

**TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE PROGRESSION POLICY: THE CASE OF SCHOOLS IN DIMAMO CIRCUIT,  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my sons, Tumisho Phaahla Jaydan Ramputla and Thresho Caswell Ramputla, who have taught me the true meaning of unconditional love, perseverance and dedication.

To my husband, Kasho Frans Ntsoane, for the unconditional love, constant motivation and support

To my mother, Ramoshoane Francina Ramputla, who is always there for me through thick and thin, supporting and motivating me.

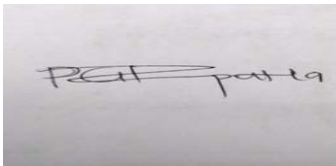
To my father, Frank Mazambane Ramputla, who has always valued education but never had the opportunity to experience it himself.

To my sister, Dimakatso Angel Ramputla, whom I want to show that everything is possible through education.

To my younger brothers, Maemo Bridgette Ramputla and Pontsho Abrillia Ramputla whom I want to be a role model to and inspire to do great things.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the research topic "TEACHERS' AND LEARNER'S EXPERIENCES OF THE PROGRESSION POLICY: A CASE OF SCHOOL OF SCHOOLS IN DIMAMO CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE"(mini-dissertation/ dissertation/ thesis) hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree Master of education in curriculum studies has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that this is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be "Ramputla P.G." written in a cursive style.

RAMPUTLA P.G (Ms)

14 December 2020

Date

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank God, for giving me the will to continue even when I wanted to give up at some stage

My supervisor, Ms M.C. Modipane, for the guidance, support and most of all for the patience she had through this whole process.

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My family friends, Mr William and Mrs Patience Nkoana for always being my refuge when I am stuck and need a way forward.

## **ABSTRACT**

The implementation of progression and similar policies remains a challenge in many education systems globally. This also applies to the implementation of the progression policy in South Africa, Limpopo Province, Dimamo Circuit, which was intended to reduce the dropout rates of learners who struggle to pass their grades during the stipulated duration. Teachers and schools seem to be ill-prepared to implement this policy, which was introduced in 2013. The effective implementation of this policy could alleviate the challenge of dealing with learners who are retained in the same grade more than twice, most of whom end up dropping out of school. This study aimed to discover the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy in Limpopo Province, Dimamo Circuit. A case study research design was used and the study used multiple methods of collecting data such as interviews, observation and document analysis.

The study found that teachers and learners in the schools that formed part of the study experience extreme challenges such as learner participation support, training, and coping with regard to the implementation of the progression policy. The recommendations of the study will contribute greatly to the system of education in Limpopo Province, Dimamo Circuit as the findings could assist in improving the implementation of the policy.

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## **ABBREVIATION & ACRONYM LIST**

B.Ed.	: Bachelor of Education
CAPS	: Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
DoE	: Department of Education
DBE	: Department of Basic Education
FET	: Further Education and Training
GET	: General Education and Training
HSRC	: Human Science Research Council
LoLT	: Language of Learning and Teaching
MEO	: Multiple Examination Opportunity
NASP	: National Association of School Psychologists
NDPC	: National Dropout Prevention Centre
NSC	: National Senior Certificate
PED	: Provincial Education Department
SA	: South African
SPP	: School Progression Policy
USA	: United State of America

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# CHAPTER ONE:

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **1.1. Background and motivation**

Policies in the education system are introduced to address educational challenges such as learner dropout, high failure rate or over-age in schools. Concurring to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), the South African approach to education is emphatically affected by worldwide patterns. Lomofsky and Lazarus contend that South Africa has taken after the prevailing American education model since the late 1950's, which was based on categories of remarkable physical, tactile and cognitive capabilities.

A study conducted in Singapore about the internationalisation of higher education shows that educational policies, programmes and activities in the education system are consistently designed and implemented in order to compete with other countries in the education hub (Daquila, 2013). Policy implementation is a major problem in South Africa and in other countries. Vislie (2003) opposes that in spite of major policy interventions and a growing obligation to educational policies in South Africa, there still remain major challenges with respect to the talk and enactment on policies and practical implementation. However, the process of policy implementation is always problematic (Syomwene, 2013).

The progression policy, also known as “social promotion” policy, is a policy that promotes learners to the following grade level in any case of their academic proficiency. Countries such as Canada, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Korea, United Kingdom and other states such as Florida, Texas, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia in the USA practise the progression policy (HSRC, 2016). The following are criteria for social promotion in the USA: 1) the learner is a constrained English capability learner who has received less than two years of institution learning in English for speakers of other languages programme; 2) the learner who has a disability sufficiently severe that it is deemed inappropriate for him to take the standardised benchmark test; 3) the learner demonstrates proficiency in another standardised test; 4) the learner has a disability and has received remedial work for more than two years; or 6) the learner has already been held back for two years (Green & Marcus, 2009).

The progression policy was introduced because learners were failing to meet the promotion requirements and later dropped out of school (Thompson, 2000). Concurring to Davidson (2004), learners who repeat two grades have about 100% likelihood of dropping out (Kosiba, 2008). The only way to anticipate the high dropout rate is when retained learners receive special mediation, which in this case is the progression policy (Owen & Ranick, 2010; Petersen, De Gracie & Ayabe, 2000).

The progression policy has extensive history. The development of the progression policy started in the 1930s as a remedy for the impact of the process of retention (Carifio, 2010). Social promotion was widely favoured in the 1970s, but gave way to grade retention in the 1980s before social promotion gained prominence again in the 90s (WIHSR, 2002).

Progression has been seen as an arrangement to the negative impacts of holding a learner back, which is known as retention. By the 1980s, the progression trend marginally decreased because of poor learner performance. In 1982, New York City schools cancelled the practice of the progression policy. The progression policy was reinstated in 1987, because of issues that arose from learners being retained. In 1999, the progression policy was dispensed by the New York City once again, but by 2004, more than 100,000 learners joined the “club of retention,” and progression was once again implemented (Carifio, 2010). Educational policies continue to be fine-tuned to be of the greatest value to the child, taking their academic and social problems into account (Carifio, 2010).

Those opposed to social promotion argue that learners who leave the previous grade without reaching a certain minimum benchmark of basic skills will fail to adequately grasp the more difficult curriculum of the next grade (Green & Marcus, 2004). They further argue that the gap between learners with and without basic skills would continue to grow as material continue to become progressively harder over time because socially promoted learners would lack the foundation on which to build their body of knowledge ( Green & Marcus, 2004).

The origin of the progression policy in South Africa is directly linked to the educational transformation after 1994 elections. In 2003, the former minister of education, Naledi Pandor appointed a committee to investigate the magnitude of learner repetition and drop-out in schools and the reasons for drop-out amongst

learners in Grade 9-12 (George, 2020). The committee found that grade repetition was a common denominator for learner drop-out. This result guided the development and execution of the progression policy. The Department of Education adopted the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools in 1998 and the guideline stipulated that learners should not repeat more than one year per school phase (George, 2020). Since the policy's introduction in 1998, progression was assumed to have been used in Grade R- Grade 9 (Kika and Kotze, 2018). However, it was only applied in the FET phase from 2013 after the inclusion of progression in the National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 on 28 December 2012 (DBE, 2012).

The first group of progressed learners reached grade 12 in 2015 (Stott et al, 2010). In terms of the Regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12, promulgated on 28 December 2012, a learner may only be retained once in the Further Education and Training Phase in order to prevent the learner from spending more than four years in a phase (Department of Basic Education, 2013). This means that a learner who fails a grade for the second time cannot be retained in the grade, but must be allowed to progress to the next grade. However, such a learner at the end of Grade 12 must satisfy all the requirements of the NSC in order to be awarded a matric certificate. Schools have been requested to provide such learners with additional support to address their specific subject deficiencies so that they will be able to cope with the demands of the next grade (Department of Basic Education, 2013).

Before the introduction of the progression policy, learners in grade 10 -12 were promoted from grade to grade provided they have completed the school based assessment which is practical assessment, oral assessment and end of the year examination requirements in not fewer than seven subjects. Furthermore, learners were expected to achieve a 40% in 3 subjects, one of which is an official language and 30% in the other 3 subjects. Most learners failed to meet these requirements, which led to a high failure rate, repetition and dropout among grade 10 to 12 learners (The Department of Basic Education, 2015).

The Council of Education Ministers adopted the following criteria as a pre-requisite for allowing a learner to be progressed from either grade 10 to 11, or from grade 11

to grade 12:1.the learner must have failed to satisfy the promotion requirements of either grade 10 to 11, and repeated either grade 10 or grade 11; 2. The learner must have passed the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and another three of the seven subjects offered; 3. the learner must have attended school on a regular basis. Absenteeism in excess of 20days without a valid reason will disqualify the learner from being progressed.4. The learner must have complied with the prescribed School Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for that academic year (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

The first cohort of progressed learners reached grade 12 in 2015 (Stott et al, 2015). According to the Basic Education (2015), the implementation of the progression policy has led to the grade 12 cohort of 2015 being the largest number that has ever sat for matric examination, thus resulting in the 2015 results nationally to drop from 75.8% in 2014 to 70.7% in 2015.

The progression policy is allegedly cited as a contributing factor of the decline of the 2015 grade 12 results. This implies that learners who were progressed ended up failing grade 12 and adding to the numbers of high school dropouts; therefore, the development of the progression policy might have overcome the intention of the education system. The failure of progressed learners could result from, amongst other things, the flawed implementation of the progression policy. It is against this background that this study is set to describe teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

## **1.2. Research problem**

The reason behind the introduction of the progression policy is to reduce learner dropout and increase learner detainment. The concept of the progression of learners is not modern in our education framework and globally. The progression of learners is steady with worldwide best practice in countries such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Korea, and United Kingdom (HSRC, 2016). The aim of the progression policy is that instead of forcing these learners to consistently repeat a grade, maybe grant them the opportunity to advance to the next grade, and give them the extra support (The Department of Basic Education, 2015).

According to Basil Manuel, the disadvantages of the progression policy, which grant learners' to fail only once in a phase, is that vulnerable learners, especially in

subjects such as mathematics, technology, life sciences and geography, which relied on prior knowledge to build on, were promoted without having the pre-requisite skills (Mail & Guardian: 2015). A lot of work must be done by teachers, because these learners need a lot of support, but the advert of the policy is that it advances learner through the system (Mail & Guardian, 2015).

Owen and Ranick (2010) argue that learners who have not mastered any educational skills should not be progressed. They say that schools are working very hard to get learners up to reasonable and defined standards by identifying personal strengths and weaknesses and by offering intense learning sessions to meet slower learner needs. They recommended that learners be retained and put in classes with other learners of their age and that limited promotion shall be granted to those who attain most of their grade skills. They discussed further that this improves success and IQ test outcomes, decreases dropout and retention rates (Owen and Ranick, 2010).

Denton (2001) also argues that progression undermines a learner's future when he or she fails to develop a critical study and job-related skills. Despite existing uncertainties, learner progression within the South African context is viewed as a good systemic indicator of quality education (Hartley, 2006). As such, automatic progression is preferred within the South African context considering that retention is regarded as being synonymous with learner dropout (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Hartley, 2006). Hartley (2006), arguing for learner progression, acknowledges the challenges that accompany learners that are promoted without acquiring the necessary content knowledge required for the new grades.

The matriculation class of 2015 showed the largest number of progressed learners since the introduction of the progression policy in 2013 for the Further Education Training (FET) phase (HSRC, 2016). Of 799 306 candidates, 65 671 were 'progressed learners'. Announcing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results for 2015, the minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga referred to "progressed learners" as contributors to the decrease in the overall pass rate. The total number of progressed learners in 2016 increased to 108 742 progressed learners although only about 67 510 wrote all their matric examinations (Ngoepe, 2016)

In effect, the progression policy guarantees that a learner is given the chance to move with his/her age group, in this state, “the system is not able to prevent promotion to the next grade or phase even if she/he does not fulfil the educational requirements to be promoted” (Hartley, 2006:100). The assumption is that the learner will be helped to procure the fundamental content knowledge that he or she needs within the new grade in order to help that learner to manage in the current grade, as well as to advance to the next grade (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

Apart from re-establishing learner nobility and self-esteem, this approach is assumed. It contributes to achieve South Africa’s Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of ensuring that all children complete primary education despite their age (Statistics South Africa, 2013). In any case, it raises numerous hypothetical and common-sense concerns in terms of learners wellbeing, capacities, opportunities and calculates support amid of teaching and learning process, the accessibility of support frameworks in place to encourage the coping process for learners.

