ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRESSION POLICY IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE: A CASE STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN MBOMBELA CIRCUIT

by

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

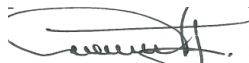**Name**: Samuel Abolarinwa Fabi

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DEDICATION

This achievement is dedicated to the Almighty God, the One who was, who is, and forever will be.

To the FABI's family, my wife, Pameline Ndamkele Fabi and my children, Percy Boitshoko and Zane Ayobami Nkosinathi for your patience, the level of understanding displayed throughout the stages of the research process, and also for being there for me.

And to Elder J.M. Fabi (Perm Sec, Ogun State) for your mentorship and constructive fatherly advice and recommendations. Also, to Dr J.K Fabi of the Ogun State University, Ogun State, Nigeria, for your motivation, inspiration and unwavering support

This achievement is also dedicated to my parents, my late dad, Pa Johnson Babarinde Ishola Fabi (Faborncity), and my mum, Felicia Obafunke Fabi for your love and the nurturing received from you till I was able to stand on my own.

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Contents

ABSTRACTS

Title: Analysing the implementation of the progression policy in Further Education and Training in Mpumalanga Province: A case study of high schools in Mbombela Circuit

To increase the number of enrolments in South African universities, there is a need to increase the number of learners that make it to matriculation stage every year. To reach the matriculation stage which is grade 12 is not sufficient, but rather passing the stage and obtaining a pass requirement that qualifies the learners for entrance into the university is needed. This attainment is the dream of every learner and one of the educational goals the Department of Basic Education wants to see being actualised. The introduction of the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the NCS, otherwise referred to as the progression policy, in the year 2013 looks set to achieve this goal. The aim of this research was to analyse the implementation of the progression policy in Further Education and Training (FET) in Mpumalanga Province. A literature study was undertaken to unearth what progression policy entails, to gauge the opinions of different stakeholders and importantly to locate where progression policy is being practised around the world apart from South Africa. Qualitative research was used in the form of open-ended questionnaires to collect relevant data in order to determine and analyse the situations surrounding the implementation of progression policy in the selected schools. The study employed a case study research design which is an appropriate research design in qualitative research. The choice of transformative theory was necessary in advancing policy implementation as transformative. An interpretivist paradigm, which takes into consideration the subjective opinion of the participants was employed. A convenience sampling method was applied in which six high schools were selected and seven participants in each school were selected for the purpose of data collection. The principal, three SMT members and three class teachers, were the participants selected from each school Document review was used in the process of data collection and content analysis was deployed in the analysis of data collected. All six schools are under the Mbombela Circuit in Mpumalanga Province. The findings of the study revealed amongst other things that;

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the progression policy was introduced to assist learners who are struggling and might possibly drop-out of school if no action was taken; the progression policy is seen as the policy that allows learners to progress to the next class even if such learners have not been able to meet the pass requirements; the positive and negative aspects resulting from the implementation of the Progression Policy in the FET; and also that the policy protects learners from repetition and dropping out of school at an early stage. Other findings were the performance of each school in the matriculation examination in 2021, including the progressed learners as depicted in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5. The study also found that looking at the representation, that there is a link between implementation and the performance of progressed learners. Many teachers are said to be unaware of what is expected of them, and it was noted that school needs to offer support and monitor the progress of support given to progressed learners Recommendations were given to the policy makers, the schools and the teachers on the effective implementation and for perfecting the ongoing practices on implementation. It was concluded that teachers need to be timely informed through effective training programmes, workshops and continuous professional teacher development. Adequate support for teachers was suggested in order to be adequately prepared to assist struggling learners.

KEY TERMS

Education, Curriculum, Further Education and Training, High schools, Implementation, Policy, Progressed learners, Progression, Repetition Retention.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Ontleding van die implementering van die vorderingsbeleid in Verdere Onderwys en Opleiding in Mpumalanga Provinsie: 'n Gevallestudie van hoërskole in Mbombela Circuit

Om die aantal inskrywings by Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite te vermeerder, is daar 'n behoefte om die aantal leerders wat deurdring na matriekstadium elke jaar te vermeerder. Om die matriekstadium te bereik, wat graad 12 is, is nie voldoende nie, maar dit is eerder nodig om die stadium te slaag en 'n slaagvereiste te behaal wat die leerders vir toelating tot die universiteit kwalifiseer. Hierdie bereiking is die droom van elke leerder en een van die opvoedkundige doelwitte wat die Departement van Basiese Onderwys wil sien verwesenlik. Die instelling van die Nasionale Beleid met betrekking tot die Program- en Bevorderingsvereistes van die NKV, andersins na verwys as die vorderingsbeleid, in die jaar 2013 lyk na die bereiking van hierdie doelwit. Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die implementering van die vorderingsbeleid in Verdere Onderwys en Opleiding (VOO) in Mpumalanga Provinsie te ontleed. 'n Literatuurstudie is onderneem om vas te stel wat vorderingsbeleid behels, om die menings van verskillende belanghebbendes te peil en belangrik om vas te stel waar vorderingsbeleid regoor die wêreld toegepas word, afgesien van Suid-Afrika. Kwalitatiewe navorsing is in die vorm van oop vraelyste gebruik om relevante data in te samel ten einde die situasies rondom die implementering van vorderingsbeleid in die geselekteerde skole te bepaal en te ontleed. Die studie het 'n gevallestudie-navorsingsontwerp gebruik wat 'n toepaslike navorsingsontwerp in kwalitatiewe navorsing is. Die keuse van transformatiewe teorie was nodig om beleidsimplementering as transformerend te bevorder. 'n Interpretivistiese paradigma, wat die subjektiewe mening van die deelnemers in ag neem, is gebruik. 'n Gerieflikheidsteekproefmetode is toegepas waarin ses hoërskole gekies is en sewe deelnemers in elke skool vir die doel van data-insameling gekies is. Die skoolhoof, drie SBS-lede en drie klasonderwysers, was die deelnemers wat uit elke skool gekies is. Dokumentoorsig is gebruik in die proses van data-insameling en inhoudontleding is ontplooi in die ontleding van data wat ingesamel is. Al ses skole is onder die Mbombela-kring in Mpumalanga Provinsie. Die bevindinge van die studie het onder andere aan die lig gebring dat; die vorderingsbeleid is ingestel om leerders

te help wat sukkel en moontlik die skool kan verlaat indien geen stappe gedoen word nie; die vorderingsbeleid word gesien as die beleid wat leerders toelaat om na die volgende klas te vorder selfs al kon sodanige leerders nie aan die slaagvereistes voldoen nie; die positiewe en negatiewe aspekte wat voortspruit uit die implementering van die Progressiebeleid in die VOO; en ook dat die beleid leerders beskerm teen herhaling en vroegtydig uitsak van skool. Ander bevindings was die prestasie van elke skool in die matrikulasie-eksamen in 2021, insluitend die gevorderde leerders soos uitgebeeld in Tabel 5.5 en Figuur 5.5. Die studie het ook bevind dat as daar na die voorstelling gekyk word, daar 'n verband is tussen implementering en die prestasie van gevorderde leerders. Daar word gesê dat baie onderwysers onbewus is van wat van hulle verwag word, en daar is opgemerk dat skool ondersteuning moet bied en die vordering van ondersteuning aan gevorderde leerders moet monitor. Aanbevelings is aan die beleidmakers, die skole en die onderwysers gegee oor die doeltreffende implementering en om die deurlopende praktyke oor implementering te vervolmaak. Daar is tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat onderwysers betyds ingelig moet word deur doeltreffende opleidingsprogramme, werkswinkels en deurlopende professionele onderwyserontwikkeling. Voldoende ondersteuning vir onderwysers is voorgestel om voldoende voorbereid te wees om sukkelende leerders by te staan.

SLEUTEL TERME

Onderwys, Kurrikulum, Verdere Onderwys en Opleiding, Hoërskole, Implementering, Beleid, Gevorderde leerders, Progressie, Herhalingsbehoud.

TS'ELISO

Sehlooho: Ho sekaseka ho kengoa ts'ebetsong ha leano la tsoelopele Thutong le Koetlisong e Tsoelang Pele Profinseng ea Mpumalanga: Thuto-taba ea likolo tse phahameng Seterekeng sa Mbombela.

Ho eketsa palo ea ba ingolisang liunivesithing tsa Afrika Boroa, ho hlokahala hore ho eketsoe palo ea baithuti ba fihlang boemong ba materiki selemo se seng le se seng. Ho fihla mothating oa materiki e leng sehlopha sa 12 ha hoa lekana, empa ho e-na le hoo, ho feta sethaleng le ho fumana tlhokahalo ea ho pasa e etsang hore baithuti ba tšoanelehe bakeng sa ho kena univesithing hoa hlokahala. Phihlello ena ke toro ya moithuti e mong le e mong mme e nngwe ya dipheo tsa thuto tseo Lefapha la Thuto ya Motheo le batlang ho di bona di phethahala. Ho tsebahatsoa ha Leano la Naha le Malebana le Litlhokahalo tsa Lenaneo le Phatlalatso ea NCS, ka tsela e 'ngoe e bitsoang leano la tsoelopele, ka selemo sa 2013 ho bonahala e tla finyella sepheo sena. Maikaelelo a dipatlisiso tseno e ne e le go sekaseka tiragatso ya pholisi ya kgatelopele mo Thutong le Katiso e e Tswelelang (FET) kwa Porofenseng ya Mpumalanga. Ho ile ha etsoa boithuto ba lingoliloeng ho utolla hore na pholisi ea tsoelopele e kenyeletsa eng, ho lekola maikutlo a bankakarolo ba fapaneng le ho fumana moo leano la tsoelopele le ntseng le sebelisoa lefatšeng ka bophara ntle le Afrika Boroa. Lipatlisiso tsa boleng bo botle li ile tsa sebelisoa ka mokhoa oa lipotso tse bulehileng ho bokella lintlha tse nepahetseng e le ho fumana le ho sekaseka maemo a amanang le ts'ebetsong ea leano la tsoelo-pele likolong tse khethiloeng. Phuputso e sebelisitse moralo oa phuputso ea mohlala oo e leng moralo o nepahetseng oa lipatlisiso lipatlisisong tsa boleng. Khetho ea khopolo ea phetoho e ne e hlokahala ho ntšetseng pele ts'ebetsong ea maano e le phetoho. Ho ile ha sebelisoa paradigm ea mofetoleli, e nkang maikutlo a ikemetseng a barupeluoa. Ho ile ha sebelisoa mokhoa o bonolo oa ho etsa sampole oo ho oona ho ileng ha khethoa likolo tse phahameng tse tšeletseng 'me barupeluoa ba supileng sekolong ka seng ba khethiloe ka morero oa ho bokella lintlha. Mosuoe-hlooho, litho tse tharo tsa SMT le matichere a mararo a litlelase, e ne e le barupeluoa ba khethiloeng sekolong se seng le se seng tlhahlobo ea Tokomane e sebelisitsoeng mothating oa

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ho bokella lintlha mme tlhahlobo ea litaba e ile ea sebelisoa tlhahlobong ea data e bokelletsoeng. Likolo tse tšeletseng kaofela li tlas'a Lebatooa la Mbombela Profinseng ea Mpumalanga. Liphuputso tsa boithuto li senotse hara tse ling hore; leano la tsoelopele le ile la hlahisoa ho thusa baithuti ba sokolang le mohlomong a ka tlohela sekolo haeba ho se na khato e nkuoeng; leano la tsoelopele le bonoa e le leano le lumellang baithuti ho hatela pele ho ea sehlopheng se latelang le haeba baithuti ba joalo ba sa khona ho fihlela litlhoko tsa ho pasa; dintlha tse ntle le tse mpe tse hlahang ho kenngweng tshebetsong ha Leano la Tsoelopele ho FET; le hore leano lena le sireletsa baithuti hore ba se ke ba pheta-pheta le ho tlohela sekolo ba sa le banyenyane. Liphuputso tse ling e bile katleho ea sekolo se seng le se seng litlhahlobong tsa materiki ka 2021, ho kenyeletsoa le baithuti ba tsoetseng pele joalo ka ha ho bonts'itsoe ho Lethathamo la 5.5 le la 5.5. Nyakišišo gape e hweditše gore ge go lebeletšwe kemedi, go na le kgokagano magareng ga phethagatšo le tiragatšo ya barutwana bao ba gatetšego pele. Ho boleloa hore matichere a mangata ha a tsebe hore na ho lebeletsoe eng ho bona, 'me ho ile ha hlokomeloa hore sekolo se lokela ho fana ka tšehetso le ho beha leihlo tsoelo-pele ea tšehetso e fuoang baithuti ba hatelang pele Litlhahiso li ile tsa fuoa baetsi ba melaoana, likolo le matichere mabapi le katleho. ho kenya ts'ebetsong le ho phethahatsa mekhoa e tsoelang pele ea ts'ebetsong. Ho ile ha phethoa ka hore matichere a lokela ho tsebisoa ka nako ka mananeo a koetliso a sebetsang hantle, lithupelo le ntlafatso e tsoelang pele ea matichere. Tšehetso e lekaneng bakeng sa matichere e ile ea hlahisoa molemong oa ho itokisetsa ka ho lekaneng ho thusa baithuti ba sokolang.

LIEKETSENG TLHOKO

Thuto, Kharikhulamo, Thuto le Koetliso e Tsoelang Pele, Likolo tse Phahameng, Phethahatso, Leano, Barutoana ba Hateletsoeng pele, Tsoelo-pele, Poeletso.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABET – Adult Basic Education and Training

CPTD - Continuing Professional Teachers' Development

DBE – Department of Basic Education

DHs – Departmental Heads

ECD – Early Childhood Development

FET – Further Education and Training

GET – General Education and Training

HE – Higher Education

HoDs – Head of departments

LoLT – Language of Learning and Teaching

Matric – Matriculation

MEOs – Multiple Examination Opportunities

NCS – National Curriculum Statement

NSNP – National School Nutrition Programme

NSC   - National Senior Certificate

NPPPPR - National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12.

NSC   - National Senior Certificate

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

QP – Qualified to Progress

SBA – School-Based Assessment

SBST – School Based Support Team

SIAS – Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SMT – School Management Team

SNE – Special Needs Education

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Transformation is a necessity in the education of South Africans having experienced discrimination, marginalisation and retrogression perpetrated by the previous apartheid system of education. The new democratic government was faced with the task of both rebuilding the system and redressing past inequalities. It has concentrated on creating a single unified national system, increasing access (especially to previously marginalised groups and the poor), decentralising school governance, revamping the curriculum, rationalising and reforming further and higher education, and adopting pro-poor funding policies. There has been an increase in school enrolments and many previously disadvantaged individuals are now beneficiaries of this transformational change.

The Department of Basic Education, in the process of reform, came up with a policy that expressly states that learners in the high schools must not be allowed to stay longer than four years in a phase regardless of their performance. By implication, any learner who is over age or has repeated a class in a phase is qualified to progress (QP). The idea is to reduce the retention rate which leads to learners dropping out of school in South Africa and increase the number of learners that access the matriculation examination. This policy would consequently increase the university enrolment. The discussion that follows covers the framework against which this study was anchored.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Learner performance in the matriculation examination in the Further Education and Training Phase has been a cause for concern in South Africa. To reduce the number of learners dropping out of the race to matriculation, the Department of Basic Education came up with several strategies which include the drafting of policies and passing of different legislations. This study investigated and analysed the implementation of one of the policies that was drafted in order to ensure learner repetition in a phase is reduced.

As university enrolment in South Africa has consistently risen, the number of South African youth with tertiary qualifications is increasing at a surprising rate suggesting a problem of quality, not quantity, in the ailing school system where access to quality education is still inequitably distributed along the lines of race and socio-economic background (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012:2).

This inequity has been in a 2008 study for the Presidency which found that 88 per cent of African state schools were poor performers. The former DA leader, Mmusi Maimane (DA, 2015:1) pointed out in parliament that nearly 8.4 million South Africans do not have jobs. He further stated that two out of three of those are young people who have been let down by an inadequate education system. Maimane further stated that these young people are not only unemployed but are increasingly unemployable.

The change of government from the apartheid system to democracy in 1994 has seen many laws and policies made to address the past inequality that has greatly affected the majority of black people in South Africa.

One of these policies is the National Policy Pertaining to Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 Government Notices No. 722 and No. 723, Government Gazette, No. 34600 of 12 September 2011.This policy, generally referred to as the Progression Policy (and referred to as such in this thesis) was introduced by the Department of Basic Education in order to address the issue of learners repeating a class many times, and which then leads to drop-out of these learners, presumably because they have not been able to pass the grade. This policy is presumed to address the retention rate of learners in a class and possibly increase tertiary student enrolment. One part of the content of this policy document that has captured my attention as a researcher is where the Department of Basic Education declares that pupils who do not meet the requirements for promotion will be able to progress to the next grade in order to prevent them from being retained in the phase for longer than four years (NPPPR, 2013:23).

This means a learner can only repeat once in a phase. This same learner is allowed to progress to the next class even if he has not met the promotion requirements to progress to the next class. However, such a learner at the end of grade 12 must

satisfy all the requirements of the NSC, in order to be awarded the matric certificate. Therefore, it is paramount to investigate practices in different schools to analyse how the Progression Policy is being implemented. This will enable me as the researcher to identify whether it has been properly implemented and if not, what needs to be done to get the Progression Policy achieve its objectives. This will also allow me the opportunity to make a finding on the positive and negative results brought by the implementation of this policy in the Further Education and Training Phase.

According to section 3(4)(1) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996, the purpose of this policy document, is to make provision for the determination of national education policy regarding curriculum frameworks, core syllabuses and education programmes, learning standards, examinations, and the certification of qualifications. This provision is subject to the provisions of any law, establishing a national qualifications framework or a certifying or accrediting body. It applies to public ordinary and special schools and those independent schools that offer the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, which comprise: (a) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for all approved subjects listed in this document; (b) National Policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12; and (c) National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12.; the policy document contemplated in subparagraph (2) forms the basis for the Minister of Basic Education to determine minimum outcomes and standards, as well as the processes and procedures for the assessment of learner achievement as stipulated in section 6A of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), which is applicable to public and independent schools; and the outcomes and standards determined in terms of section 6A of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act. No. 84 of 1996) will be translated into regulations in terms of section 61 of the said Act. 2. THE GROUPING OF SUBJECTS LISTED IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT GRADES R – 12. (1) The National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 uses the twelve Organising Fields of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for organising and listing purposes.

It has been noted that progression is not automatic as learners need to pass 4 of 7 subjects which include: Life Orientation, Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), in compliance with SBA requirements and to demonstrate regular attendance at school. These learners would also be given additional assistance for the whole year

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and for those who struggle to perform, the Policy on Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) would apply.

The above assertions have moved me as a researcher to investigate how effective the implementation of the policy in our schools is, especially the role it has played in the FET phase, and the commitment of both teachers and learners. The commitment of teachers and learners can be identified as the degree of the positive, affective bond between the teacher and the learner and the sacrifices they are willing to make. It reflects the amount of internal motivation, enthusiasm, and job satisfaction teachers derive from teaching and the effectiveness they achieve in their jobs. Interestingly the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, according to DBE (2012:4), is based on the following principles:

- Social transformation;
- Active and critical thinking;
- High knowledge and high skills;
- Progression;
- Human rights, valuing the indigenous knowledge system;
- Credibility;
- Quality and efficiency; and
- Providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries.

Also, the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, as given by the DBE (2012:5), is aimed at equipping learners with the skills to:
- find and provide solutions to any challenges confronted in education and to come up with informed decisions in a creative manner and apply critical thinking;
- work in an effective manner as individuals and ensure effectiveness in a team to which they belong;
- put together and manage their activities responsibly and in an effective manner;
- gather, evaluate, organise and critically work on analysis of information at their disposal;

- communicate in a way that will enhance understanding using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;

- make use of science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and

- establish an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that contextual aspects of problem solving cannot be treated in isolation as they involve many things.

Education policy, which includes Progression Policy, has been described as a state policy and a course of action taken by the government through the legislations, ordinances or regulations hoping to benefit the citizens and the country as a whole (Lentsa, 2019:5). Moreover, it is further noted that education policy has not always been successful in solving the crisis of access to quality in basic education. The Department of Basic Education emphasises that South African children have the right to quality education and therefore ensures compulsory schooling for all children from seven to fifteen years (DBE, 2016:23).

However, it has been noted that there has been an unrealistic pursuit of proper functioning of the education system, whereby the Education Department in South Africa changes many aspects of education system policies without adequate consultation with the teachers and other relevant stakeholders.

In this study, the implementation of Progression Policy in the FET will be analysed to identify how it has impacted either positively or negatively on learning in the Further Education and Training Phase in the Circuit of Mbombela in Mpumalanga. In this study reference will be briefly made to the implementation of Progression Policy in other countries especially Canada, Japan and the United States

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

From the perspective of an educator who is familiar with several policy documents guiding school management, activities in the school and other behavioural aspects of the school life, the researcher has observed that many of the policy documents regulating projects such as the laptop initiative for secondary school teachers, the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), and the National Curriculum Statement itself, are not without imperfections. It seems some of these policies were formulated without adequate involvement of the relevant stakeholders. One of the

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policy documents that has captured the interest of the researcher is The National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, which allows learners to be progressed to the next grade even if such learners have not satisfied the pass requirements. Learners are qualified to progress (QP) in order not to spend more than four years in a phase. Hence the primary motivation of this study is to analyse the implementation of this policy in the Further Education and Training band, on teaching and learning commitments, learner performance, their interest and enthusiasm of the learners to be the best they can be, the challenges faced on implementation, and the positive and the negative effect resulting from the implementation. The study will also delve into finding out the necessary support, if any, that schools are giving to their learners as expressed in the policy and which the policy states will be given to learners who are not ready to function at the expected level, in order for the learners to achieve an appropriate level of competence.

Other motivations are as follows:

- To empower and self-enrich with a higher qualification that will increase my knowledge base as a researcher and. also to be equipped with relevant problem-solving skills in the pedagogical environment,

- To contribute to the existing body of knowledge in education management and policy, and, to make contributions that will adequately inform the power structures of the importance of involving relevant stakeholders in policy formulation for educational institutions.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is envisaged that the research findings will contribute to the body of knowledge in education management, leadership, and policy in such a way that:

- enables planners of education policies to have a greater awareness of the impact this policy has had or is still having on teaching and learning commitment in South African schools;

- investigates and identify "necessary support" (which is not expressly stated in the policy document) introduced by schools, and its effectiveness;

- addresses the issues affecting learner performance and suggest the relevant support needed which will lead to better academic achievement in rural secondary schools; and to

- encourages policy makers to always involve education stakeholders when taking a decision in finalising the policies that affect education in South Africa.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There have been controversies and conflicting points of view in the education fraternity about how policies are being introduced and implemented without proper consultation from the relevant stakeholders; the Progression Policy is not an exemption. Machaisa and Mulaudzi (2019:3) voice their concerns over the gap between policy measures and implementation. Motala (2020:3) indicates that educational reform policies in post-apartheid have been seen as a subject of contestations by many. The implementation of educational policies, though is expected to achieve a desired result, does not always achieve what its expectation Davis, Ntow, and Beccles (2022:2). Makhanya (2021:9) however, presents a different view that Progression gives opportunities to learners to address the imbalances of poor educational achievement amongst other things The Department of Basic Education in South Africa introduced a policy in 2013 which is widely known as Progression Policy which expressly states that learners in the high schools must not be allowed to stay longer than four years in a phase regardless of their performance. By implication, any learner who is over age or has repeated a class in a phase is qualified to progress (QP). The policy was introduced to solve the problem of retention in a grade for a longer period of time.

Many still believe the policy provides respite for previously disadvantaged learners who tend to repeat the class many times without hope of progressing. The idea is when they are progressed, they are motivated and that there is therefore some hope for the future. This consequently keeps the learners within the learning environment and protects them from criminal activities. Others believe this may result in a downward trend in the quality of education in South Africa. However there has been divisive opinions from different stakeholders including the teachers on how the policy must be implemented in order to achieve the objectives for which it was introduced

Therefore, this study intended to analyse the implementation of the Progression Policy in the Further Education and Training in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa: The case study focusses on selected high schools in Mbombela Circuit. The study investigated by gathering relevant data through the use of open-ended questionnaires, and access to relevant documents, in order to unpack practices embarked upon by different schools in Mbombela Circuit for the implementation of the Progression Policy in Further Education and Training Phase. The study therefore, identifies the positive contribution, if any, and the negative consequences of the policy implementation in the FET Phase. Therefore, to achieve the aim and the objectives of this study, there was a need to structure a research question and sub-questions, and these are as follows:

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

1.6.1 Main Research question:

i. How is the Progression Policy implemented in Further Education and Training in the high schools in Mbombela Circuit of Mpumalanga Province?

