams, chatting with friends, playing music or games while in class and lesson is going on. This is a malpractice that is common in many schools across Liberia. In the year 2012, about 337 students were disqualified during the West African Examination for using phones to cheat in exams (MOE Report: WAEC Results, 2012)

Similarly, another serious challenge that was reported among participants across the five schools was the issue of students disrespecting teachers and other staff. 100% of the respondents noted that this behavior was a big challenge to the schools. The observation of the participants concurred with Ali and Gracey (2013) in an article "Dealing with students' disruptive behavior in the classroom in the context of the USA.

The researchers argued from the perspective of teacher and students that, disruptive behavior in the classroom inhibited learning and impacted retention. He further argued that disruptive behavior negatively influenced teachers' comfort and satisfaction, as well as the satisfaction of other students wanted to learn.

Other problems related to the maintenance of effective discipline and attendance policies were identified by respondents. About the problem of students leaving school without permission, approximately half of the participants 70% disagreed, 20% agreed and 5% of the participants were neutral. 40% reported drugs and substance abuse as a challenge, 60% disagreed. Similarly, 15% identified irresponsible sexual behavior in schools as factors hindering the implementation of effective school policy on discipline. However, 81% of the total participants disagreed, while 4% was neutral. Also, another problem that was noted among participants was the lack of guidance and counseling service to provide to assist students with discipline and attendance problems. 75% agreed that it was a problem, 25% disagreed. Other included negative influence from the local community. 65% disagreed while 35% agree, students missing classes because parents are unable to pay schools, 40% agreed and 60% disagreed, regarding the transfer of indiscipline students from school to school, 25% agreed and 75% disagreed.

Finally, the lack of dissemination of policy booklets was identified by participants; 80% agreed and 20% disagreed as a barrier to achieving policy effectiveness. Loto (2019) supported a similar finding in most schools in the Philippines. In her study on the extent of implementation of school policy on discipline, she suggested that all schools needed to have a clear and broad-based policy that support discipline and attendance of students. The researcher continued as cited in Cotton (2008), that rules and

procedures needed to be developed and specified with input from students and made known to everyone in the school. From this, it can be stated that a widely disseminated school policy, assured that all teachers, students and parents and other school stakeholders understood what was and what was not acceptable.

Even though, there were divergent responses among participants, the results indicated that schools faced challenge in implementing discipline and attendance policies. The challenges identified by participants agreed with the findings of other studies conducted by researchers that revealed similar problems in schools. For example, in a study conducted among secondary school students in Malaysia, Fan and Chen (2011) found some of the prevalent disciplinary problems to be late coming to school, absenteeism, sexual relationship among students, stealing and fighting. A study also carried out in Harare in Zimbabwe revealed that secondary school administrators encountered challenges of learners who engaged in vandalism, theft, substance abuse and even prostitution (Manguvo, Whitney and Chareka, 2011).

Some of the issues raised by participants as challenges were supported by the discipline policy documents that were analyzed. From the analysis, the major issue noted was the lack of code of conduct for students. One of the strategies used by schools to maintain students' discipline was the use of the Code of Conduct (Norman, 2012). The code of conduct contains the disciplinary rules for students and it is crucial to school discipline. The emphasis is on the school administrators' function to adopt and implement a code of conduct and its obligation to enforce the disciplinary rules in the case of students' misconduct. When a code of conduct is lacking in school, there is room for students' disruptive behavior.

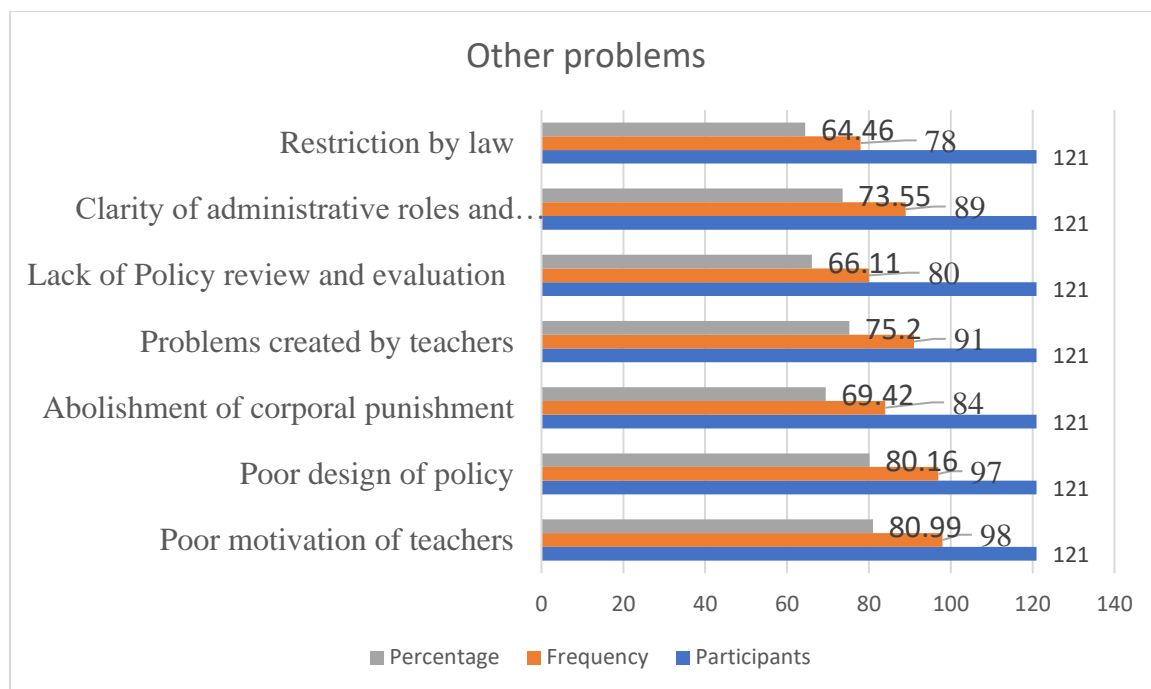
Other challenges that were faced by schools in implementing students' discipline and attendance policies.

Participants were asked to provide other challenges that they felt militated against the implementation of discipline and attendance policy in secondary schools. The findings of this section were based on the questionnaires, interview and document analyses.

From Figure 2 below, other challenges identified by schools included restriction by state law, poor design of policy, poor motivation of teachers, clarity of administrative roles and responsibilities, abolishment of corporal punishment, lack of policy review and evaluation and teachers related problems. These challenges were in line with the document analyses on discipline policy what was carried out. It was observed from the policy documents analysis that there were no roles and responsibilities spelt out in the policy handbooks. Also, all the schools' discipline and attendance policies were poorly designed thereby lacking most of the essential components that needed to be included in the policies' handbooks.

The responses of participants on other problems facing the implementation of discipline and attendance policies are tabulated to show frequency and percentages. Out of the 141 participants, Figure 2 presented the responses from 105 who responded to the open-ended question.

