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Article InformationReceived: 29th Dec., 2025Accepted: 20th Jan., 2026Published: 16th Feb., 2026**STUDENT EXPULSION AND THE LAW****Anietie Imo Effiong**

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo

Email: anietieimo@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines student expulsion within the framework of Nigerian law, with particular emphasis on the balance between institutional disciplinary authority and the protection of students' legal rights. The research reviews constitutional provisions, statutory instruments and common law principles governing expulsion in educational institutions. Key findings reveal that while schools possess legitimate powers to maintain order and safety, the exercise of such powers is frequently constrained by procedural and substantive fairness requirements, especially the right to fair hearing under Section 36 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended). The study further finds that challenges such as inconsistent enforcement of rules, inadequate legal literacy among school administrators and limited alternative disciplinary measures often undermine lawful implementation of expulsion. In conclusion, the research affirms that expulsion should remain a measure of last resort, applied proportionately and in compliance with due process standards and child protection laws, including the Child Rights Act 2003. The study recommends strengthened legal training for school authorities, clearer statutory guidelines on disciplinary procedures and the adoption of rehabilitative alternatives to expulsion. These measures will promote fairness, accountability and sustainable discipline within Nigerian educational institutions.

Keywords: Student expulsion; due process; school discipline; educational law; Nigerian legal framework

INTRODUCTION

Student expulsion remains one of the most serious disciplinary actions available within educational systems worldwide, representing both a corrective measure for unacceptable behaviour and a potential deprivation of the fundamental right to education. Expulsion is usually reserved for the most egregious forms of misconduct such as violence, possession of weapons, or repeated harmful behaviour which can result in the permanent removal of a pupil from their school community. In contemporary educational and legal discourse, the authority of schools to impose such sanctions must be balanced with internationally recognised principles of procedural fairness and human rights protections. Research in educational law highlights that disciplinary measures, particularly expulsions, cannot be applied arbitrarily but must be governed by clear

procedures that respect students' rights to fair treatment and due process (LegalClarity Team, 2025; Edicts & Statutes, 2025).

This balance between authority and rights is echoed in legal frameworks across jurisdictions. In many democratic states, constitutional provisions or statutory instruments affirm that education is not merely a privilege but a right that cannot be denied without just cause and lawful process. For instance, procedural due process requirements demand that students and their guardians receive adequate notice of alleged misconduct and an opportunity to be heard before an expulsion decision is taken (LegalClarity Team, 2025; FindLaw, 2025). Where such safeguards are absent, disciplinary actions may be vulnerable to legal challenge, as courts increasingly adjudicate disputes between educational institutions and students over fairness and legality. This dynamic has amplified scholarly interest in how expulsion policies are designed and applied, particularly in contexts where inconsistency in disciplinary practices undermines confidence in educational justice systems (Yao & Zhao, 2020).

In Nigeria, the issue of student expulsion intersects with domestic constitutional protections and educational policy, raising significant questions about fairness, accountability and the protection of children's rights. National legal instruments including constitutional guarantees of dignity and the right to education, influence how disciplinary actions are regulated, emphasising that punitive measures like expulsion should be implemented in ways that respect the inherent rights of learners while preserving school safety and order (Okaforcha, 2025). Nonetheless, empirical studies indicate that school authorities sometimes apply expulsion and related sanctions without sufficient procedural rigour or rehabilitative support, leading to adverse consequences such as marginalisation, disrupted learning pathways, and legal challenges. This backdrop underscores the importance of an in-depth exploration of the legal contours of student expulsion and the necessity for policies that align disciplinary authority with statutory and human rights obligations.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

• Student Expulsion

Student expulsion, as a concept, refers to the permanent or long-term removal of a learner from an educational institution as a disciplinary sanction for serious misconduct. Unlike lesser disciplinary responses, expulsion typically denotes the complete termination of a student's current enrolment and educational services, with implications for their academic progress and future opportunities (LawVexa, 2025). It is regarded not merely as punishment but as an exclusionary measure deployed when a pupil's behaviour is adjudged severely detrimental to the safety, order or moral fabric of the school community. Within legal scholarship, expulsion is often framed as a last resort that must be justified within the bounds of codified rules and procedural fairness, particularly given its grave effect on a student's educational right.