Following the main question, are the research sub-questions:

1.6.2 Research sub-questions

i. . What purpose do education policies serve, with particular reference to the National Policy on Progression?

ii. What are the characteristics of Progression Policy in terms of learning in the FET phase?

iii. What are the positive and the negative aspects of implementation of Progression Policy in the FET?

iv. What support is given to struggling learners in order to achieve an appropriate level of competence?

v. How relevant and sustainable is the support given to learners?

1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND THE OBJECTIVES

1.7.1 The aim and objectives

The aim and objectives of this study are elaborated upon in the following section:
Therefore, the aim of the study is to:

i. Investigate and analyse the implementation of the Progression Policy in the Further Education and Training Phase in Mpumalanga through a case study of selected high schools in the Mbombela Circuit of the Ehlanzeni District.

1.7.2 Research objectives

From the aforementioned aim, several objectives emanate which are to:

i. Describe the purpose of education policies and with reference to the term "Progression Policy" and the contents of the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement in South Africa.
ii. Discuss the characteristics of the National Policy Pertaining to Promotional Requirements of the NCS in the FET phase in high schools.
iii. Indicate the positive and negative aspects resulting from the implementation of the Progression Policy in the FET.
iv. Identify the necessary support given to learners, who are struggling for an appropriate level of competence to be achieved, and to
v. Determine whether the support provided is relevant and sustainable.

1.8 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study embraces the paradigm of interpretivist. This paradigm reviews our understanding of situations and analyses them to provide insight into the way in which individuals or a group of individuals make sense of a certain reality experienced in their environment. Kulakowska (2020:37) describes interpretivist paradigm as that which "embraces multiple and intersubjectively constructed truths. The truths are derived through interactions between the researcher, who conducts interview and the participants who will be interviewed." Transformative theory was also employed in this study. Pel, Haxeltine., Avelino, Dumitru, Kemp, Bauler Kunze, Dorland, Wittmayer, and Jørgense (2020:2) conceptualise policy as transformative

social innovation. Effective policy implementation sets the stage for transformative learning

Therefore, the paradigm of interpretivist and transformative theory became the driving forces behind this study as these inform the data gathering process by the use of open-ended questionnaire distributed to the selected participants to obtain their own version of truth or opinion on the different roles the National Policy on Progression plays in the FET phase, which consequently informs educational practices towards transformation.

1.9 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research approach

The research approach that was adopted in this study is the qualitative approach. Qualitative research is defined by Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020:1) as the study of the nature of phenomena, how they appear and the individual's perception about the event. This includes data being expressed in words rather than in numbers. The data gathered from the participants is expressed, in chapter 4, in normal language, thus making qualitative approach more appropriate. In qualitative research, the researcher carries out an investigation, and collects relevant evidence to support or establish the verity of an idea. In qualitative studies the emphasis is on the experiences of the participants and the meaning attached to certain phenomena themselves, and the environment. In this study the emphasis is on the National Progression Policy and the experiences of the educators on the roles the policy plays in the FET.

1.9.2 Research design

The case study approach was appropriate in the collection of data to achieve the aim and the objectives of this study. This is because it constitutes an important and useful means of gathering data in qualitative research. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2014:316), case study focuses on a single phenomenon (an individual or distinct group). This research focuses on six schools and open-ended questionnaires were distributed to the participants to gather relevant information.

1.9.3 Population

The population could be expressed as high schools in the Mpumalanga province, or in fact South Africa. Through convenience sampling, six school's representatives of the population were selected. The participants were six principals (one from each school), eighteen members of the SMT (three from each school) and class teachers of grade 10-12 that is three from each school. The total number of participants were forty-two (42). These participants will be interviewed to obtain their insights on the Progression Policy, the performance of learners and the challenges faced in the implementation of the policy.

1.9.4 Sampling

This research is limited to six schools in the Mbombela Circuit of the Ehlanzeni District. The convenience sampling technique was used to obtain necessary data from the educators, members of the SMT and the principals of the selected schools. The total number of the sample size is 42 as seven participants were selected from each of the six schools The convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method which is most accessible to researchers; it is used to collect data from any participant based on their willingness to participate (Scholtz, 2021:2). This sampling procedure was used because it is conveniently accessible and approachable for a researcher to use. However, there might be an element of bias on the part of the participants.

1.9.5 Data collection

The study employed the use of document review. The principals and the SMT members were given separate questionnaires to provide answers to the list of questions therein. The SMT members are referred to as a focus group as the members are given same questionnaire to answer. The three class teachers are also considered as a focus group as same open-ended questionnaire was provided in three copies for each to fill in. According to E-International Relations, (2021:1), a focus group interview is described as that which involves a small number of demographically similar participants with common experience. This allows the interviewee to be observed in a more natural setting when having a conversation with them.

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In terms of focus groups, there was an interaction with the participants, namely the class teachers of grade 10-12 to ascertain their views on the policy, however time constraint did not permit full scale interview, hence the filling of the open-ended questionnaires. Open-ended questions however have its advantages and disadvantages. It allows the participants to answer the questions in their own words. However, Maree (2007:161) reveal that open-ended questions allow the participants to think about and construct their comments, and the quantity of detail offered by participants may be different

 The performances of learners, who had been progressed from grade 10 to grade 12 in the FET phase for the last three years, were examined in order to assess the role the Progression Policy has played in the FET phase journey of these learners.

The type of documents collected are reports on learner performance, the report schedules showing progressed learners from grade 10 through to grade 12, and other documented intervention used in assisting the progressed learners.

Document review involves collecting reports, official publications, and correspondence from the selected organisations (Lentsa, 2019:39). Document review is vital to effective evaluation of the accuracy and applicability of the data presented. It will assist in evaluating and understanding various documents that are used in the implementation of the policy.

1.9.6 Data analysis

The data gathered was analysed using the content analysis method. In content analysis, researchers examine artefacts of social communication such as written documents, protocols of observation, video tapes, discourses and transcription of recorded verbal communication (Mayring, 2015:1). Therefore, the intervention programme for the progressed learners, the report and mark schedules from grade 10 to 12 were analysed to see how they perform throughout the FET phase. These documents were re-read and other materials gathered were later scrutinised and checked thoroughly in order to ascertain the correctness or the accuracy of the documents collected. All these efforts were made in order to fully understand and digest the contents of the documents. The next step was to identify important responses given by the educators, the SMT and the principals. These responses were now categorised according to how the participants are grouped namely

educators, the SMT and the principals. These responses, including new findings or what the researcher has learned during the process, were analysed, interpreted and presented.

The intention of this analysis is to ascertain the role that the implementation of the Policy has played in the FET phase, and to establish how "necessary support" (if any) has caused improvement on the part of these learners.

The six schools were selected in a convenient sampling method to find out how the Progression Policy has been impacting on the commitment of the teachers and the learners as well as on the quality of performance of learners in the school. The study also seeks to identify the kind of "necessary support" emphasised by the National Policy that will be available for learners who are not ready to function at the next level, but nevertheless have been progressed to the next level, and to investigate the effectiveness of this support.

1.9.7 Trustworthiness of the research data

Trustworthiness, and of the data gathered through qualitative methods is equivalent to reliability, a requirement of quantitative methods. Rose and Johnson (2020:8) indicate that reliability is ensured through consistent documentation of methodological procedures. Stahl and King (2020:26) indicate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as general criteria in the approach to trustworthiness. Kyngäs, Kääriäinen and Elo (2020:41) describe credibility as confidence in the correctness of findings, transferability as applicability in other contexts, dependability as indicative of consistency, and confirmability as the degree of neutrality of the findings. The data collected from the participants through the questionnaire will be compared to the official documents from the schools or from the Department of Basic Education. The opinions of the participants shall be taken as a priority to eliminate bias and subjective opinions of the researcher. The findings will be confirmable, and dependability ensured for applicability by the potential users of the findings.

1.9.8 Ethical considerations

The following ethical measures were duly considered for the purpose of this research when conducting interviews. These were informed consent, confidentiality, and permission to obtain relevant information during the study.

The participants were duly informed about the research project and what it intends to achieve. They were equally assured that it will not impact negatively on their appointment as educators as their responses will be kept confidential. This was done through sending a cover letter introducing the aim and the objectives of the study to the participants, requesting their informed consents with explanations of what is expected of them In the area of confidentiality and anonymity, information about subjects is kept confidential unless there is an agreement between the researcher and the respondent(s) to disclose certain information (McMillan & Schumcher, 2014:334). The participants were assured of this in the letter distributed to them.

Also, proper authorisation to conduct this investigation was obtained from the university (UNISA) as ethical clearance was issued to indicate approval. Relevant authorisation was also obtained from the Provincial office, the circuit office of Mbombela and the school authorities where participants were selected for the purpose of obtaining data.

All sources used in this investigation are duly acknowledged as the researcher is fully aware of the consequences of plagiarism.

1.10 THE DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Though the focus of the study is clear, and the methods conducted rigorous, the study has its delimitations in that it is confined to one district in one province. The study is limited to six schools as a case study and the focus is on the content in National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the NCS (NPPPPR) where learners are allowed to progress to the next grade even though they have not satisfied the promotion requirements. The aspect of Progression is under the spotlight and its implementation in the FET phase is analysed and reported in this study.

1.11 CHAPTER DIVISION

The research is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction/ background to the study, the problem formulation, and the main research question namely;

What purpose do education policies serve, with reference to the National Policy on Progression? What are the characteristics of Progression Policy in terms of learning in the FET phase? What are the positive and negative influences of implementation of Progression Policy in the FET? What are the support structures given to struggling learners in order to achieve an appropriate level of competence? How relevant and sustainable are the supports given to learners?

The main research question and the sub-questions will be answered by the aim and objectives of this research, respectively.

Chapter two presents a literature review relating to research aims and objectives. The first research objective explains the purpose served by education policies with reference to the National Progression and Promotional Policy for the high schools in South Africa and to explore from the literature and empirical studies how policy/policies have influenced the education system in South Africa.

The second research objective discusses the characteristics of the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotional Requirements (Progression Policy) of the NCS on learning in the FET phase in South African high schools in the Mbombela Circuit.

The third research objective analyses the positive and negative influence resulting from the implementation of Progression Policy in the FET. The fourth research objective identifies the necessary supports given to learners, who are not ready to function at the particular level, in order to achieve an appropriate level of competence. And the fifth research objective determines whether the supports provided are relevant and sustainable. Finally, the theoretical framework of the study is covered in this chapter. The interpretivist theory is explored in detail and relevant factors on how it inspired the study are provided.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology and approach where data collection methods, namely, document review, focus group interviews and the

questionnaire are elaborated. The chapter also discusses the population, sampling ethical clearance, trustworthiness and the credibility of the data collected.

In chapter four data collected from the six schools is presented. The data gathered from the forty-two participants namely the six principals, the eighteen SMT members and the eighteen educators is presented.

Analysis of data collected during the investigation is discussed in chapter five. These analyses were done through the use of content analysis. The documents and other data obtained were analysed to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

Chapter five also provides a summary in which the main findings are discussed in the light of the guiding research questions and the literature review.

The chapter also makes recommendations to the department on greater involvement of stakeholders on policy making and how such policy can effectively address the educational needs of learners and schools. The chapter also gives recommendations on areas for further research.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This research focuses on the analysis of the implementation of the Progression Policy in the FET Phase in the Mpumalanga Province through a case study of selected high schools in Mbombela Circuit. Literature research on this study, taking into consideration applicable literature, journals, policies, and laws, is presented in chapter 2. The research methodology, as well as the approach that will be employed, is presented in chapter 3. Data collection methods and analysis of the data that was collected is explained and reviewed in chapter 4. The issues of ethical clearance, confidentiality, reliability, sampling, and the population of the study is also covered in chapter 4. The researcher's concluding remarks and recommendations for future transformation plans in the Department of Basic Education are presented in the concluding sections of chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Several research studies have been conducted by policy scholars such as Du Plessis (2021), Matolo & Rambuda (2022), and Machaisa (2014), on education policy in South Africa and beyond. The outcome of their studies on education policy have been influential, as their submissions have been relevant and made a great contribution to the body of knowledge on education systems in South Africa and around the world. It is imperative to note that every education system has policies in place to drive the system and its implementation. Lentsa (2019:15) agrees that education policy is a course of action adopted by the government. This action can be implemented through legislation, ordinances, and regulations, with the aim of serving the interests of the citizens. According to a report by the Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities, (SHLC, 2020:17), it is confirmed that countries with a range of education policies and legal frameworks have the potential to be effective at encouraging socio-economic and human development.

The European Union Economic Growth and Employment Strategy is established through policy on education and training (OECD, 2017:6).

Lumen (2021:1) views education policy as a collection of laws and rules that is used to administer education systems. This collection of rules directly affects the operation and governance of education systems, the schools, the teachers, the learners and other stakeholders in the education fraternity.

However, it has been noted that policy is politically inclined as it is born out of challenges, what people have experienced in their daily lives, or in conflict situations (Bayeni and Satirambirwa 2018:4).

This chapter provides a literature review of the interest, opinions, and submissions of scholars on education policy. In this chapter the focus is on the Progression Policy and the roles it plays in the Further Education and Training education programme in the Mbombela Circuit of Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province.

The chapter, through the literature review presented, will provide possible answers to the questions emanating from the problem statement by providing answers to how education systems are influenced by policy; characteristics of Progression Policy; the negative and positive influence resulting from the implementation; support provided to learners by the policy; relevance of the necessary support; and challenges in the implementation of the policy.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Transformative theory of research

Researching a certain phenomenon in qualitative methodology for possible solutions or suggestions for improvement has a transformative effect. Mertens (2007:216) highlights the four basic beliefs of transformativeness in research. These are given as ontology which investigates the human nature, epistemology, which is concerned with knowledge, methodology, which emphasis approaches or procedures to be used in investigation as a researcher, and axiology, which accentuates the moral values derived generally from the process. It is very important to note that the findings of any research should create a pathway for transformation. Therefore, the findings of this study endeavours to achieve just that and by giving informed suggestions on better or more effective ways of implementing education policies.

A theory is explained in so many ways and one cannot ignore the fact that it is a vehicle that drives a researcher and a roadmap that guides a researcher in the data collection methods and methodology employed in a study. The study is also guided by the paradigm of interpretivist where the subjective opinions of the participants take the centre stage. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:1) assert that a paradigm is a set of fundamental beliefs that represent a worldview. Because of the nature of this study and the approach that was employed, therefore, the relevant and more appropriate paradigm for the study is the interpretivist paradigm. This will be expounded on in chapter 3.

2.3 THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION POLICIES WITH REFERENCE TO PROGRESSION POLICY

Education reform has been considered a priority in South Africa since the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 1994. It has also played a key role in redressing the injustices of the Apartheid system instituted by the previous government. In a report by the OECD (2015:1) it was indicated that impressive progress has been made in expanding educational opportunities and redressing the past injustices of the apartheid years in South Africa. The report further indicates there has been an improvement in access to education at every level and increase in the enrolment of learners and the role played by the government in this expansion with spending 6% of its total budget on education.

This increase in enrolment was made possible through education legislation and policy development, curriculum reform, and the implementation of new ways of delivering education. However, despite this significant improvement, many challenges remain in many areas, such as student outcomes, gaps in educational attainment between different populations, and labour market relevance (OECD, 2015:1). Policies are used to influence social and economic activities. Every aspect of our education system is driven by one policy or another.

The OECD report provides an overview of the impressive forward thinking and application of education reform in the country and offers advice on issues of governance and financing; curriculum, learning materials and assessment; early childhood education; adult and basic education and training; vocational education and human resource development; inclusive education and equity; teachers and teaching; and higher education (OECD, 2015:1).

Machaisa (2014:1591) indicates that despite the policy measures which are regarded as positive initiatives and opportunities, the challenge in terms of the gap that exists between policy formulation and its implementation is concerning. Section 29(1) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to basic education which includes adult basic education. The effort is to ensure access to quality education amongst the previously disadvantaged South Africans who had been subjects of the oppressive system of government.

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The apartheid government undoubtedly manipulated the education system to further their efforts to segregate racial groups and maintain white minority rule. Therefore, the Apartheid government formulated education policies that favoured the Apartheid system of government. Du Plessis (2021:55) advocates that colonised knowledge must be disrupted since it has been used to undermine and enslave the indigenous people. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2012:1211-1212) assert that the period 1994-2011 introduced a radically new historical era for all South Africans, and most importantly, for school education (Grades 1-12). The political plan in 1994 was to abolish the old policies that enthroned segregation and introduce new policies in all the various spheres in the country. It is worrying that even though South Africa is considered the wealthiest economy on the continent, the schooling success is rated among the worst (Nongxa, 2010:59-72). Mouton et al (2012: 1212) explain that many previous systems had been excellent even though they might have had flaws. However instead of assessing what was good and building on that, the new approach was to discard the "tried and tested" basic principles of education.

(Malada, 2010:22) indicates that learners suffered from the outset as textbooks were replaced by workbooks and learner portfolios. Many shortcomings in the curriculum were revealed. The implementation was seen as almost impossible, expensive, and teachers were not adequately trained for successful implementation of the curriculum. Spreen and Vally (2010:39-58) indicate that since its inception, Outcome Based Education had been controversial and confusing for South African educators and policymakers.

Blaine (2010:3), and Malada (2010:22), both agree that there was widespread ignorance as the new curriculum moved away from the crucial basics like reading and writing, and arithmetic to a learner-centred approach. This has consequently affected most students at the university level struggling with reading and understanding of content at a level that would reasonably be expected of a university scholar.

Shadrack and Yuksel (2019:5) confirm that the previously disadvantaged South Africans have broader participation in terms of enrolment in the university but due to inadequate education received in high school, their performance will be poor.

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Therefore, it is important that stakeholders at the university level would not permit the tertiary system to go the same way as that of secondary school education (Nongxa, 2010:59-72).

In line with South Africa's new constitution, the new government abolished the existing racially defined departments of education and established a single education system (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Machaisa (2014:1592) comments that the government in its plan, used the Constitution to ensure equality in our education system.

This was, undoubtedly, a laudable enterprise but it is an inescapable truth that education is a highly specialised field which can never be successfully served by political appointees (Rooi, 2012:1). Many of those who were rewarded for their role in the struggle (the so-called cadres) through being given senior appointments were not fit to fill highly specialised posts in the field of education (Lawack, 2009:7). Thus, from the outset of democratic rule in South Africa in April 1994, it became clear that the transition was a political one and one particularly ill-suited to the field of education.

Rebuilding the system and redressing the past inequalities is the task that the new democratic government in South Africa was faced with. Its focus was building a national system that will be central to the unity of all South Africans and will increase access to quality education exponentially (especially to previously marginalised groups and the poor). It also concentrates on decentralising school governance, overhauling the curriculum, rationalising and reforming further and higher education, and adopting pro-poor funding policies.

In line with the Constitution, and through the National Education Policy Act, national and provincial governments share responsibility for all education except tertiary education, which is the preserve of the national government. Education in South Africa can be divided into the following sectors/bands, according to OECD, (2008:19-20):

- Early Childhood Development (ECD);
- General Education and Training (GET), consisting of grade R and grades 1 to 3 (the Foundation Phase), grades 4 to 6 (the Intermediate Phase), and grades 7 to 9 (the Senior Phase);

- Further Education and Training (FET), including grades 10 to 12;

- Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET);

- Special Needs Education (SNE); and

- Higher Education (HE).

In the OECD report (OECD, 2008:19-20) it is indicated that schooling is compulsory for all children from the year in which they turn 7 to the end of the year in which they turn 15 (or the end of grade 9, whichever comes first). A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) integrates education and training at all levels.

The OECD research on economic surveys in South Africa reveals that despite increases in spending to extend access to education, the low quality of education outcomes has created limited access to good jobs in South Africa (OECD, 2020:17).

In the publication of the Stats SA (2020:5) it was recorded that total employment decreased between the period of December 2019 and December 2020. According to OECD report (OECD, 2019:2), it is interesting to know that tertiary attainment in South Africa is the lowest among the OECD partners and the bulk of the budget is expended on funding primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

The report establishes that young South Africans that are educated in these categories are less likely to be in employment.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, from the total South African population, the number of unemployed has been said to have increased to 7.2 million which is 32.5% of the labour forces (Stats SA, 2020:3). Therefore, if the new policy, pertaining to promotion and progression of learners allows learners to progress to the next grade regardless of whether they have passed or not, then what happens to the quality of learners we produce for the labour market? Is this policy doing justice in terms of preparing and empowering these learners to compete successfully in the competitive labour market? Will the employers of labour be willing to hire the products of this policy?

It has been noted that there are schools that have found it difficult to achieve more than 20% pass rate from 2017 to 2019 just because they are in poorest of the provinces and access to basic quality education is far from their reach (Gilili, 2020:1). The 2020 statistics on education reflects that 45,7% of youth that are 19 years of age are not in education and unemployment of youth was found to be the highest

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regardless of the level of education they have (SA MI, 2020:4). A similar report by the Department of Higher Education found that 22% of matriculants make it to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and enrolment in post-secondary education was found to be 3.6% of the eligible population compared to 123% for primary school enrolment (Stats SA, 2017:14).

Despite the low performance recorded, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa has come up with a Progression Policy that expressly states that learners in the high schools must not be allowed to stay longer than four years in a phase regardless of their performance. Therefore, any learner who is over age or has repeated a class in a phase is qualified to progress (QP).

According to OECD (2015:9) reports, it has been identified that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with several positive individual and social outcomes. The report reveals that the previous editions of *Education at a Glance* highlighted that individuals who have performed very well and with high educational attainment generally have better health and are more socially engaged. These individuals apparently are employable and have the tendency of earning greater income. It is also noted that such individuals endowed with high levels of skills such as literacy and numeracy are also, undoubtedly associated with higher levels of formal education. If learners are performing at low levels in high schools and are not motivated by systems in place to aspire to a greater height, their chances of admission to the universities are slim. This lack of university qualification will reduce their chances of opportunity in the labour market. Consequently, the product of this situation is high unemployment rates. According to the OECD report (2015:19), it is noteworthy to know that people with high qualifications have the highest employment rates. In most countries, they also have the lowest risk of being unemployed. However, it has been reported that for every 100 learners that start school, approximately 50–60 reach matric, 40–50 pass matric, 14 achieve a university pass, and six receive an undergraduate degree within six years (Spaull, 2019:1)

Du Plessis (2021:56) emphasises that the South African education system continues to navigate a colonial past within the context of global and social changes. Badat and Sayed (2014:130) maintain that the post-Apartheid government lacked policy resources and lacked strategies and capacity building to ensure the sound transformation of the education system. Therefore, it goes without saying that the

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education in South Africa will need a good and sound education system emanating from policies that will take into consideration the diverse background of the populace.

2.4 OUTCOMES FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY

2.4.1 The Progression Policy

The National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12, herein referred to a Progression Policy was introduced in the year 2013 by the Department of Basic Education. The Progression Policy was introduced to address the problem of repetition and hence, retention of learners in a grade for years. It specifically states that learners must not be allowed to stay in a phase for more than four years. A phase in South African education system translates to a three-year study programme which starts from grade R to 12 and of which three phases emerge. The three phases in the General Education and Training Band (GET) are Foundation Phase, Intermediate and Senior Phase with learners from grade R to 9 (NPPPPR, 2013:14) Therefore, learners from grade 10 to 12 are categorised under the Further Education and Training Band (FET). The Progression Policy applies to all the grades however, the focus of this study is on the analysis of the implementation in the FET Phase.

The Progression Policy has had varied responses. Many people have confirmed the good that the implementation has brought into the education system. However, others believe that the implementation has caused a lot of damage to the education system.

2.4.2 Positive aspects of Progression Policy

The Progression Policy was introduced by the Department of Basic Education to address the problems of the learner drop-out rate that results from having been retained in one grade for an excessive number of years. Being in a grade for too long without the hope of progressing or being promoted can be psychologically damaging to the learners. These learners tend to feel hopeless and start to develop behavioural problems. Consequently, these learners drop out of school and end up on the streets. According to Makhanya (2021:31) South Africa adopted the policy because of the success story recorded in other countries from implementing the

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policy and for the fact that it protects the learners from repetition and from being retained for long in a class.

Munje and Maarman (2016;188), reveal that the implementation of this policy serves as a way of giving strong and relevant support to the weak learners in order for them to have a sense of belonging and to restore their dignity and self-esteem. The implementation of this policy also contributes to the achievement of South Africa's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of ensuring completion of basic education by all school-going age children in South Africa.

2.4.3. Negative influence of Progression Policy

Mogale and Modipane (2021:1) submit that although the Progression Policy was introduced to assist in reducing school drop-out rate, the ineffective implementation of the policy defeated its good intentions. It was reported that many teachers and parents are completely unaware of what is expected of them, and the recommended phase of implementation was not followed. Many teachers believe progressed learners to be burden or responsibility which they carry as they have to repeat the contents which had been taught already. According to Khobe (2021:94), progressed learners are frustrating and difficult to teach because the current syllabus will be challenging for them to pass since the previous was not passed; the students were condoned to progress to the present grade. This situation translates to teachers being frustrated and stressed as they are blamed for the poor performance of the learners.

