An Investigation of how progressed learners are supported through the learning process: The case of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my original work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in Curriculum Studies at the School of Education, University of Limpopo. It has not been previously submitted for any degree at this or any other university, it is an original design and all reference material has been cited and duly acknowledged.

23/02/2022

NYATHI P   DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to:

- My late father Louise "Mabekani" Nyathi, he died while I was doing grade 7. I hope that wherever he is, he is proud of my journey.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CASS - Continuous Assessment

DBE - Department of Basic Education

DOE - Department of Education

FET - Further Education and Training

GET - General Education and Training

HOD - Head of Department

LTSM - Learning and Teaching Support Material

MEO - Multiple Examination Opportunities

NSC - National Senior Certificate

OBE - Outcomes Based Education

SA-SAMS - South African Schools Administration and Management System

SBA - School Based Assessment

SADTU - South African Democratic Teachers Union

SBST - School Based Support Teams

TREC - Turfloop Research Ethics Committee

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In South Africa and other parts of the world, learner performance is a serious concern. In South Africa, irrespective of changing curriculum policies since 1994, learner performance from lower grades to high grades has not improved (DBE, 2001). A large body of literature covering a wide range of policy and research on learner performance and teaching and learning is available. According to the National Policy for Assessment (NPA, 2011) Grade R-12, South African learners are either promoted or progressed to the next grade. According to the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Progression Requirements (NPPPR), the term 'progressed' means the movement of a learner from one grade to the next grade excluding grade R, in spite of the learner's non-compliance with all the promotion requirements (NPPPR, 2011). The progression of learners in South Africa was introduced to prevent learners from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years. This study discussed progressed learners with special reference to the support given to them through teaching and learning.

In the view of the researcher as an experienced primary school teacher, the progression of learners has mostly been influenced by the availability of resources, learner-teacher ratio in class, teaching methods and the preparedness of teachers for teaching and learning. This view was also supported by Brodie (2004), who indicates that socio-economic status, parents, peer influence, learners' abilities and the poor learning environment contribute towards the progression of learners. It was on this basis that the researcher intended to explore teachers' and learners' views on the support that is being provided to learners through the teaching and learning process in secondary schools, and to develop strategies to empower them on their proficiency regarding teaching and supporting progressed learners.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

In South Africa and other parts of the world, teaching and learning takes place under norms and prescripts of the country, but learners continue to show variation in performance as they differ in cognitive levels (DBE, 2011). In South Africa, some learners perform optimally; others experience challenges. The latter is from time to time moved from one grade to another with the intent to reduce the number of learners who are retained in the same grade or phase more than once. These are called progressed learners in the South African system.

Progressed learners are those who did not pass their previous grade but were moved to the next grade as per the progression policy or the NPPPR (2011). NPA (2011) clearly states how a learner in grades R – 12 is to be promoted: a learner in the intermediate phase has to meet the following requirements in order to progress to the next grade: Home Language level 4, First Additional Language level 3, Mathematics level 3 plus any other two levels 3 in any two remaining subjects. The stipulation above is also found in the Government Gazette 36041 (2012), which stipulates the pass requirements to be met by every learner according to the CAPS policy of South Africa. The major cause of the progression of South African learners in large numbers is unknown, hence the motivation of the present study.

A comparison can be made to learners in the slow learner trap in the United States (US). Learners in the slow learner trap are referred to as students with borderline intellectual functioning (Shaw, 2010). These learners show low intelligence and academic performance but do not qualify for special education for either cognitive or learning disabilities (Shaw, 2010). The No Child Left behind Act (NCLBA, 2001) in the US covered all learners in all states. Its major intention was to ensure the availability of resources and support to all learners referred to as slow learners (NCLB, 2001). Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has classified her learners in the low stream class and the mainstream class (Mapolisa, 2014). Underperforming learners in Zimbabwe are classified as learners in the low stream (similar to progressed learners in South Africa).

Most of these learners in Zimbabwe have benefitted through the introduction of the 'O' level curriculum, which has since progressed most learners from the Primary School Leaving Examination to Form One. The result of this progression of low stream learners has negatively affected the quality of the results of Form One learners in

previous years (Mafa & Tarusikirwa, 2013). Comparatively speaking, learners from the three backgrounds mentioned above manifest similarities in underperformance caused by different factors.

Various reasons and factors contribute to the increase in progressed learners' numbers such as the lack of parental recognition and involvement (SIAS, 2014). When parents are not involved in their children's learning process, they become unaware of the challenges affecting their children. Thus, learners with this background fail because of factors like absenteeism and bunking of classes, which contribute to over-age learners in a particular grade, thus leading to the age cohort principle (i.e., learners who are older than the grade by two or more years). The increase in progressed learners is also caused by the illiteracy of their parents or those they reside with at home. To this effect, it is a challenge to assist these learners with homework, personal studies and practice of subjects like mathematics. Eventually, these learners are progressed not because they satisfy the necessary requirements, but because the progression policy dictates that they must be progressed.

The policy on progressed learners in South Africa was adopted in June (2015). The intention of the policy was to create the culture of learning in learners so that they have a chance to follow their dreams in life. The drop-out of learners can be blamed on resentment and their failure to attain the promotion requirements. The basic principles relating to this policy statement is that a learner must not spend more than four (4) years in a phase. This implies that he or she should repeat a phase once. The application of the principles of progression can be illustrated as follows: scenario 1 is that of a learner who repeats grade 10 and does not meet the promotion requirements to move to the next grade at the end of the year. Such a learner must be progressed to grade 11.

Scenario 2 is that of a learner who has met the promotion requirements for grade 10, but is repeating grade 11, and does not meet the promotion requirements. Such a learner must be progressed to grade 12. Scenario 3 is a learner who repeats grade 10 but does not meet the promotion requirements. Such a learner is progressed to grade 11. If this learner does not meet the promotion requirements in grade 11 in the first year, he or she must be progressed to grade 12.

Schools and all other stakeholders are concerned that learners who are progressed without passing their grades are not able to catch up. These learners are said to contribute towards the decline in grade 12 results**.**

The challenge for all concerned, particularly teachers and schools, is to support these pupils adequately so that they have a reasonable chance of passing grade 12 (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

It is also the responsibility of these learners to make the most of this opportunity by working very hard to improve their previous results. This is because the fact that they did not meet the promotion requirements and were progressed means that they need to put extra efforts for them to meet these requirements. These learners must study harder than before and ensure that they are always at school in time to avoid missing lessons, among others.

The fact is that even after these learners have been progressed to grade 12, they must still meet the promotion requirements because in this grade, a learner cannot be progressed to another level. This is a problem because even progressed learners are expected to meet the promotion requirements in grade 12 because all learners are expected to write the national examination and to pass it in order to meet the requirements of the National Senior Certificate. This implies that all progressed learners will need to be supported through the process of learning for them to meet the promotion requirements in grade 12. This statement is supported by Kwazulu-Natal education MEC, Peggy Nkonyeni (2016), who argues: "The policy to push through learners who did not meet the promotion requirements is a correct one, and rather than discouraging them, we need to pull out all the stops to support them". Progressed learners could affect the matric (grade 12) pass rate (News24, 2015).

The South African Democratic Teachers Union was quoted by EWN (2018) as saying that they are not happy with the results of progressed learners. Not even a single study was done on the support given to progressed learners during the process of learning. This study will try to close this gap, with the understanding that the progression of learners is still a new concept in the South African education system.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Policy implementation remains a challenge in education and in many other disciplines and systems (DeGroff & Cargo, 2009). Several studies have shown different problems that are related to policy implementation (Goldberg, 2005). However, not many studies have reported on the implementation of the progression policy, particularly regarding how learners are supported through their journey of progression from one phase to the other. With the concept of progressed learners being new in the South African education system, few studies have been done on 'progressed learners'. It is important to note that little research has been conducted on how progressed learners are being supported through the process of learning.

The fact that learners are being progressed simply means that they have a learning barrier that needs to be addressed by schools and educators to enable them to succeed in the next grade. These learners are called progressed learners because they have failed their year-end examinations, but they were moved to the next grade because of factors such as age. When progressed learners are not supported, it becomes a very big problem because they do not have enough prior knowledge. Chances are that if they are not given enough support through the process of teaching and learning, they are more likely to fail and end up dropping out of school. This means that the policy will have failed to achieve its intended objectives which, amongst others, is to reduce the number of school dropouts.

Progressed learners are said to contribute more in the decline in matric (grade) results in South Africa. If this is true, the question remains: are progressed learners being given enough support through the learning process? In my view, these learners must be given extra informal activities or extra lessons. They did not make it in their previous grade, but they have been progressed because they do not have enough prior knowledge of the subjects learned in the previous grade. Educators and parents must give extra support to these learners. They can catch up with other learners only if they are supported by their schools and educators regarding how they are taught, how they learn and how they are assessed. Thus, this study seeks to establish how learners who have been progressed from grade 10 to grade 12 in Manyeleti Circuit of Mpumalanga in South Africa are supported to cope with their studies.

1.4. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As an educator, I was triggered by the everyday activities I have seen. I have come to the realisation that we are living in a democratic country with policies arguing for support to be given to progressed learners. I noted that there are a lot of different short sightings for the effective implementation towards proper support to progressed learners on the ground. This prompted me to look at the support that is given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

1.5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish how educators at Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa provide support to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of this study are:

- ❖ What is the support structure or system in place as a school to support progressed learners and how do you use such a structure or system?
- ❖ Do you have a school policy for the progression of learners?
- ❖ What initiatives have you taken as a school to support progressed learners?
- ❖ What support systems, structures or programmes have you put in place to support progressed learners?
- ❖ How do you use and monitor your support systems, structures or programmes for progressed learners?