Figure 2

Other problems identified by participants**Restriction by state law**

From figure 2, it is seen that restriction by state laws was a challenge mentioned by the majority (64.46%). For instance, the Liberia Educational Reform Acts of 2011 allows free and compulsory education for children between 6-18 years and also limited suspension, expulsion, corporal punishment. All of these do make school administrators and teachers restricted in dealing with students' discipline and attendance issues.

Poor design of policy

Another major challenge mentioned by 80.16% of the participants was the poor design of policy on discipline and attendance. Poor design of the policy was perceived by participants as factors limiting the effectiveness of the policy on discipline and attendance

among students. This concern noted by participants was confirmed in the interviews with the administrators and the document analyses.

During the interview, one of the deans agreed that although the idea of having a policy was important, the current policy was not detailed to be understood by students, teachers and parents. Inconsistency and unclear stated policy were the similar issues observed in a study conducted in secondary schools in Uganda by Kiggudo (2009). Results of his study indicated that all schools had written policy on discipline and attendance but students did not understand and administration was inconsistent in their implementation of policy which raised student's anger leading to more violence, strikes and aggression on the school campus.

Poor motivation of teachers

The poor motivation of teachers was also identified as a hindering factor to the implementation of school policy. Of the total participants, 81% noted that the poor motivation of teachers limited the success of policy effectiveness in school. This assertion was understood from two dimensions. First, teachers felt that they were not motivated by school administration in their effort to implement policy and so they felt relaxed in their dealing with discipline and attendance matters. On the contrary, one principal participant argued during an interview that some teachers were in the profession just to have an income and were not motivated to be teachers. He said; "most of the teachers do not like their work. Another principal participant added that some teachers had no motivation to take discipline and attendance matters serious because of their connection with parents and other friends whose children attended their school.

Clarity of administrative roles and responsibilities

Another issue, raised by participants was roles and responsibilities. Participants, 73.55% noted that the clarity of roles and responsibilities was a challenge. Their view was consistent with the documents analyses that were carried out. Some of the school policy did not have roles and responsibilities written in the policy booklet which could allow teachers, students and parents to know where to go in case of problem regarding discipline and attendance. This might be one of the reasons why schools have not arrived at effective policy implementation. In the school setting, when roles and responsibilities are not clear, people get confused about whom to contact and who should do what. Many a time, when that happens, making a decision becomes difficult.

Abolishment of Corporal punishment

Majority of the participants, 69.42% indicated that corporal punishment was not used at their schools. However, they felt that it was one of the major challenges facing the effective implementation of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools. In the Liberian context, corporal punishment in all schools was abolished by the Ministry of education through the Liberian Education Reform Acts, 2011. This ban has been blamed for the total increase in students' indiscipline and irregular attendance in most of the Liberian schools. The majority of the participants disclosed that the abolishment of corporal punishment has resulted in a collapse of discipline in schools. Alston (2008) conducted a study titled "Student discipline in South African Secondary schools". In his findings, the problem was that corporal punished was banned in South Africa and because of this abolishment, majority of the teachers were faced daily struggles in their schools with the issues of implementing effective discipline among students. The study

indicated that many administrators and teachers found themselves in a position of not knowing what to do in the absence of corporal punishment.

However, all the administrator participants who were interviewed confirmed that corporal punishment was not used at schools. For instance, one of the dean of students participants went on to say:

“In the absence of corporal punishment, detention has become a popular measure of disciplining students in our school. Also, students are made to clean the school e.g. clean toilets, pick up papers, fetch waters, sweep classroom or verandahs, clearing grass in the compound, etc.”

Lack of policy review and evaluation

A considerable number of participants, 66.11% identified a lack of review and evaluation of policy as a problem in the implementation of discipline and attendance in schools. This study also sought to understand the review process and evaluation plans for discipline and attendance policies across the five secondary schools that were studied. From the data generated from questionnaire, interview and documents analysis, it was evident that policies were not supervised, reviewed and evaluated. This challenge presented by the participants is supported with the view of Ahmed (2012) when he also found in his study on an examination of the public policy process in Libya, that lack of policy review and evaluation posed a serious obstacle to the government of Libya in her effort to achieve success in policy implementation. During the interview, when one of the vice principal participants was asked about how frequently was the school evaluating her discipline and attendance policies, he clearly stated as follow:

“Unfortunately, there is no practical plan in place to review, evaluate or renew our school discipline and attendance policies as expected because it is the right protocol. Our policy is old and we asked the Ministry of Education for advice and to provide us with the general logistics to use in planning and developing our outdated policy but without no result and this means that the legal body in charge of Primary and Secondary schools Division at the Ministry of Education doesn’t have any time plans for developing and renewing schools’ policies”.

Teachers related problems

Van Breda (2014) argued that teachers disregarded the fact that their conduct and attitudes in the classroom and within the school premises influenced the student’ view of belonging to the school and hence the ways they behave. The majority of the participants, 75.20% singled out that teachers’ attitude was a challenge facing effective implementation of discipline and attendance policies. Despite that the fact that concerns were on students not respecting school rules and regulations that made a policy not effective, teachers also contributed to the ineffectiveness of school policies. During the interviews, one dean of students’ participant linked teachers’ problem to the following: Some teachers are conniving with students in the act of illegal dealings on campus, the unpreparedness of teachers in the classroom, exchange of money for grades and teachers late coming to school and their frequent absences from school.

Conclusion of research question four

Research question four was intended to find out the challenges faced by schools in implementing effective policy on discipline and attendance. It was revealed that a significant number of challenges existed across the five secondary schools. According to the findings, it appeared that some of the challenges included late coming to school, absenteeism, possession of mobile phones, irresponsible sexual relations, drugs and substance abuse, bullying and intimidating other students, theft, disrespecting teachers and other staff, missing lessons, disruptive behavior in class/school, assaults and vandalizing of school property. These challenges negatively affected the effective implementation of discipline and attendance policies. However, when statistics were compared about schools, there were divergent views from school to school as other challenges were linked only to specific schools. In the next section, the recommendations to effective policy on discipline and attendance are discussed.

Research question 5: What recommendations should be made to implement effective policy?

The researcher asked the participants to give their views in the previous question about the challenges they encountered to suggest ways in which the problems could be overcome. Research question five was to find out some recommendations to resolve the challenges faced by school in the implementation of effective school policy on discipline and attendance.

Out of the 141 participants, a total of 136 responded to this section. Figure 3 presented the different recommendations of the participants on how to enhance the

implementation of discipline and attendance policies based on the different challenges that they encountered to make the policy successful.

Dealing with problems being encountered is one of the best methods to be done in order to solve a particular problem. Given the problems that are frequently associated with the management of discipline and attendance in secondary schools in the Liberian setting, it was of greater significance to investigate how these problems were being manifested and addressed in the real world of teaching and learning, and to establish the extent to which they appeared amenable to resolution. Hence, giving the appropriate solutions to a problem would lead to a successful program and could give a positive outlook towards quality and effective policy in the school. Thus, recommendations to enhance the implementation of the effective policy was very relevant to this study. This was the key to achieve the objectives that were stated in chapter one. Figure 3 presented the different recommendations from the participants on how to achieve effective school policy on discipline and attendance.