2.5 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET PHASE)

2.5.1 Overview of the Progression Policy

Progression Policy which emanates from the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the NCS (2013) is a carefully structured policy to enable learners that are struggling to satisfy the promotion requirements to progress to the next grade with some certain conditions. Munje (2017:187) submits that the Progression Policy which was introduced in 2013 and implemented is seen as one of South Africa's pathways to transformation within the education sector, having considered the poor condition of the disadvantaged population and how they

have suffered marginalisation and deprivation for many years. Many South African schools are characterised by a poor maintenance system, poor conditions for teaching and learning, unavailability of quality learning and teaching materials, and an inadequate supply of teachers. In addition to characteristics, poverty and inaccessible roads contribute to poor schooling. These are all products of the previous system of the Apartheid government. Repetition of grades are well documented amongst South African learners, and this is known to be high from grade 9 to grade 11, of which grade 10 recorded the highest level in 2017 (DBE, 2018)

Kika and Kotze (2019:1) attest to it that these high repetition rates in the FET phase, from Grade 10 to Grade 12, are a cause for concern given the value attached to this phase in determining post-schooling outcomes and labour market access. They further explain that the introduction of the Progression Policy has brought about a decline in repetition patterns.

There are, however, several challenges which have been highlighted in relation to the implementation of the progression policy (Gregory, 2020:2). These include "different interpretations of the policy across the system, resulting in varied implementation across schools; the dispensation relating to the Multiple Examination Opportunity was viewed by some as a mechanism to manipulate the pass rate of a school, given that the pass rate is based on learners that offer all subjects in the first examinations sitting; progressed learners are stigmatised and carry the label throughout their schooling years; and teachers are unable to provide differentiated support to progressed learners given their current workloads" (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

The practice of progression which "is advancing a student to the next grade level when she or he has not mastered all of the content for the previous grade has come under attack as a practice that dilutes the excellence of learning available in the public school system". Psychoanalyst's advice that progression is not effective as progressed learners tend to perform poorly and fall behind their peers or classmates (Greene & Winters, 2006).

When addressing the progression controversy, Greene (2010:3) advises "promoting learners who lack basic reading skills sets them up for failure as they fall further

behind academically. Likewise, the greatest source of lasting self-esteem is genuine academic success, not the artificial success of being pushed into the next grade (Ramputla 2020:15).

To guarantee that schools implement the policy on progression successfully, the DBE created a Guideline to help schools in the implementation of the Progression policy (The Department of Basic Education, 2012). For those who struggle based on their performance throughout the year, the Policy on Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) can be enforced. This implies that the learner writes a minimum of three subjects (excluding Life Orientation) in the November examination sitting and the remaining subjects in the subsequent June examination (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

The number of subjects that the learners will be granted to write in the November examination will be finally decided based on their outcome in the preparatory examination. Progressed learners that demonstrate acceptable levels of achievement in all subjects will be granted to write all six subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2016). The rationale for the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) is to allow these learners to focus on the subjects in which they are confident in the November examination, and to have an extended period to revise and prepare for the remaining subjects almost six months later in June of the following year. Writing all six subjects in the November examination places them under undue pressure. This, they believe, will negatively affect their performance in all the subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

Ramputla (2020:1) reveals that Progression Policy is not only practised in South Africa but also in countries such as Canada, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Korea, United Kingdom, and states such as Florida, Texas, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia in the United States of America.

The progression policy in Canada and the United States are briefly explored below:

2.5.2 The Progression Policy in Canada

Carifio (2010:2) reveals that the origin of progression policy is dated as far back as the 1930s. This practice referred to as social promotion was established to curb the number of learners that drop out from schools as a result of failure. In Ontario

Canada students who fail to meet a course expectation are allowed to repeat only the particular material or subject relating to the expectations. In this case the principal, the teachers and the parents in consultation together determine what plan or programme to put in place to assist such students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016:79)

2.5.3 The Progression Policy in Japan

The issue of grade retention of learners in Japan is very low and sometimes does not exist. Teachers are mandated to strictly adhere to standardised national curriculum and the materials as every learner is given equal chances of being promoted to the next grade. Cummings (2014:299) reveals that the principle of automatic promotion which is embedded in the education system of Japan where everyone involved is encouraged to do their best and give full cooperation as there will be no tracking or separation by ability. This means learners of the same age in a grade are not allowed grade retention or to skip a grade as everyone works together as a team

2.5.4 The Progression Policy in the United States

In year 1982, New York City schools were said to have cancelled the practice of the progression policy, suspended at a stage, and then later reinstated because of the high number of retentions experienced (Carifio, 2010:2). This simply means the number of learners repeating a grade was unbelievably high and to avoid having high number of drop-outs the practice had to be reinstated.

According to the OECD report, grade repetition is a stumbling block to progress in many OECD countries and this also constitutes a burden to the education budget. Therefore, to assist students who have not satisfied promotion requirements in American schools, they are automatically promoted but with support (OECD, 2012:49)

2.6 HOW SHOULD PARENTS BE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS?

Parental involvement is always advised when it comes to the issues pertaining the behaviour or performance of learners. It is not only the responsibility of the state, the school and the teachers to step in where learners need assistance. Parents'

readiness to be part of the school programmes go a long way to ensure the intervention introduced by the school achieves its purpose. The parents of learners who have been progressed have so much to do in order to provide support for their children. Where a parent or parents are not available to discuss the performance of their children who have been progressed, the teachers may not be able to get good responses from such learners whenever any intervention is introduced

Mestry and Khumalo (2012:102) highlight that many parents especially from rural communities lacked the necessary knowledge, skills and experience on school matters and policy implementation. It suffices to say that teachers find it difficult to engage with parents who do not have any information about why a learner may or may not be progressed to the next grade. Although the policy does not state what is expected of parents or teachers in the implementation, the fact is that, parental support is also needed in order for the school intervention or support to bear good fruits. For the purpose of set demarcation for this study, my analysis will be limited to the intervention engaged in by the schools in the implementation of Progression Policy. The issues of parent consultation with the teachers and strategies that must be put in place by the schools and the districts, in order to identify low academic achievers earlier for timely and sustainable intervention, are addressed in section 5.7 in the recommendations to the different stakeholders

2.7 NECESSARY SUPPORTS PROVIDED BY THE PROGRESSION POLICY

The Progression Policy gives opportunity for learners who fail once and have repeated in either grade 10 or grade 11 to avoid repetition again by allowing them to progress to the next grade. This means if a learner fails once in grade 10, such a learner will be progressed to grade 11 in the next academic year and subsequently grade 12. Therefore, repetition will not be allowed twice in that phase. The same applies to a grade 11 learner whose first time of failing in the same phase is in grade 11. Unfortunately, according to the Department of Basic Education (2017:1), such a learner at the end of Grade 12, will need to satisfy all the requirements laid down for an NSC candidate in order to be awarded the matric certificate.

The guideline for the implementation of promotion and progression requirements for Grades 10 to 12 (DBE, RSA, 2015a) stipulates that schools need to offer support and monitor progress of the learners. This varies according to available resources of

different schools and programmes organised for the progressed learners in order to match up with their academic work. The support that can be provided by the schools ranges from extra classes, extra-minutes concession during examinations or class tests, large prints for visually impaired, and braille paper, psychological or emotional support amongst other interventions.

It is very important to know that the progressed learners were at a stage allowed multiple examination opportunities (MEO) and therefore can register to write their Grade 12 exam over a period of 2 years (DBE, RSA, 2015b). This practice has however, been discontinued because of the loop holes in the practice

2.8 RELEVANCE OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE PROGRESSION POLICY

The MEO candidate which is also referred to as modularisation means that the learners in this category are given the opportunity to write a minimum of three subjects. These three subjects exclude Life Orientation when writing in the November examination sitting and the remaining subjects are expected to be written in the following year June examination. However, the number of subjects learners will be allowed to sit for in the November examination, will be finally decided based on their performance in the subjects written in the preparatory examination. The good news is that acceptable level of achievement in the preparatory examination gives any progressed learners the opportunity to write all the six subjects at a sitting.

In a statement released by the Department (DBE, 2017:2), specific criteria were agreed upon and made known to all schools. to ensure the application of the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) is fair and generally accepted as uniform., The following criteria were given and the progressed learners were mandated to exercise the Multiple Examination option only if these criteria were satisfied (which has now been discontinued). The learner must adhere to specified criteria.

- Be recognised as a progressed learner.

- Ensure the completion of all his/her SBA requirements in all seven subjects.

- Be in attendance regularly at school. Learners who are absent for quite a number of times will not be qualified.

- Ensure he/she has written the Preparatory examination in all subjects.

- Must be one of those that have failed a minimum of three subjects, which means a learner that has failed only two subjects may not be considered.

However, the introduction of MEO was phased out because of many challenges experienced during the implementation. Many learners are not keen on deferring the subjects to be written to a later stage.

2.9 CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY

The implementation of the Progression Policy has come with its benefits and challenges to learning and teaching in South African schools. Many of the challenges have been debated by different scholars and this is still ongoing.

Mogale and Modipane (2021:1) submit that policies in the education system across the world are developed to address educational challenges, but the implementation of these policies remains a challenge and this is evident in many countries such as Belgium, the United States of America and Kenya.

Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017:2) argue that progressed learners appeared to have experienced difficulties in attaining their Grade 12 certificates because they did not cope with the requirements.

Munje and Maarman (2017:195) submit that the policy fails to make it clear on how the implementation chain works, in terms of what is required of the teachers or principals, and monitoring and evaluation of the functionality of the policy in individual schools.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter describes the theoretical framework of the study as transformative theory. This was explained in conjunction with brief introduction of the Interpretivist paradigm. The theory of transformativeness takes into consideration the transition in the educational practice from a system that lacks inclusivity into a system where inclusivity and equality are entrenched. The paradigm of interpretivist takes into consideration the subjective opinion of participants in this study and how they make sense of the Progression Policy being implemented to rid our schools of the grade repetition that has for long beset learners when attempting to reach matriculation stage

This chapter searches different literature genres in depth and reveals the views of different scholars on the implementation of Progression Policy, the characteristics of progression policy, the support given by the policy to learners, and the relevance of the support and the challenges experienced in the implementation of the policy in South African schools. It has been established that learner retention in a grade for a longer period because of non-performance may not be in their own best interest as some of them tend to drop out or develop behavioural problems which might be difficult to control.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology explains the general approach, methods or strategy that outline how a research project must be conducted and the methods to be used in completing the study. According to Sileyew (2019:1), research methodology is defined as the path through which researchers need to conduct their research and further states that research methodology enables researchers to formulate their problem and objective and present their results from the data obtained during the study period.

Research methodology embraces the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic. It is further noted that in a research paper, the methodology section allows the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability (University of Witwatersrand, 2022:1).

According to Igwenagu (2016:4) research methodology is described as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. The author indicates that though a methodology does not, in anyway, provide all answers to the problems experienced or challenges confronted. One thing it does is to offer the theoretical eye-opener which strengthens our understanding on the appropriate set of methods or best practices which can be applied to a specific case.

This chapter explains in detail the design and details of the methodology employed by the researcher in order to successfully complete the study. This chapter succeeds the previous chapter where several literatures were consulted on the views of various academic scholars on Progression Policy. The chapter focuses on the action plan of the research process carried out. It describes the methodological approach employed to steer the research process in the right direction. Therefore, these will be discussed in detail: they are the research approach, design, population, sampling, data collection procedure, data analysis, data reliability, ethical considerations, limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

3.2.1 Introduction

The paradigm considered in the heart of this study is the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm informs our understanding of issues and analysis of the situation under study to provide insight into the way in which a group of people make sense of the phenomena they encounter. Interpretivist paradigm helps to study and understand a particular phenomenon and how such phenomenon is interpreted or understood by a certain community in their social environment.

The paradigm of interpretivist, according to Kulakowska (2020:30), describes an ontological position that emphasises constructivism. This paradigm has a depiction of the world around us as socially constructed. What we experience as human beings in our various lives or in our various communities cannot be downplayed as part of what we accumulate as knowledge.

According to Thanh and Thanh (2015:1) the paradigm of interpretivist explores and "understands the world of human experience". Reality is discovered by engaging with the participants of a study and obtaining evidence of their experiences, their views, and their backgrounds.

Pham (2018:1) describes the paradigm of interpretivist as one where the truth is seen as something that cannot be determined by a process of measurement but rather through studying events and people with their multiple interpretations. In a nutshell, people interpret what they experience in different ways, and this must be taken into consideration when conducting a study.

Ryan (2018:8) describes interpretivist paradigm as opposite to positivism where truth and knowledge are subjective. It is an orderly analysis of social and meaningful action through direct observation of peoples 'actions in their natural environment for better interpretation on how they feel and live.

Husam and Abraham (2020:42) add that the paradigm of interpretivist is concerned with detailed variables and this aims to include richness in various data collected and considers human differences in their social realities. Qualitative studies are associated with the paradigm of interpretivist because of the way data are collected,

the subjective views and reflection of many individuals on issues that affect them and the society.

3.2.2 Significance of Interpretivist paradigm

Kulakowska (2020:32) submits that the paradigm of interpretivist takes an ontological position. This position emphasises constructivism considering the world around us as socially constructed. There is further evidence that by implication, interpretivist theory focuses on meaning making processes which is seen as a social practice drawn from lived experience (Kulakowska, 2020:36). The paradigm of interpretivist puts emphasis on what individuals have experienced and their subjective interpretation of the experience and knowledge. They reflect on their experience and give their own interpretation of the real-life experience.

Curry (2020:905-907), in his description of interpretivist paradigm, gives a narration in his parable about the disagreement between a young priest and a deacon on the doubts displayed by a young parishioner on the issue of the Easter period. The deacon interprets her impertinent questions as a disbelief that Jesus resurrected from the dead. However, the young priest has a different interpretation and concludes that faith seeks understanding and that her questioning does not mean disbelief but that her faith just needs to be strengthened. It is therefore submitted that the paradigm of interpretivist embraces the intersubjectivity of beliefs where experiences of individuals, their knowledge and beliefs are shared in order to make sense of the reality of the physical world. Therefore, the interpretivist seeks to understand the individual's perception and social construction of the reality experienced.

The above explanation is the reason why this paradigm is significant and seen as part of the driving force behind this study. The interpretivist sees the reality experienced by an individual as very important and therefore recognises the meaning or the interpretation given by such individual as to what has been experienced. The opinion of the participant, who is seen as a social actor in a social world, is taken cognisance of.

The interpretivist paradigm unpacks the experience of the teachers in the implementation of the national policy. The teachers were expected to reflect and give individual interpretations of how the Progression Policy introduced by the

Department of Basic Education, as part of transformation and improving wider participation of previously disadvantaged people, is playing a role in the schooling of learners that are being progressed.

The proponents of the interpretivist paradigm believe that the subjective experiences of people are true and must be perceived seriously (ontology); what we learn about other human perspectives by interacting with them and paying attention to what they say so that we might learn regarding their existence as well as how we can realize it (epistemology); and those qualitative research methods are suitable for the task (methodology). Ontology deals with the essence of reality (either being or existence), and different ontological positions reflect different rules for what can and cannot be real.

According to Willis (2007:98) the different interpretation of authors is revealed, and it is noted that all research is influenced and modified by the point of view and ideas generated by different researchers. Therefore, it can be said that a socially constructive activity that has been unearthed is learned.

The educators' interpretation and submission on the role of the National Policy will be based on their observations, experience, and available documents such as mark schedules, statistics of performance, enrolment and attendance of the learners that have been progressed in the FET phase.

3.2.3 Interpretivist and Positivist paradigms

Interpretivist paradigm is differentiated from other paradigms in the research field. Different paradigms inform different studies. Each study is driven by a relevant theoretical framework and paradigms.

Gichura (2017:1) explains that "research involving interpretivist does not predetermine dependent and independent variables but rather focuses on the involvedness of human sense-making as the circumstances emerge and thus this methodology endeavours to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them through social contextualization" He however compares this to ideology of where research takes into consideration the objective and physical position rather than subjective experience of humans. Husam and Abraham (2020:40) assert that Positivism relates to the importance of what is given in general,

and it focuses on pure data and an objective result which is assumed independent of human influence and bias.

They further explain that "the interpretivist paradigm would enable researchers to gain further depth through seeking experiences and perceptions of a particular social context." The positivist paradigm on the other hand, is different as it enables the researchers to navigate the world of numbers and statistics that are objective, logical and more reliable leading to the development of universal laws and findings within a specified framework.

3.2.4 Applicability to the study

The interpretivist paradigm is applicable to this study as it allowed the researcher to unpack the experiences of the participants in their various schools. The subjective opinions of every participant, after having to experience the introduction and implementation of the Progression Policy, are very important. The participants (educators) experience of the implementation, the reaction of the learners, the parents' disposition towards the implementation and the outcomes of the implementation can only be accurately reported by the educators. Therefore, interpretivist paradigm is applicably relevant in this study. The participants' viewpoints of the implementation of the Progression Policy in the FET were presented in the questionnaires as answers were provided by the participants to the list of questions.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research method adopted in carrying this study forward is the qualitative approach. A qualitative approach allows a researcher to conduct an investigation and gathers evidence from the data collected. Such a researcher is then able to construct a theory from the findings. In the qualitative approach data collected is usually a set of subjective realities or experiences of the participants involved, hence less influential, seemingly, in comparison with the quantitative approach. It offers the prospect of understanding the lived experience of participants in a study as distinct individuals who are independent and have different interpretations as to what they have experienced in a particular social context. However, quantitative approach is characterised by the presumptions, theoretical and statistical assumptions of the researcher. Asimiran and Njie (2014:35) describe qualitative research as that which

is helpful in finding out about complex phenomena that seem to be oblivious to other people. Where there is a need to unravel certain information from various individuals in their natural setting, qualitative research is suitably applicable. Hignett and McDermott (2015:120) submit that, "qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their world and how they interpret and experience different events." In this study the participants' reality on the implementation of progression policy in their various schools is put under the spotlight. A systematic review of the different authors' submission with the primary findings of this study through the data collection processes was made possible by qualitative methodology. The qualitative approach, therefore, assisted in making sense of the philosophical approach of interpretivism in the collection of data from the participants in order to gain an insight of their reality and how the progression policy is being implemented in their schools.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case is defined in Kekeya (2021:28) to be an individual, a group, a family, a class, an office, or an institution such as a college, university or a school. A case study will therefore entail investigating an individual, a group of people, an institution, or a class in their natural setting.

A case study design is used in this study where six schools in the Mbombela Circuit have been selected for the purpose of gathering required data on the chosen research topic. A case study is relevant in this study as it constitutes an important and useful means of data collection in qualitative research. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2014:316), a case study is important because it focuses on events whether single or not, individuals or groups of people. A case study, according to Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez, (2020:2) is defined as a detailed examination of how complicated or comprehensive a particular case and the activities around such case are. Using a case study will enable the researcher to have a detailed insight into the implementation practices of each of the six schools under the spotlight.

A case study however is not intended as a study of the entire organisation but rather to focus on a particular issue or unit of analysis (Noor & Baharein, 2008:1602). This serves as a disadvantage for any researcher who might want to use case study.as part methods for collecting data in a study. This disadvantage however, does not

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impact negatively on the study as it is a difficult and such a daunting task to engage the whole population of high schools in the Mbombela Circuit to answer questions on the implementation of Progression Policy.

3.5 POPULATION

In terms of the population six schools were selected from the total number of high schools in Mbombela and 3 members of the SMT wiere selected from each school. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:2) describe population as the total number of participants or cases involved in a study. The principals were part of the participants interviewed as well as the class teachers of all the grades (10-12) in the FET. The participants, which are forty-two in number, were asked questions using open-ended questionnaires to obtain their insights on the Progression Policy, the performance of progressed learners, and their challenges in the implementation of the policy. Selecting the population of a study is a very important task which needs to be done in a careful and professional manner on the part of the researcher. Selecting all the high schools in the Mbombela Circuit would have given me a wider access to how implementation of progression policy is carried out in the schools. However, it would have been a task nearly impossible to collect data from all teachers in all the schools. Hence, a population sample size of six schools is drawn from all the high schools in the Mbombela Circuit and seven participants each drawn from the school. Stratton (2021:373) reveals that drawing a population sample is necessary when it is impossible to collect data from the entire population or the members of the population are not easily accessible.

3.6 SAMPLING

This research is limited to six schools in the Mbombela Circuit of the Ehlanzeni District; forty-two participants were involved in the collection of data. Convenience sampling is used to identify the key role players, and therefore obtain necessary data from the principals, the members of the SMT and the educators of the selected schools. These participants were chosen because it is convenient to collect data from them and the accessibility to the schools makes the research possible and cost-effective for me during the process of data collection. Seven participants were

selected from each school which makes up the total number of forty-two. The analysis of the sample size is depicted in TABLE 3.1 below.

Convenience sampling is defined by Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, (2012:784) as a type of nonprobability sampling, conducive to self-selection, in which people are sampled simply because of the convenience in obtaining data for the relevant data by the researchers. It may seem ideal to recruit all the teachers in the six schools as participants of this study. Doing so would have ensured all the teachers to state their opinions on progressed policy and give their individual suggestions. However, time constraint, travelling costs and the inability of the researcher to reach out to all teachers would have been a great barrier and therefore constituted a delay in the process of data gathering, presentation and analysis. The results in all probability would have been the same, given the nature of the study. Hence, the choice of convenience sampling allows a researcher to select his target population according to accessibility and geographical location. It is referred to as a non-random sampling where participants of a study are selected based on having satisfied certain criteria, their willingness to participate in the study and their proximity to the research site. According to Obilor (2023:4), convenience sampling is defined as, "accidental or opportunity sampling in which a sample is drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand, readily available, or convenient" According to Bhattacherjee, (2012:69) the use of convenience sampling is justified, "when a researcher could sample any population which could be the number of learners who enrolled for a particular course or number of patients who take their medications in a particular clinic." Penn, Petrolia, and Fannin (2023:725), add that although participation occurs basically as a result of convenient access to the researcher or the location, a high likelihood of bias to a population frame is possible. Therefore, the researcher has ensured to guard against bias and selected the relevant sample size from the available population for data collection

3.7 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

3.7.1 The justification of the involvement of the principals in the data collection processes

The implementation of the Progression Policy is driven by the school managers who are the principals. The principals are expected to be the custodians of various policy documents that inform the operational activities of a school. It has been revealed that principals have a considerable amount of influence in the school environment spanning from the curriculum implementation to various policy implementation, and to creating a supportive and enabling environment for the teachers, the learners and every member of the school community (Olsen & Huang, 2019:5). The principal shoulders the responsibility of ensuring good academic performance of learners and sees to it that teachers are well equipped through the Continuous Professional Teacher Development programme (CPTD). The role of the principal of a school in the implementation of policies cannot be relegated to another staff member. Hence it was necessary and justified that principals are involved in the data collection processes that will give the researcher a robust insight as to the implementation of the progression policy in the school.

3.7.2 The justification for the involvement of the SMT members in the data collection process

The next line of management in every school after the principal is the SMT members. This consists of the deputy principals and the school heads of various departments depending on the school management structure. The deputy principals and the Departmental Heads (DHs) work closely with the principal in discharging his managerial duties, in the curricular implementation, and various policy document implementation. It is apparent that the school principal cannot be able to do everything on his own, to ensure discipline and smooth running of the school. Therefore, the SMT members are an essential part of the management structure of the school and are able to provide timely assistance to the principal in the area of governance and relevant decision making. Ramango and Naicker (2022:88) reveal that school leaders are gatekeepers for change and therefore, are held accountable for learner performance. If progressed learners are going to be identified for

sustainable intervention to take them from the status of progressed to passing their matriculation examinations, school leaders like the SMTs cannot be exempted from this exercise.

3.7.3 The justification for the involvement of class teachers in the data collection process

Class teachers are the closest to learners in any school. They pay attention to each learner's emotional, psychological, and academic needs. The class teachers keep a record of the attendance of each learner and can quickly find out who is absent and why they are absent. They keep a record of the performance of learners and sign the term report to be given to learners. In the process of identifying the learning needs of each learner, class teachers play a vital role and they assist in determining what kind of support is needed by the learners who have been designated, "progressed". It has been revealed that the School Based Support Team (SBST), which includes the class teachers, are tasked to monitor and report on the progress made by the progressed learners (Modipane and Mogale, 2021:5). Hence the need to include the class teachers in the FET sector as they have the capacity to give relevant information on the identification, records and support given to the progressed learners.

TABLE 3.1 Sample size of the Study

SCHOOLS	PRINCIPALS	SMT	EDUCATORS	TOTAL
A	1	3	3	7
B	1	3	3	7
C	1	3	3	7
D	1	3	3	7
E	1	3	3	7
F	1	3	3	7
TOTAL	6	18	18	42

3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The study applied the technique of document review in the process of relevant data collection. Document review involves collecting reports, official publications, and correspondence from an organisation (Lentsa, 2019:39). The type of documents that were collected are the reports on learner performance, the report schedules showing progressed learners from grade 10 through to grade 12 and other documented intervention used in assisting the progressed learners. The schedules reflect how the progressed learners have been performing from grade 10 in 2019 through to grade 12 in 2021. In terms of focus groups there were interactions with the participants, namely the SMT members and the class teachers of grade 10-12 to ascertain their views on the policy. Time constraints and their tight schedules only allowed for open-ended questionnaires to be filled by the class teachers and the SMT members as the focus group.