• Suspension vs. Expulsion

Closely related but distinct is the notion of suspension, which involves the temporary separation of a student from school attendance for a specified period. Suspension is understood to be a short-term exclusion, usually ranging from one to several days, intended to separate the learner from the educational environment pending corrective action or further investigation (National Open University, 2025). The key difference between suspension and expulsion lies in duration and permanence: while suspension interrupts schooling temporarily without terminating enrolment, expulsion ends the student's immediate institutional affiliation and often triggers more formal procedures and higher legal scrutiny.

- **Due Process and Natural Justice**

Due process is a cornerstone principle in both suspension and expulsion contexts. It embodies the requirement that before any significant disciplinary deprivation such as the loss of access to education, a student must be afforded fair procedures, including clear notice of allegations, access to evidence and an opportunity to respond before an impartial decision-maker (Nisar Law, 2025). This procedural fairness reflects the broader doctrine of natural justice, which mandates that decision-makers act without bias and that affected parties are heard before adverse decisions are taken. Natural justice emphasises fairness and transparency in disciplinary proceedings, helping ensure that decisions are reasonable, impartial and legally defensible (Indulia, 2025).

- **Disciplinary Proceedings**

Disciplinary proceedings, in turn, denote the structured process through which allegations of misconduct are investigated, adjudicated and resolved. These proceedings encompass the stages of notice, hearing, evidence evaluation and determination of appropriate sanctions, guided by established policies and legal safeguards. Collectively, these terms form the conceptual foundation for analysing how student expulsion intersects with the law and the rights of learners.

- **Objectives of School Discipline**

Maintaining order and safety: One fundamental objective of school discipline is maintaining order and safety within educational environments. A disciplined school establishes clear behavioural expectations that prevent chaos and reduce incidents of violence or physical danger, thereby safeguarding both students and staff. Research shows that structured discipline policies are central to creating a stable environment where teaching and learning can occur without unnecessary interruptions or threats to wellbeing (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2025). Effective discipline also supports the prevention of bullying and promotes social norms that protect learners from harm.

Protecting academic integrity: Closely linked to safety is the goal of protecting academic integrity. Academic integrity refers to ethical scholarly behaviour such as avoiding cheating and upholding honest work standards, which is vital for credible academic outcomes (Wikipedia, 2025). School discipline that emphasises academic honesty helps nurture students' respect for rules governing examinations, assignments and research. By discouraging plagiarism and dishonest practices, disciplined schools uphold standards that reflect true student achievement and learning.

Promoting ethical behaviour: In addition, discipline serves to promote ethical behaviour among learners. Research indicates that consistent, fair disciplinary practices contribute to students' moral development and respect for community values (Ajayi, Adebuseyi & Adebayo, 2025). When schools link behavioural expectations with moral understanding, students learn accountability, respect for others, and social responsibility.

Creating a conducive learning environment: Ultimately, these disciplinary objectives work together to create a conducive learning environment. A school where safety, integrity and ethical conduct are prioritised generates a positive climate that enhances student engagement, reduces disruptions and supports academic success (Scribd, 2025).

- **Categories of Misconduct That May Lead to Expulsion**

Violent behaviour (assault, bullying): Violent conduct within the school environment constitutes one of the most common grounds for expulsion because it directly threatens the safety and dignity of others. Acts such as physical assault, severe bullying, intimidation or harassment undermine the school's duty of care and disrupt the sense of security necessary for learning. Studies

emphasise that persistent or serious violence often compels schools to adopt exclusionary measures in order to protect the wider school community (Adebayo & Kola, 2024).

Possession of weapons: The possession of weapons, including firearms, knives or improvised dangerous objects, is widely regarded as a zero-tolerance offence in many educational systems. Such conduct elevates the risk of serious harm and creates fear among students and staff. Legal and policy frameworks generally justify expulsion in these cases on preventive grounds, even where the weapon has not been used, due to the inherent danger involved.