The data generated revealed that an overwhelming majority of participants, 131 (96.32%) opted that an establishment of a new policy would be the best option to solve the problem of an ineffective policy. One hundred and twenty-nine (94.85%) participants believed that issuing policy booklets to students, teachers and parents would be one of the contributing factors to the effective implementation of discipline and attendance policies. This implied that when copies of the policy were widely distributed, students, teachers and parents would become aware of the rules and regulations to abide by them.

Increasing parents' involvement in policy implementation as one of the corrective measures was rated at 127 (93.38). This is in line with the fact that parents play a greater

role in their children education as such they must assist the school to resolve problems concerning discipline and attendance. The views of the participants are thus consistent with Fullan (2007) who argued that to ensure successful implementation of each level of the school policy, students, teachers, leaders and government bodies, must support the actions of change being implemented.

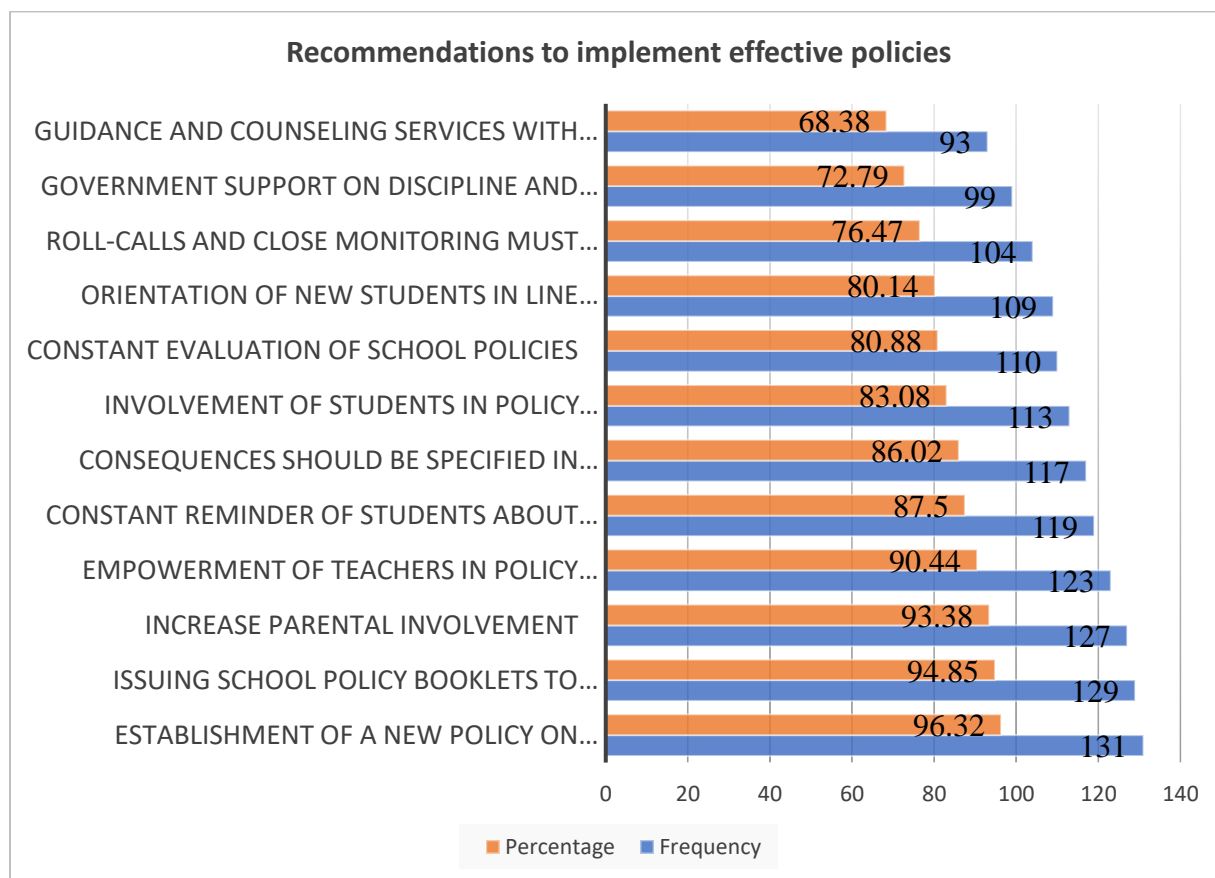
Other recommendations identified by participants to tackle ineffective policy in school included empowerment of teachers in policy implementation, 123 (90.44%), a constant reminder of students about school policies, 119 (87.50%). Most of the participants also felt that sometimes describing the punishment for students who disobey rules and regulation becomes difficult since consequences for disobedience were not specified in the policy booklet. Some, 117 (86.02%) of the participants, suggested that consequences should be specified in the policy booklet. Another portion, 113 (83.08%) of the participants also felt that the best way to implement effective policy on discipline and attendance is by having students involved. Students are the main stakeholder of any school community. Without students, there is no school. From this point of view, having them involved will allow them to take responsibility for school rules and regulations.

Furthermore, 110 (80.88%) of the participants suggested the constant evaluation of school policy to assess the problem being encountered in the process of implementing policy. 109 (80.14) of the participants were of the view that orientation of new students in line with school policies at the beginning of each academic year would promote effective policy, 104 (76.47%) considered roll-calls and close monitoring as another way of achieving effective discipline and attendance policies in school. Given that the government of Liberia allowed schools to formulate their own policies base on their local

realities, it poses challenges to schools on how to reconcile local policy with national educational policy. Thus, another number 99 (72.99) suggested government support and involvement in discipline and attendance policies implementation process. Finally, guidance and counseling services were rated 93(68.38%) as the means of tackling policy implementation in schools. All suggestions made by the respondents if implemented, would go a long way in curbing indiscipline and irregular attendance matters that are obstructing the effectiveness of school policy on discipline and attendance.

Figure 3

Participants' responses on recommendations to implement effective policy on discipline and attendance.



The findings discussed in Figure 3 were in agreement with the view of Ndeto (2013) as cited in Kabandize (2004) who found that meeting with students, empowering teachers, communication with parents, reminding students about school policy during assembly, the involvement of students in decision making, constant meeting with the disciplinary committee, guidance and counseling sessions were correct measures in managing student discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools.

Similarly, the suggestions corresponded with those of Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) and Magadla (2007) whose study acknowledged that that student involvement in the implementation of school policy on discipline and attendance was achieved through student councils, peer counseling activities and class prefects. According to Adams (2003), school policy is one of the strategies designed to instill acceptable conduct in students and therefore their involvement is paramount. The findings of the study showed that the sample schools hardly disseminate school policy to students and teachers, and that was why the majority of the administrators who were interviewed mentioned that most of the students and teachers were moderately aware of the different contents of school policy.