The school principals were asked questions as individuals managing their respective schools. This took the form of open-ended questionnaires which were also distributed to these participants to complete the appropriate sections. The open-ended questionnaires were prepared in such a way as to make the questions easily understandable by the participants. The performances of learners, who have been progressed from grade 10 through to grade 12 for the last three years, were examined in order to assess the role the Progression Policy has played in the FET phase journey of these learners. The analysis of the performance of these learners were obtained from the Ehlanzeni District and the performance recorded can be easily attributed to the claims of the participants on support that have been consistently given to the struggling learners The data collected were scanned and saved in a retrievable drive for future reference.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The six schools were selected as they are easily accessible to find out how the Progression Policy has been impacting on the commitment of the teachers and the learners as well as the quality of performance of learners in the school. In this study convenience sampling was necessary. Staller (2021:899) describes convenience

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sampling, as a non-probability sampling where the researcher exercises his best judgment by selecting participants based on accessibility and convenience by the researcher to have easy access to the participants and the research setting relevant for the study.

The data collected were analysed using the content analysis method. In content analysis, Mayring (2015:1) explains that "researchers examine artefacts of social communication such as written documents, protocols of observation, video tapes, discourses and transcription of recorded verbal communication". Bowen (2009) reveals that content analysis can be seen as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic". Kleinheksel, Rockich-Winston, Tawfik, and Wyatt (2020:127) describe content analysis as that which has the potential of ensuring a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon presented in a large quantity of textual data. Vears and Gillam (2022:112) describe content analysis as the qualitative data analysis method where text-based written transcripts, verbal interactions or other written documents are presented for evaluation.

Therefore, the performance of the progressed learners from the documents received was analysed to measure and conclude what influence the implementation of the policy has had on their attitude to learning and ultimately their performance. The open-ended questionnaires present the opinions, the attitude of the teachers and the intervention programmes which the schools set up to support the progressed learners. These were analysed and compared against the final analysis of performance from the district to see how the implementation of the policy has been running in the FET phase. During the process of analysing the contents of documents received from the participants, the data extracted from each participant's open-ended questionnaire were presented using themes and sub-themes as displayed in chapter 4.

The intention of this analysis was to ascertain the role the implementation of the Policy has played in the FET phase, and to establish how "necessary support" (if any) has caused improvement on the part of these learners

The study also sought to identify the kind of "necessary support" emphasised by the National Policy that will be available for learners who are not ready to function at the

next level, but nevertheless have been progressed to the next level; and to investigate the effectiveness of this support.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

3.10.1 Introduction

The findings of a study must be trusted by various stakeholders that might need to replicate or apply such research in their own contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe trustworthiness as the degree to which the findings can be trusted and transferability as the degree to which the results of the findings can be applied to other contexts. Trustworthiness of research is seen as a subjective shared reality where the researcher and the reader find common ground (Stahl & King, 2020:26). The trustworthiness of a study includes its credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness is described by Riazi, Rezvani, and Ghanbar (2023:3), as "providing sufficient details and evidence so that readers may judge the transferability of the results to other contexts." The possibility of transferability, therefore, reinforces the trustworthiness of the outcome of this study. Kekeya (2012:32), avers that the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are embedded in trustworthiness.

3.10.2 The determination of credibility

The credibility of a study entails having confidence in the findings and trust that correct processes and systems have been put in place for data collection. Joseph (2021:7) highlights that the credibility of a research study is established through the relationship formed by the researcher with the participants and the assurance of non-disclosure given to the participants. To ensure confidence in the findings of this study, the participants have been guaranteed that the findings will be provided only for comparison of the data collected. The level of expertise that the researcher has displayed to the participants and the approving authority for ethical clearance and permission to conduct the research accentuates the credibility of the study.

3.10.3 The determination of transferability

The transferability of research results entails that these can be generalised to other contexts, and this can be facilitated through transparency in the description of the

research procedures employed in a study (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013:13). Enworo (2023:374) confirms that transferability is the degree to which the results of a study can be transferred to other settings and adds that the sampling technique applied contributes substantially to ensuring that. The researcher has ensured that the data sampling method takes into consideration the relevant people who serve as the custodians of the policy implementation.

3.10.4 The determination of dependability

Stahl and King (2020:27) explain that dependability is ensured where there is the presence of peer scrutiny. Asking a fellow researcher to critique one's work ensures the work is open for criticism, so as to apply relevant corrections. This dependability, according to Polit and Beck (2012:539) refers to the reliability of data collected from the participants over time and under similar circumstances. The data collected from the participants were kept safe and accessible for inspection. The copies of the questionnaires, the tools for data collection are attached as part of the annexures.

3.10.5 The determination of confirmability

Chung, Biddix and Park (2020:3300) describe confirmability as the concept that emphasises the extent to which findings can be confirmed by other people. This indicates that adequate information is given which can enable any other researcher to follow through and arrive at the same findings. It suffices to say that if another researcher decides to embark on the same journey of analysing the implementation of the progression policy in the same circuit of Mbombela, there is a good chance of arriving at the same conclusion. The emails sent and received, letters of permission and informed consent were saved electronically. The data collected, how it was collected, presented, and analysed provide good evidence for an audit trail. In an audit trail development and establishment, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 319-310) highlight the following categories:

- Raw data – which includes the written notes or jotted notes which have not been tampered with.

- Data reduction and analysis products – This includes summaries and the notes on theory.

- Data reconstruction and synthesis products – this includes the reflection on the literature and its synthesis on the findings of the study.

- Process notes – The process notes can be notes on methodology applicable, to the methods and the research designs that drive the study. The trustworthiness of the report and the issues around the elements that validate the trustworthiness of research such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

- Materials relating to intentions and dispositions – Personal notes, intentions and action plans are categorised under this.

- Instrument development information – This instrument can be preliminary schedules or questionnaires initially developed and subsequently finalised for data collection.

In addition to ensuring confirmability, the data gathered from the principals, the SMT members, and the class teachers were checked against the official documents by the Department of Basic Education. This procedure can be confirmed by anyone interested in confirming that the findings from the data collected is valid. Conducting such an investigation will erase the issue of doubts as to the correctness or validity of data gathered from the questionnaires.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.11.1 Introduction

Conducting research of this nature needs the researcher to comply with certain ethical conduct. The compliance with ethical conduct by a researcher ensures that readers of the findings can trust the source of data collection and the processes and systems put in place to complete the study. The following ethical measures were taken into consideration for the purpose of this research before collecting data using open-ended questionnaires and these are informed consent, confidentiality, and permission to conduct the research.

3.11.2 An Informed consent

An Informed consent, according to Millum and Bromwich (2011:1), entails a situation where participants clearly understand the substance of the research and hence give

their valid consent. They argue that enrolling willing participants to be part of data collection in a study without having clearly explained details about the research for them to understand, will not amount to an informed consent. Klykken (2022:795) adds that an informed consent is valid when, "an individual's decision is voluntary and based on clear, unambiguous information about what engagement in the research will entail." Therefore, a researcher needs to provide a full explanation of what the research entails and allow the potential subjects to decide.

The participants of this study were given details about the research project and what it intends to achieve. They were assured that it would not impact negatively on their appointment as educators as their responses would be kept confidential. The participants, the principals, the SMT members and the class teachers were given the option to pull out at any stage of data collection if they feel uncomfortable.

3.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The protection afforded by the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity enables the researchers to gain the confidence of the participants and this allows them to speak freely and give relevant information without fear of prejudice (Dougherty, 2021:481). Goodwin, Mays and Pope (2020:1) reiterate that the commitment of the researcher to anonymity and confidentiality enables the participants to open up to the researcher.

In the area of confidentiality and anonymity, information about subjects will be kept confidential unless there is an agreement between the researcher and the respondent(s) to disclose certain information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:334). The participants have been assured the data collected will remain confidential. Therefore, the name of the schools and the participants are going to be withheld in the data analysis and when stating the findings of this study.

3.11.4 Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the research

Ethical clearance and official permission to conduct research is part of the research ethics by which a researcher must abide. Getting ethical clearance for a study may be a daunting task but it is essential. Lenton, Smith, Bacon, May and Charlesford (2021::2) reveal that ethical clearance focuses on the safety and confidentiality of the participants.

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Therefore, proper authorisation to conduct this investigation has been obtained from UNISA, the relevant education department, the provincial department, and the Mbombela circuit. The school authorities have also been duly informed and permission to select participants and to collect data from them has been sought and duly granted. All sources used in this investigation are duly acknowledged as the researcher is fully aware of the consequences of plagiarism.

3.12 THE LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

3.12.1 The Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The study and the process of data collection are limited to only six high schools in the Mbombela circuit with forty-two participants. The Mbombela circuit is situated in the city of Mbombela under the Ehlanzeni District of Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. It is the capital city of the Province of Mpumalanga

Figure3. 1 District of Ehlanzeni Showing Constituent Local Municipalities
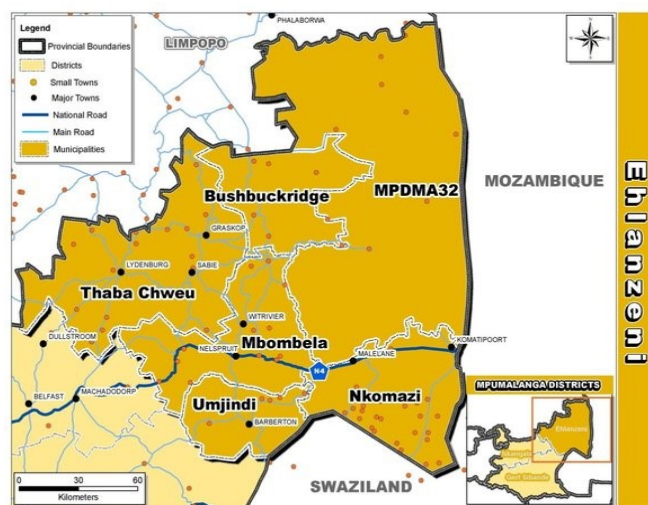
Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Ehlanzeni-showing-its-constituent-local-Municipalities-and-neighbouring-countries_fig1_311242605
(Francis ,2016)

3.12.2 The city of Mbombela

The city Mbombela was essentially created on 28 August 1884, when the Republican Volksraad approved plans to build a railway from the newly discovered

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Lowveld goldfields to Johannesburg. The line was finally opened in 1895 and growth followed as people quickly rushed to buy land in and around the Mbombela City area.

The city of Mbombela derives its name from Siswati word for "a lot of people together in a small space" and this appropriately describes some of the areas of the Mbombela Local Municipality's area of jurisdiction in the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Certain local councils which were Nelspruit TRC, White River TRC, White River TLC, Hazyview TLC and the Greater Nelspruit Area amalgamated in December 2000 to form the Mbombela Local Municipality and this new structure is committed to ensure growth and development of communities in a manner that enhances community participation and accountability (City of Mbombela 2022:1)

The city offers easy access to many of the world's finest game parks and is close to the Eastern Escarpment, a 1 200-metre wall of jagged mountain towering above the African bush. The city is also home to the National Botanical Gardens, set in 154 hectares of land along the eastern bank of the Crocodile River, containing no fewer than 512 plant species indigenous to the area.

Figure3. 2 Map of Mbombela Showing Mbombela Department of Education Circuit

Source: https://vymaps.com/ZA/Nelspruit-Circuit-Office-education-Department-249824405365838/
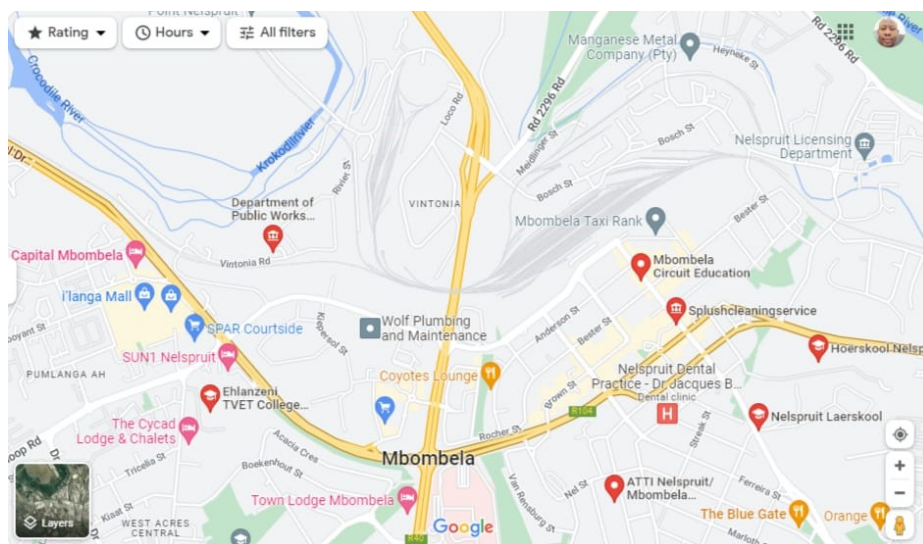
3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 3 explained in detail the methods, and the approach employed in the qualitative methodology for successful data collection. The data collection method used was explained and the data analysis process. The chapter also explained briefly justifying why the participants, the principals, the SMT members and the class teachers were selected for the study.

The data analysis method of content analysis was explained with the contents of the documents which were to be analysed. The researcher emphasised the credibility of the data gathered and how the trustworthiness of the data collected would be ensured. The issue of trustworthiness and transferability in research was given a priority as examples were given of transferability of the data in other contexts. A researcher needs to pay attention to issues that might jeopardise the trustworthiness of the data collected and therefore ensures the accuracy and the reliability of the study, and ensures that the results of the research can be generalised to other contexts.

Every study needs to consider the issue of plagiarism and informed consent; therefore, the researcher gave it a priority to get permission from the authority concerned and the participants where necessary. All sources used in this study were referenced appropriately.

CHAPTER 4

PROCESSING OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Before data collection and presentation, a researcher needs to establish what method and methodology must be employed in the collection of relevant data. The previous chapter gives details on the method and methodology of the research. The chapter also outlines the research approach the design, population, sampling, data collection procedure, and trustworthiness of the data that was gathered. It also gives an insight into the ethical considerations of the research activities.

This chapter however focuses on the details from the data collection processes and the presentation of the data gathered. Data collection, according to Bhandhari, (2020:1) is a systematic process of collecting observations or relevant statistical data. She describes this process as that which allows a researcher to gain primary knowledge into a phenomenon experienced. The process of data collection is defined as the gathering of data, doing measurement of such collected data in an organised manner which gives opportunity for any one or the researcher to evaluate the data that has been collected as well as the results (Technopedia, 2020:1).

Figure 4.1 Word Collage on Progression Policy and the implementation
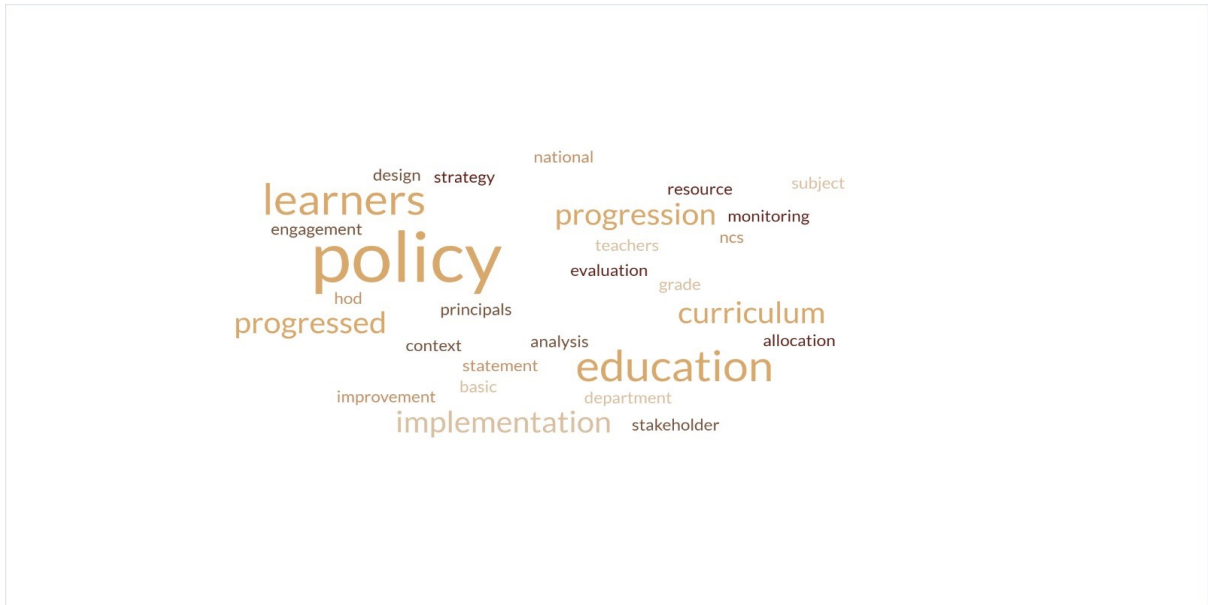
4.2 DATA COLLECTION

The six schools selected in the gathering of data have been visited for interviews and relevant data collection. It is important to note that the process of data collection has not been an easy one as some of the schools and the participants are still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic; the regulations for the lockdown are still being adhered to as a precaution against the pandemic. Many of the interview schedules had to be cancelled because of the unavailability of the participants and in some cases the questionnaires were relied on as the only instrument for data collection.

Six schools, consisting of three private and three public schools, have been identified for data collection purposes. The private schools have been designated as Schools A, B and C. The public schools have been designated as schools X, Y and Z. The sample population of the participants from the six participating schools, where data have been collected, are categorised as follows:

TABLE 4.1 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL A

SCHOOL A	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3

Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUB TOTAL		7

TABLE 4.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL B

SCHOOL B	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMEMT	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3
Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUBTOTAL		7

TABLE 4.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL C

SCHOOL C	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMEMT	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3
Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUBTOTAL		7

TABLE 4.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL X

SCHOOL X	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMEMT	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3
Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUB TOTAL		7

TABLE 4.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL Y

SCHOOL Y	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3
Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUBTOTAL		7

TABLE 4.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL Z

SCHOOL Z	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT	NO OF PARTICIPANT
One Principal	Open-ended questionnaire	1
SMT members	Open-ended questionnaire	3
Class teachers (10-12)	Open-ended questionnaire	3
SUBTOTAL		7

Document review was combined with the distribution of questionnaires for the teachers to complete. The principals were made to complete the questionnaires individually as it was difficult to engage with them on a one-on-one basis because of their tight schedules, and one principal was selected from each school. Focus groups were used for other educators to submit relevant data. The SMT members were scheduled to be interviewed but they agreed to fill in the questionnaire as it was difficult to conduct a group interview with all of them at the same time.

In terms of focus groups, there were projections of possible interactions and interviews scheduled with the participants, namely the SMT members and the class teachers of grade 10-12 to ascertain their views on the Progression Policy. In most cases, the interview schedules were being disrupted or unable to be held as a result of the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted teachers' attendance as well as affected teaching and learning in some of the schools. Many of the teachers prefer to respond through filling in the questionnaires provided and were apparently unable to avail themselves physically for face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the following data was collected from questionnaires on the Progression Policy and its implementation with the performances of learners, who had been progressed from grade 10 to grade 12 in the FET phase for the past three years, 2019 to 2021. These are presented below in order to analyse the implementation of the Progression Policy in the selected schools and the role it has played in the FET phase journey of these learners.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION

4.3.1 Introduction

This stage is where the data collected during the interview or data gathering period is presented for analysis. The data collected for the six schools, starting from the independent high schools, are presented as follows:

4.3.2 Presentation of data collected – Principals (Schools A, B and C)

The principal of school A has 12 years of experience as the principal. He has adequate knowledge of the South African curriculum as well as of various policies that drive the system. The school implemented the policy in 2013.

The principal of school B has two years of experience as the principal and also has adequate knowledge of the South African curriculum. The implementation of Progression Policy was started in this school in 2015.

The third principal (private school) has more than 30 years of experience as a qualified teacher and 16 years of experience as a principal. He is well-versed in the National Senior Certificate curriculum. The schools will be categorised in this order, school A for SA, school B for SB and school C for SC

When asked about their understanding of Progression Policy, the principals give their different views on what they believe is the essence of this policy.

"It is the learning and teaching principle meant to minimise the unnecessary dropouts of learners in South African schools." **(SA)**

"Learners are progressed to the next grade despite not passing." **(SB)**

"[It is a] framework that informs the school on the advancement of a learner from one grade to the other." **(SC)**

On the question of when the school started the implementation of the policy, the schools, apparently, did not start implementation in the same year as indicated in their responses:

"In 2013." **(SA)**

"2015." **(SB)**

"Since inception of the school." **(SC)**

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In answering the question on how the policy is different from other education policies, the principals of the different private schools gave different views as they indicate below:

"It is a mitigation strategy for high drop-out rates in South African education system and it has social and emotional implications for progressed learners." **(SA)**

"It gives learners a chance." **(SB)**

"It focuses on the advancement of the child." **(SC)**

On the question of the purpose the progression policy serves in terms of the school learning environment, the principals give their different experiences as follows:

"It has given learners a lifeline to pursue education and build self-confidence leading to some of these learners excelling very well in life." **(SA)**

"Giving learners a second chance and helps us a school to give more support to such learners." **(SB)**

"It serves as a guideline." **(SC)**

When the principals were asked how the teachers respond to the implementation of the policy, the principals submitted that:

"Majority of teachers are quick to scold and shame progressed learners without considering their needs. They still think that these are problematic learners in the education system." **(SA)**

"Some educators are not happy because the policy does not encourage hard work. However, some educators believe in the policy." **(SB)**

"Confusing at the initial stage, but now well understood." **(SC)**

In response to the question on how learners respond to the implementation of Progression Policy, the principals give their explanations as the responses experienced from learners in their various schools:

"These learners experience labelling and feel discriminated against and stigmatised leading to misbehaving at times" **(SA)**

"Learners welcome the policy but however some prefer to repeat." **(SB)**

"Well embraced. It makes them feel well accommodated." **(SC)**

In answering questions on the number of progressed learners the school had in 2019 and how many passed matriculation examinations in 2021, the principals revealed the following:

"The school was having 14 progressed learners in 2019, two of them only wrote matric and failed. The failed because of their lack of cooperation, lacked interest and supervision at home and refused to stay in the hostel for the intervention programme/support organised to assist them in passing." **(SA)**

"The progressed learners were 10. Six wrote matric and only 2 failed." **(SB)**

"Grade 10 -4 learners. In 2021 14 wrote, 13 passed and 1 learner failed due to habitual absenteeism and poor parental support." **(SC)**

In response to the support given to the progressed learners in the school, the principals seem to be providing different support but mostly they depend on extra classes as stated:

"There are remedial lessons being given to the learners including hostel accommodation and supervised on daily basis by the educators." **(SA)**

"Learners are being given extra classes and motivation." **(SB)**

"Depending on individual learner deficiency (extra lessons, counselling and parental involvement)." **(SC)**

When asked if the supports are adequate and sustainable, the principals respond as follows:

"In our case the majority of learners who have responded well in this programme and [been] supported by the school have done very well academically." **(SA)**

"Yes, most learners fail because of content gap which can be rectified by extra contact time." **(SB)**

"Yes, to a satisfactory extent. Reasonable number of progressed learners managed to pass." **(SC)**

In terms of the overall impression, characteristics of progression policy and its contribution to learning (success and/or failure) in the FET, the principals give the following responses:

"The policy has produced good results while in some cases undesirable effects include behavioural problems like truancy have been experienced which hinder progress in the classroom." **(SA)**

"It is a useful policy which draws attention to the underperforming learners." **(SB)**

"It creates an avenue for less gifted learners to be given applicable support." **(SC)**

When asked to provide advice on aspects for improvement or amendment to the Progression Policy, they advise that:

"(The) MEO system which has been scrapped could be implemented particularly for grade 12 learners. Educators need to be equipped with the necessary skills to handle progressed learners. They have special needs and require special attention as well. It is not every educator that is capable of dealing with such learners in all our institutions." **(SA)**

"The system is okay but there is a need to improve on the aspect of developing/equipping teachers to meet the challenges of progressed learners." (**SB)**

"Timeframe should apply. For example, if a learner does not show any improvement during the first term, he/she must be sent back to the previous grade." **(SC)**

4.3.3 Summary of the responses from the principals from schools A, B and C

From the data collected from the principals, it is apparent that they all understand the substance of the progression policy. The principals submit that the progression policy was established to assist the weak learners that have not satisfied the pass requirements to progress to the next grade. It was confirmed that despite the challenges experienced in the implementation, there is no doubt it has been providing hope for the weak or low-performing learners in their schools. This is actually evident in the results of the schools as most of the learners have passed matric examinations in 2021. The principals emphasised the reduced grade repetition as a result of the progression policy. Many learners might have been drop-outs if it were not for the implementation of the policy. This finding is in agreement with Makhanya, (2021:31) who emphasises that the success story of other countries

moved South Africa to adopt this policy as it was established how repetition has been avoided in various schools in different countries.