While studies done on the progression policy focuses on the negative and positive side of the policy, this study investigates experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy; hoping that their experiences will inform us in implementing the newly introduced progression policy successfully .

### **1.3. Aims of the study**

The aim of the study was to establish experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy in selected schools in Dimamo Circuit, Limpopo Province of South Africa.

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To describe experiences of teachers with regard to the implementation of the progression policy.
- To discover learners’ experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.

### **1.4. Research question**

In order to achieve the above aim and objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions:



What are the experiences of teacher with regard to the implementation of the progression policy?

What are the experiences of learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy?

### **Sub questions**

The main research question implied the following sub-questions for the teacher:

- What is your experience of “progressed” learners?
- Do learners give better performance after they have been progressed to the next grade?
- How do you support progressed learners in your class?
- What challenges do you experience when teaching progressed learners?
- What is the level of participation in classroom activities by the “progressed” learners?
- Do progressed learners give any problems in the class?
- What do you provide as remedial teaching or extra classes for progressed learners?

The main research question implied the following sub-questions for the learner:

- What are your experiences as a progressed learner?
- What kind of challenges do you face daily as a progressed learner?
- How do you deal with the subjects you failed in the previous grade?
- What kind of support do you receive from your teachers?

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

This study will contribute knowledge to other fields of the study because academics who want to further the topic will use it. The study will also be vital to school administrators and policy makers because it helps them review how the teachers and the learners experience the progression policy with regard to its implementation (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003) .

### **1.6. Definition of concepts**

For the context of this research, the following definitions apply to the terms apply as key to the study.

- Progression policy

In this study, progression, which is also known as social promotion or automatic promotion, refers to the advancement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, in spite of the learner not having complied with all the promotion (Department of Basic Education, 2015). This practice is called progression because non-academic factors and considerations, including societal pressures and expectations, influence promotion decisions.

- Promotion

Promotion means the “movement of a learner from one grade to the next when that learner meets the minimum required level of achievement per subject in a particular grade as contemplated in the policy document”. (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Promotion is the usual practice adopted in all schools wherein learners are promoted to the next class at the end of an academic year on the basis of their performance in the annual examination

- Policy

A policy is a written statement of ideas, goals and plan of action, proposed or adopted by organisational structures (Essay, 2013). Anderson (2000), states that the term policy assigns the behaviour of some actor or set of actors, such as an official government office, or assembly in an area of action such as a public enterprise.

- Policy implementation

Implementation means the administration of the law in which various factors, organisations, procedures and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect in an effort to attain policy or programme goals (Essay, 2013). This phase is unmistakably political in character and includes vital choices about the wide policy. In spite the fact that the implementation of policy is within the hands of named authorities, the ministers as political office bears stay mindful for all activities and successes or failures within the official institution for which he/she is dependable (Van Niekerk et al., 2001).

- Retention

Repetition, or retention, is the practice of making learners who have not fully mastered the curriculum or achieved a certain academic standard; repeat the

academic year (Ndarahutse, 2008). Retention is also known as the process of keeping back learners and having them repeat a grade when they fail to meet academic standards or techniques such as skill-based learning that requires them to show that they have reached academic expectations before being promoted to the next stage.

- Dropout

Dropout means “leaving high school, college, university or another group for practical reasons, necessities, or disillusionment with the system from which the individual in question leaves” (Ravitch, 2007). In the United States, dropping out generally refers to a learner leaving school before graduating or avoiding joining a university or college.

- Experience

Experience is the process through which conscious organisms perceive the world around them through knowledge, mastery of an event, subject gained and involvement in or exposure to it. Experience, in its tangible form is that which, by bringing ourselves into action, deeply modifies us in such a way that we will never again be the same after we have passed it, undergone it (Romano, 1998).

## **1.7. Outline of the study**

The chapters are outlined as follows:

### **1.7.1. Chapter 1: Background to the study**

The chapter outlines the introduction, research problem, literature review, the role of theory in the study, purpose of the study, research methodology, ethical considerations, significance of the study, definition of concepts, outline of the study and conclusion.

### **1.7.2. Chapter 2: Literature review**

The literature review sought to present literature related to progression as a policy implemented in education focusing on experiences of teachers and learners as they implement the policy in schools in Dimamo Circuit in Limpopo Province.

The literature is categorised into policy implementation in education, challenges of policy implementation, global trends on the progression policy, history of the progression policy, retention, the implementation of the progression policy in South Africa, the implementation of the school progression policy, theoretical theory and conclusion.

### 1. 7.3. Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter presents the research approach, research paradigm, research design, selection of participants, data collection methods, data analysis, quality criteria and ethical considerations.

### 1. 7. 4 Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

The data were collected and analysed, and the results are presented in this chapter. Findings were categorised into teachers' and learners experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.

### 1. 7. 5 Chapter 5: Summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusion

The chapter summarises the major findings, recommendations, limitations of the study and conclusions.

## **1.8. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter introduced the background and outline of the study. It also outlined the aims and objectives of the study. Furthermore, it discussed what relevant literature says about teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy. The research design and research methodology used in this study were also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the chapter explained how data was collected and analysed and what the population of the study is. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth discussion of the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the progression policy

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of literature on the experiences of policy implementation in education and in schools. The following topics are discussed 1);policy implementation in education; 2) challenges of policy implementation; 3) experiences of teachers in policy implementation; 4) the progression policy debate;5) retention; 6);the implementation of the progression policy in South Africa; 7) the multiple examination opportunity; 8) monitoring and evaluation of the progression policy in South Africa and 9) theoretical framework.

### **2.2. Policy implementation in education**

Educational policies were taken for granted in the past. Clearly, this is no longer the case (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Nowadays educational policies are the centre of impressive discussions and open contextualisation. Educational policies are actions by government that decide the course of an educational framework. (Okoroma, 2006). Implementation means “administration of the law in which various factors, organisations, procedures and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect in an effort to attain policy or programme goals” (Essay, 2013). Ottoson and Green (2011) suggest that “implementation is an interactive process in which ideas expressed as policy, are transformed into behaviour expressed as social action”. Therefore the implementation of policies across organisations differs from one structure to the other.

In education, policy implementation is complicated because it is concerned with political, financial and administrative issues and requires motivation, proper lobbying and technical, professional and administrative support (Essay, 2013).According to Okoroma (2006), education is a peculiar way in which the society accepts its young ones into full enrolment. Therefore every present day society needs some educational policies to guide it in the process of such induction.

The formulation of an educational policy sets the stage for implementation which, concurring to Ukeje (2004) is maybe the foremost vital angle of arranging. My study looks at experiences of teachers and learners in the implementation of an

educational policy called the progression policy. This study agrees with Ukeje that implementation is the most important aspect of any policy and that investigating experiences of teachers and learners in any educational policy can help understand their challenges and implement educational policies successfully. Shockingly, educational policies and their objectives have been opposed because of implementation limitations (Okoroma, 2006). Policy implementation in education is a noticeable national problem that has taken centre stage in many countries such as Canada, Nigeria and South Africa (Ariffin, 2013).

Educational policies turn to bring out blended sentiments, happiness amongst proponents of transition and stress among teachers expected to implement them (Ntombela, 2011). In this study, the implementers of the progression policy, who are teachers need to understand the nature of policy implementation because international experience indicates that policies, once adopted, are not always implemented as envisioned and do not necessarily achieve the intended results (Pressman & Wildavsky, 2002; Calista, 2000; Love, 2004; Bhuyan, A., Jorgensen, A. and Sharma, S, 2010). Every policy has a purpose as to why it was created and implemented. In Kenya, for example, the aim of educational policy implementation is to achieve national development (Syomwene, 2013). In South Africa, educational policies are mostly implemented to redress the imbalances caused by apartheid and to provide quality education for all (Ntombela, 2011). It appears that all educational policies across the world often experience challenges in their implementation.

### **2.3. Challenges of policy implementation**

Research studies show that the purpose of policy implementation in most countries is to redress past injustices or to achieve national development (Syomwene, 2013). Adams (2006) notes that “planned implementation is constrained by the following factors: over-estimation of available resources - this is a situation where estimated resources are greater than actual available resources to implement a programme; under-estimation of the costs of implementing a plan - this happens when cost-estimates do not make adequate provisions for inflation, and actual implementation costs become unmanageable over-reliance upon external assistance - plans that substantially rely upon assistance from foreign sources for their implementation run into hitches when such aid fails to come; and inaccurate

statistical data - planning education requires accurate and up-to-date data. Plans that do not adequately provide for this usually have implementation problems”.

Additionally, Van Deventer (2003) have also advanced three general explanations for unsuccessful implementation of programmes, namely: “the communication process - effective implementation requires that implementers know what they are expected to do; as messages pass through any communication network, distortions are likely to occur, which can produce contrary directives, ambiguities, inconsistencies and incompatible requirements; the capability problem - ability to implement policies may be hindered by such factors as incompetent staff, insufficient information, political support, inadequate financial resources and impossible time constraints, and dispositional conflicts - implementation of a policy may fail because those charged with the responsibility of implementation refuse to carry out their own assignments”.

In Kenya, teachers encountered different obstacles in trying to implement educational policies (Syomwene, 2013). Problems such as lack of resources and facilities, lack of proper training and curriculum congestion are caused by challenges such as poor economic growth, politics, school leadership, ability and inability to evaluate, lack of proper social amenities and infrastructure, ignorance and illiteracy. Similar to Kenya, Nigeria also identified factors such as political will and corruption as challenges that hinder effective policy implementation (Okoroma, 2006). From the literature, it is clear that the process of policy implementation is always complicated; however, policy implementation can always be improved.

The problem of policy implementation is detectable to the planning stage, which comes shortly after policy development (Okoroma, 2006). Therefore, during the planning stage, policy developers should clearly outline how they are going to provide teachers who are going to implement this policy proper training, support and monitoring. Of course, all of this should be accompanied by sufficient budget, which implies that enough budgets should be in place for the implementation of a new policy. Okeke, B.S., Nosiri, C.P. & Elele, S.O (2010) and Ukeje (2004) have stated plainly that good planning will provide effective implementation.

From the statements above, it is clear that the experiences of implementers of the policy who are teachers and learners as consumers are often left out. If experiences

of the teachers and learners were investigated with the same length as challenges are, many educational policies will be successfully implemented. While most studies focus on the challenges faced when policies are implemented, this study investigates experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of an educational policy known as the progression policy.

#### **2.4. Experiences of teachers in policy implementation**

Since the first light of the vote based system in 1994, South Africa has presented numerous educational policies, namely: “Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)” (Jansen, 2008; Chisholm, 2005; Bantwini, 2010). Educational changes were in reaction to the disparity and imbalances within the educational framework which were made by the apartheid government (Bantwini, 2010). Teachers are frequently baffled by policy implementation owing to the need of clear specialised expertise to carry out teaching obligations (Mdutshane, 2007). They regularly need the theoretical knowledge and familiarity with principles informing the implementation of new policy. While other educational policies emphasise the learner-centred approach, teachers are unprepared to carry out the tasks. However, their perceptions on policy development and implementation process are necessary in guaranteeing success (Taole, 2013).

Teachers play an indispensably portion within the implementation of the policy (Nunalall, 2012). It is important that teachers’ interpretation and opinion about policy review be considered. These decide their approval and rejection of review. If teachers’ considerations are not intergraded in policy implementation, it becomes an imbalance between the official policy stipulated by the policy makers and the real policy implemented by teachers in their classes (Cuban, 1993). Magano (2006) argues that adjustments in educational policies may cause a huge difference in the way teachers teach learners.