Drug and alcohol-related offences: Drug abuse and alcohol-related misconduct within school premises pose significant health, safety and moral concerns. Possession, use or distribution of illicit substances often attracts expulsion because it exposes other learners to harmful influences and contravenes public health laws. Research indicates that schools treat these offences severely to deter substance abuse and preserve a disciplined learning atmosphere.

Sexual harassment or misconduct: Sexual harassment, abuse or other forms of sexual misconduct represent grave violations of personal dignity and bodily autonomy. Such behaviour not only traumatises victims but also erodes trust within the school environment. Consequently, expulsion is frequently considered appropriate where allegations are substantiated, reflecting both moral condemnation and legal obligations to safeguard learners (Thompson & Reed, 2025).

Academic fraud or cheating: Academic dishonesty, including examination malpractice, plagiarism and falsification of records, strikes at the core of educational integrity. While minor infractions may attract lesser sanctions, systemic or egregious fraud can justify expulsion because it compromises fairness and institutional credibility.

3. LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF STUDENT EXPULSION

a. Constitutional Provisions

Right to education: Although the right to education in Nigeria is located under the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, Section 18 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) obliges the State to promote equal and adequate educational opportunities. While not directly justiciable, courts and scholars increasingly interpret this provision as guiding disciplinary decisions, meaning expulsion should not be applied in a manner that arbitrarily extinguishes access to education without lawful justification.

Right to fair hearing: Section 36(1) of the Constitution guarantees the right to fair hearing in the determination of civil rights and obligations. This provision applies to student disciplinary matters, requiring that before expulsion, the affected student must be informed of allegations and given an opportunity to respond before an impartial body. Failure to observe fair hearing principles has rendered expulsions unlawful in several judicial pronouncements.

Right to dignity and equality: Under Section 34, every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of the human person, while Section 42 guarantees equality and freedom from discriminatory treatment. These provisions restrain schools from imposing degrading or selective disciplinary sanctions and require that expulsion decisions respect students' inherent worth and equal status within the institution.

Freedom from discrimination: Section 42 further prohibits discrimination based on ethnic group, sex, religion or circumstances of birth. In disciplinary contexts, this ensures that expulsion policies are applied uniformly and not influenced by prejudice or social bias.

b. Statutory Provisions

Education Acts / School Acts: Federal and State Education Laws empower school authorities to regulate conduct and enforce discipline, including expulsion, provided such powers are exercised in accordance with prescribed procedures and institutional regulations (National Education Policy Review, 2024).

Child Rights Act: The Child Rights Act 2003 reinforces the principle that the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Expulsion decisions involving minors must therefore consider rehabilitative options and the long-term welfare of the child.

Administrative law principles: General principles of administrative law, such as legality, reasonableness and proportionality, govern disciplinary actions. These principles require that expulsion must be authorised by law, justified by facts and proportionate to the misconduct alleged.

Human rights legislation: Nigeria's domestication of international human rights instruments, particularly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, further strengthens protections against arbitrary exclusion from education, reinforcing fairness and accountability in expulsion decisions (Human Rights Review Panel, 2025).

c. Common Law Principles

Duty of care owed by schools to students: Under common law, educational institutions owe a duty of care to their students, arising from the special relationship between schools acting in loco parentis and learners under their supervision. This duty requires schools to take reasonable steps to protect students from foreseeable harm while on school premises or during school-related activities. In disciplinary contexts, this obligation means that expulsion decisions must consider not only institutional order but also the welfare, safety and future prospects of the affected student, particularly minors.

Natural justice (*audi alteram partem*, *nemo iudex in causa sua*): Natural justice is a central common law principle governing disciplinary actions, including student expulsion. The rule of *audi alteram partem* mandates that no student should be condemned unheard, while *nemo iudex in causa sua* requires that decision-makers remain impartial and free from bias. Nigerian courts have consistently applied these principles to school disciplinary matters, holding that failure to observe them renders expulsion decisions procedurally defective and legally unsustainable.