1.7. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study investigated how educators support progressed learners through the teaching and learning process: a case study of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The qualitative research approach was employed through a descriptive case study design to yield closeness and to bring about a deeper understanding (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), resulting in innovative knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The study is divided into the following five summative chapters.

1. 8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study investigated how progressed learners are being supported through the learning process: a case study of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The qualitative research approach was employed through a descriptive case study design to yield closeness and to bring about a deeper understanding (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), resulting in innovative knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The study is divided into the following five summative chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Chapter one presents the orientation and a brief overview of the research study. The chapter introduces the study by outlining the background and motivation of the study, problem statement, rationale, purpose of the study and research questions. The assumptions of the study are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

Chapter two focuses on the literature review from different facets as well as different documents such as theses, dissertations, books, newspapers, online documents, journals and articles. The literature review provides a historical overview of democratic education in general as well as in South Africa. It provides a variety of views on democracy in relation to educational practices, as well as attributes associated with democratic principles and values in the classroom. Moreover, it provides a debate on democratic education. The theoretical frameworks which assisted to make sense of the study are also discussed, including how they underpin democratic practices.

CHAPTER THREE

Research methodology

This chapter provides a discussion of the choice of research method used to collect data and methods of data analysis. The research paradigm, research approach, research design, selection of participants, and data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews, non-participant classroom observations and document analysis are also discussed. The data analysis procedure of all research instruments is discussed carefully. Moreover, detailed ethical

considentations such as permission, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis and interpretation of the findings

This is a section on the presentation of findings. Data collection instruments were analysed, and variables compared against one another. The research findings are presented, analysed and reported. This includes interview responses of participants, classroom observations as well as documents. The data is coded, and themes generated are explained for better understanding of how educators incorporate democratic principles and values into their classroom practices when it comes to teaching, learning and assessment.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter provides discussions of main findings. The chapter highlights major conclusions and recommendations of the study.

1. 9. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter presented an overview of the whole study. The introduction, background and motivation of the study, as well as the problem statement, rationale of the study and research questions were discussed. Part of this chapter introduced the role of theories that underpin the study. In the next chapter, the literature review of the study is discussed.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an in-depth review of literature on support given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. The literature of the study is extracted from research reports, journal articles and other formal texts. Secondary sources will also be used, but to a much lesser extent. Empirical as well as conceptual studies regarding democratic education will be used. The literature review will focus on the following main areas: 1) policy Implementation in schools; 2) progressed learners; 3) the concept of support; 4) teachers' attitudes towards teaching progressed learners; 5) progression debate; 6) progressed learners in Europe; 7) progressed learners in Africa; 8) progressed learners in South Africa; and 9) challenges of promoting democratic practices. The theoretical frameworks which assisted in giving meaning of democratic principles and values are also discussed.

2.2. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS

Challenges faced by schools on a daily basis require attention. Such challenges often lead to the intervention through the development of policies globally (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016). However, the implementation of such intervention policies also poses a challenge (Mahbubur & Mohammed, 2008). For instance, in the process of improving public schools in Belgium, the teacher evaluation policy was introduced and schools tried hard to adhere to the prescribed rules in the policy. However, implementation differed from school to school (Tuytens 15 & Devos, 2014). Consequently, certain schools were frustrated because processes ran in a slow pace, which led to the unsuccessful implementation of the said policies. A European study on issues of education policy implementation highlighted that education stakeholders have different attitudes that might lead to conflicts amongst education providers and education users (Katiliute, 2005). Furthermore, the education users were not supplied with adequate information, which resulted in an ineffective implementation process. In a study conducted in Nigeria on educational policies and problems of implementation, the problem of policy implementation became visible during the planning stage that comes after the formulation of a policy (Okoroma, 2006). This, therefore, seems to suggest that the gap between the formulation and implementation of a policy requires

serious attention because the desired effects of the formulation of policies are often not met due to ineffective implementation.

2.2.1 The Implementation of the Progression Policy in Schools

The effective implementation of the progression policy is a major issue in the school lives of learners and teachers, which may have long and short-term consequences. Modipane and Mogale (2021) find that the progression policy was not implemented according to its provisions. As a result, there is a need to track down the implementation of this policy, which entails describing and explaining how the policy was implemented.

Education systems throughout the world seek intervention strategies towards remedying the high drop-out of learners in schools by formulating progression policies. Nevertheless, the implementation of these policies remains a challenge. Allensworth (2005) reported slight decreases in dropout rates among the 90% students who were not retained after the implementation of the progression policy, which is referred to as social promotion in Chicago. In Estonia, a study on secondary school students' progression in operational scientific skills was conducted. The findings indicate that there was no expected shift in operational skills for a period of three years (Soobard, Rannikmae & Reiska, 2015). Although there is an indication of minimal change in knowledge and skills, the study further proposes that a change is needed in secondary science education to ensure that learners give more suitable responses in relation to problem-solving and decision-making items. The implementation of the progression policy for school and academic performance in Madagascar remains a challenge because half of the school parents interact with their children's teachers during the school year, even though they are treated as school personnel (Glick, Rajemison, Ravelo, Razakamanantsoa & Sahn, 2005). This indicates that most parents are not aware of the performance of their children and, as a result, they are not able to offer them support on their educational journey.

Like in other countries, the progression policy was implemented with the intention to minimise unnecessary school drop-outs for the first time in South African schools in 2013. The progression policy was further encouraged for full implementation in 2015. However, the policy is now cited as a contributing factor of the drop in the 2015 Grade 12 results in comparison with the 2014 results (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

Although the implementation of the progression policy addressed the challenge of retention and drop-out rates in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2016), the drop in the 2015 Grade 12 results is a burning issue as learners will leave school without a Grade 12 certificate, which takes us back to the challenge of drop-out. It is worth noting the fact that the progression policy stipulates that progressed learners will be allowed multiple examination opportunities whereby a learner writes only a limited number of subjects and will be allowed to write the remaining subjects in a following exam (Department of Basic Education, 2015). This means that such learners will have to study from home on their own while they await the exams of the following year. Furthermore, there is no guarantee of the motivation to study and register for the following exams, especially because these learners did not meet the Grade 11 promotion requirements.

According to the Guidelines for the Implementation of Promotion and Progression Requirements for Grades 10-12 (2015), the parent/guardian of the learner takes the final decision of whether a learner can be progressed or not. This means that before the learner can be progressed, the parent/guardian must be consulted by the School Management Team in order to discuss several aspects on the implementation of the progression policy on individual learners. Additionally, parents/guardians of the progressed learners automatically form part of the support group for progressed learners (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The parents/guardians must assist the learners to cope with the pressure of the Grade 12 work because being progressed does not guarantee the final certification of a learner in Grade 12 (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The ineffective implementation of the progression policy is probably because stakeholders are not being consulted or maybe the policy might have been imposed on them. It is against this background that this study ought to describe the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools in Limpopo Province. There is a need to review if the parents of progressed learners are consulted and parents offer support to their children.

Few studies have been conducted on the progression policy. I am of the view that there is no study on how the progression policy was implemented. Motala, Dieltiens and Sayed (2009) conducted a study on mapping dropout, repetition and age-grade progression in two districts in South Africa. They found that South Africa has committed itself in terms of access to schooling as compared to many other developing

countries. However, the problem of repetition is being deferred to upcoming years when grade progression becomes more subject to assessment that identifies poor achievement. This means that, in as much as the South African education system caters for learners' basic need of education, most learners get tripped along the way and thus lose the correct age range for their class. Then they drop out of schools as they struggle to cope. Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017) argue that progressed learners appear to experience great difficulty in attaining their Grade 12 certificates, which defeats the intention of the progression policy which was to allow learners to enter Grade 12 and graduate from it successfully.

Although the problem of school drop-out persists, it is more likely to occur in Grades 10-12 (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This makes my study vital as it evaluates the implementation of the progression policy that was intended to address the challenge of secondary school drop-outs. In 2015, the progression policy was fully implemented in South African schools. In the same year, Grade 12 results declined. This could be because there was a flaw in the implementation process of the progression policy. I became curious to check on how the progression policy was implemented because there was no systematic documentation of its implementation process.

The Mail & Guardian (2016) reported that progressed learners are not coping. This is more likely to lead to high rates of drop-outs and the defeat of the intention of the progression policy. Many progressed learners dropped out of school in 2015 as they were not able to understand the basics of what they had to learn in Grade 12 (Mail & Guardian, 2016). Subsequently, learners face different challenges that affect the improvement in the process of the implementation of the progression policy. For instance, personal problems and lack of motivation to learn.

There are a lot of factors that affect the success of the implementation of the progression policy. For example, teachers' attitudes towards progressed learners. A matric teacher in Mamelodi alleged that frustrated progressed learners displayed their behavioural problems which included stealing and harassment of fellow learners (Mail & Guardian, 2016). Despite this, the problem of overcrowded classes might also affect the implementation of the progression policy. Dikgale (2012) indicates that schools serving economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods are faced with overcrowded

classes and are under-resourced. This might raise the question of when do teachers give special attention to progressed learners given the type of situations they work in.

Monitoring and Curriculum support in the process of implementation of the progression policy is a vital issue because progressed learners are expected to pass the requirements of Grade 12. Mashau (2008) highlights various forms of learning support as remedial or extra classes but does not indicate the ones for the progressed learners. Various studies have been conducted on learner support but they do not focus on progressed learner support and monitoring. For example, Steyn and Wolhuter (2008) indicate that educational support systems are aimed at preventing, minimising and eradicating learning barriers, but they do not dwell much on the types of such support. Modipane and Mogale (2021) argue that communication breakdown, negative teacher attitude, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of knowledge and support were found to be contributory factors in the ineffective implementation of the policy. They further indicate that non-educational services can help to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activities. There is a need to trace the implementation of the progression policy in order to determine how secondary schools monitor and offer curriculum support to the progressed learners.