An introduction of a new educational policy requires an altar of the task of the teacher (van der Nest, 2012). However, very little studies have concentrated on the experiences of teachers concerning the implementation of the new educational policy. At an international scale, such concentration is important in order to stimulate educational pundits and specialists about the ramifications and implications of policy



development and implementation in transitional societies. Teachers were not properly trained to grapple with the changes. They were not given instructions for managing key principles of learning the assessment (Jansen and Taylor, 2003).

In Turkey, teachers were praised for a wonderful work related to overcoming issues related to policy implementation (Kirkgoz, 2008). Turkey teachers understood policies better because they were trained on any policy intended to be implemented and they were given resources to help them cope with overcrowding classrooms (Kirkgoz, 2008).

There are, however, several challenges which have been highlighted in relation to the implementation of the progression policy (Gregory, 2020). 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).

## **2.5. The progression policy debates**

Discussions about learner progression are continuing, argumentative and inconsistent (Munje & Maarma, 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 advices that progression keeps poor performing learners with their cohorts but is not effective because those progressed learners fall behind their classmates (Greene & Winters, 2006).

When addressing the progression controversy, Greene (2010) advices “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,

regardless of how much one has learned". Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) argue that progression does not have the ability to fully help compromised learners, or give acceptable answers to learner challenges and poor performance because the policy harbours a lot of disadvantages. Studies have revealed that the progression policy and its processes have led to more classroom disruptions, frustrations among teachers and parents confused about whether their children passed on merit or not (Anderson, Jimerson & Whipple, 2002). Additionally, teachers are forced to work with underperforming learners on the expense of learners who are more prepared and have been promoted and not progressed (Babcock & Bedard, 2011). On the parents' side, having a progressed child can give them a "false sense of security," which is eventually destructive to both the parents and the students (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000).

Thompson and Cunningham (2000) underlined the major arguments of progression. "It frustrates promoted learners by placing them in grades where they cannot do the work, sends the message to all learners that they can get by without working hard, forces teachers to deal with underprepared learners while trying to teach the prepared, gives parents a false sense of their children's progress, leads employers to conclude that diplomas are meaningless, and dumps poorly educated learners into a society where they cannot perform".

Thomas (2000) assert that the progression policies greatly fail to deliver on their belief that students will stay engaged in the educational process after avoiding the emotional distress related with holding failing learners back. The progression policy was even mentioned in the 1998 State of the Union Address: "When we promote a child from grade to grade who hasn't mastered the work, we don't do that child any favours. It is time to end social promotion" (Clinton, 1998). Picklo and Christenson (2005) sustain that "promoting learners that do not possess the required academic requirements presents such learners with challenges, because they are likely to struggle to cope with the workload of the new grades, a scenario they consider also frustrating to teachers who are exposed to unprepared learners within their classrooms".

Heubert and Hauser (2002) argue that progression has done nothing at all to counter poor performance and dropout rates amongst learners. They also argue that it has

worsened the problems faced by academically impaired learners and has overwhelmed teachers by encouraging disappointments, behavioural problems and low self-esteem among learners who are unable to compensate for defective skills. Moreover, a report by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE, 2000) established that social promotion, as a wide-ranging policy, gives all learners the message that nothing is required of them and that they can get through without working hard.

Social promotion defenders are resolute that the process of socially promoting learners works to create beyond any doubts that learners do not end up discouraged, estranged and unengaged in proceeding with their schooling. They contend that social promotion, scholarly execution makes strides, dropout rates decrease, and graduation rates will firmly raise (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan & Goldschmidt & Wang, 2002). These advocates, and other researchers, are hostile to the notion that retention has a role to play in any education system. Rather, they recommend that it has precisely the inverse impact of social promotion, or, at best, discusses negligible academic benefits at the same time it divide learners from their peers. They vastly believe that retaining a learner affects their self-esteem and can lead to feelings of alienation (Jimerson et al., 2001).

Alexander et al. (2003) examined the benefits and drawbacks of both intermediate and repeatable learners in the light of existing support systems both in the new and current grades. They conclude that “what matters most is the kind of support structures in place, because the lack of proper coping processes and structures both for those that are allowed to repeat and those that are promoted could result in learners performing worse than they were at the beginning of the year”. This view is supported by Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland and Sroufe (2000) who argue that “the kinds of mechanisms in place to assist retained learners may result in retained learners performing worse than if automatically promoted”.

Despite the process of progression has been the subject of discussion in and out of educational circles, the research on teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy is inadequate. No data on progression are kept by states, and the U.S. Department of Education (2000) has depicted progression as “a hidden problem”.

## **2.6. Retention**

As the literature confirms, the progression policy is not a stand-alone practice. Research studies hardly acknowledge progression without first acknowledging retention. Repetition, or retention, “is the practice of making learners who have not fully mastered the curriculum or achieved a certain academic standard repeat the academic year” (Ndarahutse, 2008). “In an era emphasizing evidence-based interventions, research indicates that neither grade retention nor progression is a successful strategy for improving educational success” (Jimerson, Pletcher, Graydon, Schnurr, Nickerson & Kundert, 2006).

### **2.6.1. Opponents of retention**

There is a lot of investigation that explain the impact of retention, but the process of retention has increased over the past years (Jimerson et al., 2006). Repetition is expensive socially and academically and contains few long term benefits. Holmes and Matthews (1984) ended their meta-analysis of the repetition of elementary and junior high students by stating that: “Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so in spite of cumulative research evidence showing the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes”. These negative consequences include an increased chances of dropping out of school before graduation (Jimerson, 2001) and behavioral concerns, including absenteeism (Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland and Sroufe, 1997).

Repetition is too expensive (Alexander et al., 2003). These include “not only the costs of having additional learners in the system, but also the lower earning-potential such learners will have once they drop out of, rather than graduate from, school”. Smith and Shepard (1987) state that repetition and ability grouping “[help] advantaged groups, [create] further barriers for the disadvantaged, and [promote] segregation and stratification”. This can be compounded by the often subjective nature of the decision on promotion, progression and retention (Brophy, 2006). Proponents of social promotion concedes that learners may initially show academic improvement relative to coordinated control on the brief term but point out that this benefits vanishes in the long term (Manacorda, 2012).

### **2.6.2. Proponents of retention**

For more than 75 years, studies have shown that the retention of grade has little academic benefit for learners (Owings & Kaplan, 2001). For several, this idea is counter-intuitive. Despite this study, Public Agenda's Reality Check 2000 finds that the majority of employers, professors, teachers, parents and even learners agree that it is safer to be retained than be elevated to the next grade if learners have not grasped the material. Scott et al. (2015) argue that grade repetition has a positive role to play in the child's growth and ability to perform better, because they repeat a grade and have the potential to learn more knowledge. Scott et al. (2015) added that repeating means "going at a slower rate, a process that reduces the pressure on the learner and thus makes things easier for those with difficulties". Scott et al. (2015), Even so, he argues that, in the end, the mechanism may not provide a solution for the problems of other school that the learners may have.

### **2.6.3. Retention and high school dropout rates**

Jimerson et al. (2006) conducted research that show that learners who are retained are more likely to drop out of high school than those to learners who are progressed. Indeed, retention and high school dropout are associated (Rumberger, 2005). When, learners are retained, they frequently feel left behind and are not inspired to catch up. Some learners may recognise that their own behavior, such as failure to respond to assignments or prepare for exams, have caused them to hold back a school year and that they are changing their behaviors in order to make an academic turnaround. Some learners may feel like they are being punished and the retention was not their fault. In these situations, the teacher is typically blamed. Frustration of the learner to the whole process of education will take root. Advanced learners proceed to the next grade and begin their educational careers.

Learners who are retained are also older than their peers. If they hit hits the age of 17 and is not in the required grade of age, several times the learner leaves school Rumberger (2005) demonstrated that retention is the most clear indicator of high dropout rate. Retention increases the likelihood of high school dropout rates two to eleven times (Jimerson et al., 2006). Such long-term consequences are visible as well. Learners who are retained have lower behavioural changes, assessed by performance, learner classroom activity and learner attendance. By the eleventh

grade, a considerable percentage of previously enrolled learners are more likely to drop out of high school by the age of 19. These learners, in fact are more likely not to seek college degree after high school (Rumberger, 2005).

#### **2.6.4. Experiences of retained learners**

In South African, schools with the majority of learners from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds experience higher drop-out rates (Romero, Hall, Cluver & Steinert, 2018). Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017) reported that 40% of learners in South Africa drop out of school after repeated failure. Retained learners are always stressed about their situation and feel hopeless. Yamamoto and Byrnes (2000) interviewed learners in the Michigan Public School System. "Learners were asked to rate 20 life events that were considered stressful. These events include losing a parent, going to the doctor, and getting a bad year-end grade in one of four core subjects, English, Mathematics, Science, and Social studies. In the study, learners on the sixth grade level report that only the loss of a parent and not being able to see are worse than being retained. These responses paint a vivid picture and bring to light what some of these learners fear the most".

Countries such as the United States of America and Canada have moreover embraced the practice of progressing learners, and concerns have been raised with respect to the challenges confronted by these progressed learners since they do not have the required knowledge and abilities to allow them to cope with the subject matter of the grade they have been progressed to (Kika and Kotze, 2017). Basically, this may result in learners getting depressed, disappointed and conceivably dropping out of the schooling system (Reddy, 2016). Chen (2019) established that the progression policy resulted in learners developing the perspective that hard work and achievement were not necessary, progressed learners become overwhelmed due to the academic demands, and schools did not provide adequate support to help socially promoted learners 'catch up' to their peers.

Another area of concern in implementing progression in schools is that learners are not identified as progressed by teachers and therefore are just a part of the larger school community within the grade/age cohort. Knight (2014) point out this concern that once a learner is progressed, he or she tends to blend in. The consequence of this is that the progressed learner is not targeted for interventions to try and address

the problem areas that have led to prior grade repetition and subsequent progression. As such, there could be a resulting lack of attention and academic assistance provided to these learners.

Furthermore, the FET phase is a stressful phase in the school (Motshekga, 2015). Fitting in with peers is very important in this phase. These learners are already witnessing crucial changes in their lives. The physical and mental changes that accompany the onset of puberty have a major impact their social lives (Motshekga, 2015). Even those that are retained struggle with humiliation which can be a challenging task which can cause unnecessary stress. Many learners in the FET phase believe the stress of retention may be the major event in their lives. In this context, it is worth acknowledging that socio-emotional and psychological impacts often looks at the benefits learners experiences when measures are implemented.

Whilst one of the main intentions of implementing the policy of progression was to address learner retention in the FET phase, an unintended consequence could be that learners keep on being pushed through the system until Grade 12 where they eventually end up dropping out. (Georg, 2020)

#### **2.6.5. Alternatives to progression and retention**

Smit et al. (2000) point out that "learning deficits easiest to remediate are those that never occur in the first place" If such interventions are in place, interventions in the secondary school would be as successful. Nevertheless, secondary school directors should ensure intervention at the institutional and at the classroom levels to help each learner to reach the norm.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) preserve that both retention and progression are ineffective processes (NASP, 2008). In addition, both policies lead to unacceptable high dropout rates, particularly for predominantly minority learners, and in inadequate training (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Neither repeating a grade nor transferring on to the next grade will provides learners who have skill deficits with the effective support needed to develop (NASP, 2008). Jimerson et al. (2006) state explicitly, "Research indicates that neither grade retention nor social promotion is a successful strategy for improving educational success". According to Heubert and Hauser (2002), progression and retention in

grade are only two of the educational interventions available to teachers when learners are experiencing severe academic difficulty. Schools may use a range of potential interventions to minimize the need for these either-or choices, for example, by combining early detection of such learners with successful remedial work.

Jimerson et al. (2006) goes on to highlight a variety of different alternatives that current research suggest are successful methods, including pre-school education services, coping and multi- age classes, school- based mental health initiatives and participation of parents. Additionally, James and Powell (2005) argue that “merely abolishing social promotion will not solve the problem”. They also suggest early interventions such as small class size and tutoring one-on-one, learning disability and early detection of at-risk learners. Adams (2006) it also emphasizes the goal of progress towards individualized learning and the promotion of parental participation through government funding for poor and vulnerable families.

