



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Management of learner progression in public primary schools in Gauteng

by

DOROTHIA MOLOBANE MOEKETSE

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**Master of Education in
Education Leadership**

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Supervisor
Prof KS Adeyemo

26 June 2023

DEDICATION

The dedication goes to my late father, Joseph Matsobane Riba. May his soul continue to rest in peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for blessing me with a wonderful healthy life every day. Thank you, Lord, for the beautiful, supportive family you have given me and the strength always to pursue my dreams.

A special thank you goes out to my wonderfully supportive husband and my three sons. You, my people, have been my pillar of strength throughout this project. You have been there for me from the beginning till the end. Your love and continuous support have made me the person I am today.

A special thank you also goes out to my mother, Elizabeth Riba, for teaching me the importance of education from an early age. You are the best.

I want to thank the following individuals for their input and support, which enabled the success and completion of this work.

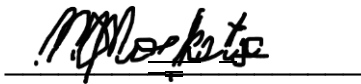
A special thanks to my supervisor, Professor Samuel Adeyemo, for your continued support and encouragement; even during very difficult times, you continued to hold my hand and gave positive and encouraging feedback, which motivated me to believe that it can be done.

I thank my colleague Sifiso Dlamini and my student friend Tumelo Maganyane for continuously checking up on my progress. Your valued encouragement and support do not go unnoticed and are highly appreciated. May God bless you.

And finally, a special thank you goes to all the education institutions that participated in this study. You have made this research possible, as without you, there would have been no research. Thank you. May God bless you in abundance and protect you. This includes all the school management team members and educators from these education institutions within the Gauteng Department of Education Gauteng East District.

ETHICS STATEMENT

“The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria’s *Code of ethics for research and the policy guidelines for responsible research*”.



Dorothia Molobane Moeketse

26 June 2023

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Make today matter
www.up.ac.za

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

DEGREE AND PROJECT

INVESTIGATOR

DEPARTMENT

APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY

DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Funke Omidire

CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EM 19/06/01**

MEd

Management of learner progression in
public primary schools in Gauteng

Ms. Dorothea Molobane Moeketse

Education Management and Policy Studies

04 October 2019

08 May 2023



Mr Simon Jiane

Prof Kolawole Samuel Adeyemo

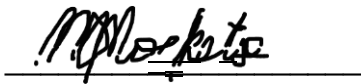
This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, **Dorothia Molobane Moeketse**, declare that this thesis, titled ***Management of learner progression in public primary schools in Gauteng***, which I hereby submit for the master's degree in education leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Dorothia Molobane Moeketse

26 June 2023

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR



Member South African Translators' Institute
www.language-services.online

27 March 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The dissertation "Management of Learner Progression in Public Primary schools in Gauteng by Dorothja Molobane Moeketse has been proofread and edited for language by me.

I verify that it is ready for publication or public viewing regarding language and style and has been formatted per the prescribed style.

Please note that no view is expressed regarding the document's subject-specific technical content or changes after this letter's date.

Kind regards

Anna M de Wet

SATI-MEMBER-1003422

BA (Afrikaans, English, Classical Languages) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.

BA Hons (Latin) (Cum Laude), University of Pretoria.

BA Hons (Psychology), University of Pretoria.

ABSTRACT

The dissertation builds on and contributes to work in learner performance and achievement. The specific focus of this study was on learner progression in schools. The learner progression policy stipulates that the learner can only repeat a phase once. Although several studies examined the effects of learner progression, there has not been a strong focus on managing intervention strategies and support. The purpose of the dissertation was to explore the different effects of the learner progression policy in schools, how this policy is managed and what support is made available to learners affected by this policy. This study further examined the School Management Team's (SMT) roles in managing progressed learners' academic performance through realistic and managed intervention strategies. The data for this qualitative study was collected through individual semi-structured interviews with purposive sampling of Deputy Principals (DPs), Heads of Department (HDs) and educators. The data was collected from the four sampled primary schools in Ekurhuleni, east of Johannesburg, in the Gauteng East District. The data population for this study were one Grade 3 educator, one Grade 4 educator, one Foundation Phase Departmental Head, one Intermediate Phase Departmental Head and the Deputy Principals in each school. The dissertation draws on the work of Bronfenbrenner, whose ecological systems theory explores student achievement best understood as the developmental outcome that emerges as a result of interaction among layers within a complex system. The findings from this study unveiled the pressures that are brought by the policy requirements, including the assessment requirements and the reporting procedures, which tend to then prioritise the issues of data collection rather than ensuring that learners grasp the required basic content that will be used throughout the schooling system.