This study ought to describe how progressed learners are being supported through the learning process in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province, noting the fact that there are few studies that show evidence of literature on the support given to these learners. This is still an emerging phenomenon within the South African education system. I reviewed literature from journal articles, education policy documents and newspapers. I noted that there is no difference between the South African and international perspectives in the implementation of policies in schools because policies clearly specify the stipulations. However, the implementation process remains inconsistent.

2.3. PROGRESSED LEARNERS

Progressed learners are learners who were moved from one grade to another because of the progression policy not because they satisfied the necessary requirements of passing the previous grade (Government Gazette 36041, 2012). Various reasons were investigated that qualified learners to be moved as progressed learners.

2.4. THE CONCEPT OF SUPPORT

The concept of support has become a broad concept that carries a lot of meanings and overtones. Within the educational context, support is understood as adding to what already exists, such as the provision of extra money, extra equipment, additional staff and extra efforts from educators (Mittler, 2006). Support comprises factors that directly affect education and those that do so indirectly (Steyn, 1997). Education support comprises non-educational services that can help to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational activities (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). Any form of support that assists in breaking learning difficulties can be regarded as learner support. Most studies done on support seem to be concerned with learner support in general, with little or no interest in progressed learners. Muedi, Kutame, Ngidi and Uleanya (2021) find, amongst others, that there are no specific support strategies put in place to assist progressed learners to catch up with their counterparts. Progressed learners can also be understood as learners who have learning difficulties, with learner support being defined as any form of support that attempts to eradicate learning difficulties (Mashau, Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). However, very little is being said on how these progressed learners will be supported through the learning process.

2.5. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING PROGRESSED LEARNERS

The attitude of the teacher is one of the most important ingredients that determines whether the teaching and learning process is successful or not. A positive attitude yields more effective results at the end of the day. Teachers' lesson plans should accommodate learners who struggle during teaching. The application of inclusivity as outlined in the White Paper 6 during all activities that take place in the class is very important. Teacher attitude determines if the learners take their studies seriously or lose interest. Thus, the Code of Ethics of South African Council of Educators Act (2000) always sought to see teachers' interactions with their learners as pleasant.

Lesson planning is also a challenge that contributes to how progressed learners perform. The study sought to understand whether teachers prepared lesson plans that benefitted all learners of different cognitive levels (i.e., whether the lesson plan addressed the individual needs of all learners or whether it was prepared as classical). The expanded opportunities in the lesson plan should be properly used to capacitate and keep all learners busy with different assessment activities leading to the same outcome of the lesson plan. The CAPS curriculum has produced prepared lesson

plans from different publishers as a way of assisting teachers to reduce their workload. However, teachers must ensure that the lesson plan includes ways that the teacher will use to support progressed learners through the learning process, because in the prepared lesson plan, this has been excluded.

2.6. PROGRESSION DEBATE

Debates around learner progression, retention and performance are on-going, contentious and contradictory. This means that people have different views and ideas regarding the progression of learners. Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) argue that neither retention nor automatic promotion has the potential to fully assist learners who do not understand the subject content, nor provide rational answers to learner challenges and underperformance because both approaches have a host of disadvantages. Moagi and Daniel (2020) find that teachers were not trained to teach progressed learners and tended towards teacher-centred approaches. This means that retaining learners is not a solution, neither is progressing learners. The key is to support these learners. Educationists, researchers and policy makers around the world cannot explain why learners are unable to obtain the promotion requirements. In the case of schools in South Africa, learners' underperformance can be blamed on socio-economic issues and shortage of resources, amongst other things. But the government is trying its best to encourage the culture of learning through the introduction of policies such as the progression policy (Hartley, 2006).

2.7. PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN EUROPE

In almost all countries, according to the legislation in force, it is possible for a pupil to repeat a class in primary education. Although pupils are given support and remedial activities when they experience problems during the school year, a pupil might still fail to meet the set objectives by the end of the year (Shaw, 2010). Retention is therefore proposed as the final measure of support. It is considered that by repeating a school year, pupils have a further opportunity to improve their learning and skills. The regulations that provide for grade retention are mostly based on this principle. There are a very few countries that do not allow grade retention. In Norway, regulations state that all pupils are entitled to automatically progress through the years of compulsory schooling (John, 2015).

In Iceland, the Compulsory School Act does not state explicitly that children progress automatically to the next school grade, but explains that compulsory education shall generally be of ten years in duration, in general, all children, between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to attend compulsory school (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). This has been interpreted to mean that no child should stay longer than 10 years at compulsory level, and consequently, this has become the usual practice. Furthermore, in the National Curriculum Guide currently under revision, it will be stated explicitly that children at compulsory level are to be moved up automatically from one grade to the next at the end of the school year. In Bulgaria, according to a recent amendment to the National Education Law, in 2009, a pupil may not repeat grades 1 to grade 4. In Liechtenstein also, legislation provides for automatic progression through primary education.

2.8. PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN AFRICA

According to a study done in Uganda, with regard to the quality of education, arguments point to the fact that retaining learners does not mean that such learners will improve their performance in the next calendar year, nor does it improve the achievement of low-achievers. This means that learners who have been retained in a grade may still fail to obtain the promotion requirements in the following year. This can be understood as stating that retaining learners is not a solution but supporting learners can always produce the desired results (Ndaruhustse, 2008). Retaining learners who did not meet the promotion requirements does not mean that such learners will meet the requirements in the next grade. Meanwhile, in Zimbabwe, progressed learners are termed learners in the lower stream. Unlike in South Africa, the system groups learners according to their learning abilities in Zimbabwe, and it is called streaming of learners. Mainstreaming of learners in Zimbabwe is an act of grouping learners by ability range, that is, those with high intelligent quotients are grouped in their classroom and those that are perceived to be slow are grouped in their own classroom (Mapolisa, 2016). Instead of progressing learners to the next grade, the Zimbabwean Department of Education has adopted a method of allocating experienced teachers in teaching learners in the lower stream. Allocating experienced teachers in classrooms that are occupied by progressed learners is an indication that these learners need to be supported through the teaching and learning process.

2.9. PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The policy on progressed learners was adopted in June 2015. The intention of the policy was to create the culture of learning within learners so that all learners have a chance to follow their dreams in life. The drop out of learners can be blamed on resentment and their failure to attain the promotion requirement. The basic principles relating to this policy statement is that a learner must not spend more than four (4) years in a phase. This implies that he or she should repeat a phase once (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The progression of learners can sometimes be described as the movement of learners from the current grade to the next possible grade, excluding learners in grade R. This is done regardless of whether the learners have failed to meet the promotion criteria (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2015). South African policy on progression states that learners should not stay for more than four (4) years in a single phase (grade 4 to grade 6); he or she may only fail one grade once. Thereafter, the learner is advanced to the next grade even if he or she fails to meet the promotion requirements. The fact that these progressed learners did not meet the promotion requirement clearly indicates that they need to be supported through teaching and learning for them to meet the promotion requirements.

2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Weiner's (2009) Theory of Organizational Readiness Change was used in this study to describe the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province. According to this theory, readiness for change refers to organisational members' shared resolve to implement change (change commitment) and shared belief in their collective capability to do so (change efficacy). This implies that in order to implement change in an organisation, particularly the school, all stakeholders of the school have to be committed and effective during the implementation process. The stakeholders of the school must be willing and able to pursue the course of action; they must have shared beliefs in their joint capability to organise and execute the courses of action in change implementation (Weiner, 2009). The theory by Weiner assisted me to make meaning of how organisational readiness for change has an impact on the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools.

Weiner (2009) believes that organisational readiness for change varies as a function of how much organisational members value the change. This focuses on how the stakeholders of the school value the fact that learners have to be progressed to the next class even though they did not meet the promotion requirements. Change valence is drawn from the motivation theory that says that the more an organisation values the change, the more they will want to implement it (Weiner, 2009). For the fact that the 2015 Grade 12 results dropped as compared to the 2014 results, and that the implementation of the progression policy was scheduled to be fully implemented in 2015, one can assume that the stakeholders of the schools did not value the change. It might be because teachers were not involved during the formulation of the progression policy but were just instructed to implement it without a clear understanding of the provisions of the policy.

According to the Theory of Organizational Readiness for Change, change efficacy is drawn from the social cognitive theory which is a function of organisational members' cognitive appraisal of the three key determinants of implementation capability, namely, task demands, resource availability and situational factors. This theory can be related to the implementation of the progression policy in the sense that when learners are progressed to the next class, they are more likely to experience challenges of coping with the tasks done in that class taking into consideration that they did not cope with those of the previous class. Furthermore, lack of resources and overcrowded classes are important aspects that require schools to work collectively to assist progressed learners. The progression policy stipulates that various consultations have to be made before the implementation of the policy, and that the parent/guardian of a learner is the final decision maker of whether the learner can be progressed or not (DBE, 2015). Perhaps collaborations between teachers and parents to offer support to progressed learners might assist such learners to cope well in the next class.

The Theory of Organizational Readiness for Change serves as a lens in my study because policies in an organisation could have a negative or positive impact on organisational members' evaluations of task demands, resource availability and situational factors. Besides, change valence and change efficacy depend largely on an organisation's readiness towards change; that is, the commitment of an organisation in terms of valuing change, having little choice or obligations to change. The implementation of the progression policy (change) in schools (organisations)

requires evaluation because the organisational members, especially progressed learners, are faced with academic changes of the next class. Therefore, the implementation of this policy should address the academic, social and psychological aspects. Besides, the fact that the 2015 Grade 12 results dropped while the progression policy was also fully implemented in schools the same year must also be considered. This theoretical framework is in line with the literature reviewed as well as the research questions. Werts and Brewer (2015) mention that the application of a policy within the lived experiences is underestimated, hence an increase in ineffective policy implementation. This goes back to change valence and change efficacy of the organisational readiness for change. The theory also assists to answer the research questions in an attempt to achieve the purpose of the study. This involved describing how secondary schools in Manyeleti Circuit support progressed learners through the learning process.