Many experts believe that before it happens, the best approach for retention versus progression method is to avoid academic failures. Academic failure is the common explanation for learner retention and the step is to avoid learner failure and retention is for schools to better recognise learners at risk of failure (Smirk, 2001). Denton (2001) Clearly indicate that learners with learning problems should be classified as early as possible during the school year and that intervention efforts should commence as soon as learning problems arise.

Additionally, the National Dropout Prevention Centre’s (NDPC) policy statement on grade retention advocated the implementation of alternative strategies in place of policies supporting grade retention (National Dropout Prevention Centre). NDPC encourages regular comprehensive learner evaluation, autonomy in school, scheduling to enable effective and timely instructional interventions and positive school experience. Owings and Kaplan (2001) suggested the implementation of alternative methods of framework and the classroom level to help each learner meet the expectations.

All of these suggestions talk to the capability of educational pioneer and government policymakers to see past abuse and apparently incapable activities. And such looking past depends on emphasising various types of information other than the recognizable quantitative examination (Hadzimichalis, 2015).



## **2.7. The implementation of the school progression policy**

Both promotion and progression refers “to the movement of a learner to a higher grade” (Stott et al, 2015). In the case of promotion, this is due to the least pass pre-requisite required for the grade by the education government. In the case of progression, the learner moves to a higher grade in spite of not accomplishing the least pre-requisite (Stott et al, 2015). In spite of the fact that particular pre requisite are given to direct learner promotion, SPP is implied to guarantee that apart from investing a most extreme of four years in a phase, learners are incapable to progress with their age group. The policy in this perspective stipulates that since such learners are likely to rehash the new grade, they be granted the essential support to help them to advance to the next grade with the purpose of promoting learner nobility, self-esteem and the need to energize socialization by age (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

To counter balance the existent imbalance inside the educational segment, and at the same time keep up value, quality and learner retention rates, the SPP is utilized as key apparatus to deliver learners the vital support they require in order to attain these targets (Munje & Maarman, 2016). The SPP is in this way respected as one of those policies or developments that have contributed to unequal educational openings in South Africa (Maarman, 2009)

SPP in destitute schools is influenced by a series of problems and suggestions for learner performance due to its lack of clear cut structure and execution plan. In spite of the fact that the policy hypothetically assigns that learners are advances based on their age and the number of times they may have repeated a grade, are given the vital support to assist them adapt with the problem of the new grades, how and when that support ought to be given and by whom remains hazy, regularly driving to error and laxity on the portion of teachers in policy implementation (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Even the policy also does not explicitly explain how the chain of implementation functions in terms of roles, supervision and assessment of policy features in individual schools. Since there were no official ‘catch-up’ programmes in schools that provided the policy support, there was no specific guidance about how to provide information about learner reports cards in the classroom, teachers should think and respond differently to policy imperatives (Munje & Maarman, 2016).

Teachers are expected to support learners on every policy that is embedded on them without receiving adequate even little training on how to implement the policy. The progression policy's success is solely based on teachers' understanding and thorough implementation of the policy (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

The problems associated with progression by teachers are well outlined in this often cited statement by the American Federation of Teachers (1997) "Social promotion is an insidious practice that hides school failure and creates problems for everybody – for kids, who are deluded into thinking they have learned the skills to be successful or get the message that achievement doesn't count; for teachers who must face students who know that teachers wield no credible authority to demand hard work; for the business community and colleges that must spend millions of dollars on remediation; and for society that must deal with a growing proportion of uneducated citizens, unprepared to contribute productively to the economic and civic life of the nation".

## **2.8.The multiple examination opportunity**

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). Furthermore, these learners are closely checked throughout the Grade 12 year to guarantee that they are coping. For those who struggle based on their performance throughout the year, the Policy on Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) can be enforced. This policy grant learners to take their final examination in two parts. 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 that 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 will negatively affect their performance in all the subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

The Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) is about a learner modularizing his/her subjects. The programme allows the learner to divide his/her subjects in parts. This is done in most countries around the world. However, in South Africa, the “Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) only relates to the writing of the NSC examination in two sessions. This dispensation also only applies to learners that are progressed from Grade 11 to Grade 12” (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

Specific criteria were set to guarantee that the Multiple Examination Opportunity is executed the same across the board. The following pre-requisite should be met by the learner to qualify for the multiple examination option. “The Learner must be a progressed learner, have completed all his/her SBA requirements in all seven subjects, have attended school regularly, have written the Preparatory examination in all subjects, and have failed a minimum of three subjects” (Department of Basic Education, 2016)

## **2.9. Monitoring and evaluation of the progression policy in South African schools**

The surveying of the implementation of the progression policy is solely in the hands of the provincial education department (PED). They must ensure compliance of the progression policy across all schools. To guarantee the consent, the provincial education department undertake the following: the PED, through the district office, must conduct regular inspection/ spot checks of the learner schedules and learner report cards to ensure that progressions are carried out as per policy; a checklist is developed by the province for use during the conduct of the spot checks which must be completed by the official conducting the spot check and signed by the principal. This will serve to confirm that the school has adhered to the stipulations of the promotion and progression requirements. The PED must track the performance of the learners across the different grades to verify that the learner has failed a grade within the phase before the learner can be progressed (Basic Education, 2015).

The policy developers expected that different schools put in place their own unique workable strategies to implement the demands of the policy in order to assist learners in need. In essence, “the policy theoretically expected that principals, through the Heads of Departments (HoDs), monitor and evaluate teacher abilities and efforts in implementing the SPP” (Hartley, 2006). However, “the lack of monitoring and evaluation by the Department resulted in the existence of a blanket policy whereby schools could not correctly interpret the policy aims and objectives, ignored the policy entirely or merely implemented these policy directives in their own unique and seemingly contradictory ways, and thus impeding learner freedoms”. Therefore, the lack of monitoring and evaluation by the DoE, principals, and HoDs shows that teachers are left on their own to implement the policy in their own different ways and at their own time, thus the adoption of conflicting and contradictory approaches by individual teachers.

### **2.9.1. Learner support**

Learners who meet the progression pre-requisites may be progressed to the next grade on condition that the learner is given with the appropriate support in order to pass other subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The district and schools must have clearly verbalized intercession procedures that incorporate early distinguishing proof of low achievers or at risk learners so that they can create and implement important amplified day/year programmes outside of regular school hours to build the self- esteem of these learners and to facilitate their social adjustment, or their access to alternate career pathways that are available locally (Basic Education, 2016).

Countries that practise the progression policy are all developed countries with strong remedial systems, and who perform exceptionally well in worldwide comparative tests. Moreover, they display exceptionally distinctive classroom conditions to those experienced in ordinary low quintile South African schools (Scott et al, 2015:5). Angie Motshekga admitted that South Africa’s framework needs the fundamental solution for the progression policy to be lucrative when she pointed out that “we need to strengthen our support programme for progressed learners” (Motshekga, 2014).

An average learner these days has a multitude of factors that they are exposed to and that cause anxiety or stress during difficult times. In addition to the pressures

they experience, there is a definite demand for their academic success. With the changing social structure, they are not being taught the skills to cope with the pressure that this high demanding society imposes on them. Hamburg (1997) says” ... contemporary families and community institutions are contributing far less to the teaching of these vital life skills than they did in earlier period.” Learners need to be taught the skills that they need to manage the anxiety and stress that life is beginning to place them under and will continue to do so for some time, resulting underachievement and the repetition of grades.

In this respect, the policy stipulates that such learners are likely to repeat the new grade, obtain the requisite support to help them advance to the next grade, with the goal of promoting the integrity of the learner, self-esteem and the need to promote socialization by age (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

## **2.10. Theoretical framework**

Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory is used as a lens to describe the experiences of teachers’ and learners of the implementation of the progression policy. With regard to the Social Cognitive Theory, the study highlights the cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors underpinning the implementation of the progression policy.

### **2.10.1. Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory**

Albert Bandura (1986) established the learn through observation theory known as Social Cognitive Theory. The Social Cognitive Theory is a mental model of behaviour that states that learning occurs through observation within a social context. (Frey, 2018). Social Cognitive Theory observes people as individuals that are eagerly involved in their personal growth. The person is therefore seen as being structured through interaction of personal, behavioural, and environmental processes.

The personal factors in Social Cognitive Theory consist of learning characteristics, considerations, sentiments and other person inspiration, behavioural components accentuation on the rule that people watch behaviours of others and the outcome and use those perceptions to inform their behaviour - knowledge and skill to achieve academic competence would form part of the behavioural process, environmental factors are the social and physical environments that sway a person’s behaviour

academically and would incorporate family, companions, and educators. (Gregory, 2020)

The Social Cognitive Theory takes under consideration a person's past experience, which factors into whether behavioural action will occur (Albert Bandura, 1986). These past experiences impact reinforcement, expectations and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behaviour and the reasons why he or she engages in that behaviour (Albert Bandura, 1986). Bandura further explains how the historical and cultural context constructs and impacts human 'behaviour. Bandura states that behaviour is, therefore, a product of both self-generated and external sources of influence. This could mean that, in the context of the learning process, learners would observe the behaviour of others (family members, peers, lecturers and role models) in order to determine how to act and what could work for them.

In relation to this study, the Social Cognitive Theory can serve as a framework for understanding the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy looking at their personal, behavioural and environmental processes. Social Cognitive Theory has been applied in several studies and was explicitly chosen for this study because of the influence of social contexts on a person's experience (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Another reason for the selection of Social Cognitive Theory in this study is the theory integrates both the internal experiences of a person and impact of the environment in explaining behaviour and behavioural outcomes. The use of this theoretical framework thus provides an understanding of the teachers and the learner's experiences of the implementation of the progression. Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory suggests that people are products of their environments and therefore the creation of a beneficial environment has the potential to impact positively on an individual. The use of this theoretical framework thus helps to develop an understanding of the environmental barriers on teachers and learners experiences.

As such, the Social Cognitive Theory was used as a theoretical framework in this study as a means of understanding the experience of teachers and learner's with regards to the implementation of the progression and in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of these data.

## **2.11. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter focused on the relevant literature related to the progression policy. This was done by discussing what policy implementation in education is, the challenges of policy implementation and the implementation of the progression policy. Furthermore, it discussed the theoretical framework that is used to guide the study. The next chapter deals with the research methodology, data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed policy implementation in education, challenges of policy implementation, the progression policy debates, retention and the theoretical framework. In this chapter, I offer a description of the study's research paradigm and the approach that underpin it. I also outline the research design in terms of the selection of participants, data collection methods, and strategies used for analysis of data in the study. Quality criteria and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

### **3.2. Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a model or pattern, according to which social scientists view the objects of research (Kuhn, 1996). Babbie and Mouton (2001) add that a research paradigm is a “generic research approach in social research according to which research takes its departure point as the insider perspective on social action”. The purpose of research and how it will be conducted are all influenced by the researcher's paradigmatic beliefs. Paradigms as basic belief system are based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) define a paradigm as a set of beliefs that deal with the ultimate first principles, and represents the world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. Therefore, a research design or plan cannot be isolated from the researcher's paradigmatic perspective of the world of research. There are three different methodological paradigms in the research field known as the positivism paradigm, the interpretivism paradigm and the emancipatory paradigm. Babbie and Mouton (2001) point out that social researcher utilise methods and techniques that are underpinned by assumptions, principles and values of paradigms mentioned above.



### **3.2.1. Interpretivism paradigm**

Interpretivism is a concept that is related to addressing and understanding the world as others experience it. Interpretive paradigm differs from the positivism on assumptions about the nature of reality, what counts as knowledge and its sources, values and their role in the research process. The purpose of interpretative research is to understand people's experiences. The research takes place in a natural setting where the participants make their living. The purpose of the study expresses the assumptions of the interpretive researcher in attempting to understand human experiences. Assumptions about the multiplicity of realities also inform the research process. For example, the research questions may not be established before the study begins but rather may evolve as the study progresses (Mertens, 2009). The research questions are generally open-ended, descriptive and non-directional (Creswell, 2018). A typical model includes a "grand tour" question followed by a small number of sub-questions (Spradley, 1979). The grand question is a statement of the problem that is examined in the study in its broadest form, posed as a general issue so as not to limit the inquiry (Creswell, 2018). The sub-questions are used as guides for the methodology and methods used to enable the researcher to answer the broad-based grand tour question.