Adams (2003) was of the view that on admission, schools should provide students with policy booklets which outlined some of the expectations which include compliance with rules and regulations. The findings of this study, however, contradict that of Adams (2003) where in the sample schools, copies of school policies were not distributed to students, teachers and parents. It was also revealed that the investigated schools did not evaluate policy to detect what was working and what was not working in order to amend if there was a need. This has also contradicted the view of Korbi (2014), who proposed in

his study on policy evaluation and monitoring in Tanzanian secondary schools that regular policy evaluation and effective supervision were pertinent and placed school's authorities in the right position to determine what was working and what was not working as regarded existed policy.

From the interview, when administrators were asked about their suggestions to implementing effective policy, majority of them opted for a new policy formulation and parental involvement, but also complained about the lack of support from government to finance policy's formulation. When responses were compared from the interview, most of the administrators confirmed that for policy to become effective, it must always be emphasized, which entails reminding students during assembly, communication with parents to discuss students' problems related to school policy and creating awareness within the school community regarding school rules and regulations.

The interview between the administrators and the researcher had the following in as far as discipline and attendance policy was concerned. When further asked to explain the possible ways of achieving policy effectiveness, one principal reiterated that the administration gave students a room to form governing councils which represented their involvement in policy implementation, there existed suggestion boxes within the school where students, teachers and parents' suggestions were placed and taken into consideration when implemented school rules and regulations and also the school authority allowed students an opportunity to engage in open forums and debate to voice their opinions some of which were incorporated in the formulation and implementation of school policy on discipline and attendance.

It was also noticed that the chain of command did not flow to give directions to students and teachers on how to go about the process of settling discipline and attendance issues. Through the document analysis, it was revealed that there was no roles and responsibilities described. From this, one can deduce that the leadership style of the schools contributed to the ineffectiveness of the policies on discipline and attendance.

Proposed policies' guidelines and procedures for discipline and attendance

On the whole, the principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teachers overwhelmingly agreed to the effectiveness of measures like parental involvement, policy education, teachers' motivation, students' participation, policy supervision and evaluation, etc., to improve discipline and attendance policies and their implementation. Based on the objectives of the study and the proposed recommendations from the participants, the researcher was convinced of the need for schools to draw up new policies on discipline and attendance in secondary schools that would be implemented in the way they supposed to be implemented. The objective of every school policy is to ensure that teaching and learning is made inclusive enough to accommodate the diversities of students and to give each one an opportunity to develop and become a good citizen of the nation. In so doing, schools where young people receive formation must take responsibility to eliminate any difficulty that is capable of withholding such a vision. In the case of Liberia, however, the discipline and attendance policies used by secondary schools had not being realized.

Furthermore, developing a school policy should not be only the principal's responsibility. It is important that it is not just one member of staff who writes the policy. The policy would be more meaningful if developed in consultation with teachers,

students, parents, Education specialists and senior government staff. The proposed policy on discipline and attendance was described as follows:

| |
|--|
| <p>1. Understanding school policy in line with the 5C as proposed by Hausiku, R. (2017).</p> |
| <p>Content: Content refers to the goals of the policy or what the policy wants to achieve. Although it was confirmed that the discipline and attendance policies existed in schools, they were not clear in terms of what they wanted to achieve, and how they should be implemented to avoid any setback.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Review the policy document itself in terms of clarifying the “how to” or supplement the policy with further documentation that provides clearer guidance to implementers by means of instructions and systems required for implementation.</p> |
| <p>Context: The policy context refers to the broader social, economic, political and a legal reality of the institution within which implementation of the policy has to take place. One of the social challenges that Liberian schools experienced was the lack of understanding of the background of parents and communities. If parents or communities do not buy in to support the school in its effort to maintain discipline and regular attendance, the policy will also not achieve its intended outcome.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Promote awareness in communities regarding the benefits of having discipline and attendance policies in school and the value of education to children with diverse backgrounds.</p> |
| <p>Commitment: For policies to be effectively implemented, commitment is required from all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents and government). This commitment is enhanced through clear indication of responsibilities of role players and by involving stakeholders in the design and goal setting to promote ownership of the implementation. Commitment is also encouraged by considering the ability of the individual that the policy affects. Commitment is very important when it comes to policy implementation as it creates an opportunity for the implementers to learn on their own and use the resources at their disposal.</p> |

Recommendation

Improve commitment and morale amongst implementers by indicating that their challenges are acknowledged and that attempts to address these challenges will be put into place.

Capacity: Capacity relates to the resources required to give effect to policy implementation. This refers to human and financial resources, physical and technological resources and also intangible resources such as endurance and motivation which have a direct impact on commitment. Lack of capacity appears to be the biggest contributor to ineffective policy implementation in the case of the discipline and attendance policies in Liberia. The primary capacity need appears to be that of formation of the teachers and schools' management who have to design and implement the policy at school level.

Recommendation

Seek support from the MOE and school principals to train teachers by making training programmes compulsory to all teachers. Training is required to equip the teachers with the necessary skills that they need to help students and ensure that they implement the policy effectively.

Clients and coalitions: Clients and coalitions refer to building relationships between stakeholders that can provide support for the implementation of the discipline and attendance policies. There is also a need to have all structures in place to collaborate more with different stakeholders which will create a good working environment for all. Stakeholders in the communities should also be encouraged through awareness to support the schools in terms of discipline and attendance.

Recommendation

School should create forums for continuous engagement amongst stakeholders to discuss and address challenges related to the implementation of the policy. School management should play a role in the implementation of the policy by reinforcing the discipline and attendance so that teachers feel responsible for implementing it effectively. It is important for stakeholders to have a common understanding and have a shared vision which is democratic to promote discipline and attendance policies in schools.

2. Essential requirements of a discipline policy

- Policy title
- Objective of the policy
- Policy commencement and expiry dates
- Code of conducts
- Forms of indiscipline (a list of discipline should be spelt out, e.g., procedures on the use of electronic devices in schools)
- Consequences when policy is violated (punishment for each offence)
- Role & responsibilities (teachers, students, parents, etc.)
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements
- Discipline committee (function should be outlined)
- Procedures of complaints

3. Essential requirements of an attendance policy

- Policy title
- Objective of the policy
- Policy commencement and expiry dates
- Consequences related to absences
- Role & responsibilities (teachers, students, parents, etc)
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements
- Means of encouraging good attendance
- Types of absences
 - a. Excused absence
 - b. Explained absence
 - c. Extra-curricular activity absence
 - d. Unexcused absence
 - e. Excessive absence
- Procedures to be absent
- Response to poor punctuality
- School timetable

4. Strategies to formulate and implement effective policy on discipline and attendance in Liberia

- a) The school principal should form a policy formulation team which must include the following: administrators, teachers, students, parents, policy specialist, education officer, government representative and community representative. This team must be commissioned to draw up a new policy that will be piloted for one academic year.
- b) Policy education among teachers, students and parents should be promoted.
- c) Parents need to get involved in the implementation of school policy by progressive monitoring of their children's school activities.
- d) Formation of teachers on dealing with discipline and attendance problems should be planned and executed by school administrators.
- e) There should be frequent workshops with students and parents to deepen the awareness and the importance of the school policy.
- f) School must develop strong partnership with the surrounding community about school policy.
- g) The administration must fully support the implementation of school policy.
- h) There should be consistency and fairness during policy implementation.
- i) The policy should be evaluated at the end of every semester.
- j) Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and communicated to students, teachers and parents.
- k) Once the policy is formulated and approved, copy should be given to each student, teacher and parent to understand the content of the policy.