2.11. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided the review of literature on progressed learners and how much they need to be supported to obtain the progression requirement. Therefore, to ensure that progressed learners are being supported through the teaching and learning process, the progression policy must be implemented. The theoretical frameworks used in the study are based on scaffolding, which aided me to make sense of the support that should be given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two provided the literature review on the support given to progressed learners through teaching and learning in different contexts. In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology of the study. The chapter covers the following: a) research design, b) research paradigm, c) research approach, d) selection of participants, e) data collection and f) data analysis. In addition, trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations of the study are discussed.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe research design as procedures for conducting the study. Therefore, the aim of a research design is to specify a plan to enable the researcher to generate empirical evidence that can be used in answering the research questions.

3.2.1. Different research designs

There are different types of research designs: for example, a case study, narrative design, and phenomenological designs. Maree et al. (2010) define a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

A descriptive case study has been chosen as the research design of this study. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), the descriptive design brings about closeness and more understanding, resulting in the unearthing of new things about the real world. This type of design will assist the researcher to find out how educators support progressed learners in their schools, more especially secondary schools, because only secondary schools have been selected to form part of the study (Creswell, 2007).

3.3. RESEARCH PARADIGM

 According to Babbie (2010), a paradigm is a fundamental model or frame of reference used to organise observations and reasoning. The following are paradigms that researchers could use in research: the interpretivist, post-positivist, pragmatist, advocacy is also known as participatory and the constructivist paradigms. These paradigms were investigated to ascertain which one would best underpin this study. These paradigms, among others, included post-positivism; pragmatism; advocacy which was also known as participatory; the constructivist; and interpretivist worldviews or paradigms, which are similar and often used as an approach to qualitative research.

The post-positivist paradigm is characterized by Maree (2010) according to the assumptions of determination, reductionism, empirical observation, including measurement and theory verification. Creswell (2009) outlines constructivism and interpretivism as paradigms where human beings construct meanings as they engage in the world they are interpreting. This assumes the meaning attributed to multiple participants, which imply that different participants in a study come up with their own understanding in relation to the topic under study. Social constructivism, according to Creswell, allows humans to engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives and experiences. Thus, the study of progressed learners was related to social constructivism because a lack of learner understanding is an educational challenge and a social or societal problem.

Another paradigm stated above was the advocacy or participatory worldview, which Creswell describes as recursive or dialectical, and focused on bringing about change in practices. This paradigm is characterised by political empowerment, issue-oriented, collaborative and change-oriented assumptions. The paradigm is more focused on the emancipation of others as it is more politically inclined.

The participatory worldview is more involved in issues relating to politics or topics which had political background under study. Consequence of action, problem-centered, pluralistic and real-world practice-oriented summarized the characteristics of the pragmatism paradigm which is the last paradigm discussed. This paradigm does not commit to any philosophy, and gives researchers freedom of choice. In this paradigm, according to Creswell, the truth is what works at a time; there is no yardstick used to research the topics under this paradigm.

Considering the different paradigms outlined above, the researcher aligned his study with the social constructivist and interpretivist paradigms as the two were appropriate in qualitative research. The researcher chose the interpretive paradigm because it entailed the exploration of a social problem in education, in this case, the support given to progressed learners through teaching and learning. The researcher opted for the interpretivist paradigm because the problem under study was a societal problem where education was concerned. Teachers who participated in the study shared their experiences regarding the support given to progressed learners through teaching and learning in secondary schools. Social constructivism was also a chosen paradigm as it allowed the generation of theories by participants to come up with relevant recommendations in relation to the topic of the study.

3.4. RESEARCH APPROACH

Yin (2009) defines a research approach as a logical plan for getting from here to there; it addresses the initial set of questions to be answered. There were three types of research designs: the qualitative research design, quantitative research design, and mixed-methods research design. The qualitative research design relies on words while the quantitative research design relies on numbers. The mixed method is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research designs. The distinction between these research designs is that in the qualitative research design, researchers are afforded an opportunity to explore the views of the participants, through open-ended questions, and individuals can give their views in the participants' settings.

This research design (qualitative research design) allowed the researcher to interact with participants by asking questions to collect data. The qualitative research design also afforded an opportunity of analysis of data from the information that was collected from different participants with all leading towards a common theme guided by the topic under study.

The qualitative research design allows researchers to come up with a description of the phenomenon despite how complex it may appear. This is achieved by gathering different thoughts provided by different participants. The qualitative research design has certain advantages (Shidur 2017) eliciting deeper insights into designing, administering, interpreting, assessing, testing and exploring test-takers' behaviours, perceptions, feelings and understanding. This research design allows the researchers

to work with a team of other experts in the field of study to assist in directing the thoughts and confirming the commonality of the findings through the process of research. It also affords the researcher to design his research study in a manner that is open to the interpretation of data gathered by the researcher or participants who took part in the study.

In contrast, quantitative research designs focus more on the testing of theories in a deductive way. In this research design, data collected are generalized and the researcher is restricted by efforts to protect his/her findings from biased decisions. Another assumption of this research design is that there is sometimes a replication of findings; information and numbers are used more than words, and questions are more close ended than open-ended questions of qualitative research design. Shidur (2017) also adds that quantitative research designs also take snapshots of the phenomenon, are not in-depth, and overlook test-takers and testers' experiences and what they mean by something.

The researcher opted to use a qualitative research design as it was best suited for the topic under study. The issue of progressed learners required more than one participant to share their views about teaching these learners to achieve the aim of reducing the rising numbers of progressed learners in Lichtenburg on an annual basis. Multiple inputs from the participants, who were in this case teachers teaching progressed learners led to deeper insights from different perspectives and environments and assisted in devising strategies to improve the performance of the progressed learners.

Creswell (2009) distinguishes between these research methodologies by defining them as follows: the qualitative research methodology is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He further emphasises that the process of the qualitative research methodology involves issues like emerging questions and procedures. Data are collected in the participants' setting and the focus is on individual meaning, and a description of the complexity of the situation. On the other hand, Maree (2010) describes the qualitative research methodology as research that collects rich descriptive data in respect of a phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is studied. Maree adds that the qualitative research

methodology focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences.

Through the qualitative research methodology, data can be gathered by involving several people who then give their own views of a phenomenon being studied. However, data collected is always context-bound and thus it is not identical for each participant although the context is related. The quantitative research methodology as outlined by Creswell (2009) could be defined as a means for testing objective theories by examining relationships among variables. Similarly, Maree and Pietersen (2010) explain the quantitative research methodology as a process that is systematic and objective in its ways of using numerical data from only a selected subgroup of the universe or population to generalise the findings to the universe being studied. Creswell (2009) continues that variables can be measured with the use of instruments, and numbered data can be analysed with the use of statistical instruments. Creswell (2009) describes the mixed method as an approach of inquiry that combines both the qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

This method, in Creswell's view, involves philosophical assumptions and the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research alone. This study employed the qualitative research approach as it employed the interactive strategy of inquiry, an interaction between the researcher and participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to discover the phenomenological aspect that the researcher wished to investigate.

The researcher opted for this line of inquiry as it assisted in gathering data from different sources, in this case, of the support given to progressed learners through teaching and learning. The researcher set predetermined questions that the participants had to respond to. At the same time, the researcher had the latitude to probe the participants to elaborate where there was a need. The researcher chose semi-structured interviews because he could redirect the participants through probing if he observed that they were losing track of the topic. The study was undertaken through the qualitative research methodology because there were several participants who were requested to take part in the study to provide information from their own personal experiences from different backgrounds, in this case, the support provided

to progressed learners through teaching and learning in selected secondary schools in Manyeleti Circuit.

3.5. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Population sampling is defined as methods used to generalise findings when a population was studied (Maree & Petersen, 2010). According to Maree and Petersen (2010), the population represents a phenomenon studied for a specific purpose. On the other hand, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define a population as a group of individuals with common characteristics.

Sample refers to the actual selected size or units of the population that represent the entire population under study (Maree & Pietersen, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher define a sample as a small number of individuals selected from the population that would form the basis of a research study. There are two different population sampling methods: random sampling and stratified sampling methods.

This study will adopt purposive sampling, which allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals and sites that will help them understand the subject matter better (Creswell, 2014). This means that only individuals that are relevant to the study will be considered. This study will take place in the area of Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, where Manyeleti Circuit is situated. The research will focus mainly on three secondary schools situated in rural Bushbuckridge. Of the three schools, two are mathematics, science and technology schools, and the other caters for social sciences and commercial subjects.

This research is going to focus mainly on grades 10, 11 and 12. The researcher will sample three (3) learners per school, which means one (1) per grade (grade 10, 11 and 12). A total number of nine learners will be sampled. Only progressed learners will be sampled. All principals (making a total of three principals) of the sampled schools, one head of department (HOD) per school and two educators per school (making a total of nine educators) will be selected.

3.6. DATA COLLECTION

Explanations and descriptions provided by the research participants provided information to the researcher to develop credible answers to the main research question. Strategies for collecting data such as observations, interviews and documents enable researchers to collect data deemed relevant for the phenomenon under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). There are different ways in which data could be collected in education research these methods are interviews, focus groups, documents and observation.