You, the researcher, gather most of the data. In recognition of the assumption about the subjective nature of research, you will need to describe yourself, your values, ideological biases, relationship to the participants and closeness to the research topic. Access and entry to the study site are important and sensitive issues that need to be addressed (Kawulich, 2011). You also have to establish trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns with the participants so that you can capture the subtle nuances of meaning from their voices (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Ethics is an important issue that the researcher addresses throughout the study whenever it arises. Common research designs include ethnography, phenomenology, biography, case study and grounded theory (Creswell, 2018). Data gathering techniques are selected, depending on the choice of design, the nature of the respondents and the research problem. They include interviews, observations, visual aids, personal and official documents, photographs, drawings, informal conversations and artifacts.

### **3.3. Research approach**

There are two different types of research approaches, the qualitative research approach and the quantitative research approach. Nieuwenhuis (2010) describes qualitative research as an approach that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing understanding of what is being observed or studied. Quantitative research is a process that is systematic and objective in its ways of using numerical data from only a selected subgroup of a universe (or population) to generalise the findings to the universe that is being studied (Maree & Pietersen, 2010). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), descriptive quantitative research involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring correlations among two or more phenomena.

This study used the qualitative research approach in an attempt to understand the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy. According to Creswell (2018), research approaches are plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, he explains that the selection of a research approach is based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers' personal experiences and the audience of the study.

I therefore start by 1). examining three of the many definitions of qualitative research; 2). Unpacking the different characteristics thereof; and 3), describing how these relate to my study.

Creswell (2018) states, "we conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored... because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue and... We want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and allow them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We do this because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or an issue". These reasons inform why I position my study in a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm. I will further outline the reasons for conducting qualitative research further through a discussion of three of the many definitions of qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from insiders' perspective. The goal of research for them is to understand and describe a phenomenon. Flick follows Toulmin's (2009) views on what qualitative research attempts, and defines it as being "oriented towards analysing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts" (Flick, 2009).

Creswell (2018) provides this definition "Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting is sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis used is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem and it extends to the literature or signals a call for action".

In line with the above interpretation of qualitative research, I am interpreting teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy. I have read different documents, listened to their stories and heard what they had to say in order to gain some insight into how they experienced the implementation of the progression policy (Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative approach, however, has the following limitations: it can be time-consuming and demanding as the data obtained through it is voluminous (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993); it is more expensive because of travelling costs and the need for a tape and video recorder; and the risk of human bias and error is always present because the researcher becomes immersed in the phenomenon being studied (Bailey, 1996; Clark et al, 1997; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

Having fully explained and motivated why I position my research in a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm, I now turn to discuss the design of my study.

### **3.4. Research design**

Research design means a plan to guide one through the research process, from the beginning to the end (Yin, 2014). Consequently, a research design represents the entire research process; it gives direction and guidance in order to arrive at the intended outcomes (Berg, 2001). This means that when one embarks on the research journey, the research design should be the first priority. It is a carefully thought through plan that a researcher has to construct with the assistance of relevant literature, introspection and critical reflection, supervisor's input, and other forms of assistance that are needed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). However, as the research design is a plan or blueprint (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Yin, 2014), one must take cognisance of the fact that any plan could change, or that adjustments to the plan could become necessary as the research process unfolds (Creswell, 2018). The research design that I used in this study is a case study design.

#### **3.4.1. Case study design**

In qualitative studies there are several designs that can be used. A case study seeks to understand one person or situation in great depth, while ethnography examines behaviour as it reflects the culture of a group. Phenomenology is used to study the experience from the participants' point of view, while grounded theory sees data collected in a natural setting. Content analysis identifies the specific characteristics of a body of material (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). From the literature that I have reviewed regarding the different designs that are mostly used in the qualitative research approach, I decided that a case study design was most suitable for my study because I worked with a specific, identifiable group that shared certain characteristics that made them a coherent grouping (Stake, 1995). Babbie and Mouton (2001) refer to a case study as "an intensive investigation of a single unit". Creswell (2018) states that "...case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)". Yin (2014) takes it a step further and describes a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"

There are three reasons why I decided to use a case study design. Firstly, I used a case study design because it has been successfully used in other educational research studies. Yin (2009) states that "...case studies are commonly used as a research method in the social science disciplines".

Secondly, I used a case study design because, it "is an exercise in such depth, the study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish" (Stake, 1995). I work with teachers and learners and their experience of the implementation of the progression policy is my top priority. I believe that this study has helped me see "what others have not yet seen", that it would "reflect the uniqueness of my own life" and that which I "cherish", and that it would engage my own "interpretive powers", (Stake, 1995).

The last reason why I want to use the case study design is because it requires extensive description and data gathering of the identified case. This will help me gain an in-depth understanding of experiences of teachers and learners about the implementation of the progression policy as a case in my study. Stake (1995) suggests that the first criterion in selecting a case is "to maximize what we can learn", that is, to get as much information about as many aspects of the case as possible. From the outset of my study, I had a desire to gain an in-depth understanding of experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy. Yin (2014) describes three main categories of case studies: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive.

#### **3.4.1.1. Descriptive design**

This qualitative research study is a descriptive case study. According Yin (2009), a descriptive case study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment. Sometimes these are referred to as "correlational" or "observational" studies. In human research, a descriptive study can provide information about the naturally occurring health status, behaviour, attitudes or other characteristics of a particular group. The descriptive design of the research is for a "more intensive examination of phenomena" (Founche, 2002).

This should lead to the "... search for invariant essential meanings in the descriptions" (Kvale,1996). Qualitative research aims to discover and describe a phenomenon rather than explain or analyse it (Kvale, 1996). For research to be descriptive, it needs to be as precise and complete as possible (Kvale, 1996). The description is not effective if it is made from an observer's point of view. It needs to be an "uninterpreted" description (Kvale, 1996) from the experience of the participants in their own words. This will provide "rich context bound information leading to the patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2018)

In this research study, a rich description of experiences of teachers and learners of the implementation of the progression policy in the Dimamo circuit was provided.

### **3.5. Selection of participants**

This study was conducted in two schools found in Dimamo Circuit in Polokwane District, Limpopo Province. Both participating schools are situated in rural villages. The academically underperforming school is situated at a village called Ga-Dikgale, Moduane. The academically performing school is located in Solomondale.

#### **3.5.1. Sampling**

According to Merriam (2000), "sample selection in qualitative research is usually (but not always) non-random, purposeful, and small, as opposed to the larger, more random sampling of quantitative research". The participants of this study were purposefully selected and consisted of four teachers and four learners. According to Best and Kahn (2006), purposeful sampling is a technique used to select certain persons, settings or events on the grounds that they can provide the information desired. The sample is useful in answering the questions raised by the researcher which, in qualitative research, involves purposefully choosing participants or sites that best achieve this aim (Creswell 2003). Purposive sampling does not include accessible or convenient sampling, but incorporates those from which the most can be learned and who would most accurately help the researcher to answer the research question (Silverman 2000:105).

The population of this study were selected using the following criteria: the selected schools were from a rural area. One was an academically performing school and the other an academically underperforming school. Teachers in both schools were

fulltime educators who have been teaching the FET phase for more than four years. Participating learners were full time grade 11 and 12 learners who were progressed from one grade to another in their past academic life in the FET phase. The learners were aged between 19-22 years old.

This population was selected because I believed that they could provide me with rich information regarding their experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.

### **3.6. Data collection methods**

Data collection is the vehicle with which researchers collect information to answer the research questions and to defend conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the research (Mertens, 2006).The study collected data through interview

#### **3.6.1. Interviews**

An interview is a two-way communication in which the researcher meets participants and asks them questions during the process of data collection. The qualitative interview is a commonly used data collection method in qualitative research (Greeff, 2005; Mouton & Babbie, 2001).

Before the data was collected, participants were requested to participate in the study, and thus, were given letters of consent (ANNEXURE E). Four teachers and four learners were interviewed. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) point out that an interview is among the most widespread methods of collecting data in the social sciences. According to Myburgh and Strauss (2000), interviewers aim to gather information from the respondents' lived experiences.

One-to-one interviews were conducted during working hours, not exceeding 30 minutes, because I wanted to have ample time to ask questions, probe and observe the interviewees. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed with participants' permission. Semi-structured interviews with a fixed set of questions (ANNEXURE F & G) were used. A semi-structured interview is a process where the interviewer has established a set of questions beforehand, but intends the interview to be conversational (Yin, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), semi-structured

interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to ask individually tailored questions and do not limit the field of enquiry.

I took notes during the interview sessions, and where necessary, I asked participants follow up and probing questions that were important to further understand or clarify the points made.

### **3.7. Data analysis**

Qualitative methods of analysing data were adopted since this study was qualitative in nature. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Silverman, 2013). Moreover, Denzil and Lincoln (2013) describe qualitative data analysis as working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and deciding that which could be learned and imparted to others. I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis method of analysing data whereby the analysis commenced with: a) the reading or familiarising myself with the data obtained from interviews, b) then I generated codes for the participants for confidentiality purposes so that I can be the only one who can identify them, c) I searched for themes, reviewed the themes, and then defined and named them and e) lastly, I produced the final report

### **3.8. Quality criteria**

I strove to adhere to the principles of trustworthiness throughout the research. Trustworthiness of data addresses issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, which in quantitative research design are equivalent to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, respectively (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Trustworthiness is a method of ensuring rigour in qualitative research without sacrificing relevance. The findings of the research were the real issues with which teachers and learners experienced during the implementation of the progression policy. In the next section, four criteria of ensuring trustworthiness and their relevance in the study are discussed.



### **3.8.1. Credibility**

According to Guba and Lincoln (2002), credibility in qualitative research is the ability of the researcher to demonstrate a prolonged period of engagement with participants, to provide evidence of persistent observation, and to triangulate by using different sources, different methods and sometimes multiple investigators. I ensured credibility in my study by using triangulation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Triangulation helps reduce biasness and cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses. This was done through data triangulation, where different sources of data or research instruments such as interviews or observations were used to utilise different informants and to enhance the quality of the data from different sources.

### **3.8.2. Transferability**

The extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings and contexts is known as 'transferability' (Guba & Lincoln, 2002). In this study, I ensured transferability by giving a thick description about all the research processes from data collection, context of the study to production of the final report. Thick description will help other researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings (Shenton, 2004).

### **3.8.3. Dependability**

Dependability of data is the extent to which the same findings could be repeated if the same research instruments were simulated with similar respondents under similar conditions (Creswell, 2018). I ensured dependability by using stepwise replication, where two researchers analysed the data about teachers' and learners' experiences of the progression policy separately, and then compared the results (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). The results of the analyses were similar, so dependability of the inquiry was achieved (Ary, Jacobs, Asghar & Sorensen, 2010).

### **3.8.4. Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are free from bias (Guba & Lincoln, 2002). I ensured confirmability by keeping a reflexive journal to reflect on, tentatively interpret, and plan data collection (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). The reflexive journal included all events that happened in the field, and personal reflections in

relation to the study, such as the 'ah' phenomenon that arises during the investigation.

### **3.9. Ethical considerations**

Within the realm of educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interest and well-being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Ngubane (2005) describes ethics as indicative of the moral dimensions of about what is right and wrong while one is involved in research. As a researcher, I was continuously guided by ethical principles throughout the study. All participants of this study were provided with letters elucidating the research study, including the rationale as well as the data collection methods that were to be employed. I obtained permission from Limpopo Department of Education to conduct research in the school. I also obtained permission from the principal, teachers, parents and learners to gather information from the teachers and the learners

Research was conducted during the time allowed by the principal. I selected teachers and learners on the basis that they were willing to participate and able to articulate their experiences of the implementation of the progression policy. Participation was only allowed after careful reading, understanding and signing of consent forms. The consent form informed the participant of his or her voluntary participation and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. As for the learners who are minors, parental permission was sought before interviewing the learners.