Keywords: Automatic promotion, intervention strategies and support, progressed learners, progression policy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate of Education
ALP	Automatic Learner Promotion
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum And Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DH	Departmental Head
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GET	General Education and Training
HED	Higher Education Diploma
LSE	Learner support educator
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NCLB	No child left behind
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NPPPPR	Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement
PL	Post level
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
SMT	Senior Management Team
DP	Deputy Principal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	I
Acknowledgements	II
Ethics statement	III
Ethical clearance certificate	IV
Declaration of authenticity	V
Declaration of language editor	VI
Abstract	VII
List of abbreviations	VIII
Table of contents	IX
List of tables	XIII

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research problem	3
1.3 Statement of purpose.....	5
1.4 Rationale.....	5
1.5 Research question.....	9
1.5.1 The main research question	9
1.5.2 Research sub-questions	9
1.6 Preliminary literature review	9
1.7 Theoretical framework	9
1.7.1 Ecological system model: Urie Bronfenbrenner.....	10
1.7.2 The relevance of the theory to the research	10
1.8 Research methods.....	11
1.8.1 Paradigms	11
1.9 Research Design and Methodology.....	12
1.9.1 Data collection.....	13
1.9.2 Participants	13
1.9.3 Data analysis procedure	14
1.10 Ethical issues	14
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	 15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.1 .1 Learner progression.....	15
2.2 South Africa	17
2.3 Cameroon	21
2.4 Brazil	22
2.5 Uganda.....	23
2.6 Namibia.....	24
2.7 Learner progression vs Learner retention	25
2.8 The effects of the learner progression policy	27
 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..	 30
3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 Research approach, paradigm and design	30
3.2.1 Research approach.....	30
3.2.2 Research paradigm.....	31
3.2.3 Case study design	31
3.3 Research methods.....	32
3.3.1 Research site	32
3.3.2 Sampling	32

3.3.3	Research Participant.....	32
3.4	Data collection strategies	33
3.4.1	Semi-structured Interviews	33
3.4.2	Interview Schedules	34
3.4.3	Audio recordings	34
3.4.4	Data analysis procedure	34
3.4.5	Trustworthiness (validity)	35
3.5	Ethical considerations	35
3.5.1	Permission granted	36
3.5.2	Voluntary participation and informed consent.....	36
3.5.3	Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality	37
CHAPTER FOUR:	DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS	38
4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	Participants' profiles	39
4.2.1	Background of School A	39
4.2.2	Background School B	39
4.2.3	Background of School C	40
4.2.4	Background of School D	40
4.3	Emerging themes from the research questions.....	42
4.4	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	46
4.4.1	Findings from Principals.....	46
4.4.1.1	Policy implementation	46
4.4.1.2	Curriculum management, monitoring and support.....	47
4.4.1.3	Implementation of remedial programmes.....	49
4.4.1.4	Parental involvement in schools.....	50
4.4.2	Findings from Departmental heads	51
4.4.2.1	Policy implementation	51
4.4.2.2	Monitoring and support.....	53
4.4.2.3	Educator accountability	55
4.4.2.4	Tracking of progressed learners	55
4.4.2.5	Parental Involvement.....	56
4.4.3	Findings from Educators.....	57
4.4.3.1	Policy implementation	57
4.4.3.2	Monitoring and Support by the School Management.....	58
4.4.3.3	Learner support and intervention strategies	61
4.4.3.4	Overcrowding and time for support	62
4.4.3.5	Learner referrals.....	64
4.4.3.6	Parental involvement.....	65
4.4.3.7	External factors affecting performance	66
4.5	Conclusion	67

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS,

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1	Introduction.....	68
5.2	The background of the study	68
5.3	The implementation of the progression policy in primary schools	70
5.4	Tracking, Monitoring and Supporting of Progressed Learners	72
5.5	Parental Involvement in supporting progressed learners.....	74
5.6	Recommendations.....	75
5.7	Opportunities for further research.....	77
5.8	Limitations.....	77
5.9	Conclusion	78

REFERENCES	79
------------------	----

6. APPENDICES 85

6.1	APPENDIX A: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER	85
6.2	APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT	87
6.3	APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH - PRINCIPAL	90
6.4	APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY	93
6.5	APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER.....	96
6.6	APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: The number of learners promoted in school A needing assistance from Grades 3 to 4	20
Table 4.1: Summary of participants	41
Table 4.2: Schools' profiles.....	42
Table 4.3: Deputy Principal themes	43
Table 4.4: Departmental Head themes	44
Table 4.5: Grade 3 and 4 educators' themes	45

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The inception of the progression policy in South African schools is one of the initiatives in the educational revolution that followed the elections of 1994 (Ramputla, 2020). The political changes from the apartheid regime to a more democratic and inclusive South Africa influenced the curriculum (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). Since South Africa's first post-apartheid elections in April 1994, the Ministry of Education has introduced three national curriculum reform initiatives focused on schools (Jansen, 1998). The educational restructuring initiatives after 1994 led to various announcements regarding curricula and policies during the last three decades. Curriculum 2005 was unveiled in 1997, followed by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2007, and the currently used framework, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), in 2012 (Adu & Ngibe, 2014). This pattern means the education policy has been revisited repeatedly during this period (Adu & Ngibe, 2014). These different reforms had implications on the issues of assessment of learners in schools and the determination of promotion requirements. It was not until the introduction of the current curriculum reform, which is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), that clarity was given, and promotion and progression requirements were stipulated.