Many South African schools, as they experienced high enrolment, concurrently experienced high drop-out rates. The introduction of the progression policy seems to have reduced the high number of dropouts, although at a cost. Kika and Kotze (2019:2) confirm that grade repetition, since the emergence of the progression policy, has been on a downward trend, especially in the Further Education and Training phase.

More attention is focused on these learners with the schools incurring more expenses to ensure the weak learners pass the matric examinations even if it is restricted to the categories of Diploma or Higher certificates. The principals stress how the policy has been embraced by the learners because of the second chance it brings and how excited they are to know that they have been given a second chance to prove themselves worthy of passing the matriculation exams. The suggestion of bringing back the Multiple Examination Opportunities (MEO) by one of the principals is well noted as learners are given the opportunity to write the subjects in more than one examination sitting. In this case, three subjects can be written in the first sitting and the others in the next sitting. This gives the weak learners a reduced workload of three or four subjects, rather than studying for 7 or 8 subjects in one examination sitting.

Munje and Maarman (2016;188), agree that the opportunity given to the progressed learners is seen as restoring their dignity and their image because many of them end up passing the matriculation examination but not without the teachers who have accompanied them through difficult times. There was no doubt, from the statements provided by the principals, that the progression policy has contributed positively to the educational advancement of low-performing learners. However, there was the suggestion of sending progressed learners who seem not to be improving back to the previous grade, which, in my opinion, may not be well embraced by the learners and the parents alike. Instead of doing this, it would rather be appropriate to investigate what support such learners might need in order to assist them. This would be in the best interest of the learners as such learners would be able to react positively seeing efforts taken to assure their successful completion of the matriculation examinations. The issue of adequately equipping the teachers was also

suggested. According to one of the principals, it was stated that dealing with progressed learners must be regarded as special needs education and currently, it seems many educators are ill-prepared for this task. Muedi, Kutame, Ngidi, and Uleanya, (2021:141) agree that the progressed learners are different from their peers and therefore suggest that teachers need to be well-trained to effectively assist these learners to get ahead in their studies.

4.3.4 SMT members' responses (Schools A, B and C)

The questionnaires were also distributed to the SMT members who are mainly the Head of different departments (HoDs) within the school, and they seem have different, somewhere conflicting ideas or opinions regarding answers to the questions posed. The SMT members are categorised in the following order, School A SMT 1(SA-SMT1), School A SMT 2(SA-SMT2) and School A SMT 3(SA-SMT 3)

The SMT members when asked what they understand about Progression Policy, the responses were as follows:

"The Policy that allows learners to move to the next grade even if they have not met the minimum requirements." **(SA-SMT1)**

"Policy used to progress and promote learners from one grade to the next." **(SA-SMT2)**

"A policy where learner is advanced from one grade to another even though the learner has not met the promotion requirement." **(SA-SMT3)**

"The Policy to adhere to when learners progress to a new grade." **(SB-SMT1)**

"It is a good policy because it gives learners chances to redeem themselves." **(SB-SMT2)**

"A policy of progressing well-behaved slow learners." **(SB-SMT3)**

"it is policy that progresses learners who have failed in one grade or phase for two or more years." **(SC-SMT1)**

"Promoting learners who are above the age limit of a particular grade." **(SC-SMT2)**

"This is a formal process that prevents a learner from spending more than 4 years in a phase.**" (SC-SMT3)**

When asked how the policy is differentiated from other education policies, the responses were different as the HoDs (SMT members) indicate as follows:

"it allows learners to advance to the next grade even though they do not perform at the expected level." **(SA-SMT1)**

"It ensures that progression requirements are met and if a learner is not promoted will not be retained in one phase for more than 4 years." (**SA-SMT2**)

"Others set conditions to be met but not push learners.**" (SA-SMT3)**

"It is flexible to accommodate all learners." (**SB-SMT1**)

"It allows learners to learn at their own pace and remedy their mistakes." **(SBSMT2)**

"It looks at different learner attributes." (**SB-SMT3**)

"It caters for learners that might end up dropping out of school because they have failed several times." **(SC-SMT1)**

 "Other policies did not progress learners without a pass." (SC-SMT2)

"The policy enhances the academic fortune of learners with learning barriers." **(SC-SMT3)**

In terms of the purpose the policy serves in their school learning environment, the SMT members reveal the following:

"It ensures learners do not remain in a grade or phase for too long.**" (SA-SMT1)**

"It ensures learners are not frustrated by repeating one grade twice." **(SA-SMT2)**

It gives learners a sense of hope." (**SA-SMT3**)

"It is demotivating and encourage laziness among learners." (**SB-SMT1**)

"We have learners who ultimately improve in due course." **(SA-SMT2)**

"It empowers slow learners and makes them feel so important.**" (SB-SMT3**)

"It discourages learners from working hard to achieve since they know they will finally be progressed." **(SC-SMT1)**

"It encourages learners to stay in school." **(SC-S.MT2)**

"The policy prevents low literacy level in a society." (**SC-SMT3**

When questioned on the responses of subject teachers in their respective departments on the implementation of the policy, the responses were:

"Some progressed learners struggle significantly with content and this makes teaching difficult." **(SA-SMT1)**

"They respond well but it affects the pass rate in grade 12." **(SA-SMT2)**

"It has been challenging especially having to deal with progressed learners where most of them are weak and not attending regularly.**" (SA-SMT3)**

"Not satisfactory as it does not reflect good learner performance.**" (SB-SMT1)**

"They welcome it and understand they have been given a chance to work harder.**" (SB-SMT2)**

"It gives them enough time to teach and catch up with learners." **(SB-SMT3)**

"Discouraged since learners who would have failed their subjects are finally progressed." **(SC-SMT1)**

"Some of them did not support the movement because it affects the overall performance of learners." **(SC-SMT2)**

"There are different stances of teachers on this policy." **(SC-SMT3)**

On the question of how learners are responding to the implementation of the policy the SMT members respond as follows:

"It is beneficial to the learners who embrace this opportunity. But others disregard this and perform poorly." **(SA-SMT1)**

"Learners respond positively." **(SA-SMT2)**

"Many of the weak lazy learners are not cooperative." **(SA-SMT3)**

"Favourable to them who do not take their studies seriously.**" (SB-SMT1)**

"Learners are happy with the policy." **(SB-SMT2)**

"Very well." **(SB-SMT3)**

"They like it since there is a lot of condonations especially when they know they cannot repeat a phase." **(SC-SMT1)**

"Weak learners are pleased with the implementation." **(SC-SMT2)**

"The policy helps genuine learners with learning challenge." **(SC-SMT3)**

In response to the question of how many progressed learners they had in their various department in 2019, the responses were:

"None." (SA-SMT1)

"More than 5 learners." *(SA-SMT3)*

"Close to 8 in number." *(SA-SMT2)*

In responding to the question of the number of progressed learners at school B, it seems the SMT members do not have details on that and so no answer was given; the questionnaire was left blank without any answer.

"Grade 10 - 6 learners." **(SC-SMT1)**

"About 80 out of 154 learners." **(SC-SMT2)**

"Not sure." **(SC-SMT3)**

When asked how many of the progressed learners wrote the matriculation examination in 2021 and the pass rate, the responses were:

"Not applicable." **(SA-SMT1)**

"All of them wrote but pass rate was 50%." **(SA-SMT2)**

"All the progressed learners wrote but not all of them passed. Not sure of the number." **(SA-SMT3)**

On the same question on number of progressed learners that wrote matriculation examinations in 2021, the SMT members did not have the details readily available on the learners in their department that wrote

"4 learners passed and 8 learners did not pass." **(SC-SMT1)**

"Out 55 only 30 passed." **(SC-SMT2)**

"3 learners and they all passed." **(SC-SMT3)**

On the question of support being given to learners in the various departments the SMT members disclosed the following:

"Extended learning through revision of basic concepts." **(SA-SMT1)**

"Extra classes and remedial work." **(SA-SMT2)**

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"Extended learning hours and hostel accommodation to ensure proper monitoring.**" (SA-SMT3)**

"Evening classes, weekend classes, camps and extra classes." **(SB-SMT1**

"Extra classes." **(SB-SMT2)**

"Having extra classes." **(SB-SMT3)**

"Extra classes and lessons during afternoons and weekends.**" (SC-SMT1)**

"Giving extra classes to them." **(SC-SMT2)**

"Counselling, weekend lessons and holiday lessons." **(SC-SMT3**

When asked whether the supports are relevant, adequate and sustainable the SMT members respond as follows:

"The supports are inadequate and not sustainable as they strain the already limited resources.**" (SA-SMT1)**

"Yes, it is." **(SA-SMT2)**

"The support is good but not adequate because there are limitations." **(SA-SMT3)**

"Yes, assessments are always done to improve performance." **(SB-SMT1)**

"We still have to give more supports in order to ensure better results." **(SB-SMT2)**

"Very sustainable because learners get to catch up in time." **(SC-SMT3)**

"Yes, but the learners see it as punishment." **(SC-SMT1)**

"It is adequate and sustainable with the support of the SMT." **(SC-SMT2)**

"As the policy continues, its merits will become more apparent." **(SC-SMT3)**

When asked to explain their overall impression of the policy, the characteristics and its contribution to learning the SMT members explain as follows:

"Adequate support should be put in place to provide teachers and learners with relevant resources to succeed." **(SA-SMT1)**

"Progressed learners make it impossible for mathematics and physical sciences to attain 100% pass rate." **(SA-SMT2)**

"Policy implementation is not properly monitored, and resources and training personnel are not visible." **(SA-SMT3)**

"Not a good representation for South Africa. Pass percentage has to be of a good standard to create competition amongst learners." **(SB-SMT1)**

"The policy is okay but also has its setbacks. Most learners tend to fail at the end." **(SB-SMT3)**

"It helps to keep learners focused." **(SB-SMT3)**

It encourages learners not to work hard since they know the will be condoned." **(SC-SMT1)**

"It reduces the number of drop out learners.*" (SC-SMT2)*

"It helps learners who otherwise would have dropped out from school." **(SC-SMT3)**

On aspects for improvement or amendment of the policy the SMT members give the following opinions or their advice.

"While the policy has positive intention, it seems it has been used as a tool for manipulating results of grade 12 in the final year. Hence there is a need to effectively monitor its implementation." **(SA-SMT1)**

"There must be a way of advising learners to take vocational courses if the formal FET is too difficult for some learners." **(SA-SMT2)**

"The policy must provide for training and workshops on how to deal with progressed learners. Adequate support and monitoring of implementation must be visible in all schools." **(SA-SMT3)**

"Amendment has to be done for learners to be able to survive and contribute to economic development." **(SB-SMT1)**

"The policy has to be amended in order to promote quality results." **(SB-SMT2)**

"None." (SB-SMT3)

"There should be no limit as to how many times a learner should repeat. A learner should be condoned when they meet the required standard." **(SC-SMT1)**

The department should encourage extra classes for the progressed learners." **(SC-SMT2)**

"There should be more engagement with teachers on the positive influence of this policy." **(SC-SMT3)**

4.3.5 Comment on the responses of the SMT members (HoDs) (Schools A, B and C)

The SMT members from schools A, B and C are from the independent schools selected for the purpose of data collection. The question on what their understanding is concerning progression policy was met with different explanations which converge to one meaning. They all agree that progression policy is a policy formulated to advance learners who have not satisfied the pass requirement to the next grade. This assertion is confirmed by Kika and Kotze (2019:13) that the number of learners who are retained in a grade for years have largely decreased since the introduction of the policy in 2013 as many learners are now being progressed to the next grade without having to satisfy the promotion requirements.

The responses of all the 3 SMT members from each school indicate they have an understanding of what progression policy is all about. A member of the SMT from one of the schools added that the policy is meant to progress well-behaved learners who are slow in their academic work and hence may not have passed the grade. This is the practice in many schools where learners who have not passed the grade are progressed taking into consideration their behaviour or attitude towards learning.

The SMT members from the three schools have different opinions on what differentiates the progression policy from other policies. One of them believes the progression policy is meant to empower slow learners and give them a sense of belonging. Other members respond that the policy is meant to prevent learners spending more than four years in a phase and there are those who believe the policy enhances the performance of slow learners and prevents them from dropping out of school because of their inability to fulfil the pass requirements.

The question on the purpose the policy serves are answered with different views expressed by the SMT members. One of them expresses how demotivating the policy can be because there are learners who simply don't want to be serious knowing they will be progressed to the next grade. Subject teachers' responses to the implementation, according to a few SMT members, are said to be discouraging especially when you have learners who are low-performing and yet fail to attend

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classes. However, some believe the policy has been helpful to genuine learners with learning barriers who take responsibility for their own learning. There are those who believe the policy is adding value into the life of progressed learners that are serious. According to the SMT members, while other teachers are not in support of the policy, there are those who are in support as they experience positive feedback from their learners.

4.3.6 Class teachers' responses to questionnaires (Schools A, B and C)

The class teachers, as one of the focus groups were also asked questions on their knowledge of the policy implementation by the use of questionnaires and the following are the responses given at the three schools A, B and C when asked about their understanding of Progression Policy; the answers are stated below:

It is the process where a learner is moved from one grade to the next without having passed.**" (SACLT1)**

"A learner is given a chance to go to the next grade after failing after failing the previous grades." (**SACLT2**)

"It is intended to reduce the number of drop-outs and over-aged learners in schools." **(SACLT3)**

"It is where learners are allowed to proceed to another level even though they did not do well and given remedial work as they go." **(SBCLT1)**

"Schools are allowed to progress learners." **(SBCLT2)**

"Progression of learners without satisfying pass requirements." **(SBCLT3)**

"It details how learners must be moved from one grade to another despite their performance." **(SCCLT1**)

"It is the process of promoting a learner who is averaged to the next class." **(SCCLT2)**

"It is a policy stating that learners are not supposed to spend more than four years in a phase." **(SCCLT3**)

The teachers gave the following responses when asked how this policy is different from other education policies:

"I cannot say." (SACLT1)

"Progression is normally done after passing promotion." (SACLT2)

"It makes learners not to take their work serious." **(SACLT3)**

"It allows learners to proceed without mastering the grade." **(SBCLT1**)

"It gives learners second chance." **(SBCLT2)**

"The focus is not to allow learners overstay in a phase." **(SBCLT3)**

"It is done in consultation with the child and parents." (SCCLT1)

"It is different from other policies because other policies promote learners to the next class on merit." (SCCLT2)

"It is different because if a learner did not pass in other policies, the learner will need to repeat the class." (SCCLT3)

When asked if the policy serves any purpose in their classrooms as subject or class teachers the following responses were given:

"No." (SACLT1)

"No. The progressed learners lack the basics in their subjects, and they continue to fail in the next grade." (SACLT2)

"No." (SACLT3)

Not really. Learners should master a grade before proceeding to the next grade (SBCLT1)

"No purpose." (SBCLT2)

"Allows learners an opportunity to cover curriculum content." (SBCLT3)

"It affects the overall performance of learners as learners are moved to the next grade without proper background." (SCCLT1)

"It makes learners to be lazy." (SCCLT2)

"Yes, because learners who repeated a class are progressed to the next class even when they failed." (SCCLT3)

On the question of how learners are responding to the implementation of the policy the teachers answered as follows:

"It is difficult to say." (SACLT1)

"They like it because another chance is granted." (SACLT2)

"Learners are less serious with schoolwork because they know they will be pushed to the next grade." (SACLT3)

"Most progressed learners still struggle." (SBCLT1)

"They don't take school seriously." (SBCLT2)

"Learners respond positively." (SBCLT3)

"Learners welcome the policy as they see it as a way of finishing school despite their performance." (SCCLT1)

"Learners are lazy believing they will be promoted to the next grade." (SCCLT2)

"Learners are not serious with their studies because they believe they will be progressed to the next class even if they failed." (SCCLT3)

On the question of if they have progressed learners in their classes, the responses of the teachers are as follows; these responses were in the affirmative as all the teachers in School A answered yes to the question

Similarly in School B, the class teachers gave 'yes' answers to the question whether they have progressed learners in their school.

In school C, the teachers also confirmed there are progressed learners in the school by indicating a "yes" answer in the questionnaire provided.

The teachers gave their different responses on the support given to learners in their respective subjects. It is shocking to learn there are teachers who are not giving any support despite apparent need of learners for assistance. This is evident in one of the responses as follows:

"Currently nothing." (SACLT1)

Other teachers who have contrasting answers to what the first teacher gave indicated that support is given in form of extra classes and homework

"Constant extra lessons during the holidays and weekends." (SACLT2)

"Extra work (Homework and assignments)." (SACLT3)

"Remedial work in form of extra classes." (SBCLT1)

"I give them extra classes e.g., weekend lessons." (SBCLT2)

The 3rd class teacher in school B did not respond to the question as expected as the answer, "N/A" was given.

"Provision of extra lessons and materials." (SCCLT1)

"Giving them extra classes." (SCCLT2)

"Giving the learners extra class works and home works." (SCCLT3)

As it is common for most of the teachers to give answers according to their own views, the question asked to explain if the support was adequate and sustainable was met with different point of views as the teachers give the following explanations:

"No. Difficult to implement." (SACLT1)

"Yes, we teach the basic concepts which they missed in their previous classes." (SACLT2)

"Yes, to those learners who have the will to learn, the supports are adequate." (SACLT3)

"They are not adequate because of time factor." (SBCLT1)

"No, because they are still failing." (SBCLT2)

One of the teachers in school B responds with a "Not applicable" answer indicated as follows:

"N/A." (SBCLT3)

"Extra lessons are dependent on school policy and materials for teaching will always be available." (SCCLT1)

"The supports are adequate because it improves the performance of the learners. With reinforcement it can be sustainable." (SCCLT2)

"The supports are adequate but not sustainable because the learners are not willing to learn new concepts." (SCCLT3)

The teachers from the different public schools explain the overall impression and contributions of the policy to learning in the classrooms. The responses are not

encouraging as most of them do not believe the policy is effective in the area of encouraging learners to be hardworking. They believe learners are taking advantage of the fact that they will be progressed and therefore cultivate the habit of being lazy. These claims are evident in their responses as extracted from the questionnaire:

"I have not seen any benefits. Learners still struggle." (SACLT1)

"Majority of progressed learners do not put more efforts after being progressed and they continue to." (SACLT2)

"It somehow promotes laziness in some learners." (SACLT3)

"Progression Policy is not beneficial as learners continue to struggle with concepts they did not master in earlier grades." (SBCLT1)

"It gives learners false hope." (SBCLT2)

The 3rd class teacher from school B maintained his stance on being neutral or having no answer by indicating "*N/A" as his response to the question:*

"The progression policy has not contributed much to the success of my subject." (SCCLT1)

"It increases number of learners finishing matric." (SCCLT2)

"It reduces number of learners who are dropping out of school and keep them in school." (SCCLT3)

In the concluding question posed to the teachers to give advice on aspects of the Progression Policy that needs improvement or amendment, they highlight their different opinions and advice. Some believe there must be adequate support given to the learners and the teachers to drive the success of this policy. Others want the learners to pass on their own, and others believe the policy should only cater for the learners who are willing to learn. These responses are evident in the data extracted as follows:

"There should be support offered to both the learners and the teachers." (SACLT1)

"Learners should pass themselves." (SACLT2)

"It should only be implemented to address the needs of learners who are interested and have the will to learn." (SACLT3)

"Learners should be in a special class if they are progressed for them to be assisted adequately." (SBCLT1)

"There must be another alternative than progression." (SBCLT2)

"The implementation is defective." (SBCLT3)

"Learners must be progressed on condition that they perform better in the first term of their next grade or be demoted to the previous grade." (SCCLT1)

"The schools can give extra lessons to the progressed learners." (SCCLT2)

"Extra classes should be given to the progressed learners." (SCCLT3)

4.3.7 Summary of responses of class teachers in schools A, B and C

The class teachers in the three different schools have different opinions of what the progression policy entails. The first school depicted as school A has its teachers' interpretation of progression policy as a chance to allow learners to progress to the next class. The policy is also seen by the teachers as a way of reducing the number of drop-outs in secondary schools. The teachers submit that the progressed learners lack the necessary basics in the subjects which they have not been able to pass and therefore continue to fail as their seriousness and the will to pass are not evident in their behaviour.

However, the teachers reiterate that the only way to ensure the success of these learners and which they, the teachers, have been doing is to continue to conduct extra lessons during the holidays and the weekends apart from the class activities and homework they have been given. According to Muthala, Govender, Kutame, and Ajani (2022:5), their findings reveal the efficacy of having extra lessons and collaborative teaching and learning in our schools as these enhance the quality of learner performance in their academic work. Although the support introduced is difficult to implement, they agree that learners who are willing to pass will adequately benefit from the extra classes provided. Bertram, Mthiyane, and Naidoo (2021:4) submit that extra lessons for the learners will assist them in this increasing pacing to cover the curriculum as tension mounts on the teachers by the curriculum trackers to ensure the curriculum is finalised within a certain period of time without considering slow learners' capabilities.