In terms of possible benefits and risks, the participants were informed that there are no risks involved in the study except for the little discomfort the participants might feel and affect them psychologically. University counsellors are available in case such incidents occur.

#### **3.9.1. Limitations of the study**

There were a number of limitations in this study that must be acknowledged:

- The study was limited by little literature on teachers and learners experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.

- Another limitation of this study was that learners need to be given at least six or more months to experience being progressed so that they can outline their experiences of the progression policy.
- A further limitation was that teachers in the study need to teach the FET phase and have experience of teaching pre-progressed learners and post progressed learners which mean they must have 10 years teaching experience.
- The study concentrated on the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy only in rural schools, which might have limited the voices of model C schools, independent schools and schools in townships.
- The researcher is also teacher; if a neutral person conducted the research in the same circuit the results may have been different.

### **3.10. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in the study. It also included the data collection and data analysis processes used to obtain the findings. The research methodology was useful in understanding the experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy. The data collection methods used complemented each other. The unstructured interviews made it possible to capture the opinions of participants. Ethical considerations were outlined in the chapter. Following ethical procedures assured me that my quest to find the truth was legal and trustworthy. The next chapter deals with the analysis of the collected data and presents the findings of the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the following topics were discussed: research approach, research paradigm, research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, quality criteria and ethical considerations. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy in Dimamo circuit of the Limpopo province. This chapter offers contextualisation of participants and area of study, presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion on the findings of the research; which are categorised, themes and sub- themes. The information that derived from the interviews was integrated. For confidentiality reason the participants are coded.

The results are allocated and presented in a form of themes based on the research questions as shown in chapter 1. Each theme holds a number of different categories of description that emerged from the data analysis process. These were then described and explained based on extracts from participants' statements that explained the meaning of the content taught.

#### 4.2. Contextualisation

Following McMillan and Schumacher (1993) I briefly describe the schools and the participants in order to get the sense of the milieu in which the participants are involved. The description also offers an idea of the participant's work and learning experiences.

Prosperous high school (pseudonym) was established in 1963 and it is situated in a remote village approximately 50 kilometres away from Polokwane, Limpopo. The school has a total of 143 learners from Grade 8 to 12, with 5 teachers and a principal. The external appearance of the school resembles that of an administration block, three blocks (15 classrooms, a hall, a laboratory, a library, a computer lab and a kitchen area). There are no sports field or training facilities at the school. The majority of the learners are from child headed families or are orphans living with their

grandparents. The teaching staff uses bus as a mode of transportation to and from work.

Lydensdale secondary school (pseudonym) was established in 1970 and it is situated near a township approximately 40 kilometres away from Polokwane. The school has 438 learners and 13 teachers. The outer appearance resembles that of a two block first brick building and one block of mobile classrooms. The school is located in area with a high rate of crime. The teaching staff mostly uses private cars to and from work.

### **4.3. Teacher profiling**

The study selected four teachers as participants of the study. The sample consisted of four female teachers aged between 25 and 55. They are permanently employed. For anonymity, they were coded as ST1, ST2, ST3 and ST4. Teachers ST1 and ST2 are from a prosperous high school (pseudonym). Teachers ST3 and ST4 are from Lydensdale Secondary School (pseudonym). Teacher ST1 has a B.Ed. degree and 4 years teaching experience; ST2 has a B.Sc. degree and PGCE and five years teaching experience; ST3 has a 4-year teaching diploma and 22 years teaching experience and ST4 has a B.A. degree and 27 years of teaching experience.

### **4.4. Learner profiling**

The study selected four learners as participants of the study. The sample consisted of two female learners and two male learners aged between 20 and 30 years. For anonymity, they were coded SL1, SL2, SL3 and SL4. Learners SL1 and SL3 are from a prosperous high school (pseudonym) whereas learners SL2 and SL4 are from Lydensdale Secondary School (pseudonym). Learners SL1, SL2 and SL3 are doing grade 12. Learner SL4 is doing grade 11.

### **4.5. Research findings**

The results are presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed according to identified themes of teachers' and learners experiences of the implementation of the progression policy. The findings are categorised into teacher experiences and learner's experiences.

The category of teachers' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy is divided into three themes, namely, Learner performance, Support, Challenges and Level of participation. In this chapter, the following codes are used to identify teachers who were interviewed: ST1, ST2, ST3 and ST4.

**Table 1: Category, themes, and sub- themes of teachers' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.**

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Teachers experiences	Academic performance	Lack of background knowledge
		Average marks
		Disinterested learners
		Ill-discipline
	Teacher support	Remedial work
		Extra classes
		Training
	Challenges faced by teachers	Time Management
		Finishing the syllabus in time
		Burnout of teachers
		Pressure from the DBE
		Boredom of promoted learners
	Level of participation	Low self-esteem
		Lack of confidence
		Inferiority

#### **4.5.1. Theme 1: Academic performance**

The study found that all the teachers who were interviewed complained about the academic performance of progressed learners. Lack of background and basic skills, disinterested learners, ill-discipline and average marks were quoted in the interview as some of the reasons that may contribute to poor performance among progressed learners.

ST1 explained, *“The reason why progressed learners get low to average marks is that they are progressed to the next grade without mastering basic skills needed to pass content subjects such as mathematics, geography and so forth”*.

ST3 added, *“Progressed learners lack sufficient knowledge needed as a basic in the next grade”*.

ST2 reported *“... their performance is poor. When you say they passed they only get average marks”*.

ST4 added, *“Progressed learners are disinterested in their school work because they no longer have the fear of repeating a grade. They know that they will automatically progress to the next grade, this policy turns them into a bunch of ill-disciplined learners who do not want to put more efforts into their school work”*.

Those opposed to the progression policy argue that learners who leave the previous grade without reaching a certain minimum benchmark basic skills will fail to adequately grasp the more difficult curriculum of the next grade (Green & Marcus, 2004). Background knowledge is the foundation that most subjects build on in the Further Education and Training (FET) , therefore, learners lacking this fundamental knowledge turn to experience difficulties in understanding and mastering the subject, thus leading to high failure rate or learners passing their grade with average marks that does not guarantee them university entrance.

Fear of repeating a grade has always motivated learners to put more efforts into their school work. Now that the fear is removed teachers find it difficult to discipline learners who respond by saying they will go to the next grade whether they pass or not. Critics suggest that unjustified promotion keeps underperforming learners with their social peers but is ultimately counterproductive in that such learners fall further behind their classmates (Greene & Winters, 2006).

According to Basil Manuel(2015), the downside of the progression policy is that learners, particularly in content subjects like Mathematics, Technology, Life Sciences and Geography, which depend on prior knowledge to build on, were promoted without having the requisite skills (Mail & guardian, 2015). Moreover, studies done

on the topic show that progressed learners are faced with the struggle of lacking prerequisite skills and knowledge to enable them to cope with the subject matter (HSRC, 2016). Anderson, Case and Lam (2001) mention specific factors in South African that contribute to learner underperformance namely, poverty, teacher quality and content knowledge, parental lack of education, and poor management skills of school principals.

#### **4.5.2. Theme 2: Teacher support**

In varied responses teachers in this study seem to have planned strategies and activities to effectively support progressed learners. It is important that strategies that are utilised benefit all the learners in the class. Responses indicate that these teachers use simple techniques (which are not necessarily the most effective ones) to offer support to all learners:

*ST2 said, "Eh we do give them support. We try in many ways to treat question papers with them, putting questions in their level and then going back to the level of their previous classes so that they can at least understand what they are busy with"*

The teacher also supports progressed learners by giving them more written work as mentioned by

*ST4, "They are given extra work to do e.g. more written work". She further said that "Progressed learners are also given extra time to do their work and that they need remedial teaching".*

*ST3 stated, "I assign progressed learners to better performing learners to do peer teaching; monitor their progress after every written assessment and give them feedback".*

*ST3 added, "Tutorials are also used to support progressed learners because they cover a lot of work. They also help bridge the gap between grades".*

In teaching and learning it is believed extra work help learners to familiarise themselves with the content and questions asked in the examinations. Learners usually do not master the content the first time so they need to be drilled constantly. They sometimes need to be taught the same topic twice or thrice-in order for them to



actually understand the phenomena. Therefore, in a case of learners having difficulty passing a grade and repeating it countless times, one might think that they are slow learners. Remedial teaching never seemed to disappoint.

Peer teaching is regarded as a very powerful tool in whereby learners learn directly from their peers. This method motivates weak learners to try harder and it also creates a healthy competition among the learners which at the end can be very beneficial to their academic life. When learners are doing peer teaching teachers monitor their progress. Through monitoring, the teacher will be able to identify learners who are still struggling. As much as peer teaching is a powerful tool, in some cases it fails drastically.

The district and schools must have clearly defined intervention strategies that involve an early detection of low achievers or at-risk learners so that they can establish effective extended day to yearlong services beyond normal school hours to create these learners self-esteem and promote their social adaptation, or encourage access to alternate career paths (Department of Basic Education, 2016)

Training is an important part of support and the approach with teachers should not be that they are expected to succumb to training, but rather that such training is going to assist them in addressing needs and therefore improve academic performance and reduce academic difficulties in the classroom (Gregory, 2020). Training is something that is being done for them – not to them.

#### **4.5.3. Theme 3: Challenges faced by teachers**

In varied responses, most teachers indicated that they face series of challenges when implementing the progression policy. These challenges included time management, finishing the syllabus, burnout of teacher, pressure from the DBE to get progressed learners to pass and boredom of promoted learners.

ST2 reported, *“Progressed learners drag the timeframe as they still lack the foundation”*.

ST4 highlighted that *“I must reduce pace and increase time because I always revise each and every lesson for them to understand better”*.

ST1 remarked that *“You take a lot of time on a topic when than the given time on the pace setter, because progressed learners take long time to master the topic at hand”*. The issue of time is very crucial and affect promoted learners as well.

ST2 remarked, *“Good better performing learners becomes bored in the midst of clarifying misconceptions on progressed learners”*

It is very clear from the interviewee that progressed learners need more time to master basic skills in content subjects that is why one of the requirements of learner progression is that they modularise their subjects in grade 12 and write three subjects in the Oct/Nov examination and the remaining four in the May/June examination. This gives them enough time to prepare for their examination. Even in learning, progressed learners need time. Therefore attentive teachers when teaching progressed learners quickly identify their lack of basic skills, so they start teaching these learners the most needed basics if they want to succeed in helping progressed learners get promoted. While this strategy might benefit progressed learners it also affects the syllabus drastically.

Every subject is given a pace in which teachers must follow in order to teach the entire curriculum as stipulated in the CAPS document. Most teachers mentioned that it becomes very difficult, sometimes impossible to finish the syllabus in time because learners who are progressed need time to master the basics and understand the content. In the midst of helping and supporting progressed learners, promoted learners also suffers. They end up getting bored when because it could be that progressed learners are given too much priority and time.

ST3 reported, *“I literally feel burnout by all this extra classes we give progressed learners in the afternoon and weekends not to mention the pressure we receive from the Department of Basic Education to get progressed learners to perform better”*.

The progression policy carried with it additional work for teachers which contribute a great deal to teachers feeling overwhelmed and burnout. This leads to exhaustion and in turn a lack of enthusiasm to implement the policy (Stott et al, 2015). It seem reasonable to assume that teachers will focus more on progressed learners than

promoted learners because of the pressure they receive from the Department of Education to get progressed learners to perform better. A greater neglect of promoted learners will occur thus leading them to fail and becoming another progression statistic.

According to the teachers, learners who were fairly promoted struggle, not because they merit it, but because they have been disproportionately denied the opportunities to gain sufficient knowledge of content in the new grade. In certain situations, the time that should have been spent on covering the syllabus was used to repeat the material of the previous grade in order to get slow learners advanced up to speed for reasons other than academic achievement, resulting in inequality for everyone in the classroom.