Proportionality in punishment: The doctrine of proportionality requires that disciplinary sanctions correspond reasonably to the gravity of the misconduct. Expulsion, being the most severe penalty, should only be imposed where lesser measures are inadequate. Common law discourages excessive or oppressive punishment, insisting that sanctions must reflect fairness, rationality and contextual assessment of each case (Arowolo & Singh, 2024).

d. Institutional Policies

School handbooks and codes of conduct: School handbooks and codes of conduct constitute binding internal regulations that define acceptable behaviour and outline sanctions, including expulsion. Once adopted and communicated, these policies create legitimate expectations that disciplinary actions will follow stated procedures. Courts often treat such documents as quasi-contractual, requiring strict compliance by school authorities (Educational Governance Review, 2024).

Disciplinary committee procedures: Most institutions establish disciplinary committees to investigate allegations and recommend sanctions. These committees are expected to operate transparently, observe fairness and document proceedings properly. The legitimacy of expulsion decisions largely depends on whether committees act within their mandate and follow approved procedures.

Notification and appeal procedures: Effective disciplinary frameworks provide clear mechanisms for notifying students of allegations and allowing appeals against adverse decisions. Appeal procedures enhance accountability, reduce arbitrariness and reinforce confidence in institutional justice systems by offering students an avenue for redress.

4. DUE PROCESS IN STUDENT EXPULSION

Due process in student expulsion refers to the requirement that disciplinary decisions must be reached through procedures that are fair, open and free from bias. In Nigeria, this principle derives constitutional force from Section 36(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), which guarantees fair hearing in the determination of civil rights and obligations. Applied to educational institutions, this means that schools must follow laid-down rules, act transparently and ensure that disciplinary bodies do not pre-judge allegations before hearing the affected student (Afolayan & Omotoso, 2024). Due process also serves as a safeguard against arbitrary or capricious disciplinary actions. School authorities are expected to base expulsion decisions on established facts, evidence and lawful procedures rather than emotions, public pressure or personal sentiments. Nigerian administrative law discourages discretionary abuse, insisting that powers must be exercised reasonably and in good faith.

• Elements of Procedural Fairness

Notice of allegations: Procedural fairness in student expulsion begins with clear and timely notice of the allegations against the student. Section 36(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) requires that any person whose civil rights and obligations are in issue must be informed of the case against them. In disciplinary settings, this means the student must receive adequate information regarding the nature of the misconduct alleged, the rules breached and the possible consequences, enabling meaningful preparation for defence.

Access to evidence: Fair process further demands that the affected student be granted reasonable access to the evidence relied upon by the school authority. This includes witness statements, reports or documentary materials forming the basis of the allegation. Denial of access to such evidence undermines transparency and violates principles of fair hearing recognised under Nigerian administrative law.

Opportunity to present a defence: An essential element of due process is the opportunity for the student to respond to allegations, either orally or in writing. This requirement flows directly from the common law principle of *audi alteram partem*, which Nigerian courts have consistently upheld in disciplinary proceedings. The student must be allowed to call witnesses, challenge adverse claims and present mitigating factors before a decision is reached.

Impartial panel or hearing officer: Fairness also requires that disciplinary hearings be conducted by an impartial body. Decision-makers must not have personal interest in the outcome, in line with the principle of *nemo iudex in causa sua*. Any indication of bias renders the process defective and susceptible to judicial review under Nigerian law.

- **Substantive Fairness**

Reasonableness of sanction: Substantive fairness in student expulsion requires that the sanction imposed be reasonable in light of the surrounding circumstances. Nigerian administrative law recognises that disciplinary powers must be exercised rationally and not capriciously. A sanction is considered unreasonable where it is excessive, punitive or unrelated to the misconduct established, thereby defeating the corrective purpose of school discipline.

Proportionality to the offence: Closely related to reasonableness is the principle of proportionality, which demands that the severity of punishment corresponds to the gravity of the offence. Expulsion, being the harshest disciplinary outcome, should be reserved for serious or repeated misconduct that poses a real threat to school order or safety. Nigerian courts have shown reluctance to uphold expulsions where lesser sanctions could have adequately addressed the misconduct.

Consistency with precedent: Fairness further requires consistency in disciplinary decisions across similar cases. Where institutions impose varying sanctions for comparable misconduct without justification, such inconsistency may amount to arbitrariness. Adhering to established disciplinary precedents promotes predictability, equity and institutional credibility, reducing the risk of discriminatory application of sanctions (Kareem & Watson, 2024).