Conclusion

Discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia had not been effectively dealt with, which necessitated the current study. Five secondary schools were investigated and their challenges were found. Recommendations were made by participants to improve the implementation of effective policy on discipline and attendance. It is hoped that this

proposed policy outline and its strategies for formulation and implementation would be embraced, adopted and put into practice.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter presented the qualitative findings for the study, arranged using broad themes such as availability of policy documents, the extent of policy effectiveness, approaches to implement the policy, difficulties facing the implementation and some recommendations to achieve effective policy in secondary schools in Liberia.

The next chapter summarized the study and drawn conclusions pertaining to the research questions, based on data collected. The chapter also concluded by making recommendations based on the findings of the study. Areas for further researched were also discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

The preceding four chapters dealt with several aspects pertaining to the research problem. This chapter presented a summary of the findings of the study, conclusions made from the findings, implications, limitations, recommendations of the study and suggestions for further studies.

Summary of the study

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. Five secondary schools were used for the study. This study used the descriptive survey design because the researcher could not investigate every member of the population. The sample consisted of One hundred and sixty-seven participants which included five principal participants, five vice principal participants, five dean of students participants and one hundred and fifty-two teacher participants. Questionnaires, structured interview guide and policy checklists were used to collect data. The questionnaires were administered to the principals, vice principals, deans of students and teachers, the interview was conducted with the principal, vice principals and dean of students, while the policy checklists were used to assess the composition of the policy documents in all the five school. All the information collected from each of these was organized and analyzed using tables and figures. The researcher used both descriptive statistics and content analysis of data. The analysis of the data enabled the researcher to come up with the following findings based on the five research objectives.

Objective one

The availability of policy documents in schools

This objective was to assess the availability of discipline and attendance policies documents in the sampled schools. The finding of the study revealed that each of the five schools investigated had a policy in place as mandated by the Ministry of Education. However, despite the effort made by the schools to set up a policy on discipline and attendance through the code of conduct, there had still been a decline in student discipline and attendance which imply that these policies had not been effective. To fully understand the extent to which these policies were available, the study investigated the participants' level of awareness of the policies. According to the findings, a low level of awareness of discipline and attendance policies was found among participants which, in the view of the researcher, was very worrisome since it would be difficult for teachers to fulfil the aims and objectives of those policies without being fully aware of them. In relation to the availability of policy documents, the study also sought to establish if the policies were constantly evaluated, it was revealed that the policy documents were not reevaluated. This imply that even though policy documents were available, teachers and students did not understand the policy. it also meant that the policy documents were outdated to meet the needs of the students and the community.

Objective two

The effectiveness of the school policies

Objective two was meant to establish the extent to which the policies were effective. The finding revealed the policy documents were ineffective as indicated by 17.0% less effective and 68.8% ineffective respectively. From the findings of this study,

it became obvious that the barriers to policy effectiveness were linked to bullying and intimidation, irresponsible sexual relationship, possession of the mobile phones by students, late coming to schools and absenteeism. Other were disruptive behavior, drugs and substance abuse, escaping classes, refusal to do school assignment and absenteeism.

Objective three

Policy implementation approaches used by schools

Objective three was to determine the approaches used in implementing the policies. The results showed that that the schools had a number of approaches in place to deal discipline and attendance. Some of the approaches used by schools included principal's communication, PTA meetings, kept class attendance records, encouraged parents to fees on time, students participated in violence prevention program and positive school culture to encourage discipline and attendance. Even though these approaches were utilized by schools, they proved not to have reduced indiscipline and irregular attendance among students. This indicate that the approaches used were limited and needed to be increased or improved to meet the currents needs of the students.

Objective four

The challenges encountered by schools to implement effective policy

The objective had to explore the challenges that schools encountered during the implementation process and established the factors that contribute to the problems that schools are faced with. The findings revealed that there were a number of challenges faced by schools. Some of the challenges identified by participants included late coming to school, lack of parental involvement, lake of teachers' motivations, lack of students'

participants, restrictions by state laws, negative influence from the surrounding community and lack of corporal punishment. The challenges of a lack of awareness, lack of dissemination of policy documents to students, teachers and parents and use of mobile phones by students were also mentioned by the participants.

Objective Five

Recommendations to improve effective policy implementation

The fifth object aimed at explaining ways in which the problems faced by the participants could be overcome. The participants gave their suggestions on what they felt should be done. From the findings, the need for a well-developed policy emerged strongly among participants. Other suggestions included high level of policy awareness among stakeholders, involvement of parents, student's participation in decision making and teachers' motivation. Also, management structures, dissemination of policy documents among students were suggested by participants.

Conclusions of the study

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. All the sampled schools had written policy documents in their respective schools but the policies were flawed.
2. Poor design of the policy was perceived by participants as a drawback to its
3. Implementation. All the schools' policy documents reviewed were poorly designed. They lacked the essential components should be included in a policy on discipline and attendance. The common elements that were absent included: roles

and responsibilities, policy evaluation plan, consequences if policy were violated, type of indiscipline, type of absences and procedures of complaints.

4. Policy documents were not regularly evaluated to assess the difficulties experienced by implementers and progress made by implementers.
5. Participants were not highly aware of the contents of the policy documents, thereby limiting their knowledge about the school policies and ways of implementing the policies.
6. The discipline and attendance status in the five schools was poor with the most common forms of indiscipline being late coming to school, possession of mobile phones, absenteeism, the irresponsible sexual relationship among students, disruptive behavior in class, drugs and substance abuse, disrespect to teachers and other staff, bullying and intimidating other students and verbal abuse of teachers.
7. The most common strategies used by schools in implementing discipline policy were: constant reminder of students about school policy, principal's communication, teachers' supports in dealing with policy issues, PTA meeting, and keeping discipline files for recording offences.
8. The most common strategies used by schools in implementing discipline policy were: offering support if parents' child/children refuse(s) to come to school, daily roll-call, and encouraging parents to pay fees on time to keep students in school.
9. The most prevalence challenges encountered by schools were: lack of support from parents, lack of effective policies, students coming to school late, absenteeism and lack of policy education, lack of dissemination of policy booklets, negative influence from the surrounding community

The implications of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. In doing so, the researcher explored the existence of the policy, approaches and challenges encountered by school administrators and teachers and recommendations to implementing effective school policy. The study revealed that all the sample schools have discipline and attendance policy in place but these policies lack effectiveness. Several challenges were identified by participants which included lateness to school, absenteeism, respect for teachers and other staff, etc. According to the findings, some strategies have been adopted by schools to deal with students' indiscipline and irregular attendance among students. However, from what was discovered from this study, few implications were made from the problem of discipline and attendance among secondary school students.