Many teachers supported grade repetition over progression. They based this on their experiences of progressed learners' lack of academic improvement, lack of effort and lack of responsiveness to the support measures provided (Gregory, 2020). Studies have found that the progression strategies and its policies raise disturbances in the classroom, teacher's feelings of dissatisfaction and parents' perception of their children's academic performance (Anderson, Jimerson & Whipple, 2002).

In addition, social promotion demands that teachers to work with underperforming learners at the detriment of other more prepared learners (Babcock & Bedard, 2011). On the parents' side, having a progressed child can give them a "false sense of security," which is ultimately harmful to both the parents and the students (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000). Contrary to what teachers in this study are facing as challenges, literature reviewed showed that other teachers who are trying to implement educational policies face challenges such as lack of proper training, poor leadership, politics, corruption, ignorance and illiteracy ((Syomwene, 2013).

#### **4.5.4. Theme 4: Level of participation**

The participants admitted that most progressed learners lack participation in the classroom. Among many factors that can contribute to low level of participation, this study identified only three: low self-esteem, lack of confidence and inferiority.

ST2 observed that *"progressed learners lack confidence and that prohibits them to participate in the classroom and they have low self-esteem"*.

ST3 revealed that *“progressed learners do not participate in formal teaching, they need group discussion”*.

ST1 agrees with ST3 that *“they do not participate at all; they take a lot of time looking at promoted learners in the class. Their level is way too low”*.

ST4 added, *“Their level of participation in classroom activities is lower since they learn very slowly”*.

Firstly, I personally think that the favouritism afforded by the progression policy encourages the passive and demotivated attitude shown by learners, because they know that, irrespective of their status or results, progression is guaranteed regardless of their status or results on grounds other than regular attendance or satisfactory results. While, in reality, the SPP opposes the absenteeism of learners, it contradicts the age variable and the stipulated number of years to be spent in each step, offering undeserving learners an opportunity to advance whilst accumulating additional unfreedoms as they do.

Secondly progressed learners lack confidence because they have not yet mastered the subjects they failed in the previous grade which give them pressure to excel while lacking proper background. Greene (2010) suggests “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, regardless of how much one has learned”.

Inferiority in this case was caused by lack of self- esteem. I think that it is highly understandable for progressed learners to feel less of who they truly are. This might be because promoted learners are constantly reminding them that they are failures who failed to enter the next grade with merit, hence they are conditionally taken to the next grade. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the department of education to “... implement meaningful extended day/ year-long programmes outside of regular school hours to build the self- esteem of these learners...” (Department of Education, 2015)

The category, themes and sub-themes of learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy are discussed below and augmented by

examples of quotations from the interview transcripts. The code SL1 to SL4 was used to identify learners.

**Table 2: Category, themes, and sub-themes of learners’ experiences of the implementation of the progression policy.**

CATEGORY	THEMES	TOPICS
Experiences of learners	Challenges faced by learners	Prejudice
		Confusion
		Academic pressure
	Coping mechanism	Investing time
		Tutoring
	Support	Intrinsic motivation
		LTSM
		Regular testing

#### 4.5.5. Theme 5: Challenges faced by learners

Some participants were unanimous in pointing out they suffered mostly from prejudice on the other hand some participants complained of constant confusion and academic pressure as major factors that hinder their effective implementation of the progression policy.

SL3 reported, *“Promoted learners look down on us like we do not deserve to be in the same class as them”*.

SL3 added, *“I deal with classmates who frequently accuse me of favouritism; these are some of the challenges I go through daily”*.

SL2 revealed that *“...the experience is very painful, honestly speaking. I have failed certain subjects in the past grade and I am still doing those subjects in the grade I am currently in, which causes great confusion for me because I did not understand these subjects then and I definitely don’t understand them now”*.

It is clear that experiences vary from one individual to another, thus the participants had different challenges as they implemented the progression policy.

From my observation during the interview, other participants seem very happy that they were progressed. They viewed the progression policy as a gift from God because they were tired of dealing with the embarrassment that comes with repeating a grade countless time. Being a progressed learner also have its peaks. Progressed learners look like they are constantly undermined by their peer for being in a grade that they had not reached the minimum requirements to be. Therefore, progressed learners feel prejudiced. These learners were also accused of favouritism.

Today the average learner has a multitude of factors that they are exposed to and that may cause anxiety or stress during times such as being progressed. These learners suffer from the pressure of continuing with subjects, which they previously failed where they need to try very hard to understand the subject so that they can at least try to pass their Grade honestly, because even though they are progressed, progression does not qualify them for matric certificate. Hamburg (1997) says, “Learners need to be taught skills they need to manage the anxiety and stress that life is placing them under.

Opponents to progression policy contend that “placing learners in Grades where they cannot do the work sends the message to all learners they can get by without working hard” (Picklo & Christenson, 2005, p. 262). Knight (2014) complains that learners are being progressed due to policy rather than academic competence leads to learners developing a limited mind-set that is accepting of under-achievement. Bandura (1989) argues that the Social Cognitive Theory shows that a person’s actions and behaviour are guided by observed consequences and as such observed outcomes exert their influence. Bandura (1998) emphasised that learners are not likely to spend energy on an activity that is viewed as less important. It could thus be argued that a likely consequence of the progression policy is that learners’ view of academic effort is less important.

#### **4.5.6. Themes 6: Coping mechanism**

Most participants agreed that the only way they see themselves surviving being progressed is if they invest more time into their studies.

SL3 mentioned, "I invest more time in subjects I failed in the previous grade"

SL4 highlighted that "My mother got me a tutor who help me with my school work after school and weekend".

Investing time in education can mean that a learner join or create study groups or attend extra classes whether organise by their schools or themselves. Others found themselves tutors to help them cope. Even though tutoring can be seen as a coping mechanism, other learners may not afford the service. Therefore, this method does not help everyone. Meaning participants who are financially struggling will have to study hard on their own or rely on extra lessons and support offered at school by their teachers.

#### **4.5.7. Theme 7: Support**

With regard to support, progressed learners as any other learners need support to implement the progression policy. Participant's idea of support varied from one learner to the other. Most participants agree that they are frequently encouraged to study hard and come to school regularly. Some said they got support in a form of study materials.

SL1 said, *"I receive a lot of support from my teachers, they try"*.

SL2 reported, *"Our teachers motivate us daily to pull our socks up"*.

SL4 highlighted that *"...our teachers give us question bank to practice difficult questions asked in the exams. They also recommend good study guides to study with o that we can improve our marks"*.

Support in education is very crucial. Many learners fail their Grades because of lack of parental and teacher support. Progressed learners are in dire need of support so that they pass. I observed that teachers do not sell a dream to the learners that being progressed is easy as a sail in the park. It is clear to me that these learners

are being told and explained to about the advantages and disadvantages of being progressed so that they can decide if this is a curse or a blessing in disguise.

From the literature reviewed, learners who meet the progression requirements may be progressed to the next grade on condition that the progressed learner is provided with the relevant support in order to achieve the of competence in the relevant subject(s) (Department of Education, 2015). Jimerson et al (2006) advises that the absence of a strong remedial strategies could result in a lack of effectiveness of any support measure. Literature suggests that extra lessons could be effective provided the purpose stresses remedial intervention and strengthens achievement (Cooper et al, 2000 in Jimerson et al, 2006). The MEO is another support measure implemented by the DBE.

Alexander et al. (2003) examined the benefits and drawbacks of both intermediate and repeatable learners in the sense of existing support systems in both new and current grades. They conclude that “what matters most is the kind of support structures in place, because the lack of proper coping processes and structures both for those that are allowed to repeat and those that are promoted could result in learners performing worse than they were at the beginning of the year”. This view is supported by Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland and Sroufe (2000) who argue that the kinds of mechanisms in place to assist retained learners may result in retained learners performing worse than if automatically promoted.

#### **4.6. The effect of learner progression policy on matric results in South Africa**

A table of previous matric results was analysed in order to see the success or failure of the progression policy which is currently implemented in South African schools.

Table 3: A table showing the reported matric pass rate between 2015 and 2017

Year	Pass rate with progressed learners	Change	Pass rate without progressed learners	Change
2011	N/A	-	70.3%	
2012	N/A	-	73.9%	+3.6
2013	N/A	-	78.3%	+4.4
2014	N/A	-	75.8%	-2.5



2015	70.7%	-5.1	74.1%	-1.7
2016	72.5%	+1.8	76.2%	+2.1
2017	75.1%	+2.6	76.5%	0.3

Table 4: A table showing progressed learners between 2015 and 2017

Year	No. of progressed learners	No. wrote	No. passed	Percentage
2015	65 671	65 671	22 060	37.6%
2016	108 742	67 510	29 384	27%
2017	107 430	34 011	18 751	55.1%

In 2013, the progression policy was introduced in the FET phase and the first cohort reached grade 12 in 2015. The progression policy encourages provinces in South Africa to progress or condone over-aged learners who have repeated grade 11 more than once and give them extra support to sit for the NSC examinations or allow them to modularise their examinations.

Despite the minister's efforts to retain learners in schools and ensuring that they make it to the exit level, which is matric, the progression policy has brewed a huge storm among teacher unions, school managers, teachers and other stakeholders. Marcus (2004) argues that progressed learners who leave the previous grade without getting certain minimum basic skills will fail to adequately grasp more difficult curriculum of the next grade. He further argued that the difference between learners with and without basic skills will continue to develop as material continues to become increasingly more difficult over time because progressed learners would lack the framework on which to build their knowledge base

Progressive critics also claim that it frustrates the learners being promoted by putting them in grades where they didn't work to be, sends the message to all learners that they can get through without hard work, forces teachers to deal with under-prepared learners while trying to teach the prepared, it gives parents a false sense of the progress of their children, leads employers to conclude that diplomas are meaningless, and dumps poorly educated learners into a society where they cannot perform.

The progression policy is alleged to be cited as a contributing factor to the decline of the grade 12 results in the past three years. Minister of Basic Education Angie

Motshekga said in her 2015 grade 12 results release speech "If the so-called progressed learners had not been added to the total, the pass rate would have been 74%. If they were not added in 2016 it would have been 76.2% instead of 72.5% and 76.5% in 2017 instead of 75.1%. This implies progressed learners affect the national pass rate negatively, hence the figures drop every year since the policy was introduced. This destroys the status of education in South Africa; therefore, the development of the progression policy might have overcome the intention of the education system.

#### **4.7. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter presented the findings of the research. The purpose of the chapter was to explore the experiences of teachers' and learners of the implementation of the progression policy. The categories, themes and sub-themes extracted from the study were presented and discussed. The research findings support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory in that experiences of teachers and learners with regard to the implementation of the progression policy are influenced by personal, behavioural and environmental factors. The findings from the schools that participated in the study were more or less the same which made this study more interesting. The following chapter, chapter five, provides a summary, recommendation, limitations of the study and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, an analysis, interpretation and discussion of data was made based on the interview transcriptions of teachers and learners who participated in the study. In this chapter, those findings are summarised in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations that can serve as a guideline to those in the field of education who may benefit from the findings of the study.

#### **5.2. Summary of findings**

The findings of this research study sought to respond to the aim of the study as stated in chapter one which was to establish what the experiences of teachers 'and learners are with regard to the implementation of the progression policy in the schools under study. Overall, this study could contribute to policy implementation in education, also more in detail, it describes the experiences of teachers' and learners as the progression policy was implemented. The findings of this study indicate that teachers and learners are experiencing extreme challenges in the implementation of the progression policy. These challenges may limit the successful implementation of the progression policy.

##### **5.2.1. Experiences of teachers**

The experiences of teachers during the implementation of the progression policy were classified and sorted into the following themes: Learner performance, Support, Challenges and Level of participation.

- Academic performance

In investigating the implementation of the progression policy, teachers and learners in the study were asked to describe their daily experiences with regard to its implementation. The results revealed that most progressed learners still struggle with their academic performance. The study found that some of the reasons for learners to perform poorly or get average marks were that they lacked basic foundation and

background knowledge. These could be some of the reasons why progressed learners still struggle to pass subjects they failed in the previous grade.