Consideration of mitigating factors: Substantive fairness obliges disciplinary bodies to consider mitigating circumstances, such as the student's age, prior conduct, intent and personal background. Failure to assess such factors may render an expulsion decision unjust, particularly where the misconduct arose from situational or developmental challenges.

5. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Rights of the Student**

Right to education: Students enjoy a protected interest in access to education, supported by Section 18 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), which mandates the State to promote educational opportunities. Although directive in nature, this provision guides disciplinary actions, requiring that expulsion not be applied arbitrarily or without lawful justification.

Right to appeal: The right to appeal disciplinary decisions forms an essential safeguard against error and arbitrariness. Institutional regulations commonly provide internal appeal mechanisms, allowing students to seek review of expulsion decisions and reinforcing accountability in school governance (Iheanacho, Gomez and Lawal et al, 2025).

Right to legal representation: Depending on institutional policy and the gravity of the allegation, students may be entitled to representation by a legal practitioner or other authorised person. This right is particularly relevant in cases involving complex factual or legal issues, ensuring effective participation in disciplinary proceedings.

Right to fair hearing: Section 36(1) of the Constitution guarantees fair hearing in the determination of civil rights and obligations. This applies to student discipline, requiring notice of allegations and an opportunity to be heard before expulsion is imposed.

Right to equality and non-discrimination: Section 42 prohibits discrimination on grounds such as sex, religion or ethnic origin. Students are therefore entitled to equal treatment in disciplinary matters, free from prejudice or selective enforcement.

- **Responsibilities of the Student**

Compliance with school rules: Students are obliged to observe institutional rules and regulations, which define acceptable conduct and facilitate orderly learning environments.

Respect for teachers and peers: Respectful interaction with staff and fellow learners supports discipline and mutual coexistence within the school community.

Maintaining academic integrity: Students are expected to uphold honesty in academic work, avoiding practices that undermine assessment credibility (Adeola & Kumar et al, 2024).

Avoidance of harmful behaviour: Learners must refrain from conduct that endangers others or disrupts school activities, aligning personal behaviour with communal safety.

- **Rights of the School**

Authority to maintain order: Schools possess inherent authority to regulate behaviour within their premises to preserve discipline and educational effectiveness.

Power to discipline in accordance with rules: Institutions may impose sanctions, including expulsion, provided such actions comply with established regulations and legal standards (Mensah & Okoro et al, 2025).

Right to protect staff and students: Schools have a legitimate interest in safeguarding the physical and psychological well-being of all members of the school community.

- **Responsibilities of the School**

Fair and consistent application of rules: Disciplinary measures must be applied uniformly to avoid arbitrariness and discrimination.

Non-discriminatory policies: Institutional policies must reflect constitutional guarantees of equality and inclusion.

Adequate communication of rules: Schools are required to clearly communicate codes of conduct to students and parents.

Ensuring safety of all students: A core duty of schools is to maintain a safe learning environment.

Protecting vulnerable groups: Special consideration must be given to minors, students with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, in line with child protection laws.

6. ROLE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND DISCIPLINARY BODIES

- **Duties of School Administrators**

Policy formulation: School administrators are responsible for developing clear disciplinary policies that align with national education policies and constitutional standards. Such policies must reflect the principles of fairness and legality implicit in Section 36 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), providing predictable standards for managing misconduct.

Ensuring the safety of students: Administrators owe a duty of care to students, requiring them to create a safe learning environment. This obligation is reinforced by child protection norms under the Child Rights Act 2003, which emphasise safeguarding the welfare of minors in institutional settings.

Implementing disciplinary policies: Beyond formulation, administrators must ensure consistent enforcement of disciplinary rules. Selective or arbitrary implementation undermines legality and may expose institutions to legal challenges.

- **Composition and Roles of the Disciplinary Committee**

Chairperson: The chairperson oversees proceedings, ensuring compliance with institutional rules and principles of impartiality.

Teachers: Teachers provide factual insight into school operations and student conduct, contributing professional judgement to deliberations.