First, the study found out that awareness of the school policies was very low among school administrators and teachers. This study implies creating awareness to students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. As far as the researcher is aware, no study has been carried out on a similar topic of effective school policy with a focus on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia. If this result is utilized, students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders will become aware of the importance of having a clear policy that is capable of reducing indiscipline and irregular attendance.

The second implication of the study was other Liberian researchers. Only a few studies related to school policy have been carried out in Liberia. This study, then, contributes to this growing body of research. The main implication of the current study is that it is the first local study that provides findings from well-designed research on

schools' administrators' and teachers' perceptions towards implementing effective school policy on discipline and attendance, as well as their views on the recommendations for future Liberian students. This result can be used to inform local researchers to derive other areas of studies about the effectiveness of policy on discipline and attendance in schools. The study has also yielded up-to-date information on administrators' and teachers' difficulties and approaches in implementing school policy, which all add to the limited literature on effective school policy implementation in Liberian secondary schools. This study will be significant to the local and international researchers to explore more on the effective policy as far as discipline and attendance are concerned.

Third, the results imply to provide school administrators with an understanding of the challenges other administrators deal with and that the discipline and attendance problems that one school encounters are not limited to that school, but is a general phenomenon within the education system. Also, conducting this study has provided administrators and teachers with the necessary knowledge on what discipline and attendance problems they face, how to deal with these challenges and how to improve the current policy on discipline and attendance.

The fourth implication of the study was the MOE and policy planners. It was discovered through the study that the MOE does not provide a clear structure in her national education policy guide to combat discipline and attendance in secondary schools. If this result is read, it will provide the Ministry and her policy planners with an opportunity to understand the challenges school administrators faced on the field due to their inability to provide specific structures that will guide school administrators on how to deal with discipline and attendance. This result will be an avenue to policy makers to

consider the issues of effective discipline and attendance as relevant when they are preparing national education policy for schools.

Limitations of the study

The research was conducted on the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in five secondary schools. The study was confronted with few limitations. First, an obvious limitation of the study is the small size of the sample. The study was geographically limited to Liberian schools and the sample was limited to only five secondary schools in one community. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the population at large since the District where the community is located is wide and has several secondary schools. Second, there was a limitation during the administration of the questionnaire and interview. It was noticed that some of the participants did not return their survey and some filled but did not answer up to 50% of the questionnaire. For the interview, instead of 15 administrators, only 10 were able to show up. Third, The Coronavirus pandemic also affected Liberia where all schools were shut down in the process of data collection. Due to the closure of schools in the middle of the data collection, the researcher had to run after participants to collect the questionnaires and conduct interviews outside school campuses.

Finally, the study could have been usefully expanded to include students' views about implementing discipline and attendance policies since they are the ones affected by the policy. The different views between teachers and students could have been investigated. Moreover, a comparison between teachers' and students' views might have assisted in creating the preferable future needs of students which policy makers and

administrators should consider when formulating policies in order to achieve effective discipline and attendance in schools.

Despite these limitations, the data gathered from this study yielded relevant areas that contributed to a better understanding of the implementation of effective school policy on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia.

Recommendations for practical Action

This purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. Based on the conclusions of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. This study identified a need for schools to come up and develop a new policy on discipline and attendance. It is recommended that school administrators set up discipline and attendance policies that serve the school and the larger community.
2. School policy should be reviewed and roles of different administrators defined well to avert role conflict which could be counterproductive in discipline and attendance management.
3. A school policy is relevant for the effective and efficient running of the school. When the school's policy is being drawn up, all major stakeholders including students, teachers, parents must be involved to ensure that democratic principles are being included in some important procedures.
4. At the beginning of every school year, the administrators should orientate students about school policy that include code of conduct and school rules. Rules and the consequences of violating them must be clearly indicated to students during assembly and other occasions.

5. From the results, it was revealed that school administrators and teachers have longed for parental involvement to create a school with better discipline and attendance. It is recommended that administrators create opportunities for parents to be actively involved with the activities in and around the school.
6. Teachers are the main agent of policy implementation in the school setting. It was revealed that teachers were not motivated by school administrators to implement discipline and attendance policies. Therefore, it is recommended that administrators encourage teachers to have full control over students in the classroom when it comes to discipline and attendance problems.
7. Administrators are also advised to involve students to assist in policy implementation. When students are involved in such activities, they will become role models to the rest of the student population and this might change other students' attitude towards discipline and attendance in the school.
8. According to the findings, the causes of school policy ineffectiveness were attributed to lack of awareness on policy issues. A low level of awareness of discipline and attendance policies was found among all the sampled schools as a problem. Hence, it is recommended that administrators should create a platform for policy awareness among students, teachers and parents.
9. Finally, the government through the Ministry of Education has a major role to play in implementing discipline and attendance policies in schools. Therefore, it is recommended that the MOE should draw up a clear policy that specifies approaches and consequences about discipline and attendance in school. to apply when rules are violated.

Suggestions for further studies

The study endeavored to throw light on the concept of effective school policy on discipline and attendance. The challenges and approaches during the formulation and implementation process were discussed in order to bring to the awareness of how school administrators and teachers need to see discipline and attendance from different angles. Participants of the study suggested their views and some findings were revealed about school policy. At the end of the study, recommendations were made as a way forward to implementing an effective policy on discipline and attendance. However, there is a need to conduct other studies in areas related to the current topic.

1. This study was conducted only in five public and private secondary schools in the Barnersville community. So, the data obtained does not give a whole picture of the situation. It is suggested that a similar study should be conducted to the whole country at the secondary school level. This could help to give the whole picture concerning the implementation of effective school policy on discipline and attendance in secondary school country wise.
2. Since the study was conducted in secondary school level, the same should be conducted at primary school level to get the general picture of the implementation of effective school policy on discipline and attendance to compare the approaches and difficulties between secondary school and primary schools.
3. Furthermore, studies would be necessary on the role of the community and parents in the formulation and implementation of school discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools. This may bring out the specific roles attached to community and parents when it comes to discipline and attendance in schools.

4. Due to the lack of research on the role of the students in the management of discipline and attendance in secondary schools, many aspects still require further more detailed research. Thus, Strategies to improve students' involvement in policy implementation needs to be investigated in Liberia.

Summary of Chapter Five

The chapter provided the summary of the study, conclusions based on the findings, implications, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for further research. The suggestions for further research were also outlined in this chapter. The study was carried out to provide an answer to the specific research questions that guided the study. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of discipline and attendance policies in secondary schools in Liberia. From the researcher's expectation, the aim of the study was achieved by examining the effectiveness of the school policy on discipline and attendance, challenges that come with effective policy implementation, approaches in implementing the policy and providing recommendations to assist school administrators in their effort to improving effective school policies on discipline and attendance.