The teachers, however, in their suggestion, comment on the laziness of the learners and would like if it to be possible for the learners work harder and pass themselves to the next grade rather than being pushed as expected by the policy

4.3.8 Presentation of data collected – Principals (Schools X, Y and Z)

The principal of school X has more than 30years of experience in the teaching profession and has adequate knowledge of the South African education system. The School Y principal has 25 years of experience and versatile experience in school management and policies and the School Z principal has 33 years of experience. The schools started the implementation of the policy as early as 2013 when it was introduced except for school Z which started in 2019. In terms of indicating what data is collected from which principal, School X will be referred to as SX, School Y as SY, and School Z as SZ. The question on the progression policy was posed to gather their understanding of the progression policy, the responses given by the school principals, although differently explained, are in line with what is expected of the policy as follows:

> "It explains how and when a learner moves from one grade to another. Its principle is that a learner cannot spend more than 4 years in one phase. In exceptional cases a learner may be given permission to repeat more than once per grade/phase" (SX)

> "NPPPR which is National Policy Pertaining to the Promotion and Progression Requirements of the NCS. It is an advancement of learners from one grade to the other." (SY)

> **"**Policy regarding the progression of learners from one grade to another." (SZ)

In answering the question of how is the policy different from other education policies, the responses are as follows:

> "The progression policy focuses on how and when a learner should be moved from a grade to the other and its purpose is to reduce high school drop-out" (SX)

> "It guides us when to progress or condone a learner if he/she does not meet the pass requirements." (SY)

> "Strictly deals with progression" (SZ)

On the question of the purpose the progression policy serves in terms of the school learning environment, they state as follows:

> "The progression policy was formulated to reduce school drop-out rates globally. It was intended particularly for learners who had been retained for more than 4 years in a phase." (SX)

> "It prevents a learner from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding 4 years as stipulated in admission policy." (SY)

> "Regulates the school progression requirements." (SZ)

When the principals were asked how the teachers respond to the implementation of the policy, the principals submit that:

> "Educators respond positively towards the progression policy. Keeping a learner in one phase for a long time leads to learners being frustrated and learners misbehaving." (SX)

> "They respond positively in a sense that they follow what circulars on assessment from National." (SY)

> "Most teachers do not understand the policy and its implementation." (SZ)

In response to the question on how learners respond to the implementation of the Progression Policy, the principals explain that:

> "Learners' responses were positive, and some learners fail, not because of stupidity but because of learning barriers that can be dealt with." SX)

> "Learners like to be progressed obviously especially when they are above age, and have been repeating a grade." (SY)

> "The implementation is conveyed wrongly to the learners. They are of the opinion that once you fail in the FET, you are automatically placed in the following grades in the subsequent years." (SZ)

In answering questions on the number of progressed learners the school had in 2019 and how many passed the matriculation examination in 2021, the principals reveal as follows:

"17 learners in total, 12 wrote and they all passed as they were getting assistance from the educators. Learners with learning barriers were screened and provided with necessary support to achieve good result." (SX)

"Progressed learners in grade 10 – 70 learners. 16 learners wrote in 2021 and 6 learners passed." (SY)

"1 learner, did not pass due to academic challenge." (SZ)

In response to the support given to the progressed learners in the school, the principals explain the different support they administer as part of intervention to assist progressed learners to achieve something tangible at the end of their final examinations. This support differs from school to school as explained:

"According to Screening Identification Assessment and Support policy (SIAS), learners with learning barriers should be identified and supported. Examples are learners who cannot write were provided with people to write on their behalf and recordings were done. Learners with vision problems were provided with question papers in braille. Also, learners who are slow-writers were given extra 10 minutes for each 1 hour per paper which means a 3 hour paper qualifies for extra 30 minutes." (SX)

"Extra tuition and extra work are given to learners." (SY)

In terms of the support, the third principal's comment is not indicative of any support as the statement only depicts how substantial the support is as quoted below:

"Minimal support." (SZ)

When asked if the supports are adequate and sustainable, the principals respond as follows:

'It is not sustainable because the department is slow to deliver due to lack of resources." (SX)

"Adequate but not sustainable because of costs." (SY)

"No, I don't think so. Most of the learners are left on their own and have to find private tutors." (SZ)

In terms of the overall impression, characteristics of progression policy and its contribution to learning (success and/or failure) in the FET, the principal responds as follows:

"The policy is partially effective as indicated by the significant drop in the number of learners who has dropped out since implementation." (SX)

"It causes failing rates to go up and encourages learners to work hard." (SY)

"Most of the progressed learners pass their final NSC exams." (SZ)

When asked to provide advice on aspects for improvement or amendment to the Progression Policy, they advise that:

"The principal only stresses on the importance of adequate resources as mentioned earlier." (SX)

"It must put into consideration marks obtained by learners in different learning areas." (SY)

"The progression policy, if applied correctly it is fine." (SZ)

4.3.9 SMT members (Schools XYZ)

The SMT members, when asked what they understand about Progression Policy, the responses were as follows:

"A learner cannot spend more than 4 years in one phase." (SX-SMT1)

"It is a formal process of accommodating slow learners." (SX-SMT2)

"Introduced to minimise unnecessary school drop-out." (SX-SMT3)

"The policy states to minimise the drop-out of learners in order to move learners from a grade to another." (SY-SMT1)

"Advancement of a learner from one grade to the next according to the National policy." (SY-SMT2)

"A policy that guides on moving learners from one grade to the other." (SY-SMT3)

"Giving concession to learners who have not passed the grade to go to the next grade." (SZ-SMT1)

"Learners who did not pass on criteria required, proceeds to the next grade due to age." (SZ-SMT2)

"Due to the age of a learner, this policy applied to them if he/she did not pass or meet the criteria required." (SZ-SMT3)

When asked how the policy is differentiated from other education policies, the responses were:

"It is more for the promotion of learners." (SX-SMT1)

"It is a package designed to assist learners having academic difficulties." (SX-SMT2)

"It focuses only on progressed learners."(SX-SMT3)

"it is different because learners need to meet certain requirements to progress to the next level." (SY-SMT1)

"A majority of the beneficiaries are not aware of the policy." (SY-SMT2)

"In spite of the learners not having achieved, it advances a learner." (SY-SMT3)

"Focuses on the failed learners." (SZ-SMT1)

"Does not comply to assessment criteria." (SZ-SMT2)

This policy did not apply on other programmes especially on school- based assessment." (SZ-SMT3)

In terms of the purpose the policy serves in their school learning environment, the SMT members reveal the following:

"Even if they did not learn the basic concept, they are progressed to the next grade." (SX-SMT1)

"It removes blockings on the pathway of learners who would have dropped out of school." (SX-SMT2)

"It progresses learners who have been retained for 3 or more years." (SX-SMT3)

"To improve performance of learners in their learning space." (SY-SMT1)

"It ensures that learners do not stay in the same grade for more than 2 years." (SY-SMT2)

"To consider other factors that disadvantages learners." (SY-SMT3)

"Helps to support struggling learners." (SZ-SMT1)

"Prevents average learners being in some grades as younger learners." (SZ-SMT2)

"Sometimes yes because the learners try to be more committed and perform well, but others took advantage of this policy and become lazy." (SZ-SMT3)

When questioned on the responses of subject teachers in their respective departments on the implementation of the policy, the responses were:

"spending extra time for extra teaching to improve the basic concepts and standard." (SX-SMT1)

SMT Respondent 2: "There is no uniform response to the policy." (SX-SMT2)

SMT Respondent 3: "Teachers feel the progression policy leads to a decline in grade 12 pass rate." (SX-SMT3)

"Teachers do not fully support the policy because most learners don't show commitments." (SY-SMT1)

"They are not happy because incompetent learners will be retained in grades they do not qualify." (SY-SMT2)

"Not happy as learners that are progressed are burdensome." (SY-SMT3)

"Well." (SZ-SMT1)

" Offers more one-on-one assistance." (SZ-SMT2)

"One-on-one assistance help many learners better than the learner who is not a progressed learner." (SZ-SMT3)

On the question of how learners are responding to the implementation of the policy the SMT members respond as follows:

"They are taking time to be on the right track of the game." (SX-SMT1)

"It is a remedy to learners who would have been retained in a certain grade." (SX-SMT2)

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"Learners welcome the policy as it enables them to move from one grade to another." (SX-SMT3)

"2% of learners perform better." (SY-SMT1)

"Those affected are happy." (SY-SMT2)

"Very excited and happy for the opportunity." (SY-SMT3)

" Well." (SZ-SMT1)

"Progressed learners do not avail themselves of extra classes." (SZ-SMT2)

"Those who are committed if you help them, they excel." (SZ-SMT3)

In response to the question of how many progressed learners they had in their various department in 2019, the responses were:

"17 learners." (SX-SMT1)

"Not sure." (SX-SMT2)

"Not sure." (SX-SMT3)

"Uncertain." *(SY-SMT1)*

"26 learners." (SY-SMT2)

"11 learners." (SY-SMT3)

"26" (SZ-SMT1)

"Approximately eight to ten." *(SZ-SMT2)*

"4 learners." *(SZ-SMT3)*

When asked how many of the progressed learners wrote the matriculation examination in 2021 and the pass rate, the responses were:

"12 and 5 of them did not prepare thoroughly for the exam" (SX-SMT1)

"Not sure." (SX-SMT2)

"Not sure." (SX-SMT3)

"Uncertain." *(SY-SMT1)*

"10 learners wrote and 4 learners passed." (SY-SMT2)

"11 learners wrote and 5 passed." (SY-SMT3)

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"3 and did not respond to intervention." (SZ-SMT1)

"Two progressed learners in 2021 and one passed." (SZ-SMT2)

"2 learners and one of them passed." (SZ-SMT3)

On the question of support being given to learners in the various departments the SMT members disclose the following:

"Extra classes and remedial work, parents contact session etc." (SX-SMT1)

"One on one counselling, extra work on weekends and extra holiday classes." (SX-SMT2)

"One on one learning sessions, extra work and individual support to catch up with others." (SX-SMT3)

"All learners are given adequate opportunity, given extra classes." (SY-SMT1)

"They are given extra classes, grouped with good learners for peer support." (SY-SMT2)

"Extra classes and Saturday homework." (SY-SMT3)

"Extra/remedial classes." (SZ-SMT1)

"One-on-one assistance." (SZ-SMT2)

"Extra classes, one-on-one contact sessions." (SZ-SMT3)

When asked whether the supports are relevant, adequate and sustainable the SMT members respond as follows:

"Support was adequate but responses from the learners are poor." (SX-SMT1)

"The desire to help these struggling learners is a pull that supports this policy." (SX-SMT2)

"Support is adequate but may be unsustainable due to number of learners needing extra help." (SX-SMT3)

"Yes, the problem is the progressed learners do not show good level of commitment." (SY-SMT1)

"Our school uses scholar transport. Many of our learners stay far away in rural areas from school." (SY-SMT2)

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"No, as more contact time still needed and not available." (SY-SMT3)

"Yes" (SZ-SMT1)

"No, progressed learners continue with the same subjects that made them to fail. It would be better for them to repeat the year." (SZ-SMT2)

"Yes" (SZ-SMT3)

When asked to explain their overall impression of the policy, the characteristics and its contribution to learning, the SMT members explain as follows:

"It is not really helping; they have the impression they can pass without studying." (SX-SMT1)

"Its positive influence on learners is expanding." (SX-SMT2)

"The policy has positive intention but not sustainable and hence results in a drop in grade 12 pass rate." (SX-SMT3)

"It is a failure because learners are given a chance but don't show high level of commitment." (SY-SMT1)

"It leads to the failing of learners since in most cases they would not be ready for the grade." (SY-SMT2)

"Learners turn out to be lazy and expect the same in all exams." (SY-SMT3)

"If the learner is willing to put n the hard work, it works." (SZ-SMT1)

"Progressed learners seldom improve their results after progression." (SZ-SMT2)

"If the learners show willingness and commitment to their school work, then they can pass." (SZ-SMT3)

On aspects for improvement or amendment of the policy the SMT members give the following opinions or their pieces of advice:

"More than 4 years in one phase is not a problem. Learners should be given more time to learn in each grade to improve overall development" (SX-SMT1)

"Learners progressed to grade 10 can be advised to go to TVET for skills acquisition." (SX-SMT2)

"Learners who are progressed to grade 10 should be advised to take TVET colleges route rather than to force them to matric." (SX-SMT3)

"Learners not to register for all subjects in one sitting for final examinations." (SY-SMT1)

"There must be a minimum failure mark per subject to be considered (SY-SMT)

"None." (SY-SMT3)

"Not applicable." (SZ-SMT1)

"Learners who are repeatedly progressed over 12+ years should be redirected into other educational paths e.g., take technical subjects with different subjects." (SZ-SMT2)

"They must consider other educational method like technical subjects and vocational education be introduced in schools to accommodate all learners."(SZ-SMT3)

4.3.10 Responses from the class teachers (Schools XYZ)

The class teachers as one of the focus groups were also interviewed and the following are the responses given at School A. when asked about their understanding of the Progression Policy: the answers are given as stated below:

"it is a process of moving learners from one grade to another." (SX-CLT1)

"It talks about how and when a learner moves from one grade to another." (SX-CLT2)

"This policy details how and when a learner moves from one grade to another." (SX-CLT3)

"A policy that outlines minimum requirements for a learner to progress from one grade to the next." (SY-CLT1)

"When learners move from one grade to the other grade due to age or being in the same grade for a very long time." (SY-CLT2)

"A policy that moves a learner to the next grade, who might not have passed their respective grade." (SY-CLT3)

"It is a policy applied to pass learners to the next grade even if they have not achieved the requirements." (SZ-CLT1)

"A learner can only repeat once in a band then they must be progressed." (SZ-CLT2)

"A policy that allows a learner who has not met passing requirement to move to the next grade." (SZ-CLT3)

The teachers gave the following responses when asked how this policy is different from other education policies:

4.3.11 School X class teachers

"It is based on learners' willingness to study and not only on intellectual; ability." (SX-CLT1)

"It allows learners to continue to the next grade even after failing.". *(SX-CLT2)*

"This policy supports learners to learn. The support includes helping learners in the classroom with curriculum assessment." (SX-CLT3)

"This policy ensures that competent learners are progressed although it also enables struggling learners to move from one grade to the next to avoid being in a phase for too long." (SY-CLT1)

"It is different because learners are moved to the next without meeting the requirements and are not aware they have been progressed." (SY-CLT2)

"It seems to be misunderstood by people who sometimes misquote it." (SY-CLT3)

"It is not that different." (SZ-CLT1)

"No answer given." *(SZ-CLT2)*

"There is number of years that has been stipulated that a learner cannot spend within a phase." (SZ-CLT3)

When asked if the policy serves any purpose in their classrooms as subject or class teachers the following responses were given:

"It motivates learners with academic challenge to keep attending classes." (SX-CLT1)

"It allows learners who should repeat grades to move ahead." *(SX-CLT2)*

"Yes." (SX-CLT3)

"Yes." (SY-CLT1)

"No, mostly tend to do so bad because of lacking previous content." (SY-CLT2)

"Yes." (SY-CLT3)

"Yes." (SZ-CLT1)

"It does not. It creates a problem if the progressed learner had not passed" (SZ-CLT2)

"Sometimes yes, sometimes no. for reality struggling learners, it works but for others they become even more lazy." (SZ-CLT3)

On the question of how learners are responding to the implementation of the policy the teachers answered as follows:

"This policy has encouraged learners who would otherwise have abandoned school." (SX-CLT1)

"There is no need to work hard because they will be progressed." (SX-CLT2)

"The learners are taking advantage of this policy." (SX-CLT3)

"Positively." (SY-CLT1)

"They are unaware and think they been promoted" (SY-CLT2)

"Some learners became complacent as they think they will just be pushed to the next grade." (SY-CLT3)

"They feel it's unfair because other learners will proceed to the next grade even if they do not pass." (SZ-CLT1)

Class teacher 2: "Learners are taking advantage of the policy. Once they repeat in a band, they don't even attend class." (SZ-CLT1)

Class teacher 3: "Some of them do not work as hard as they have potentials to do so because they know they will be progressed anyway." (SZ-CLT1)

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On the question of the number of progressed learners in their classes, the first teacher's answer was negative and the other two teachers answered in the affirmative.

On the question of what support the teachers are giving in their subjects the following were given:

"Extra attention during my lesson." (SX-CLT1)

"Remedial lessons." (SX-CLT2)

"Extra lessons after school and one on one session during break time." (SX-CLT3)

"Remedial work from the previous grades to catch up with any topic that they did not understand from previous grades." (SY-CLT1)

"I see them after school to teach them separately." (SY-CLT2)

"Not applicable." (SY-CLT3)

"Remedial classes." (SZ-CLT1)

"I give them extra materials, activities and offer extra lessons if need be." (SZ-CLT2)

"Giving them on-on-one assistance before a test or after a lesson if there is something they do not understand." (SZ-CLT3)

When asked to explain if the support is adequate and sustainable the teachers give the following explanation:

"It is preferable to keep these learners in class than pushing them to social world without the basic knowledge." (SX-CLT1)

"It might work if learners' attitude towards school becomes positive." (SX-CLT2)

"Through the programme the learners are showing great improvement in terms of their school work." (SX-CLT3)

Yes, although there is always room for improvement." (SY-CLT1)

"Yes, they can be able to answer questions on their own without any assistance." (SY-CLT2)

"Not applicable." (SY-CLT3)

"Not adequate because of time constraint." (SZ-CLT1)

"Yes, they are when the learners make use of them." (SZ-CLT2)

"Supports are adequate." (SZ-CLT3)

When asked to explain the overall impression and contributions of the policy to learning in the classrooms the following views were stated:

"This policy has granted opportunities to learners with different learning needs." (SX-CLT1)

"At times it's a success because some learners due to maturity, change in attitude and fear of failing again make them to start doing better and pass." (SX-CLT2)

"Some of the learners are pushing hard to meet half way the implementation of the policy whilst others do not put any effort." (SX-CLT3)

"Learners who are aware they can't repeat twice in a grade tend to relax as they know they will be progressed regardless of performance." (SY-CLT1)

"It's not working at all as most tend to misbehave and want us to remind them about the importance of education." (SY-CLT2)

"I feel it should be stated in layman's terms especially to learners." (SY-CLT3)

"It is a good policy because it reduces learner drop-out rate due to frustration of repeating the grade." (SZ-CLT1)

"Due to the nature of my subject (Accounting), if a learner is progressed due to maths, they do have struggles in accounting." (SZ-CLT2)

"The policy must only apply to learners that have a learning barrier only." (SZ-CLT3)

The teachers when asked to give advice on aspects of the Progression Policy that needs improvement or amendment, highlight the following:

"Progressed learners need more academic monitoring." (SX-CLT1)

"Progressed learners should be given set targets in the next academic year" (SX-CLT2)

"Parents should be involved in the implementation of the policy." (SX-CLT3)

"Increase the pass mark from 30% to 40% for all subjects." (SY-CLT1)

"For the government to cancel the progression policy." (SY-CLT2)

"Like any policy, the goal of the policy is not as important as the incentives a policy creates. So further work must be done to analyse the incentives whether good or bad the policy is creating." (SY-CLT3)

"It must be applied per case and not a blanket application because some learners ae progressed even though they will not be attending classes." (SZ-CLT1)

"Learner attendance and participation in the year that they need progression must be a prerequisite." (SZ-CLT2)

"I think this policy must not be communicated to the learners if that makes them to be too lazy." (SZ-CLT3)

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter gives an overview of data collected from the participants using open-ended questionnaires. The data represents the views of the participants and practices in each school in the implementation of the progression policy. Although the views and the claims made by each of the participants are different from school to school, the practices seem the same in terms of ensuring progressed learners meet the criteria to progress to the next grade and eventually pass their matriculation examinations, which is the ultimate goal.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, RESEARCH SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter gave a detailed presentation of data collected during the field work using the questionnaires. The views of the participants on the implementation of the progression policy in their respective schools are well documented. This chapter, however, zooms into the interpretation and analysis of the data collected and which was already presented in chapter 4. The chapter discusses in details how progression policy is implemented in the schools under the spotlight. It is very imperative at this stage to highlights what each school has been doing to ensure compliance with the requirements of progression of learners to the next grade, the shortfalls detected in the implementation and the possible way forward in advancing the prescripts of the policy. The previous chapter gave an extensive analysis and discussion of the data extracted from the open-ended questionnaires, the documents received from the department and the schools during the process of gathering relevant data. The process of data gathering involved moving from participants to participants, and school to school, and patiently waiting for their opinions on a particular issue or problem that needs to be solved, which in this case, is the implementation of the policy that outlines the progression requirements for struggling learners.

Solving a problem emanating from the implementation of progression policy needs an adequate analysis of data collected, which will be addressed in chapter 5. After analysis of the implementation of the progression policy and attention to all the necessary support provided in all the 6 schools, the next stage is to give a summary informed by the data collected and give recommendation, where necessary, on areas that need urgent attention and improvement. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the findings presented in chapter 4 and the synthesis of the findings made during the data collection. This chapter will also conclude on how the findings are able to provide appropriate answers to the research questions with the assurance that the outcome will contribute to the body of knowledge that already exists. The

chapter will also give a summary of the literature review, with critical reflections on the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, the research process, and the limitations to the study. In conclusion, recommendations will be given and areas for further research or improvement will be suggested.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

5.2.1 Analysis of data collected

As part of analysing the data collected, it is very important to take into consideration the questionnaires and other documents that will corroborate the claims made during the data collection exercise. This is necessary for the purpose of reinforcing on the integrity and trustworthiness of the data collected and consequently affirming the reliability of the outcome of this study. The following table reflects the performance in the Ehlanzeni District from 2019 to 2021 and the true state of the progressed number of learners in each school:

TABLE 5.1 EHLANZENI DISTRICT PERFORMANCE 2019-2021

YEAR	PASS PERCENTAGE
2019	84,6
2020	74,5
2021	75,6

Adapted from the Grade 12 Examination statistical report by Ehlanzeni District

FIGURE 5.1 GRAPH EHLANZENI DISTRICT PERFORMANCE
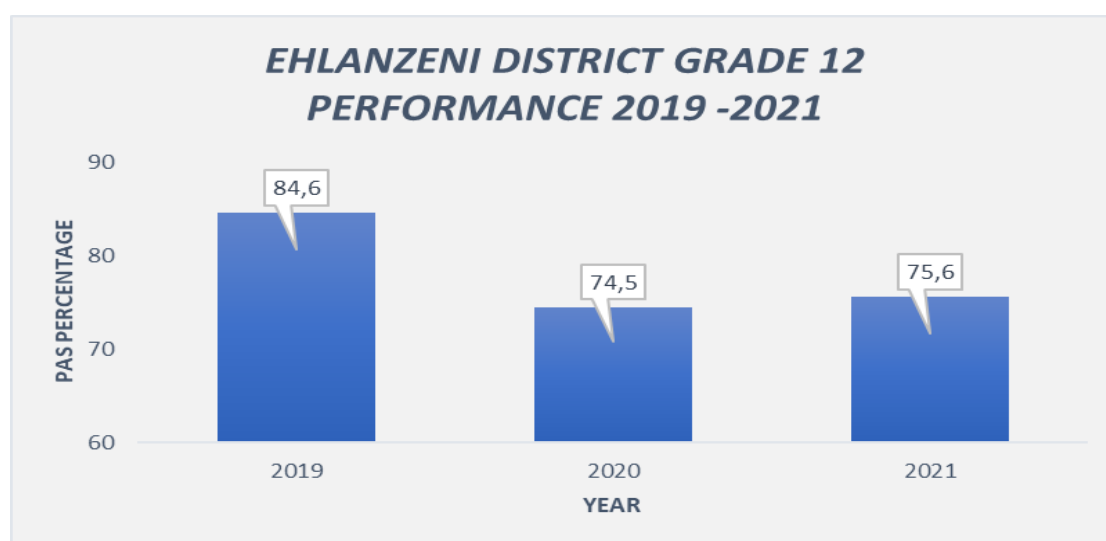
Adapted from the Grade 12 Examination statistical report by Ehlanzeni District

The table reflects the National Senior Certificate pass rate from the year 2019 to 2021 in the District of Ehlanzeni. This result is represented in Figure 5.1. The result shows a downward trend in the pass rate which could be due to many factors which we may not be able to investigate and analyse in this study as this study is focused on the implementation of progression policy in different schools in Mbombela Circuit.

TABLE 5.2 EHLANZENI CIRCUITS PASS PERCENTAGE

S/N	CIRCUITS	PASS% 2019	PASS % 2020	PASS % 2021
1	MBOMBELA	89,2	90,3	91,4
2	WHITE HAZY 1	84,4	81,2	84,4
3	WHITERIVER	86,2	78,3	82,0
4	MALELANE	87,8	79,0	81,0
5	INSIKAZI	88,9	81,9	80,6
6	NKOMAZI WEST	89,6	80,1	78,6
7	NKOMAZI EAST	90,2	68,6	76,2

8	KHULANGWANE	83,5	69,4	74,3
9	LUBOMBO	82,5	70,2	72,0
10	SIKHULILE	83,7	69,3	71,3
11	NKOMAZI CENTRAL	-	78,4	70,4
12	NKULULEKO	62,9	58,7	70,3
13	NGWENYA	78,3	61,9	69.1
14	WHITE HAZY 2	79,8	67,8	63,4
15	UMJINDI	74,3	59,7	52,9

Adapted from the Grade 12 Examination statistical report by Ehlanzeni District

FIGURE 5.2 GRAPH EHLANZENI CIRCUITS PASS PERCENTAGE
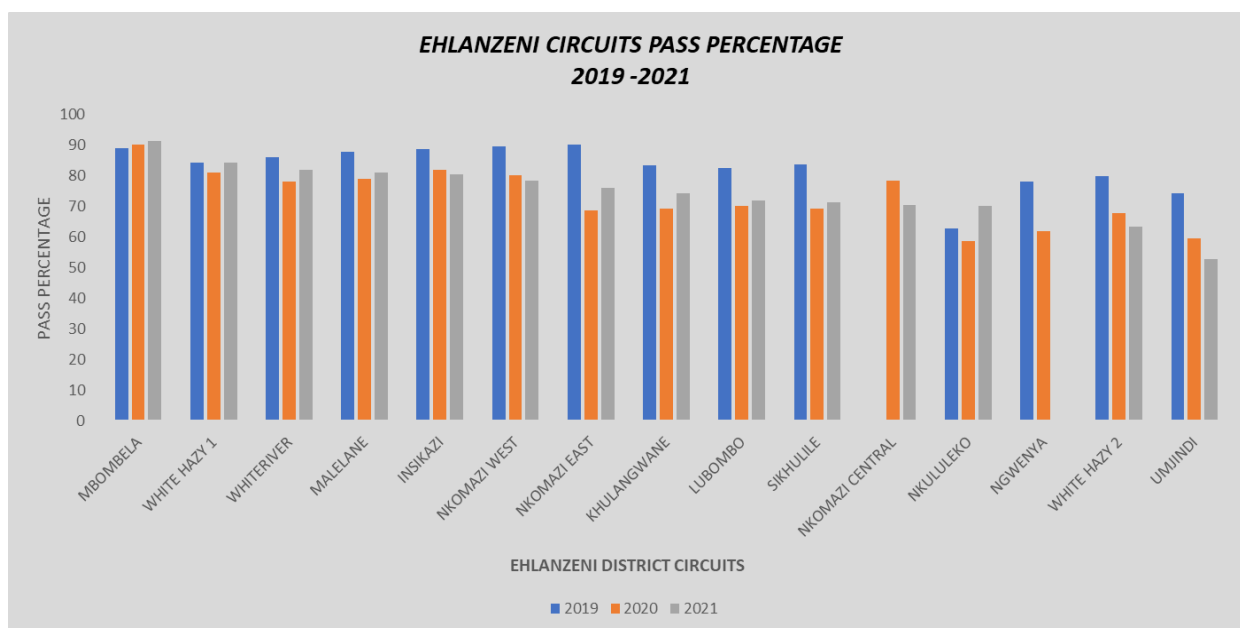
The above shows the circuits under the Ehlanzeni District and the pass percentage obtained by each of them from 2019 to 2021. It is noteworthy that Mbombela Circuit has retained the leadership position for three years. The Mbombela Circuit seems to be a pacesetter in terms of learner achievement in the matriculation examinations of the National Senior Certificate and they tend to keep it that way.