3.6.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are regularly used in research to support information emerging from additional data sources (Maree, 2016). Interviews provide an interactive role where I had to be in close contact with participants; one of the characteristics of a qualitative research approach (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Merriam (2009) attests that semi-structured interview comprise a mixture of more or less structured questions. This is guided by the interview by a list of questions or issues to be explored. Interviews recognise feelings, emotions and views concerning a specific research subject (Creswell, 2014). The tools used gave participants, that is, educators, the platform to respond to questions on how progressed learners are being supported through the teaching and learning process. I continuously involved participants through the use of questioning in an unbiased way, listening attentively to responses and asking follow-up questions (Maree, 2016). The interviews were done in a quiet place such as an office to avoid disturbance. I secured appointments with participants beforehand for each session of the interview. The appointments for interviews were scheduled during free periods or after working hours to avoid disruption of the day-to-day teaching and learning activities. This created a stage where participants could voice their experiences in a free-flowing manner. Qualitative research interviews pave the way for participants' sense-making and experiences (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that there are steps to follow in analysing different methods of qualitative data. This involves segmenting and taking apart information, like peeling back layers of an onion and putting it back together again. This is in line with the interpretive paradigm where individuals seek out understanding of the world in which they live and work. Through the qualitative research approach, I was able to

investigate the support given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

3.6.2. Focus group interviews

In line with the interpretive paradigm and following the qualitative research approach, I used focus group interviews which have been identified as some of the most suitable data collection tools. A focus group interview, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is when a researcher interviews participants in a group of 6 to 12 participants, which allows for control over the line of questioning. The focus group involved six learners from the FET phase (grades 10-12) from each school. The mixed in grade level ensures that opinions, thoughts and experiences of learners were prompted. This allowed the learners to widen their range of responses and to share their details of experiences, providing rich information (Maree, 2016). The interviews in both schools took place in a board room for about 50 to 60 minutes during sports period which was before the late afternoon study commences. Audio recording during the setting was used to bring value towards data collection and credibility to the study (Maree, 2016).

3.6.3. Classroom observations

Observations were done in the classroom as one of the ideal data collection tools for the interpretive paradigm and in line with the qualitative research approach. I was a non-participant observer in this study. Observation is when I take notes and observe in a structured way the events in the research area as they unfold (Maree, 2016). I used classroom observation schedules such as appendix J to assist me in order not to lose focus, thereby collecting unnecessary information that would compromise the study (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Classroom observations enabled me to observe and record participants' behaviours and activities methodically. I was a complete observer in the sense that I observed the classrooms without participating to record information as it happens in the observation and be more objective (Nicholls, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This allowed me to observe what people were doing and to witness participants' actions in their 'natural setting'. This enabled me to watch what people are reluctant to talk about.

6.6.4. Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the data collection methods used in case study research (Merriam, 1998). Maree (2016) defines document analysis as a data gathering technique that assists to shed light on the phenomenon. Documents can either be public records (newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports) or personal documents (personal journals, letters, diaries) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Records that are found in schools tend to provide better understanding of a setting. Thus, document analysis allows information to be extracted from relevant documents.

In this study, public records like the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document, the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, the school assessment policy and lesson plans were analysed in order to get an understanding of democratic principles and values that were incorporated into educational practices. CAPS documents were used as evidence to check whether educators followed guidelines stipulated in the documents. The Manifesto contained details of how democratic values can be contextualised in education. The Assessment policy was used to check whether any form of democratic principles and values were stipulated. Lesson plans were studied together with observations to establish if democratic principles and values were evidently infused into teaching and learning practices.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

I used Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse data from semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews as well as document analysis (Bowen, 2009) to analyse data obtained from records in order to investigate the incorporation of democratic principles and values into classroom practices by educators. The qualitative approach involves a process where a more focused re-reading and reviewing of the data helps to uncover themes relevant to a phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). Merriam (1998) emphasises the importance of the process of thematic analysis and triangulation as significant in ensuring the quality of a study by means of data collection and data analysis as a systematically detailed chain of evidence in an interpretive paradigm.

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Collection and data analysis form the basis for the effective answering of research questions (Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). As a result, I began data analysis immediately after it was collected. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), qualitative analysis is an on-going process, where there are no strict boundaries between data collected and making sense of that data. An in-depth analysis of the incorporation of democratic principles and values by educators into their classroom practices was implemented in relation to the FET (grade 10-12) Phase.

The study adopted Braun and Clarke's six step-by-step guide in following the Thematic Analysis strategy. Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of analysing data covers the following procedure: familiarising oneself with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and generating a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The framework is a method that identifies, analyses and reports patterns or themes within data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:10), "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set". I used Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse data to investigate the support given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) attest that qualitative data analysis is a process of simplifying abstract data and of transforming it into stronger data, which involves identifying themes and patterns by creating themes or networks in order to display it easily for better organisation of information and subsequent conclusion. Similarly, Mncube and Harber (2010) uphold that data analysis is a process of mass ordering, structuring and meaning of data. Creswell (2014) points out that data analysis involves breaking apart data and placing it back collectively once over again.

I analysed the data while collecting it. Therefore, unanswered questions that remained (or new questions that might come up) were addressed before data collection was completed. Data processing and analysis was on-going. In this study, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were transcribed and analysed, and the information was categorised into themes and sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) propose thematic analysis as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns

(themes) within data. The rich data was organised and described in detail. I further interpreted various aspects of the research topic.

3.7.2. Documents Analysis

Data were gathered from the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (2012), the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, assessment policy and lesson plans. I analysed the documents using Bowens' (2009) document analysis. This was done to provide data in the context within which research participants provide support to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the documents provide what Bowen (2009) calls supplementary research data, which is in line with the research approach. Furthermore, this type of analysis is a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources, ensuring a means of triangulation.

The procedure followed when analysing data is presented in Table 3.7.2 below:

phase		What I did.
1	Skimming	I read the CAPS, Manifesto, assessment policy and lesson plans to get an overall picture (superficial examination).
2	Reading	I did a thorough examination of the documents in order to understand how educators can support progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.
3	Interpretation	I then interpreted the documents in relation to the support that should be given to learners through the teaching and learning process.

Table 3.7.2: Document Analysis (Bowen, 2009)

3.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS

To maintain accuracy and consistency in a research study, trustworthiness or qualitative validation is key (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study on the support given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process in secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province ensured trustworthiness through the following criteria: credibility, confirmability and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8.1. Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to finding out that results are credible or believable from the viewpoint of participants in the research (Creswell, 2013). This means that the aim of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomenon of interest from participants' understanding. In this study, I used the following strategies to enhance credibility. During the data collection procedures, each participant was informed of the purpose and procedures of the research before the actual interview. Participants' responses were transcribed verbatim. Each participant was given their own copy of the transcript to check for validity, which most scholars (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Durodola, 2009; Creswell, 2013) refer to as member checking. I re-looked at the raw data and checked that the findings on the report are reflective. I spent ample time with participants when I was collecting data and repeatedly observed and interacted with them. The use of multiple methods of data collection through different instruments enabled me to cross-validate responses from findings. In other words, I constantly applied certain strategies to look for accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.8.2. Confirmability

Findings will be related only to the study and not to the bias, motivation and view of the researcher (Durodola, 2009). To ensure that the data relates specifically to how progressed learners are being supported through the teaching and learning process, I engaged with the audit (give to an external editor) in a manner that the reader should be able to confirm and accept the findings. Moreover, different data approaches were collected at different times through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and document analysis (Merriam, 1998). I used triangulation to establish validity to ensure trustworthiness of the research. According to Miles,

Huberman and Saldaña (2014), triangulation means linking analysis with findings from a variety of data sources. This further demonstrates trustworthiness. Masote (2016) acknowledges that it is vital to find out whether the data obtained ties in with other general findings of other studies. Thus, a diversity of data sources was added to findings to build a more argumentative view of themes. This means that comparing my findings with other findings will serve as evidence supported by reliable sources derived from writings (Nicholls, 2009). Triangulation validates the findings of the study (Creswell, 2014).

3.8.3. Dependability

Dependability was achieved through auditing (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argues that dependability results can be subject to change and instability. Dependability therefore looks at how consistency and reliability of the research is maintained (Masote, 2016). In this study, I aimed to avoid making mistakes when abstracting information by checking transcripts. By gathering records and interpreting findings, I made sure that the information was recorded, and what is reported as findings on the results bring value to researchers, clients and practitioners (Nicholls, 2009). I compared the results from interviews with the classroom observations and documents to see if they come together upon the same findings.

3.9. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Findings will be vital to curriculum advisors and policy makers to enable room for the support of progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. Findings will also reduce theoretical and practical gaps when supporting progressed learners. The present study is significant as its interpretations and recommendations will contribute to the body of knowledge on what more can be done to help other researchers and the Department of Basic Education on how educators can support progressed learners through the teaching and learning process in public schools. Moreover, it will add in the building of theories on learner support.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were perceived. Ethical issues are important in today's research (Creswell, 2014). Ethical practice is vital as it ensures respect for participants' privacy (Durodola, 2009). It provides research that has a truthful report, that reflects participants' responses, and that is not personalised or plagiarised for my interest (Creswell, 2012). Before conducting the study, it is important to seek and to be granted approval by the University of Limpopo's Research Ethics Committee.

Moreover, permission letters were also sought from relevant authorities: The Department of Basic Education at district and Circuit levels as well as principals from the two selected schools, including learners, educators and parents/caregivers. The principals of the schools were contacted telephonically to make arrangements to explain the study and how it was to be conducted. All the above authorities granted approval letters to me before the commencement of the research.