Concluding statement

The overall objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of school policy on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in the post-conflict context of Liberia. On the whole, the study disclosed that effective school policy played significant role in enhancing students' discipline and attendance. The adoption further revealed that when policy is emphasized, it is in a long run prescribes the standard of behavior expected of students and teachers. School children make up almost half of the population of the

present Liberia. For this reason, their education and completion of secondary school are important for achieving the goal of Education for All and the MDGs. Hence, giving consideration to the issues that challenge education either by indiscipline or irregular attendance among students can contribute to sustainable peace and conducive school environment. Education in Liberia is faced with many challenges in accessing and completing the full course of study in secondary school due to many factors including educational policy issues as well as features in the society such as lack of parental support for children' education and limited educational opportunities. Given the lessons learned from this study, it might be safe to conclude that the Government of Liberia and school administrators need to join hands and find new ways to address the policy issues that failed to minimize indiscipline and irregular attendance in secondary schools. To end, I used the words of Eli Broad (2010) of the USA as follow:

“The biggest barrier we have seen to student progress is this: Lack of effective school policies and practices often prevent good teachers from doing great work and even dissuade some talented students from entering their profession. This situation needs to change”

The next section presented the reference list and a variety of instruments which included questionnaire, interview schedule and policy checklists on discipline and attendance.

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APPENDICES

The appendices in the study were made up of four different parts which included the survey questionnaire for principal participants, vice principal participants, dean of students participants and teacher participants, an interview guide for principal participants, vice principal participants and deans of student participant and finally documents analyses checklists for discipline policy and attendance policy.

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Principals, Vice principals, Deans of students and Teachers

Appendix B: Interview guide for Principals, Vice principals and Deans of students

Appendix C: Checklist for attendance policy in schools

Appendix D: Checklist for discipline policy in schools

Appendix A: Survey questionnaire for administrators and teachers

The main purpose of this survey questionnaire for principals, vice principals, dean of students and teachers was to solicit information related to effective school policies on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in Liberia. The Administrators and teachers' contributions or views was significance since they are dealing with discipline and attendance issues in the school. They were given the survey to fill starting from their biography, questions related to policy effectiveness, approaches, challenges and recommendations on how best to have an effective policy that will minimize students' indiscipline and irregular school attendance in Liberia.

Section A: Demographic information

Kindly put a tick [] on the alternative that best represents you.

| | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|--|
| 1. | Gender | Male [<input type="checkbox"/>] | Female [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| 2. | Age level | 25-30 [<input type="checkbox"/>] | 31-35 [<input type="checkbox"/>] 36-40 [<input type="checkbox"/>] 41-45 [<input type="checkbox"/>] 46-50 [<input type="checkbox"/>] Above 50 [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| 3. | Job title | Principal [<input type="checkbox"/>] | Deputy Principal [<input type="checkbox"/>] Dean [<input type="checkbox"/>] Teacher [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| 4. | Years in the school | 1-5 [<input type="checkbox"/>] | 6-10 [<input type="checkbox"/>] 11- 15 [<input type="checkbox"/>] 16-20 [<input type="checkbox"/>] Above 20 [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| 5. | Level of education | Certificate [<input type="checkbox"/>] | Diploma [<input type="checkbox"/>] Bachelors [<input type="checkbox"/>] Masters [<input type="checkbox"/>] PhD [<input type="checkbox"/>] |

Section B: Assessing discipline and attendance policies availability

Kindly put a tick [√] on the area that best represents you.

6. Does your school have policies on discipline and attendance?

a. Yes b. No

7. How long since the policies were formulated?

a. Below 2 years b. Between 3-5 years

c. Between 6- 10 years d. Above 10 years

8. To what extent are you aware of the different sections of your school policies?

a. Very highly aware b. Highly aware

c. Moderately aware d. Not aware

9. How often does your school evaluate its discipline and attendance policies?

a. Always b. Sometimes

c. Rarely d. Never

Section C: Assessment of policy effectiveness

10. If your answer in question (6) is yes, how effective are the policies?

a. Highly effective b. Effective e. Neutral

c. Less effective d. Ineffective

To what extent do the following discipline and attendance issues become a problem to the school? Kindly put a tick [√] on your option that best describes your experience.

| No. | Items | Serious | Moderate | Minor | Not a problem | Neutral |
|-----|--|---------|----------|-------|---------------|---------|
| 11. | Students coming to school late. | | | | | |
| 12. | Students' absenteeism. | | | | | |
| 13. | Students' escaping classes. | | | | | |
| 14. | Physical conflicts among students on campus. | | | | | |
| 15. | Stealing items among students. | | | | | |
| 16. | Damaging of school property (vandalism) | | | | | |
| 17. | Drugs and substance abuse | | | | | |
| 18. | Students use of mobile phone in school | | | | | |
| 19. | Physical abuse of teachers | | | | | |
| 20. | Disrespect for teachers and other staff | | | | | |
| 21. | Verbal abuse of teachers. | | | | | |
| 22. | Disruptive behavior in class/campus. | | | | | |
| 23. | Students refusal to use school uniform. | | | | | |
| 24. | Students bullying and intimidating other students. | | | | | |
| 25. | Irresponsible sexual relations among students | | | | | |

26. From your personal experience, what are other problems that you think the school is constantly experiencing?

Section D: Strategies used in implementing school policy

Tick [√] your opinion on the approaches used to implement your policy.

SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

| No. | Statements | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|-----|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 27. | Issuing of discipline policy booklets to students | | | | | |
| 28. | Disciplinary files are kept for all students | | | | | |
| 29. | Principal reminds students about school policy | | | | | |
| 30. | Rehabilitation of students with psychological problems | | | | | |
| 31. | Creation of a disciplinary committee | | | | | |
| 32. | The orientation of new students | | | | | |
| 33. | Provision of guidance and counseling | | | | | |
| 34. | Frequent PTA meetings | | | | | |
| 35. | Parental involvement | | | | | |
| 36. | Punishment through suspension, expulsion, etc. | | | | | |
| 37. | Students involvement | | | | | |
| 38. | Policy awareness campaign | | | | | |
| 39. | Supervision and monitoring | | | | | |
| 40. | Manual work (clearing grass, cleaning, etc. | | | | | |
| | Approaches to implementing attendance policy | | | | | |
| 41. | Extra curriculum activities to encourage attendance | | | | | |
| 42. | Attendance policy booklet is issued to all students | | | | | |
| 43. | Punishment through suspension | | | | | |
| 44. | School intervenes early if students' attendance begins to deteriorate | | | | | |
| 45. | The adoption of PTA meeting to discuss attendance | | | | | |
| 46. | Involvement of parents | | | | | |
| 47. | Adoption of program that promotes a positive school environment | | | | | |
| 48. | Encourage parents to pay fees on time | | | | | |
| 49. | A positive school culture that promotes attendance | | | | | |
| 50. | Daily roll-calls track absenteeism | | | | | |
| 51. | Incentive program for regular attendance | | | | | |
| 52. | Attendance policy awareness campaign | | | | | |
| 53. | Principal's communication to remind students | | | | | |
| 54. | Verbal and written warning | | | | | |

Specify other approach or approaches used by the school to implement school policy.

Section E: Challenges to implementing school policy

Tick [√] your opinion on the challenges to implementing your policy.