- Teacher support

In terms of support, the study revealed that teachers provided learners with necessary support to ensure that they pass. The support that teachers are able to offer learners falls within the confines of their own knowledge, skills and resources available (Nel et. al, 2016). As Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2013) rightfully indicate “teachers need to be highly skilled and motivated to be successful” in teaching progressed learners because it “demands such a high level of teaching competence and organisational changes” in order to successfully implement the progression policy. Teachers reported that they provided progressed learners with remedial work and extra-classes after school. These strategies were used to ensure that those learners felt supported and not on their own to ensure their own success.

- Challenges faced by teachers

The progression policy is about reducing high school dropout rates and ensuring that most learners reach the exit grade which is grade 12. The study found that even though the progression policy was meant to do good for learners, it also disadvantaged the teachers. The study revealed that the implementation increased the workload of teachers. On a daily basis, teachers implement strategies that they think can help progressed learners not only to pass but also feel comfortable in a grade they know very well that they are in without meeting the minimum requirement. The study also revealed that progressed learners took time to master certain content therefore slowing the implementation of the syllabus in different subjects

- Level of participation

Among other experiences of teachers with regard to the implementation of the progression policy, the study found that progressed learners suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence. This in turn affected their level of participation in a classroom, which included learners who had met the minimum requirements for progression.

### **5.2.2. Experiences of learners**

The experiences of learners regarding the implementation of the progression policy were also classified into the following themes: Challenges, support and Coping mechanism

- **Challenges**

Learners are also key players in the implementation of the progression policy. The successful implementation of this policy is gauged by the pass rate of progressed learners. Progressed learners reported in the study that they face a series of challenges when implementing the progression policy. They complained about constantly being discriminated by promoted learners who think that progressed learners do not deserve to be in the same classroom as them. This put progressed learners under academic pressure to excel in order to prove their worth to those who prejudice them.

- **Coping mechanism**

In order to cope with being progressed, learners revealed that they invest more time in their studies because they fully understand that the subjects they failed in previous grade continue in the next grade, so they need to do their best to pass them. Other learners reported that their parents were able to get them tutors who help them with subjects they find difficult to master.

- **Support**

Support for learners should start in this innermost structure. If learners lack support by the adult (such as the teachers or other personnel) at this stage of being progressed, they are already disadvantaged (Nel et. al., 2016). The study revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation goes a long way in helping progressed learners. Progressed learners need to be constantly motivated because most of them suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence. With perpetual motivation progressed learners are reassured that being in the next grade is not a mistake and they have the potential to pass.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

In order for teachers' and learner's to experience the implementation of the progression policy in a more positive light, the following recommendations are made:

- Recommendation 1

The findings of this study revealed that teachers need to be trained on policy implementation. Therefore this study recommends that teachers in this case study be trained on how to effectively implement the progression policy in schools. In this regard teachers need to have more knowledge about which criteria are used to progress a learner to the next grade and how to teach a class that is comprised of promoted and progressed learners. Therefore the study recommends that the department of education train facilitators who can run seminars and workshops for teachers and train them about the progression policy.

- Recommendation 2

The study also found that the issue of multiple examination opportunity is adding more workload for teachers hence they should invigilate the Oct/Nov and Jun/Jul examination for progressed learners. Therefore, the study recommends that the Department of Basic education select academic centres in the Dimamo circuit where progressed learners will write their multiple examinations in the Jun/Jul part because teachers will be busy invigilating June examination for the whole school.

- Recommendation 3

Looking at the way the progression policy is implemented at schools, the study recommends that some of the criteria used to select progressed learners be amended in the school progression policy of the schools participated in the study. For example, the criterion that stipulates that absenteeism in excess of 20 days without a valid reason will disqualify a learner from being progressed. One of the reasons that might be causing progressed learners to fail is being absent from the school and 20 days of absenteeism is just too much. For learners to qualify for progression the criteria should be that of a minimum of 3 days per year.

- Recommendation 4

In terms of support, the study revealed that teachers implementing the progression policy feel unsupported. The study recommends that teachers teaching progressed learners be supported in their schools so that the policy can be successfully implemented. The support that teachers need to successfully implement the progression policy include: regular workshops with the Department of Basic Education delegates where teachers discuss their daily challenges and are given

solutions on how to best solve such problems, Schools should be mandated to have compulsory enrichment classes on Saturdays whereby they hire teachers to teach progressed learners so that they can catch up and cover the syllabus as most teachers complain about progressed learners slowing down the implementation of the syllabus.

- Recommendation 5

Besides support, there are many factors that teachers in this study deals with daily when trying to implement the progression policy. One of the common factors identified in this study is learners' low self-esteem. Therefore, the study recommends that the schools that participated hold annual awards ceremony for learners who were previously progressed but managed to pass their grade 12 with a bachelor, diploma or higher certificate. This ceremony should invite progressed learners who are still at schools so that they can feel motivated and be aware that it is possible to pass even though you were once progressed.

## **6. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on discussion of findings with regard to how teachers and learners experiences the implementation of the progression policy as well as the literature reviewed. The study concludes that if provided with the necessary support, teachers and learners could successfully implement the progression policy. It is evident that the progression policy needs to be constantly monitored by the department of basic education so that challenges teachers faces can be solved, if not the purpose of the progression policy will be difficult to achieve.

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**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 02 November 2017

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/302/2017: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Teachers'and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case of South African Schools  
**Researcher:** PG Ramputla  
**Supervisor:** Prof LT Mabasa  
**Co-Supervisor:** Ms MC Modipane  
**School:** Education  
**Degree:** Masters in Curriculum Studies

  
**PROF TAB MASHEGO**

**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

**ANNEXURE A: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

RAMPUTLA P.G  
186 ZONE 5A  
SESHEGO  
0742  
SEPTEMBER 2016

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PRIVATE BAG  
POLOKWANE  
0700

Dear sir/madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DIMAMO CIRCUIT

I, PHUTI GODFREY RAMPUTLA (University of Limpopo student) hereby request permission to conduct research in the Capricorn district, Dimamo circuit. The title of my dissertation is **“Teachers’ and learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case of schools in the Dimamo circuit, Limpopo Province”**

I would be very grateful if teachers who teach in the FET band and learners in the same band allow me to interview them. Answers will be treated as confidential and all participants will remain anonymous. Please find the attached proposal of my study. My contact details are as follows: 0766845898 or [phuti.ramputla@gmail.com](mailto:phuti.ramputla@gmail.com) for any clarity.

Hope my request is taken into consideration.

Yours faithfully

Phuti Godfrey Ramputla

**ANNEXURE B: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL**

RAMPUTLA P.G  
186 ZONE 5A  
SESHEGO  
0742  
MARCH 2017

Dear Principal

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

With the permission from the circuit manager, I hereby request the honour of conducting research in your school. The title of my dissertation is **“Teachers’ and learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case of schools in the Dimamo circuit, Limpopo Province”**

I would be very grateful if teachers who teach in the FET band and learners in the same band allow me to interview them. Answers will be treated as confidential and all participants will remain anonymous. My contact details are as follows: [phuti.ramputla@gmail.com](mailto:phuti.ramputla@gmail.com) for any clarity.

Hope my request is taken into consideration

Yours faithfully

Phuti Godfrey Ramputla

.....

**ANNEXURE C: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH  
– FROM THE PARTICIPANT’S PARENTS**

Dear Parents

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a Masters student at the University of Limpopo, under the supervision of Ms M.C. Modipane (Department of education studies, school of education).

I am preparing to collect data on “Teachers’ and learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case study of schools in the Dimamo Circuit, Limpopo Province”. The aim of my study is to discover what the teachers’ and the learners’ experiences are with regards to the implementation of the progression policy in South African schools. The findings will be used to develop and provide the learner with the necessary support.

The interview will be audio taped. It will be transcribed into verbatim. The participants will be ensured anonymity and confidentiality, whereby I will be the only one with access to the material. Respondents’ participation will be strictly voluntary and there will be no obligation to participate in the research project. They will reserve the right to withdraw at any time during the process.

If there are any further questions I will be glad to respond. A summary of the findings will be made available to you if required.

Thank you for your assistance.

I/We the parent(s) of ..... Hereby grand permission for him/ her to participate in the abovementioned research project.

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Parents signature)

\_\_\_\_\_.

Date

\_\_\_\_\_.

P.G Ramputla: Researcher

Master’s in Education (UL)



**ANNEXURE D: LETTER TO THE INTERVIEWEE**

Dear participant

I am currently conducting a research study on the progression policy. The title of the research for my master's degree is **“Teachers’ and learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case of schools in the Dimamo circuit, Limpopo Province”**.

The aim of the study is to discover what the experiences of teachers’ and learners are with regard to the implementation of the progression policy in South African schools.

I would be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time and allow me to interview you. Answers will be treated as confidential and all participants will remain anonymous.

I appreciate your effort in this regard.

Yours faithfully

Phuti Godfrey Ramputla

\_\_\_\_\_.

Researcher

**ANNEXURE E: INFORMED CONSENT**

I ..... willingly agree to be interviewed by the researcher on the study titled “Teachers’ and learner’s experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case study of schools in the Dimamo Circuit, Limpopo Province”. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my gender, age and my grade will be anonymously processed into a research report. I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the interview. I had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

Name (Interviewee): ..... Name (Interviewer): .....

Signature: ..... Signature.....

Date: ..... Date .....

## ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

1. What is your experience of “progressed” learners?
2. Do learners give better performance after they have been progressed to the next grade?
3. How do you support progressed learners in your class?
4. What challenges do you experience when teaching progressed learners?
5. What is the level of participation in classroom activities by the “progressed” learners?
6. Do progressed learners give any problems in the class?
7. What do you provide as remedial teaching or extra classes for progressed learners?

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TRANSLATED INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEACHER (SEPEDI)

1. Maitemogelo a gagokeafekabarutwanabaobafitišitšwego?
2. Na barutwanabašomakathathamoragoga gore bafitišitšwemaphatongwo o latelago?
3. O thekgabjangbarutwanaba go fitišwabaobalegokaphaphušingyagago?
4. O itemogeladitlhohlodifege o rutabarutwanabaobafitišitšwego?
5. Na barutwanabaobafitišitšwegobakgathatemagakaakangmešongwanengyakapha phušing?
6. Na barutwanabaobafitišitšwegobafamathatakaphaphušing?
7. O šomišamokgwaofewathutoyatlaleletšo go barutwanabaobafitišitšwego?

## **ANNEXURE G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE LEARNER**

1. What are your experiences as a progressed learner?
2. What kind of challenges do you face daily as a progressed learner?
3. How do you deal with the subjects you failed in the previous grade?
4. What kind of support do you receive from your teachers?

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TRANSLATED INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THE (SEPEDI)**

1. Maitemogelo a gagobjalokamorutwanayo a fitišitšwego keafe?
2. Bjalokamorutwanayo a fitišitšwego, o kopana le ditlhohlodifetšatšikatšatši?
3. O šomišamekgwaefe go rarollamathatadithutongtšeodi gopaletšegomphatong (grade) wa go feta?
4. Barutišibagagoba go fathegoyamohutamang?

## ANNEXURE H: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

### 1. The tone of the voice

Aggressive	
Cheerful	
Sarcastic	
Pessimistic	

### 2. Facial expression

Eye contact	
Sadness	
Fear	
Happiness	

### 3. Body Gestures

Folding arms	
Relaxed hands	





**DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**

Ref: 2/2/2

Enq: MC Makola PhD

Tel No: 015 290 9448

E-mail: [MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za](mailto:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za)

Ramputla P.G  
186 Zone 5A  
SESHEGO  
0742

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **“teachers and learners experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: A case in South Africa”**.
3. The following conditions should be considered:
  - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.
  - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
  - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: RAMAPUTLA PG

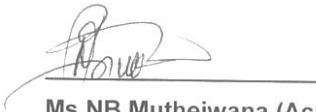
CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

***The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!***

- 
- 4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
  - 5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



**Ms NB Mutheiwana (Acting)**  
**Head of Department**

12/10/16

**Date**

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: RAMAPUTLA PG

CONFIDENTIAL