Participants were given explanations for the reasons of the study, and that their participation is voluntary, as they were not in any obligation and could withdraw at any given time. They were further informed of the study methods used to collect data and the way the outcome would be published. They were provided with consent forms to sign. Consent forms for those who were under 18 years old were signed by the parent/guardian of the participant. Ethical procedures were monitored throughout the study so that issues of confidentiality and privacy of participants were protected. Privacy of participants will not be revealed, and anonymity will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms instead of participants' real names. This will protect and guarantee their identity, ensuring them anonymity and equal treatment. This also included the identity of the schools to avoid any unfair criticisms and assumptions, with the use of 'School 1' and 'School 2', instead of schools' names.

3.11. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The above discussion outlined the research methodology followed in the search for an in-depth understanding of the support given to progressed learners through teaching and learning in the selected secondary schools around Bohlabela District in the Mpumalanga Province. The qualitative research design and the relevant qualitative techniques for data collection were thoroughly explained. The discussion indicated

how the gathered data were analysed using the systematic process of coding, categorisation and interpretation. The various measures needed for credibility and trustworthiness of the data collecting instruments as well as the data obtained were described. The ethical issues of importance to this study were also highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings of the data that I collected in three schools in Manyeleti Circuit, Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga Province that highlighted how progressed learners are being supported through the teaching and learning process. The discussion was derived from the documents and semi-structured individual interviews of the sampled schools. Data collected through instruments were organised and categorised into themes and subthemes guided by the research questions (Yin, 2011). The participants, which are teachers teaching in the FET phase, progressed learners, and principals were selected because they were directly affected by the implementation of the progression policy.

The chapter outlines, firstly, the management and analysis of data; secondly, the presentation of research findings and interpretation; thirdly, an overview of the research findings; and, lastly, a summary of the challenges of supporting progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

4.2 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to establish how educators at Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa support progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. In the discussion, I present findings from the analysis organised into categories and themes as guided by the research questions (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). Findings from the data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and document analysis are presented separately.

This research study sought to answer the following research questions:

- ❖ What is the support structure or system in place as a school to support progressed learners, and how do you use such a structure or system?

- ❖ Do you have a school policy for the progression of learners?

- ❖ What initiatives have you taken as a school to support progressed learners?

- ❖ What support systems, structures or programmes do you have in place to support progressed learners?

- ❖ How do you use and monitor your support systems, structures, or programmes for progressed learners?

In accordance with the qualitative research approach, the data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of Thematic Analysis. The data was coded and organised into themes. Coding is a process of organising data into themes through the refinement of codes (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). I captured important data in relation to the research questions asked and looked for patterns.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDNIGS

In this section, I present findings of the study separately in terms of themes according to the data collection methods that were used which are: semi structured interviews (appendix H), focus group interviews (appendix I), classroom observations (appendix J) and document analysis. The discussion of findings is substantiated by direct quotes from interview transcripts which were recorded and transcribed to verify their authenticity.

4.4 FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS

Semi-structured interviews were prepared and organised as was explained in chapter 3. The interviews were conducted with nine (9) educators; three from each of the three schools. The educators (E) are referred to as educator 1, educator 2, educator 3 and educator 4; coded as T1, T2, T3 and T4, and nine learners, three from each of the three schools. Learners are coded as A1, A2, A3 and A4. The findings were organised according to the themes generated from interviews, as represented in Table 4.4 below:

Theme 1	Theme 5
Learner's understanding of progressed learners	Teachers views on progression policy
Theme 2	**Theme 6**
Support that should be provided to progressed learners	Progression policy
Theme 3	**Theme 7**
Those responsible for providing support	Schools' support of progressed learners
Theme 4	**Theme 8**
Is enough being done to support progressed learners?	Monitoring support structure to support progressed learners

4.4.1. THEME 1: LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS

In order to understand what progressed learners meant to learners, the following question was posed: what is your understanding of the concept progressed learners? From the responses, participants expressed different understanding of progressed learners. The participants' responses were as follows: A1B1 said: *"these are learners who have been pushed from one grade to the next grade, due to not getting enough qualification for the next grade".* A12B12 said: *"it's a learner who was supposed to repeat grade 11 but was progressed to the next grade".* A15B15 said: *learners who were given another chance by allowing them to the next grade".* A14B14 said: *"are learners who are unable to master their maximum subjects and are considered as underperforming".* A11B11 said: *"people who have been pushed from other grade to other grade".*

Based on the participants' responses, it appears that most learners seem to view progressed learners as those learners that have been pushed, but they demonstrate little knowledge about factors that contribute on a learner being progressed. Factors such as age and repetition of a phase.

4.4.2. THEME 2: SUPPORT GIVEN TO PROGRESSED LEARNERS

Regarding the kind of support that should be given to progressed learners, most of them stated that progressed learners should be given extra classes and extra work. This is what A9B9 said: *"they should be given extra time or extra class classes, because I think they are struggling with the normal time that we are given".* In agreement A15B15 said: *"they should be given more extra classes so that they can improve their grade"*

Participants seem to believe that progressed learners can improve their grades if they can be given more time to learn as a way of supporting them. One participant supported this view by saying: progressed learners didn't do well in the previous grade, because they couldn't cope with the allocated time. Another participant, A15B15 went further to say: *"learners should be given extra lesson and also get motivated by the teachers to work hard".*

In contrast with the above three participants who based their views and responses on learners being given extra time, two participants had different views. They seem to note lack of motivation to be the downfall of progressed learners, hence they think progressed learners should be supported through motivation. This agrees with Dikgale's (2012) finding that parents do not encourage learners to attend school. This is what A6B6 had to say: *"they should motivate them and make sure that all progressed learners can ask for help from their teachers".* In support, this is what A14B14 had to say: *"learners must be given a splendid support and they must be told that being a progressed learner doesn't mean that they are a failure".*

Based on these findings, it appears that learners understand that progressed learners should never be discriminated against based on their failure to meet the promotion requirements. However, they should be embraced and supported through the learning process.

4.4.3. THEME 3: PERSONNEL TO SUPPORT PROGRESSED LEARNERS

Regarding this question on who should provide support to progressed learners, five participants said teachers and school principals. This is what one of the five participants, A15B15 had to say: *"they can be supported by the principal and the whole teachers at school".* In support, this is what A12B12 had to say: *"the school principal and the teachers".*

However, three participants were of the view that parental involvement can also play a big role. Hence, they mentioned parents as part of those who should provide support to progressed learners. This is what A6B6 had to say:" all *of the teachers including the principal and their parents".* In support, this is what A1B1 had to say: *"teachers and parents".*

In contrast to the eight participants, one participant had a different view. This participant mentioned classmates as amongst those that should provide support to progressed learners, who happened to be their peers. This is what A2B2 had to say: *"teachers and their classmates".*

Based on the responses from the participants, it appears that every stakeholder should play a role in supporting progressed learners. However, the primary role rests with teachers and school principals because they have a privilege to support them through the learning process.

4.4.4. THEME 4: SUPPORT GIVEN TO PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN SCHOOLS

In order to understand whether enough is being done to support progressed learners in schools, the following question was asked: based on the current state in schools, do you think enough is being done to support progressed learners through the learning process and why? In response to this question, eight participants agreed that enough is being done to support progressed learners. This is what A6B6 had to say: *"Yes, I think enough is done to support progressed learners, because they are provided with winter class and weekends classes.* In support, this is what A5B5 had to say*: "Yes, they are giving them enough time to study, and teachers involve them in school extra studies".* According to these participants, giving extra class is proof that enough is being done to support progressed learners. It appears that extra classes seem to be

the most common method of support used by teachers to support progressed learners in schools.

In contrast to the eight participants, one participant had a different view. On whether enough is being done to support progressed learners, this participant never agreed to this notion. This is what A9B9 had to say: *"No, they are being discriminated based on their situation here at school, the situation that they are progressed learners. Teachers mock them and make them a laughingstock instead of supporting them"*.

Based on this finding, it seems as if some educators still discriminate against progressed learners based of the fact that they did make it in the previous grade. This means that some teachers laugh at learners for being progressed learners.

4.4.5. THEME 5: TEACHERS VIEWS ON PROGRESSED LEARNERS

Regarding teachers' views on progression policy, participants expressed various views. Some participants were in support of the progression policy, while others did not support it. This is what T2S3 had to say, *"it is good because learners don't have to repeat a grade many times"*. In addition, T4S5 had this to say:*" it is good because it reduces overcrowding at school and makes the classroom manageable"*. T1S2 said: *"it is a very good policy, but I think it lack details, like guidelines on how teachers can support progressed learners"*. In support, this is what T5S6 had to say: *"I support the progression policy of South Africa, because there are learners who experience barriers in learning. For a learner to repeat a phase twice it can make them lose interest at school/ self-confidence because of their age"*.

In contrast to the four participants above, the other for participants were not in support of the progression policy. Others mentioned learners' attitude towards learning, while they know that they meet the progression requirements, be it age or repetition of a phase. This is what T8S9 had to said:*" I think it disadvantages many learners who are having difficulties in learning, because they are progressed before they can master the content"*. T7S8 said:*" I think it is not a good idea as more learners are aware of this policy, tend to relax and not study very hard, knowing that they will till go to the next standard (grade)"*.

T6S7 said: *"it is not a good idea to progress learners, because they end up failing at grade 12. It is better to engage them to other activities such as sports and art".* T3S4 had this to say: *"it is not good because learners are no longer serious about their school, because they are aware that once they fail one grade or phase they will be progressed to the next grade".* In support, this is what T9S10 had to say: *"it should be scrapped".*

Based on the responses from participants, it appears that most educators are not happy with the introduction of the progression policy in schools (2012). This is a huge problem because educators are the very people who should implement the progression policy, then support these progressed learners through the learning process.

4.4.6. THEME 6: PROGRESSION POLICY

Regarding the question on whether or not selected schools have a policy that addresses progressed learners, seven participants said yes, one participant said no, and the remaining one said he was not sure. Based on the participants' responses, it appears that most schools have a progression policy, but they hardly meet to discuss it. The absence of staff meetings meant for the discussions of how schools could implement the progression policy could mean that schools implemented the policy without a clear understanding of its provisions.