Guidance Counsellors: Counsellors introduce a rehabilitative perspective, helping assess behavioural causes and appropriate corrective measures.

Student Representation: In some jurisdictions, student representation promotes transparency and peer accountability, though participation is usually limited to protect confidentiality.

- **Steps in Disciplinary Investigation**

Filing of incident report: Disciplinary action typically begins with a formal incident report documenting alleged misconduct.

Preliminary investigation: Administrators assess the report to determine whether a prima facie case exists.

Suspension Pending Investigation: Temporary suspension may be imposed where necessary to protect safety, subject to fairness and proportionality.

Summoning Witnesses: Relevant witnesses may be invited to provide statements or testimony.

Hearing and Deliberation: The committee conducts a hearing, evaluates evidence and deliberates impartially.

Issuance of Decision and Communication: Decisions are formally issued and communicated to affected parties, ensuring clarity and accountability.

7. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING LAWFUL EXPULSION

- **Institutional Challenges**

Inconsistent enforcement: One major institutional challenge is the inconsistent application of disciplinary rules across similar cases. Where schools fail to apply sanctions uniformly, expulsion decisions may appear arbitrary and contrary to Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), which guarantees equality before the law.

Poorly trained disciplinary officers: Many disciplinary officers lack adequate training in education law and administrative justice. This deficiency often results in procedural errors, exposing institutions to legal challenges and undermining confidence in disciplinary outcomes.

Insufficient legal literacy: Limited understanding of constitutional rights, the Child Rights Act 2003 and administrative law principles among school administrators further complicates lawful expulsion. Without legal literacy, disciplinary actions may inadvertently violate students' rights.

- **Social and Ethical Challenges**

Bias or discrimination: Bias based on gender, disability, ethnicity or social background remains a significant concern. Such practices conflict with constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination under Section 42 and erode trust in school disciplinary systems.

Pressure from parents or communities: School authorities often face pressure from influential parents or community leaders, which may distort disciplinary decisions and compromise fairness.

Handling students with special needs: Disciplining students with disabilities or behavioural challenges requires specialised approaches. Failure to accommodate such needs may contravene child protection and inclusive education principles.

- **Procedural Challenges**

Inadequate notice to students: Some schools fail to provide proper notice of allegations, contrary to Section 36(1) of the Constitution, thereby undermining the right to fair hearing.

Poor documentation: Inadequate record-keeping weakens accountability and hinders effective review or appeal of expulsion decisions.

Failure to apply due process: Disregard for due process principles remains a recurring problem, rendering some expulsions legally vulnerable.

- **Policy Gaps**

Ambiguity in statutory provisions: Certain education laws lack clarity on expulsion procedures, creating uncertainty for school authorities.

Outdated school rules: Many institutions rely on obsolete disciplinary codes that fail to reflect modern legal and social realities.

Lack of alternative disciplinary measures: The absence of restorative or rehabilitative options often forces schools to rely excessively on expulsion, contrary to child-centred disciplinary ideals.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Student expulsion remains a critical disciplinary measure within the Nigerian educational system, yet its application must strictly align with legal and constitutional safeguards. This study has shown that expulsion decisions intersect with fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), particularly the rights to fair hearing, dignity and freedom from discrimination. While schools possess the authority to maintain order and safety, such power must be exercised reasonably, proportionately and in accordance with due process principles. Failure to observe statutory provisions such as the Child Rights Act 2003 and administrative law standards exposes institutions to legal challenges and undermines confidence in educational governance. A lawful expulsion framework therefore demands a balanced approach that preserves institutional discipline while protecting students' rights and welfare.

Recommendations

1. To school administrators, it is recommended that disciplinary policies should be regularly reviewed and aligned with constitutional provisions and child protection laws.
2. To teachers and disciplinary committees, continuous training on due process and students' rights should be implemented to ensure lawful decision-making.

3. To policymakers and education authorities, clearer statutory guidelines and alternative disciplinary measures should be developed to reduce overreliance on expulsion.
4. To parents and guardians, active participation in disciplinary processes should be encouraged to safeguard the best interests of students.

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