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TABLE 5.3: GRADE 12 NSC PASS AND PERCENTAGE IN 2020 AND 2021

SCHOOLS	NO WROTE (2020)	% PASS	NO WROTE (2021)	% PASS
A	160	80,6	177	87,0
B	94	75,5	79	91,1
C	45	86,7	66	84,8
X	130	77,7	188	87,2
Y	110	88,2	94	88,3
Z	196	98,0	201	93,0

Adapted from the Grade 12 Examination statistical report by Ehlanzeni District

FIGURE 5.3 GRAPH GRADE 12 PASS PERCENTAGE 2020 AND 2021
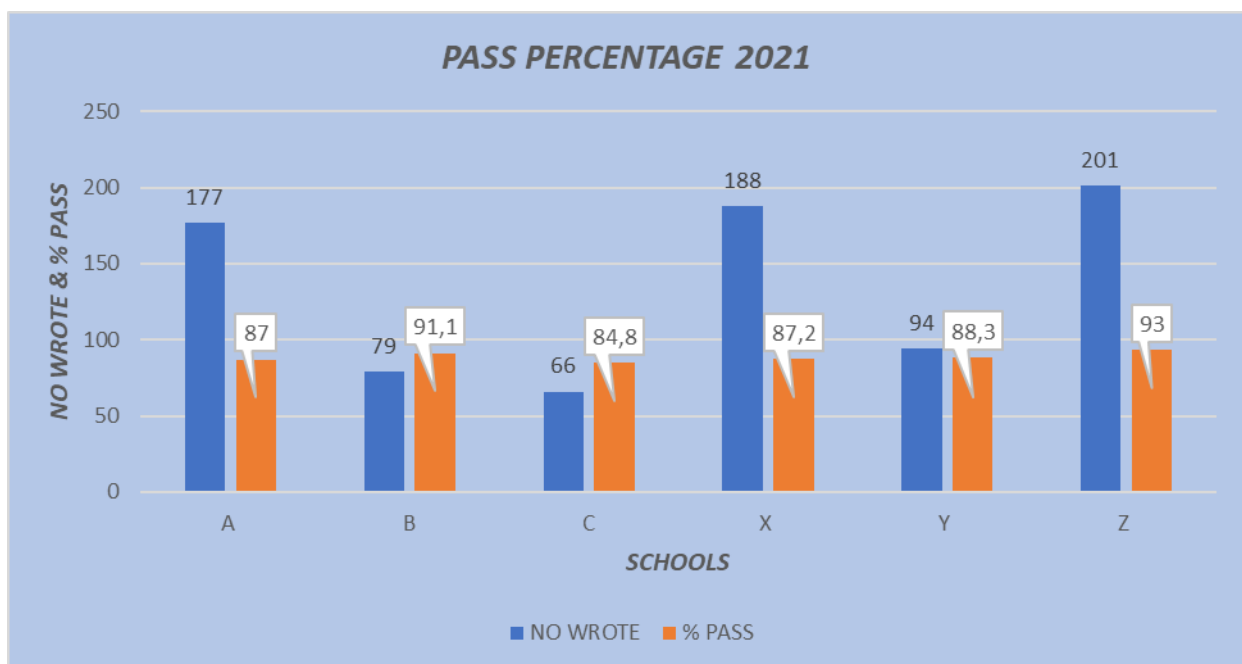
The schools under the spotlight are three public schools and three independent schools in the Mbombela Circuit. The data for 2019 was unavailable at the time of data collection but the two years available are sufficient in giving relevant analysis of the performance of the schools despite the number of progressed learners they had

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to support during these years. The focus is on the performance of the schools in 2021 as this study investigates the journey of progressed learners from 2019 through 2021 and how progression policy has been implemented to see the learners through to the 2021 academic year.

TABLE 5.4 THE NUMBER OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN 2020 AND 2021

S/N	SCHOOLS	2020	2021
1	A	27	2
2	B	0	6
3	C	0	11
4	X	22	16
5	Y	13	10
6	Z	3	0

Adapted from the NSC School Performance Report for the year 2022

FIGURE 5.4 GRAPH NUMBER OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN 2020 AND 2021
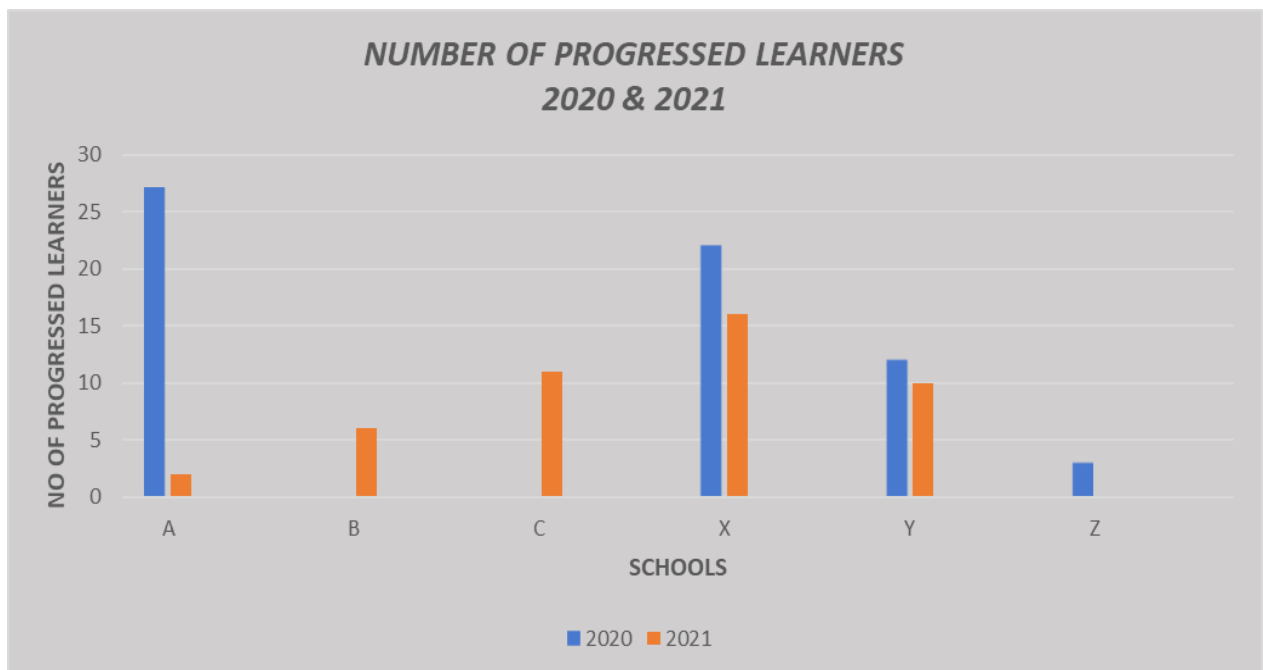
From the above Table 5.4, School A which is one of the independent schools, obtained a pass rate of 87% in 2021, a 6.4% increase from the year 2020, with only two progressed learners. The progressed learners in 2020 were quite high as they were 27 in numbers. However, the focus is on progressed learners that made it through from grade 10 in 2019 to grade 12 in 2021. Therefore, the grade 12 learners in 2020 is outside the scope of this study. When comparing the statistics from the Department of Basic Education and that given by the school principal as stated in chapter 4.3 (SA), there is an agreement with the figure that only two progressed learners wrote in the year 2021 and these two did not make it for different reasons. The principal cited lack of cooperation from the learners, inadequate supervision by the parents and lack of seriousness on the part of these learners.

The following shows the pass rate and the percentage pass of the progressed learners in 2021 according to the principals. The percentage pass of the progressed learners is calculated based on the data supplied by the school. This is because some of the figures provided by the schools are slightly higher than the ones obtained from the DBE:

TABLE 5.5: PASS PERCENTAGE OF THE PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN EACH SCHOOL IN 2021

SN	SCHOOLS	DATA FROM THE SCHOOLS	DATA FROM THE DBE	NO. PASS	% PASS
1	A	2	2	2	100%
2	B	6	6	4	66,7%
3	C	14	11	13	92,8%
4	X	16	16	6	37,5%
5	Y	12	10	12	100%
6	Z	1	0	0	0%
TOTAL		51	45	37	72,54

FIGURE 5.5 GRAPH - PASS PERCENTAGE OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS PER SCHOOL 2021
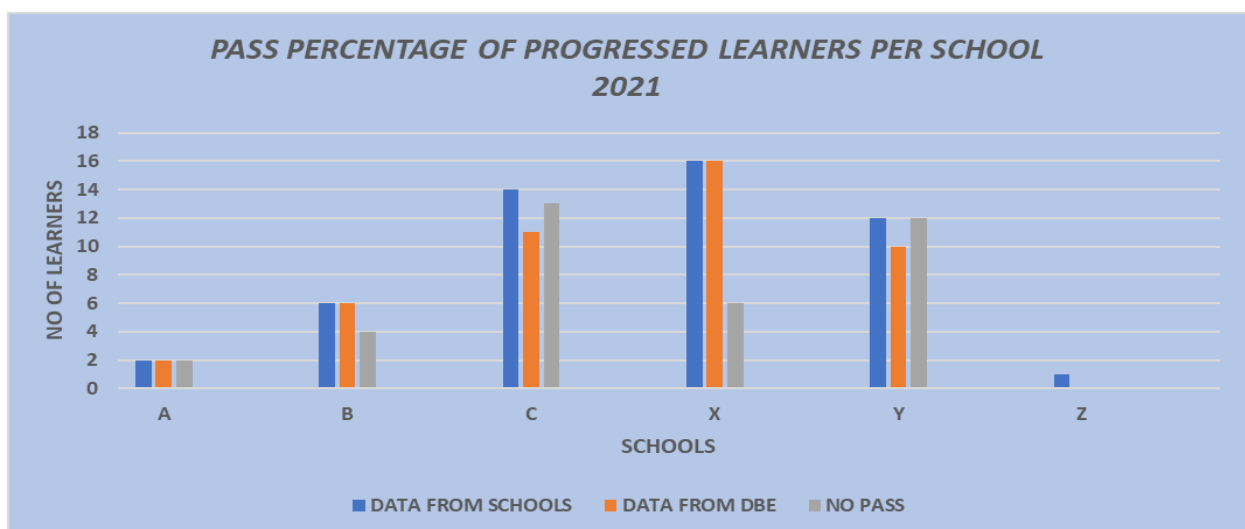
The second school (School B) from the above Table 5.5 shows a record of 6 progressed learners in 2021 as against zero number of progressed learners recorded in 2020. The school principal, in the interview questions, correctly answered that the school had 6 progressed learners in 2021 who wrote the

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matriculation examination. He added that two of these learners did not make it due to a content gap which could be solved by giving adequate time. He agrees that the policy is beneficial as it draws attention to the underperforming learners. The school obtained a pass rate of 91% out of 79 learners who sat for the examinations. This means seven learners failed in total which includes two progressed learners.

School C has records of 11 progressed learners in the year 2021 as against zero number of progressed learners recorded for the year 2020. The number obtained from the school during data collection is slightly different from the statistics captured by the Department of Basic Education. The figure from the data collection states that 14 progressed learners wrote the matriculation examinations and out of these 14 learners, 13 progressed learners were able to pass. The only one failure recorded, according to the principal, was due to the learner's habitual absenteeism and poor parental support. The data shows an84,8% pass rate out of 66 learners which means that 11 learners did not make it, which included the number of progressed learners stated above.

Schools X, Y and Z are public schools in the Mbombela Circuit. The responses from these schools will be compared to the data extracted from the official documents provided by the Department of Basic Education.

In School X, the progressed learners in the year 2020 was 22, and in 2021 it was documented to be16 learners. In the responses given by the school principal, the number of progressed learners given was the same as the number obtained from the department. However, after all the efforts made by the school, only six of these 16 progressed learners passed in the year 2021. That translates to 37,5% pass achieved from the number of progressed learners. The pass rate of 87,2 from 188 learners means total number of learners that failed were 24 and out of these 24 learners there were 10 progressed learners and 14 learners that were not in the category of progressed learners. The principal gives lack of content background as the one of the major reasons for their failure. The principal also confirms the extra classes given to these learners seemed to be inadequate and unsustainable as they had been unable to meet the costs involved.

In school Y, the number of progressed learners as documented by the school were 12 learners against 10 indicated by the DBE. These 12 learners were able to write

the matriculation examinations in 2021. The principal confidently indicated that all these 12 learners were able to pass because of the positive response from the teachers and the support given to the learners. This means the pass percentage of progressed learners in this school in 2021 was 100%. The support, given to the learners, ranges from extra classes, winter enrichment, time concession during the writing of tests/examinations, to the use of braille and the Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) by the school. The school, in this year 2021, attained an 88,3% pass rate out of 94 learners which translates to 11 learners that failed the matriculation examinations. This means the 11,7% who were 11 in number were not categorised as progressed learners, yet they failed the matriculation examinations. Does this mean efforts are more concentrated on the progressed learners forgetting the few learners who struggle to meet the pass requirements to the next grade but narrowly escape being considered progressed learners?

The number of progressed learners in School Z, according to the principal, was 1 learner while the DBE records reveal there was none in the year 2021. The principal confirms that this learner did not pass due to an academic challenge. An academic challenge might be a learner struggling to grasp or assimilate what has been taught. It could also be learners failing to find time to study effectively. The principal admits the support given to progressed learners was minimal and hence inadequate. The pass rate of the school was 93% of 201 learners which means 14 learners were unsuccessful and one of them was a progressed learner.

From the above the "necessary support", part of the implementation of the progression policy, provided by each school can be summarised into different categories like extra classes which include winter and spring classes, the use of braille, time concession and the application of SIAS. It is imperative that learners, despite the support provided, also make an effort on their own to embrace the support and conform to the requirements as instructed by their teachers. Robinson and Bornholt (2007:55) reveal, as part of progression theory, that student readiness and the choice of subjects are considered as significant factors for successful completion of the grade. The effectiveness of applying these various methods to assist the progressed learners will be addressed below:

5.2.2 The effectiveness of extra classes

Extra classes (winter and spring classes included) have been seen by many of the schools as effective at ensuring learner performs to their best. These can also be used to improve on the performance of learners who have been struggling especially the progressed learners. Sempe (2021:25) indicates that extra classes are not meant to introduce new knowledge to the learners but rather to reinforce what has been already taught in the classroom.

Fusani (1994:253) confirms that extra classes, which are less formal, are critical to learner academic performance and intellectual development. This is because learners are able to interact freely with their instructors without any constraint. They seem to be free to ask any questions during this period without any fear especially when the number of learners in an extra class is small.

5.2.3 The use of braille for learning support

The use of braille has been said to assist learners with sight problems. Some of these learners are either completely without sight, not able to see any object or have partially lost their sight. Unfortunately, not all the schools are equipped to assist learners with this challenge. Some learners might be supplied with examination papers that have bigger fonts than the usual ones given to most learners. Ralejoe (2021:2) discloses that, "*children are considered to be visually impaired when they had varying degrees of low vision to an extent that they relied on the Braille system and enlarged print*". This could impact on their schoolwork if adequate and prompt assistance is not provided.

Nahar, Jaafar, and Sulaiman (2019:108) places emphasise on mBRAILLE which is a smartphone-based application useful in assisting the visually-impaired. Although, many schools are not paying attention to how this could be useful, one of the schools in the sample, reveals that use of braille actually assists to give support lo their learners who are struggling as a result of their visual challenges. Jawasreh, Ashaari, and Dahnil (2020:246) concur that the of use Braille code "*brings sight to visually impaired people and plays an essential role in their lives*". Ndlovu (2021:2) adds that the use of assistive devices like braille enhances learner performance and improve functionality. Morelle and Tabane (2019:2) however reveal that, "teachers in mainstream schools are not adequately trained and supported, and not all

stakeholders participate sufficiently to give Learners with Visual Impairments (LVI's) the necessary support within the teaching and learning environment"

5.2.4 Time concession for struggling learners

It has been indicated in the data collected from the schools that extra minutes are given to learners depending on the learning challenges they face. Extra 10 minutes are said to be given to slow learners for each 1-hour paper to be written. This translates to 30 minutes extra for a 3-hour paper that will be written by a slow learner. This type of support needs an authorisation from the relevant office of the Department of Basic Education. The affected schools need to identify what kind of support the learners need during the profiling session of the learners. This will be communicated to the DBE by sending in an application with supporting documents that the identified learners actually deserve the support requested. The SIAS policy outlines different types of accommodation granted to learners with different learning barriers such as physical disability, learning disability, vision impairment and hearing loss (DBE:2016:17) The additional time given ranges from 5 to 20 minutes depending on the seriousness of the condition. Schools are therefore granted concessions or accommodation based on information provided on the learners.

5.2.5 Application of Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

The application of SIAS, as claimed by one of the schools, is said to be effective in dealing with progressed learners or learners with barriers to learning. This involves the process of screening the learners to identify the barriers to learning that they face. These learners are given assessment in the form of activities to ascertain what challenge they are faced with in a subject or on a particular topic.

The outcome of the assessment will inform the teachers the type of support or intervention that must be introduced to assist such learners facing barriers to learning.

Chapter Two Section 3(1) of the SIAS 2014 policy emphasises the need to overcome barriers to learning by providing learning support for the affected learners. Matolo and Rambuda (2022:12) reveal that all teachers are expected to take the learners through the process of screening, identifying, and assessing barriers to

learning in their day-to-day classroom teaching. It has also been suggested that building capacity by the educators in terms of effective policy application will assist learners facing barriers to learning (Matolo & Rambuda, 2021:208).

However, it cannot be ignored that some teachers are not properly informed or trained to apply SIAS in their schools. Some may not be aware of the existence of the policy. For effective application it is necessary for the teachers to be aware of various policies affecting teaching and learning and be adequately developed so as to apply them where necessary. Kgothule, Ntseto, Okeke and Ugwuanyi (2021:130) confirm that teachers that are not trained may not be able to implement inclusive policies effectively as inadequate knowledge of inclusive policies is considered a recipe for disaster in an inclusive classroom.

Figure 5.6 Steps in The Progression Policy Implementation
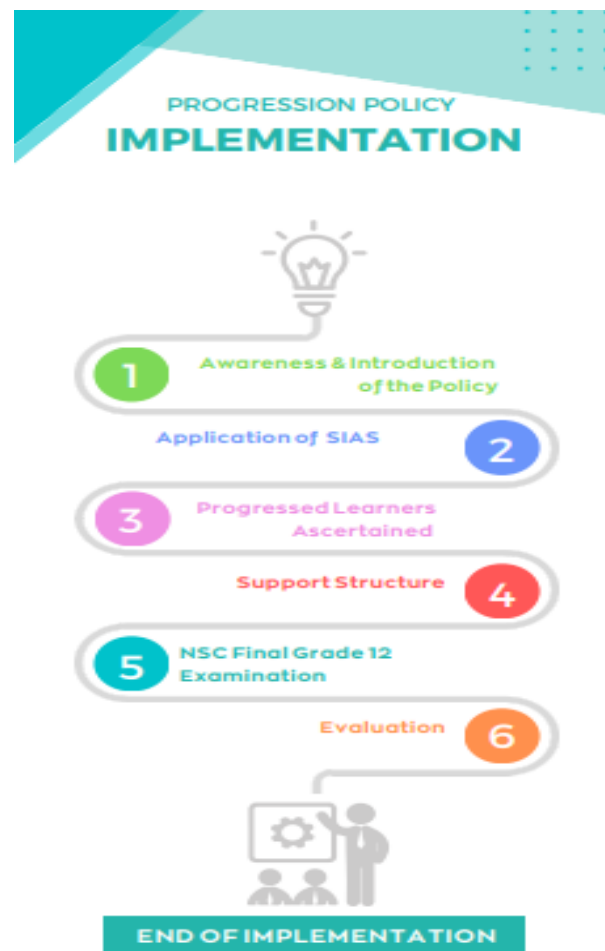
5.3 RESEARCH SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study entails researching different documented opinions of different authors on progression policy, the implementation in various schools, and how it impacts, negatively or benefits, the teaching and learning activities in various schools. This was presented in chapter 2 with the theoretical framework that informs the whole process of data collection and the methodology of this study. The literature review provides a background to the questions directed at the participants during data collection which was presented in chapter 4 of this study. The purpose of this policy, which was presented in the literature review was given different answers by the participants as documented in chapter 4.

The characteristics of the policy was given by the participants when responding to the question on what features of the policy distinguished it from other policies. In the data collection and presentation (chapter 4), the negative aspect and the benefits of

the progression policy were stated by the participants in light of the guidance provided in the literature review. One of the research objectives stated in chapter 2 was the "necessary support" given to progressed learners in the FET in order to perform to expectation. The opinion of different authors on this aspect are weighed against the data collected from the participants. Many responded on the effectiveness of the support provided which are extra-classes, application of SIAS to identify learners with specific needs, the use of braille for physically impaired and time concession of 10 minutes for every hour of an examination paper. However, the support provided, according to some teachers, is seen to be inadequate.

The literature review provided a guiding light as to the choice of methodology and the research instruments used in chapter 3 in order for data collection to be directed and ordered.

5.4 RESEARCH SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.4.1 Research summary

The empirical study involved collecting data using open-ended questionnaires designed for that purpose. Six schools were selected from the high schools in the Mbombela Circuit. Each of the schools has seven participants that responded to the questions in the open-ended questionnaires provided. The data collected from the participants were systematically presented in chapter 4 of this study and the findings from each of the group were summarised at the end of the presentation of the data.

The data collected and presented in chapter 4 were systematically reviewed and analysed in chapter 5. The data from the open-ended questionnaires were reconciled with the data provided in the official documents for clarity and to ensure trustworthiness of data. During the process of analysis and discussion of the data collected, the names of the six schools were coded as A, B, C, X, Y and Z for easy identification in terms of presenting and analysing the data. This was also done to protect the identity of the participating schools as part of conforming with the ethical principles of research.

The data collected from the participants were all considered significant in determining how the progression policy is treated and implemented in each school. The contributions of the principals were the most important data needed to ascertain

the total number of progressed learners in each school for the period under study. Although the numbers vary with the data extracted from the documents provided by the DBE, the practice in each school to give "necessary support" to progressed learners seems to be similar in terms of how this is being handled. It must be noted however that there are schools that have gone beyond offering usual support to the learners: Such schools have provided an inclusive learning environment to assist progressed learners with a disability, which constitutes a barrier to learning. The responses given by the SMT members of each school and the class teachers mostly agree that the interventions introduced to assist progressed learners are effective but only if learners are co-operative and work with the system and are willing.

5.4.2 Reflection on the methodology of research

Chapter 3 stresses the importance of the interpretivist paradigm in a qualitative research approach. The paradigm accentuates the subjective opinions of participants to get answers to the different practices in each school, an issue of implementation of the progression policy, which has been of assistance to the progressed learners. The paradigm has been noted to motivate researchers to seek the experience of certain research participants and their interpretation of what they have experienced (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022:10). In this study, the principals, the SMT members and the class teachers have relayed their experiences in the implementation of the progression policy by stating their opinions, efforts and practices embarked on to give "necessary support" to struggling learners with barriers to learning.

With the help of literature, the research methodology was instrumental to selecting different high schools that are implementing progression policy, and the appropriate methods used in data collection. Collecting data from the participants was guided by case study design which recognises the participation of six schools and selection of seven participants in a convenience sampling technique.

5.5 SYNTHESIS ON FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

5.5.1 Introduction

The findings of this study reveal how implementation of the progression policy is being carried out in the six schools selected for the case study. In analysing the implementation of the policy, the objectives of this study will be synthesised with the findings. This will be categorised into the following five sections:

5.5.2 The purpose of education policies, with reference to the term "Progression Policy"

The literature search in chapter 2 reveals that the progression policy was introduced to assist learners who are struggling and might possibly drop-out of school if no action was taken. It was noted that many countries already introduced the policy and the success stories from these countries such as Canada, Japan and the United States (as stated in 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 2.5.3) motivated South Africa to go the same route. It was envisaged that the introduction of the policy would reduce retention rate and limit the number of dropouts as a result of repetition. This was confirmed during data collection from the participants of this study.

5.5.3 The characteristics of the Progression Policy

The progression policy is seen as the policy that allows learners to progress to the next class even if such learners have not been able to meet the pass requirements. The idea is not to repeat a year in the same phase twice, and therefore not to spend more than 4 years in a phase. A phase is 3 years and repeating twice means spending 5 years. Some parents and learners are of the opinion that it is automatic that learners will be progressed even if they have not passed. One of the conditions to allow learners to progress is regular attendance at schools, as previously stated in chapter 1. A struggling learner who does not attend regularly is not showing signs of willingness and commitment, and such learner may not be progressed according to this policy.

5.5.4 The positive and negative aspect resulting from the implementation of Progression Policy in the FET

It has been documented that Progression Policy has its positive and negative aspects. Literature confirms the policy protects learners from repetition and dropping out of school at an early stage. This was confirmed during data collection when most of the teachers, as presented in chapter 4, agree that the policy has assisted in curbing the upsurge of repetition in our schools and the number of drop-outs has been reduced drastically. The findings report the performance of each school in the matriculation examination in 2021, including the progressed learners as depicted in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5. There is no doubt, looking at the representation, that there is a link between implementation and the performance of progressed learners.