This finding is contrary to the Theory of Organisational Readiness for Change. This could mean that teachers in schools did not have shared beliefs in their joint capability to organise and execute the courses of action during the implementation of the progression policy (Weiner, 2009). Communication breakdown between staff members on the implementation of the progression policy is a challenge. Rammala (2009) reported a similar finding of communication breakdown on factors contributing towards poor performance of Grade 12 learners.

4.4.7. THEME 7: SCHOOLS 'SUPPORT OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS

Regarding initiatives that schools have taken to support progressed learners, the following question was asked: what initiatives have you taken as a school to support progressed learners? This is how participants responded: T4S5 had this to say: *"we focus more on progressed learners and give them extra work to do at home"*. T5S6 had this to say: *"we call the parents to be involved in their children's education, they check their books regularly they assist with their homework"*. T8S9 had this to say: *"we have remedial class that specifically deal with progressed learners"*. T7S8 said: "*After lessons extra school programmes and public holidays they attend"*.

In contrast with the other participants, one participant had a different view. The participant was of the view that since the school is not saying anything on how they should support progressed learners, he would use his own way to support them. This is what T1S2 had to say: "*the school is silent on how we should support progressed learners, but as a teacher I give them extra work and make extra notes for them"*. T3S4 had this to say: *"in our school learners are progressed to the next grade, but there is no support that is given to these progressed learners"*.

Based on these findings from the participants, it is clear that progressed learners are being supported through extra work only. Educators seem to be of the view that these progressed learners did not meet the promotion requirements because they did not have enough time to learn, hence the idea of giving them extra work and more learning time as the only form of support.

4.4.8. THEME 8: MONITORING SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN SCHOOLS

In order to understand how schools monitor their support systems for progressed learners, the following question was asked: How do you use and monitor your support systems, structures or programmes for progressed learners? From the responses, participants expressed different ways in which they use to support progressed learners and how they monitor them. This is what T1S2 had to say: *"I draw a time-table for after school classes aimed at addressing the barrier that these progressed learners have; these learners complete a register after attending"*. T6S7 said: *"Assess their activities"*.

T2S3 had this to say: *"after school progressed learners stay behind with their teacher so that the teacher can close the gabs, they had during normal contact time, they are also given extra time"*. T8S9 had this to say: *"by giving out assessment to see if there is an improvement where each learner was facing any challenges"*. T7S8 had this to say: *"they are regularly assessed on their formal and informal assessment tools. In order to maintain their progress"*. T5S6 had this to say: *"all educators must work together to develop a clear plan of how they will guide learners through that phase. Teachers show learners how to learn by developing interesting projects"*.

Based on the findings from participants' responses, it appears that schools do not have systems in place to monitor whether support is given to progressed learners. Moreover, it seems as if schools do not have committees that focus on progressed learners, hence no one is there to monitor if indeed educators are giving support to progressed learners through the learning process.

4.5. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Focus groups were conducted with six learners in each group from the FET phase (grades 10-12) in each of the two schools. The group interviews were carried out during sports time, before the commencement of afternoon studies. Eighty (80) learner participants from each school were referred to as learner 1, learner 2, learner 3, learner 4, learner 5 and learner 6; coded as A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and A6, respectively.

4.6. CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Using a non-participant classroom observation schedule, I analysed data to ascertain corroboration and contradiction that have occurred. Regarding what I observed when it came to the behaviour of participants in this study, not all educators in the three schools have the same culture of conduct. All participant educators greeted the learners as they entered the classroom. Some of these participants even informed the learners of what to know by the end of the lesson.

These are the lesson's aims and objectives. The learners seemed to be on their best behaviour and showed respect towards their educators. In all the classes observed, there did not seem to be any form of ill-discipline from the learners as everyone seemed to be paying attention. In one class in School 2 where a grade 10 class was observed, learners were not comfortable in my presence.

4.7 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Documents were analysed using Bowens' (2009) document analysis to provide data in the context within which research participants incorporate democratic principles and values into their classroom practice. It was important to recognise the key features identified by Child-Friendly Schools and Social Reconstructionism approach where support and progressed learners within the framework were discussed. The analysis enabled me to determine how these crucial attributes were applied in the three schools selected for this study. Some educators might apply these attributes while others do not.

I asked educators for a copy of lesson plans administered on the day of classroom observation. Those who were able to provide the objectives, outcomes and tasks from lesson plans were given and then studied. The lesson plans provided, including classroom observations, made it possible to examine the degree to which educators practise what it is written. Through the lesson plans, I looked at their teaching approach to find out if it is in line with the interpretation of lesson objectives and assessments. However, many of the lesson plans did not have anything regarding supporting progressed learners during the learning process.

4.7.1 Lesson plans

Several lesson plans collected after and during the classroom observation lacked important details such as lesson objectives, learners' and educators' activities, and most importantly, how to support learners with learning barriers who are also known as progressed learners. Although educator participants carried with them textbooks or question papers as a basis for the day's lesson, it was difficult to understand the quality of the lesson as lesson plans were incorrectly written.

4.8 SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study found that the support given to progressed learners through the learning process in Manyeleti Circuit of Mpumalanga Province was not enough regardless of the provisions of the policy. This study found that participants did not fully understand how they should support progressed learners.

4.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The participants of the study were of the view that progressing learners who did not meet the promotion requirements is good for learners, but it could be better if enough support is given to the learners. They are aware that if enough support is given, these learners can meet the promotion requirements at the end of the calendar year. However, teachers' views regarding the progression policy revealed that workshops are required. This is because, firstly, stakeholders (i.e., teachers, progressed learners and parents) do not understand the progression policy; secondly, they limit support to only giving learners extra work; and, thirdly, stakeholders' lack of understanding lead to negative attitude towards the effective implementation of the progression policy.

Teachers see the progression policy as an addition to challenges they already face in schools; hence some went on to say they think the policy should be abolished. This part does not agree with the Theory of Organisational Readiness for Change (Weiner, 2009) in the sense that teachers, as organisational members, do not value change, which is, namely, learner progression. Teachers' attitude towards the progression policy negatively affects the change commitment.

Some of the progressed learners stated that schools implemented the progression policy effectively; however, they do not get full support from some educators. Additionally, some educators and fellow learners label them as progressed learners, which demotivate them. Learners understand the fact that they have been progressed, but they would understand it more if they were receiving enough support from both educators and fellow learners, as the implementation of the progression policy requires a joint capability from all the stakeholders in the organisation (Weiner, 2009). It was also found that some schools do not have systems in place to support progressed learners. This means that they also do not have tools to monitor the support that should be given to progressed learners through the learning process.

4.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter presented analysis and interpretation of findings from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. It found that not enough support is given to progressed learners through the learning process. In the next chapter, I discuss summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The summary of findings from the evaluation of the support given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province is presented in this chapter. Report on the conclusion of the research is drawn from the research problem and the research question. The recommendations on how secondary schools can support progressed learners are also discussed. The chapter is structured as follows: (1) the discussion of research design and method used; (2) summary and interpretation of the research findings; (3) conclusions; (4) summary of challenges on the implementation of the progression policy; (5) recommendations; (6) contributions of the study; (7) limitations of the study; (8) recommendations for further studies; and, (9) lastly, the concluding remarks.

5.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

This study employed a descriptive case study design as explained in Chapter 3. The descriptive case study design enabled me to describe how progressed learners can be supported through the learning process in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province (Yin, 2003). I was able to ground my assertion in terms of responses from stakeholders (i.e., teachers, progressed learners and parents) of the progressed learners and literature reviewed (Creswell, 2013). The descriptive case study design assisted me to assemble the relevant data regarding the support that should be given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process (Bhattacharyya, 2006).

Data were collected through documents and semi-structured individual interviews. The documents equipped me with relevant information support provided to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process (Yin, 2011). The semi-structured individual interviews enabled me to describe the participants' words and actions by presenting data on the support that should be given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. This interpretivist approach from the qualitative inquiry used Document Analysis (Bowen, 2009) and Content Analysis (Neuman, 2011)

to present an in-depth understanding of how secondary schools support progressed learners (Creswell, 2013).

5.3. SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study described the support that should be given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province. Progression policy was intended to minimise unnecessary school dropouts for learners who have been retained for more than four years in a phase (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Three secondary schools in Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province were sampled to evaluate the support that is given to progressed learners through the teaching and learning process. The study focused on how the sampled schools support progressed learners.

The findings were interpreted based on the purpose and research questions of the study. The stipulations for the support that should be given to progressed learners were presented in Chapter two. The purpose of this study was to investigate how progressed learners are being supported through the teaching and learning process in secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province. The research questions that guided this research study were: (1) What is the structure or system that has been put in place as a school of supporting progressed learners and how do you use such a structure or system? (2) Do you have a school policy for the progression of learners? (3) What initiatives have you taken as a school to support progressed learners? (4) What support systems, structures or programmes do you have in place to support progressed learners? (5) How do you use and monitor your support systems, structures or programmes for progressed learners? The research findings were categorised to answer the research questions to achieve the purpose of the study. The findings of this research study identified several issues in support of progressed learners through the teaching and learning process.

5.3.1 Educator's view of the progression policy

Regarding educators' views on the progression policy, it was found that educators do not have knowledge of the progression policy. Their responses indicated that many have negative attitude toward the progression policy. Having a negative attitude led to failure to implement the policy to the fullest. Some educators blamed the progression policy for learners' bad behaviour.