SD = Strongly disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly agree

| No. | Statements | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|-----|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 56. | Students late coming to school | | | | | |
| 57. | The high rate of absenteeism in the school. | | | | | |
| 58. | Students stay from classes because school rules are not clear | | | | | |
| 59. | Students are disruptive in classes in the present of teachers | | | | | |
| 60. | Some students leave school without permission. | | | | | |
| 61. | Students are disrespecting and teachers and students. | | | | | |
| 62. | Some students carry drugs and alcohol to school. | | | | | |
| 63. | Lack of corporal punishment in school. | | | | | |
| 64. | Students come to school with phones | | | | | |
| 65. | Inadequate teacher training on discipline procedures | | | | | |
| 66. | Restriction by law from the government. | | | | | |
| 67. | Humiliation of teachers by the students. | | | | | |
| 68. | Lack of parental involvement in children's education | | | | | |
| 69. | Provision of Guidance and counseling services | | | | | |
| 70. | Student's deviance and resistance. | | | | | |
| 71. | Perpetual indiscipline behavior of some students. | | | | | |
| 72. | Negative influence from surrounding community | | | | | |
| 73. | Students often miss classes due to payment of fees | | | | | |
| 74. | Transfer of indiscipline students to other schools | | | | | |
| 75. | Lack of support by some teachers. | | | | | |

Others (Specify)

Section F: Possible solutions to implement effective school policy

Research question 5: What would you recommend to implement effective policy?

Direction: Consider the following suggestions below and tick (√) your opinions

| No. | Statements | Tick (√) the most appropriate |
|-----|--|-------------------------------|
| 77. | Establishment of a new policy on discipline and attendance | |
| 78. | Issuing school policy booklets to students, teachers & parents | |
| 79. | Increase parental involvement | |
| 80. | Empowerment of teachers in policy implementation | |
| 81. | Constant reminder of students about school policies | |
| 82. | Consequences should be specified in the policy booklet | |
| 83. | Involvement of students in policy implementation | |
| 84. | Constant evaluation of school policies | |
| 85. | Orientation of new students in line with school policies | |
| 88. | Roll-calls and close monitoring must be consistent | |
| 89. | Government support on discipline and attendance | |
| 90. | Guidance and counseling services with discipline problems | |

Others (Please specify) _____

Thanks very much for answering this survey.

The survey was used to solicit information from the principals, vice principals, deans of students and teachers about effective school policies on discipline and attendance. After distributing the questionnaire to the participants to fill out, the researcher collected the feedbacks and arranged them according to different sections as indicated in the survey in order to find out percentages of participants.

Appendix B: Interview guide

The purpose of this interview guide was to get the principal participants, vice principal participants and dean of students participants' opinions on effective school discipline and attendance policies, approaches, challenges and recommendations on how effective policy could be achieved. The administrators' opinions during the interview was relevant since they were directly involved in discipline and attendance in the school system. They had diverse knowledge about discipline and attendance problems in their respective schools and they were also be in the better position to come up with strategies that could solve the problem under study. The interview guide comprised of 18 different questions, the questions were designed for information about administrators and their opinions concerning effective policies on discipline and attendance.

1. Gender: Male [] Female []
2. What is your position in this school?

3. How long have you been in this position in the present school? -

4. Do you have discipline policy in your school? -

5. Do you have an attendance policy in your school?

6. How long now since your school discipline and attendance policies were formulated?

7. What methods do you have in place to implement your school discipline policy?

Explain

8. What methods do you have in place to implement your school attendance policy?

Explain

9. On average, how would you rate student attendance in your school?

Excellent b) Good c) Average d) Poor e) Bad

10. On average, how would you rate student discipline in your school?

Excellent b) Good c) Average d) Poor e) Bad

11. Who is responsible to formulate your school policies? Explain

12. To what extent are your teachers, students and parents aware of the policy on discipline and attendance?

13. On average, how would you rate effectiveness of your current attendance policy?

a) Excellent b) Good c) Average d) Poor e) Bad

14. On average, how would you rate the effectiveness of your current attendance policy?

- a) Excellent b) Good c) Average d) Poor e) Bad

15. What are some of the barriers that you face in regard to implementing discipline policy?

16. What are some of the barriers that you face in regard to implementing attendance policy?

17. What strategies do you have in place to help make your policies effective?

18. Finally, what would you recommend as a possible solution in reducing discipline and attendance problems in your school?


Thanks for your time.

The interview guide was used to gather information from administrators about effective policy on discipline and attendance in secondary schools in the Barnersville community. The results from the interview was used to back up the information from the questionnaire and other related documents on how to promote effective policy to reduce indiscipline and irregular school attendance among students.

Discipline and attendance policies checklists

The purpose of the discipline and attendance checklists is to examine the content of the policies that the school has in place to deal with discipline and attendance matters. Researcher used the checklists result to support information collected from the questionnaire and interview about school discipline and attendance policy's effectiveness, approaches, challenges and recommendations to have an effective policy.

Appendix C: Discipline policy checklist

| | School  | A | B | C | D | E |
|-----|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No. | Item | Exist | Exist | Exist | Exist | Exist |
| 1. | Policy title | | | | | |
| 2.. | Policy statement | | | | | |
| 3. | Policy rationale | | | | | |
| 4. | Date of commencement | | | | | |
| 5. | Forms of indiscipline | | | | | |
| 6. | Consequences/Punishments | | | | | |
| 7. | Policy revision (Time frame) | | | | | |
| 8. | Contact person | | | | | |
| 9. | Policy objectives, strategies and outcomes | | | | | |
| 10. | Procedures of complains | | | | | |
| 11. | Procedures to use electronic devices in school | | | | | |
| 12. | Roles and responsibilities (Stakeholders) | | | | | |
| 13. | Students' conduct outside the school gates | | | | | |

Appendix D: Attendance policy checklist

| | Schools —————▶ | A | B | C | D | E |
|-----|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| No. | Policy contents | Exist | Exist | Exist | Exist | Exist |
| 1. | Policy title | | | | | |
| 2. | Policy Statement | | | | | |
| 3. | Consequences/Punishments | | | | | |
| 4. | Date of commencement | | | | | |
| 5. | Policy revision (date) | | | | | |
| 6. | Encouraging good attendance (method) | | | | | |
| 7. | Policy objectives, strategies and outcomes | | | | | |
| 8. | Procedures to be absent | | | | | |
| 9. | Request for leave of absence | | | | | |
| 10. | Following up students' absences | | | | | |
| 11. | Response to poor punctuality | | | | | |
| 12. | School schedule (Timetable) | | | | | |
| 13. | Class daily register | | | | | |
| 14. | Types of absences (Excused & Unexcused) | | | | | |
| 15. | Roles and responsibilities (Stakeholders) | | | | | |
| 16. | School shared principles and beliefs | | | | | |

During the data collection process, the Students' handbooks on discipline and attendance were reviewed and notes were taken. The document analyses assisted the researcher in getting wider information about how discipline and attendance policies were formulated and the essential elements they contained and those elements they lacked that restricted the effectiveness of the policies. The checklists were also used to verify whether what was written in the policy documents and what was obtained from the questionnaire and interviews were consistent.