One of the negative aspects mentioned in the literature search was concerning the implementation of progression policy. Many teachers are said to be unaware of what is expected of them as stated in chapter 2.3 above. Therefore, the implementation seems to be ineffective and does not produce the desired fruit. The participants (the teachers) echo the same sentiments.

5.5.5 The necessary support given to struggling learners

The literature review in Chapter 2.7 stressed that the necessary support be given to progressed learners. It was noted that school needs to offer support and monitor the progress of support given to progressed learners. Although the policy does not state specifically what support must be given to the progressed learners, most of the responses obtained from the selected schools emphasise extra classes, a time concession of 10 minutes for a 3-hour paper, using SIAS, and assisting with braille learning.

5.5.6 The relevance and the sustainability of the support

One of the supports previously given to the struggling learners was the introduction of modularisation where learners are given Multiple Examination Opportunities (MEO). As stated in Chapter 2.8, learners were given the opportunity to write three subjects provided they are in the category of "progressed learner", attended school regularly, attended all the SBA tasks, failed a minimum of three subjects and have written the preparatory examination. Unfortunately, this practice was truncated, and

the progressed learners were left with the option of support available from their respective schools.

The findings reveal many teachers believe the support given by the schools in the form of extra classes is relevant in supporting these learners to pass their final examinations. Others were able to confirm that the sustainability of the support depends on how equipped the schools are and the funds available for the schools to drive the implementation process.

5.6 THE DELIMITATIONS/LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study conforms with the appropriate ethical principles of empirical research and is based on scientific values. It must be noted however that the study is guided by the determination set and by the researchers in terms of the settings, the number of participants, the schools selected in the study and the methodology of the research serve as a delimitation to the study It has been confirmed that the topic, scope, focus, settings and other elements of research which are determined by the researcher may constitute bias and limitation (Modise, 2022:232). Smith (2021:2) reveals that one of the challenges of repeating a qualitative study is that different elements of the original study cannot be repeated.

The research is limited to six schools in the Mbombela Circuit of Ehlanzeni District and seven participants selected from each school for the purpose of collecting data. The collection of data was eventually done by using open-ended questionnaires. It was previously planned to include face-to-face interviews but the incidence of COVID-19 and unavailability of most teachers made this impossible to achieve.

The delimitations/limitations, however, do not bear any negative concerns on the part of the researcher as it is envisaged that the findings of this study will make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on the implementation of the progression policy and what schools are doing or should be doing for the implementation process to be successful.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.7.1 Introduction

The findings of this study, notably that the progression policy has been found to be helpful, nevertheless supports recommendations. Recommendations are necessary in a situation where there is a need to perfect or to improve on any ongoing practices. The practices around implementation of progression policy in the selected schools will need every stakeholder to pay attention to and improve on as school environments in South Africa continually evolve.

5.7.2 Recommendations to the Policymakers

The development of policies pertaining to education in South Africa is guided by the applicable legislation. Various legislations inform the contents of every policy and the responsibility of every stakeholder involved.is to consider aspects that will make the policies effective and the other aspects that might serve to facilitate the successful implementation of the policy. According to Miller (2019:1), it has been noted that "Policy-makers and practitioners may simply not know about important research findings because these findings are not published in forums aimed at them". Therefore, it is imperative that when formulating a policy, the people at the helm of the authority structures must be sufficiently informed of the current trends and research conducted on the topical issues that such policy intends to address. It is recommended also that the government and the relevant education departments pay attention to the outcome of research conducted by the researchers in education and be willing to fund research that investigates issues affecting the education system, and the teaching and learning activities that impact on the education of our learners. It is also recommended that schools are well-equipped to face challenges a policy is trying to address. According to Mamabolo (2002:341), performance at various schools is based on the adequate provision of teaching and learning resources, conditions of service of teachers and the school management. This provision must be outlined in the contents of the policy for effective implementation. It is also recommended that when formulating a policy, such policy must indicate at what stage and how parents, the teachers and the districts should be involved in the implementation process.

5.7.3 Recommendations to the schools

The findings of this study reveal that many teachers in various school districts are included or consulted when it comes to the introduction of policy affecting teaching and learning. This situation is evident from the responses obtained from the participants. Some of the teachers were unable to give sufficiently detailed answers as to the substance of the progression policy and how this policy may be distinguished from other policies.

Therefore, it is recommended that teachers, in their professional development, are trained and properly informed about policies that inform their professional work and how such policies are implemented at various schools. The school managers, with the assistance of the DBE, need to be hands-on in terms of awareness of policies. Awareness is not just introducing or informing the teachers about the policies but rather constantly reminding them about what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. By so doing any policy implementation at the school level will be sustainably effective. Parental involvement is also recommended in order to ensure the parents of learners involved are adequately aware of the implications of being a progressed learner

5.7.4 Recommendations to the Teachers

Teachers have a part to play in the implementation of education policies. Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) ensures teachers are adequately informed of changing trends in the education system and equipped to face the challenges these might pose to teaching and learning. Educators need to constantly update their knowledge and avail themselves of workshops and training that have to do with developing teachers. Bernadine (2019:130) establishes that *"teacher professional development plays an important role in changing teaching methods and assisting teachers to move beyond a comprehension of the surface features of a new innovation"*. It is imperative that teachers equip themselves and crave new knowledge beyond what is being gained at the university, their respective districts, or the circuit level. This can be achieved through individual teacher's commitment, willingness, and passion to serve as professional teachers to the best of their ability.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the light of the findings discussed in Chapter 5, the concerns or negative aspects of the policy implementation shared by the participants, and the recommendations offered, the following foci are suggested for further research:

- Teachers are not adequately informed on issues pertaining to policies and hence they have a challenge with the contents and how to implement the policy. Therefore, it is suggested that knowledge of policies must not be limited to the management of the schools only. The school management must ensure all policies are known by the educators and that the awareness of the functionality of each must be taken as a priority in their in-service training and workshops.

- The policy does not provide for the support that must be given to learners and how this support can be met by the DBE. Every school needs to be empowered to meet the needs of learners with barriers to learning. Unfortunately, the empowerment that will be given to each school as a result of the implementation of the policy is not mentioned. It is therefore suggested that in drafting an education policy such as this, the resources, the empowerment and the support to carry out the implementation must be clearly indicated. It is still possible to introduce amendments to the policy that will ensure that the lapses are addressed.

- It has been noted that teachers are not sure of what the implementation of the policy requires. The experience of the school managers, however, plays a vital role in ensuring effective implementation, although vaguely indicated by the policy. Therefore, it is suggested that every policy needs to provide clarity on the implementation process and what it requires.

5.9 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented and analysed earlier provide expressive details and answers to the main research question of this study, *"How is the Progression Policy implemented in Further Education and Training in the high schools in the Mbombela Circuit of Mpumalanga Province?"* The study explored and analysed practices in six high schools in the Mbombela Circuit on the implementation of the progression policy

in the Further Education and Training that is from grades 10-12. The support given to the learners who were progressed from grade 10 in 2019 and then completed grade 12 in 2021 were presented and analysed. The necessary support these learners received, is analysed to be either effective or not, based on the outcome of the matriculation examination written by the learners in 2021.The literature review revealed a number of countries and briefly explains the adoption and implementation of the progression policy in countries like Canada and the United States. The research provides detailed answers to each sub-question as formulated in chapter 1, systematically reviewed in chapter 2 with the help of different literature, analysed and synthesised with the responses obtained from the participants as presented in chapter 4.

This chapter presented the data collected during the field work for analysis and discussion. The chapter discussed the performance of learners at the district level in 2020 and 2021, the performance in each circuit under Ehlanzeni and the performance at the six schools. The pass percentage of progressed learners in each school is well noted as well as the pass percentage of all the learners that wrote matric in each school in the year 2021. It was noted that efforts made by each school has contributed to progressed learner improvement and successful completion of their study. The statistics presented also reflect how progressed learners were able to do better than other learners who have not been categorised as "progressed learners". The pass percentage of each school and the percentage of progressed learners within these pass rates testify to this. It has been noted that extra classes, the profiling of learners, time concession given to progressed learners and the use of braille equipment, as claimed by the teachers, contribute to their success in the matriculation examination. The in-depth summary, recommendations and suggestions for further research are also provided in this chapter.

The findings to each of the sub-questions in chapter 1 are summarily unpacked as follows:

5.9.1 What purpose do education policies serve, with reference to the National Policy on Progression?

The study revealed that education policies are relevant in taking important decisions in education. The study focuses on the purpose the progression policy serves in the

education of our children. It was revealed that it was formulated to address repetition of learners for more than two years in a grade, and more than four years in a phase which might eventually lead to such learners dropping out of school. The participants agreed in their contribution, that the progression policy has succeeded in the task of addressing retention of a learner in a class for an extended period of time. However, the implementation of the policy needs addressing. The teachers are not adequately informed on how the implementation should be carried out and limited resources are available for effective implementation.

5.9.2 What are the characteristics of the Progression Policy in terms of learning in the FET phase?

The findings of this study revealed that the purpose of the progression policy is similar to its characteristics. The policy addresses issues of retention in a phase for more than four years. The participants' contribution reflected the following characteristics attributed to the policy:

- It gives hope to the struggling learners to finish and pass their matriculation examinations:

- It acknowledges that there are learners with learning barriers who need the support of their respective schools in order to be successful:

- It has drastically reduced the number of school drop-outs and increased the number of learners presented for matric every year;

5.9.3 What are the positive and the negative aspects of the implementation of the Progression Policy in the FET?

The implementation of the progression policy in various schools, without doubt, has been registered with positive and negative implications. The positive aspects of the policy according to the findings are as follows:

- Learners are being profiled to identify who needs support and in what areas.

- Reduction in retention rate in a grade or phase is taking place.

- Schools are being moved to assist learners that have learning barriers.

- Learners with learning barriers are being acknowledged and supported.

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- Learners' hope of passing matric exams is raised, and

- Learners are motivated to stay at school knowing there is the hope of making headway and that support is provided to achieve what seems to be impossible in their academic journey.

However, the negative implications are visible from the submissions made by the participants in the implementation of this policy:

- It has been revealed that many teachers are not aware of the policy and how it should be implemented,

- Findings have shown that several interpretations have been given to what "necessary support" means as indicated in the policy;

- Schools are doing the best they can but the resources needed to address the learning needs of the progressed learners are limited, inadequate, and non-sustainable;

- Teachers are not receiving adequate and specific training on how to adequately address the specific needs of progressed learners.

5.9.4 What support is given to struggling learners in order to achieve an appropriate level of competence?

The findings revealed the different support that schools have given to learners in order to be able to achieve competency in their examinations and ultimately the matric exams. One of the supports, according to one of the schools, is to employ the use of SIAS, an acronym for Screening, Identifying, Assessment and Support. It was evident from the data gathered on the implementation of the policy and the matric results obtained by progressed learners in the six schools, that effective implementation of the progression policy is vital in ensuring the successful completion of the matriculation examination. Progressed learners, in this case, were able to obtain a significant pass rate in the matriculation examination because of the support they received.

5.9.5 How relevant and sustainable is the support given to learners?

The support given to progressed learners can be said to be relevant if it has addressed their problems. The findings revealed that learners that were struggling in

one way or the other were offered support. The support offered was just what many of them needed to escape being retained in a grade unnecessarily. Hence the support was relevant. In terms of sustainability of the support. It can be deduced from the data obtained from the DBE statistics of matric pass rate that effective implementation of progression policy results in successful completion of the matriculation examinations by the progressed learners. However, it is apparent that progressed learners will possibly not make it if the policy is wrongly or improperly implemented.

Figure 5.7 Progression Policy and the relevance of implementation Model
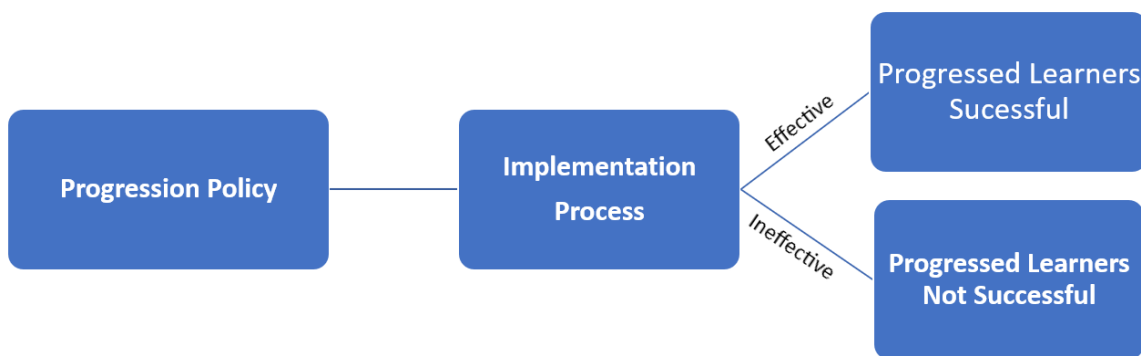
The model above (Fig.5.6) displays sufficiently the outcome of an effective implementation. This applies also to any policy being implemented effectively. it pictures the route from progression policy to the implementation process. The implementation process entails where progressed learners are being profiled to identify the support needed to avoid retaining them in a grade for too long. Retaining them for too long in a grade because of the ill performance may not help them in the long run as some of them give up on schooling and eventually drop out. Getting things right during the implementation process will culminate into effectiveness of the process which results in successful completion of the matriculation examination. Therefore, successful completion of matriculation examinations by the progressed learners means they have passed their examinations.

5.9.6 Concluding remarks

This study investigated and analysed the implementation of the progression policy in the high schools in the Mbombela Circuit of Ehlanzeni District, Mpumalanga Province. The focus was on the Further Education and Training Phase (FET) and three schools were selected from the independent schools and another three schools from the public schools. Six schools in total were selected as the case study in a qualitative research methodology where questionnaires were distributed to the participants to gather data on this topic. The high schools, notably the FET phase, were used as the focus of the study because of the awareness matriculation examination results create in South African society. It is a general phenomenon that successful completion of grade 12 matriculation examinations by learners put the name of the school in the good books of the society and the DBE. It is presumably understood that such schools are doing everything correctly to ensure the learners are passing and attaining a matriculation certificate.

The study undertook a systematic review of the primary data collected from the participants, using questionnaires, against the statistical data presented by the DBE on the performance of progressed learners in the 2021 matriculation examinations. The participants of this study included the principals of the six schools, the SMT members of the schools and the class teachers. These participants were selected in a convenience sampling method because they are both not just relevant for the purpose of data collection, but are easily accessible. The participants have been carefully and professionally selected knowing that the full responsibility for the implementation of the policy is with them.

The study found that progressed learners perform even better than learners not categorised as progressed if they are given the necessary support, they so needed in their learning journey. This reflects in the performance of school C (as indicated in figure 5.5) where 84.8% result was achieved and only one progressed learner failed out of 13 progressed learners. The study also found that teachers are not adequately included and empowered concerning what needs to be done and when it must be done. It was found that teachers are not adequately trained to confront some of the challenges emanating from learners' inability to cope because of the learning barriers they face. Many teachers are new in the system and there seems to be a

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programme that is organised to update their knowledge and skills on how various policies must be addressed and implemented.

The study effectively identified what schools have been doing to carry out a successful implementation of progression policy. Most of the schools agree that extra classes assist the progressed learners to improve on their performance. Effective application of extra classes and other necessary support given to slow learners in the form of extra time concession, large prints, braille learning, has been seen to produce good results.

Therefore, the findings in this study have significant value for other high schools to emulate and to improve on their approach in addressing the learning needs of the progressed learners in their various schools. The implication of the findings is that progressed learners are not to be seen as an elephant project but as a work-in-progress which can be guided towards a successful completion. The findings have revealed that it is a possibility that all progressed learners are able to pass themselves if given the necessary support. It is hoped that this study may stimulate a rethink on how policies are formulated, the inclusion of ordinary teachers and other stakeholders in the policy formulation and clarity provided as to the resources that will be available for implementation.

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Appendix A: LETTER OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/06/08

Ref: 2022/06/08/42870909/19/AM
Name: Mr SA FABI
Student No.:42870909

Dear Mr SA FABI

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022/06/08 to 2027/06/08

Researcher(s): Name: Mr SA FABI
E-mail address: 42870909@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +2767 006 9540

Supervisor(s): Name: PROF PR MACHAISA
E-mail address: machapr@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27124294560

Title of research:

ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN MBOMBELA CIRCURT, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Qualification: PhD Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2022/06/08 to 2027/06/08.

The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/06/08 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Open Rubric

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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.

6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/06/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2022/06/08/42870909/19/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

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REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON:

TITLE: ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS IN MBOMBELA CIRCUIT

Ethical clearance ref: 2022/06/08/42870909/19/AM

Date 13th June 2022

Mr. DM Mtembu

Director, Strategic Planning/Research/Project Co-ordinator

013 766 5148, Cell: 083 560 9713

D.Mtembu@education.mpu.gov.za

Dear Mr. Mtembu

I, Samuel Abolarinwa FABI, am doing research; under supervision of Prof. PR Machaisa, a professor in the Department of Education Management and Leadership; towards PhD in Education Management at the University of South Africa.

The aim of the study is to analyse the implementation of Progression Policy in Further Education and Training (FET) phase in Mpumalanga Province: A case study of selected high schools in Mbombela Circuit of the Ehlanzeni District, South Africa.

Your Provincial department and the schools in Mbombela Circuit have been selected because of the personal connection and accessibility of the researcher to the different schools selected in the study.

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The study will entail Qualitative Research Method which will use Case study design and six schools as stated above are selected for interviews and for gathering relevant data. The principals, the SMT members and the class teachers will be interviewed

The objectives and benefits of this study are to analyse purpose of education policies and with reference to the term "Progression Policy" and the contents of the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement in South Africa; discuss the characteristics of the National Policy Pertaining to Promotional Requirements of the NCS in the FET phase in high schools; Identify the necessary supports given to learners, who are struggling for an appropriate level of competence to be achieved; and to determine whether the supports provided are relevant and sustainable

Potential risks are Covid-19. Therefore, this will be discussed and adhered to according to applicable Regulations. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail UNISA and the schools. UNISA will give feedback to the schools and this will be given to the participants.

Yours sincerely

FABI, SA

CELL: +2767 006 9540

STUDENT NO:42870909

ANNEXURE C: APPROVAL LETTER FROM MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhamanga Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

I itiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Mr SA Fabi
UNISA
Tel: 067 0069540
Email: 42870909@mylife.unisa.ac.za
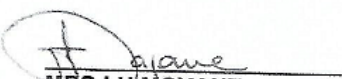
RE: "ANALYZING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSING POLICY IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN MBOMBELA CIRCUIT, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE"

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The tittle of your research project reads: **"Analyzing the implementation of progressing Policy in the Further Education and Training in Mbombela circuit, Mpumalanga province".** I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and COVID -19 regulations to observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5124/5148 Or n.madihlaba@mpuedu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

_____
MRS LH MOYANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

16 / 06 / 2022
DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

ANNEXURE D: LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

UNISA | university of south africa

CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the _____ (insert specific data collection method).

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant   Name   &   Surname   (please   print)

_____

_____

_____

Participant Signature   Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print)   SAMUEL ABOLARINWA FABI

13TH JUNE 2022

Researcher's signature   Date

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ANNEXURE E: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT/ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I_____ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by _____ (name of researcher) for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: (Please print): SAMUEL ABOLARINWA FABI

Researcher's Signature:

Date: 8TH JUNE 2022

If you are and adult who gives permission you **consent** then delete assent

If you are a learner who gives permission you **assent** and then delete consent

ANNEXURE F: COVER LETTER FOR THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of questionnaire: ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Dear respondent

This questionnaire forms part of my (**doctoral/**master's) research entitled: **ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE** for the degree (MEd/**PhD**) at the University of South Africa. You have been selected by a Convenience sampling strategy from the population of High schools in Mbombela Circuit

Hence, I invite you to take part in this survey. The aim of this study is to investigate and analyse how Progression Policy is being implemented. The findings of the study may benefit the learners, the parents, the teachers, the school and the DBE. You are kindly requested to complete this survey questionnaire, comprising only **two sections**, as honestly and frankly as possible and according to your personal views and experience. No foreseeable risks are associated with the completion of the questionnaire which is for research purposes only. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes.

You are not required to indicate your name or organisation and your anonymity will be ensured; however, indication of your age, gender, occupation position etcetera will contribute to a more comprehensive analysis. All information obtained from this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to omit any question if so desired, or to withdraw from answering this survey without penalty at any stage. After the completion of the study, an electronic summary of the findings of the research will be made available to you on request.

Permission to undertake this survey has been granted by the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Basic Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. If you have any research-related enquiries, they can be addressed directly to me or my supervisor. My contact details are: 067 006 9540, e-

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mail: 42870909@mylife.unisa.ac.za and my supervisor can be reached at 012 429 4560, Department of Educational Leadership and Management, School of Educational studies, College of Education, UNISA, e-mail: machapr@unisa.ac.za By completing the questionnaire, you imply that you have agreed to participate in this research. Please return the completed questionnaire to me as soon as possible.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH TITLE: ANALYSING THE IMPLEMETATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PRINCIPALS)

SECTION A (BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS)

POSITION [   ]   AGE: [   ]   GENDER [   ]

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE [   ]

SECTION B

1. What is your understanding of Progression Policy? ---
----

2. When did the school start the implementation of the policy?..

3. How is it different from other education policies?-
…………………………………………………………………………………….

4. What purpose does the policy serve in terms of your school learning environment?..

5. How do the teachers respond to the implementation of the policy?..
....
....

6. How are the learners responding to the implementation of the policy?..

7. How many progressed learners did you have in the year 2019?..

8. How many progressed learners wrote matric in 2021 and how many of them passed?......................................

9. How many progressed learners did not pass and why?..

10. What supports are you giving to the progressed learners in your school?..

11. Do you think the supports are adequate and sustainable? Please explain your answer…………………………………..

12. Please explain your overall impression, characteristics of progression policy and its contribution to learning (success and failure), and enrolment in the FET……………………………………………………………………………………… …..

13. Advise, if there is any, on aspects for improvement or amendment to the progression

policy…………………………………………………………………………………… …

ANNEXURE H: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SCHOOL SMT

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QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH TITLE: ANALYSING THE IMPLEMETATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (SMT MEMBERS)

SECTION A (BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS)

POSITION [   ]   AGE: [   ]   GENDER: [   ]

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: [   ]

SECTION B (QUESTIONAIRE)

1.   What   is   your   understanding   of   Progression Policy?..
....

2.   How   is   it   different   from   other   education policies?..
....

4. What purpose does the policy serve in terms of your school learning environment?...
....

5. How do the teachers teaching different subjects in your department respond to the implementation   of   the policy?..
....

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6. How are the learners responding to the implementation of the policy in your department?..

7. How many progressed learners did you have in your department in the year 2019?..

8. How many progressed learners in your department wrote matric in 2021 and the number of those who passed?..

9. How many progressed learners did not pass in your department and why?...

10. What supports are you giving to progressed learners in your department?..

11. Do you think the supports are adequate and sustainable? Please explain your answer……………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………

12. Please explain your overall impression of the policy, characteristics of progression policy and its contribution to learning (success and failure) in your department…………………………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………..

13. Advise, if there is any, on aspects for improvement or amendment on the progression policy………………………………………………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………

ANNEXURE I: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL CLASS TEACHERS

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QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH TITLE: ANALYSING THE IMPLEMETATION OF PROGRESSION POLICY IN THE FET IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)

SECTION A (BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS)

POSITION[   ] AGE: [   ] GENDER[   ]

YEARS OF EXPERIE[   ] CONTACT

:……………………………………..

SECTION B

1.   What   is   your   understanding   of   Progression Policy?...
....

2.   How   is   it   different   from   other   education policies?...
....

3. Does the policy serve any purpose in your class as a subject and class teacher?...
....

4. How are the learners responding to the implementation of the policy?...
....

5. Do   you   currently   have   progressed   learners   in   your class?...
....

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6. What supports are you giving to progressed learners in your subject(s) as a teacher?..
....

7. Do you think the supports are adequate and sustainable? Please explain your answer…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………….

8. Please explain your overall impression, characteristics of progression policy and its contribution to learning (success and failure) in your class…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………

9. Advise, if there is any, on aspects for improvement or amendment on the progression
policy…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………

ANNEXURE J: PROOF OF EDITING

Just write

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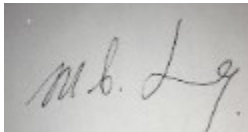
16th February 2024

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that language editing was completed satisfactorily on an earlier version of the document titled below. As of 16th February, additional editing was completed on corrected sections of the examined document, for:

SAMUEL ABOLARINWA FABI

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UNISA

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