5.3.2 Progression policy

Regarding the question whether selected schools have a policy that addresses progressed learners, it was found that all the selected schools do have a progression policy, but they hardly meet to discuss it. The absence of staff meetings meant for the discussions of how schools could implement the progression policy could mean that schools implemented the progression policy without a clear understanding of its provisions.

5.3.3 Schools' support to progressed learners

Regarding the initiatives that schools have taken to support progressed learners, it is clear that progressed learners are being supported by being given extra work only. Educators seem to be of the view that these progressed learners did not meet the promotion requirements because they did not have enough time to learn, hence the idea of giving them extra work and more learning time as the only form of support. It was found that educators limit themselves to a single method of support, instead of exploring other forms.

5.3.4 Structures or programmes to support progressed learners

Regarding whether enough is being done to support progressed learners in schools, it was found that some educators still discriminate against progressed learners based on the fact that they did not make it in the previous grade; meaning that some teachers laugh at learners for being progressed learners.

5.3.5 Monitor support structures in schools

Regarding how schools monitor their support systems for progressed learners, it was found that schools do not have systems in place to monitor whether support is being given to these learners. Moreover, it seems as if schools do not have committees that focus on progressed learners, hence no one is there to monitor if indeed educators are giving support to progressed learners through the learning process.

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conclusions of the study are derived from the purpose and research questions. The study concludes that certain educators in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province do support progressed learners through the learning process, but they limit themselves to a single method of support. The study described the support that should be given to progressed learners through the learning process in secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province.

The progression policy was intended to minimise unnecessary school dropouts for learners who have been retained for more than four years in a phase (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Three secondary schools in Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga Province, were sampled to evaluate the support that is given to progressed learners. The study focused on how the sampled schools support these learners. This study revealed that progressed learners were not supported accurately as per the provisions of the progression policy.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- This study revealed that educators are not involved in the development of a school based progression policy. It is very important to allow educators to have inputs when developing a school policy. This allows teachers to own the policy because they know that they are responsible for its creation. Teachers and learners' information, with no exception to progressed learners' profiles, must be updated in order to validate the school information. The minutes of the meetings must also be recorded as they serve as evidence for the decisions taken.
- Little support was given to progressed learners because educators did not understand the provisions of the progression policy. If schools are prepared for the implementation of a new policy, such implementation is more likely to be successful. Before educators can be expected to implement a policy, they must be trained first. Training for teachers can be in the form of a workshop with a policy expert as a facilitator (Katiliute, 2005). The effective implementation of the progression policy depends largely on teachers' understanding of the policy and implementation thereof. Therefore, teachers must be trained on a policy

rather than provide and impose it for implementation. This would assist with effective implementation, as they are the ones to ensure that all the provisions of the policy are implemented.

- The implementation of the progression policy defeated its intention because progressed learners were not adequately monitored and supported academically. The Department of Basic Education, through districts and circuits, must ensure that schools access new information within the education system in time. This will assist teachers within a cluster to team up and discuss such information for the benefit of the learners.

- Educators do not accept a policy that is being imposed on them. They need to feel like they are part of the team. Schools must have internal meetings to discuss how educators can support progressed learners as a school. Sharing ideas can lead to various options to use when supporting progressed learners.

- Even though parents should also play their part to support progressed learners, a huge task rests with educators who have a privilege of supporting them through the learning process. Educators should know that they are the primary sources of support to progressed learners.

- Educators should be reminded that it is against the progression policy to make fun of learners who do not meet the promotion requirements but are progressed to the next grade. Educators should never be the reason why progressed learners decide to drop out; they should always bring positive energy to these learners. This means that they should always motivate them to do better.

5.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study outlined challenges experienced by stakeholders of the progression policy during the implementation process. The study has a role in assisting school administrators and policy makers to weigh their practices and manage the implementation process of the progression policy. The findings of the study also added to the theory of development with regard to policy implementation in secondary schools.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on three schools in Manyeleti Circuit, Bohlabela District in Mpumalanga Province. The study used a limited population consisting of three educators and three progressed learners per school. Furthermore, the population may not represent all the stakeholders of the progression policy in all secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The findings of the study also add to the new concept of progressed learners.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Although the study has achieved its purpose of checking the support that is given to progressed learners in secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province, consequently affecting the performance of the Grade 12 results, a number of aspects require additional research. i. in the context of this research study, it would be important to research on the conceptualisation of the progression policy. This could be the starting point for the effective implementation of the policy. ii. It would be important to research teachers, learners and parents' role in the development of this policy.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the support that is given to progressed learners through the learning process in secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The research study concludes that the support that is given to progressed learners is not enough because all the selected schools use one method to support progressed learners. The question is what should teachers do if their only method of support fails to yield the desired results? Hence, educators are advised to explore various methods of support. Reading books on learner support and going through the internet can help unlock other methods that can be useful in supporting progressed learners than giving them extra work. Educators must always remember that one of their seven roles is being a lifelong learner.

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TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: **24 April 2020**
PROJECT NUMBER: **TREC/93/2020: PG**

PROJECT:

Title:	An Investigation of how progressed learners are supported through the learning process: The case of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga, South Africa
Researcher:	P Nyathi
Supervisor:	Ms MC Modipane
Co-Supervisor/s:	N/A
School:	Education
Degree:	Master of Education in Education Studies

PROF P MASOKO
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) **This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.**
ii) **Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.**
iii) **PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

Finding solutions for Africa

Faculty of Humanities
Executive Dean
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727,
South Africa Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268
3425,**Email:Sat**

DATE: 18 October 2019

NAME OF STUDENT: NYATHI, P
STUDENT NUMBER: [201008701]
DEPARTMENT: MEd   —   Curriculum
                        Studies
SCHOOL: Education

Dear Student

FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2019/5/10)

I have pleasure kin informing you that your MEd proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 29 May 2019 and your title was approved as follows:

TITLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW PROGRESSED LEARNERS ARE SUPPORTED

Ethical Clearance	Tick One
In principle the study requires no ethical clearance, but will need a TREC permission letter before proceeding with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

THROUGH THE LEARNING PROCESS. A CASE OF MANYELETI CIRCUIT,
MPUMALANCA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
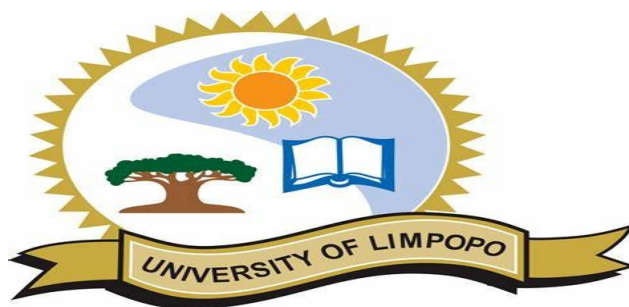
Note the following:

Yours faithfully

Prof R Maoto,
Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

Director: Prof MW Maruma Supervisor:
Ms MC Modipane

University of Limpopo
School of Languages and Communication Studies
Translation Studies and Linguistics
Private Bag x1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
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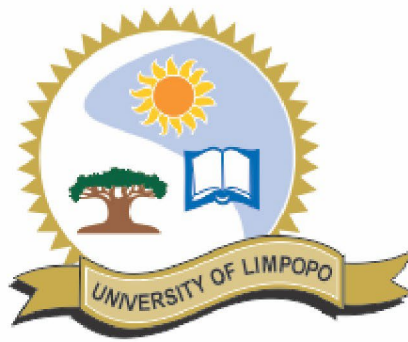
10 July 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: EDITING OF MASTERS RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to certify that the masters research proposal entitled 'An Investigation of how progressed learners are supported through the learning process: The case of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga, South Africa' by Mr P Nyathi (201008701) was proofread and edited by me, and that unless further tampered with, I am content that all editorial issues have been dealt with.

Kind regards

Dr SJ Kubayi (DLitt et Phil - Unisa)
Senior Lecturer (Department of Translation Studies and Linguistics – UL)
SATI Membership No. 1002606

University of Limpopo

School of Languages and Communication Studies

Translation Studies and Linguistics

Private Bag x1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa

Tel: (015) 268 3707, Fax: (015) 268 2868, email:joe.kubayi@ul.ac.za

03 October 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: EDITING OF MASTERS RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to certify that the masters research proposal entitled 'An Investigation of how progressed learners are supported through the learning process: The case of Manyeleti Circuit, Mpumalanga, South Africa' by Mr P Nyathi (201008701) was proofread and edited by me, and that unless further tampered with, I am satisfied that all editorial issues have been dealt with.

Kind regards

Dr SJ Kubayi (DLitt et Phil - Unisa)

Senior Lecturer (Department of Translation Studies and Linguistics ̱ UL)

SATI Membership No. 1002606

Finding solutions for Africa

P.O. BOX 6299

HLUVUKANI

1363

MARCH 2021

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

PRIVATE BAG X 1342

HLUVUKANI

1363

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN SCHOOLS

I, NYATHI PROMISE, am a registered master's degree in Education (Curriculum Studies) student at the University of Limpopo. I hereby request permission to conduct a research in two schools within Manyeleti Circuit. The title of my dissertation is "The support given to progressed learners through the learning process Progression policy in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa: An evaluation study". The participation is voluntary and involves no harm. Furthermore, the information collected from the schools will only be used for the purpose of this study and nothing else. Attached is the proposal of the research topic which articulates what I am planning to do.

I can be contacted on the email: mabekani23@gmail.com or this cell number: 0731742784 for clarity about the study. I hope my request will be taken into consideration.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully

………………………….

NYATHI P

Appendix: Permission to Conduct the

P.O. BOX 6299

HLUVUKANI

1363

MARCH 2021

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PRIVATE BAG X 1342

NELSPRUIT

1201

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN SCHOOLS

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Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully

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NYATHI P

Appendix: Permission to Conduct the