The introduction of CAPS as a policy in the South African education system has brought about changes in the education system. One of the changes has been the new specific promotion requirements. The CAPS curriculum has come up with new specific promotion requirements. These requirements state that every learner in the foundation phase must achieve a minimum of 50 % in their Home Language, 40% in Mathematics and 40% in First Additional Language for the learner to be promoted. In the Intermediate Phase, the learner must further pass two of the other three subjects at 40% (DBE, 2013). Based on these promotion requirements, educators started seeing many learners not meeting the requirements and having to repeat the academic year. The progression policy was then introduced to minimise school dropout rates and also progressing learners who have been retained for four years in the phase (Mogale & Modipane, 2021)

The implementation of these promotion requirements has led to a high number of learners being unable to meet the requirements. The matric class of 2015 saw the largest number of progressed learners since the policy was promulgated in 2013 for the FET phase. Of the 799 306 matric candidates, 65 671 were “progressed learners” (9.8%) (Juan, Reddy & Hanna, 2021). The Gauteng education MEC indicated in an interview that 2017 saw 4,901 progressed learners writing their final exams (Nomahlubi, 2018).

The progression policy only allows a learner to be retained once in a phase (DBE, 2013) to curb multiple learner retentions. This means when a learner does not meet the requirements for the second time in any phase; then the learner will have to be progressed. Progressing the learners does not necessarily mean that they are ready to deal with the content in the grade to which they are progressed. The purpose of this study is to get an insight into how these progressed learners are supported to close the content gap they were experienced after being moved to the next grade. The study looks at the systems that are put in place by schools to manage learner progression and ensure that the necessary and relevant support is offered.

Progression means that a learner (excluding Grade R learners), who has not met all the requirements to pass the grade, is being advanced to the next grade and provided with additional assistance (DBE, 2013). Progression may prevent a learner from being held in the phase for more than four years if the promoted grade addresses the prior grade's underperformance. The purpose of this policy was also to ensure the reduction of learner dropouts due to being over age. Learner dropout is often caused by frustrations and a feeling of hopelessness experienced by learners consistently exhibiting patterns of underperformance (DBE, 2015b). According to Grossen, Grobler, and Lacante, “The system of progression was intended to provide a solution for learners to stay in a scholastic system and graduate from it successfully” (Grossen *et al.*, 2017). The question posed by the study is whether this objective is successfully achieved as intended. Are all progressed learners able to graduate successfully from the system? The success of this policy needs to be viewed especially in the township schools and some rural public primary schools where teaching and learning are characterised by overcrowding and a shortage of resources, including educators as one of the important resources expected to implement this policy. The study will

determine the effectiveness of the systems in place in our different schools in pursuing the successful implementation of the policy on progression.

Arguments favouring the policy as a superior choice to grade retention can be divided into three categories: “enhancing education quality, internal efficiency of education and personal development of students/learners” (Okurut, 2015). Furthermore, retaining students leads to classroom overcrowding, and high student-classroom and student-teacher ratios, negatively impacting the overall quality of education (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). It should be noted that though learner progression is generally supported, however, this policy cannot be implemented in the absence of ensuring proper support for the learner in the grade to which they are being progressed. Reschly and Christenson (2012) opined that instructions to struggling learners must be carefully monitored, and it is essential that they receive supplemental interventions addressing their learning needs. Research also focuses on the successes and challenges of intervention strategies used to support progressed learners. We cannot begin to discuss the management of the policy on progression in the absence of relevant intervention strategies that are put in place to support these progressed learners. It should be noted that the important outcome of implementing this policy should be to produce improved learners who have managed to grasp all relevant concepts and end up being able to complete school successfully.

1.2 Research problem

Introducing the progression policy in Education in South Africa has led to having some learners promoted on progression and not by meeting the minimum requirements (Munje & Maarman, 2016). This policy, in turn, led to teachers being expected to ensure the learner grasps previous and new content at the same time. According to Munje and Maarman (2016):

It is for the learners who were progressed to grasp both previous content and new knowledge. This cause standards of performance to drop because even the learners who were promoted genuinely are affected because of needy learners who take more time on support.

Challenges were noted, especially in lower quintile schools, as learner numbers in the classroom do not allow the teacher to support all learners as expected and enrich the learners promoted on merit (Munje & Maarman, 2016). This challenge becomes a burden to both learners and teachers. Learners who are not promoted based on

merit will likely have difficulty grasping the content in the succeeding year (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). This is a problem that has been identified, and this aimed to give close insight into the strategies put in place by the school management and the educators in managing this challenge and determine if any interventions have been put in place.

However, it must be noted that the planned intervention strategies must be managed to ensure every learner gets the support that will yield desired results. For South Africa to be transformed and improve economically will need learners with academics and lifelong skills. South Africa's higher education system isn't generating enough qualified graduates for social and economic progress. Despite decades of policy changes and educationally sound interventions, poor student success patterns persist (Scott, 2018). The learners' academic performance can only be improved if the intervention strategies to support them are monitored, managed and controlled. A personalised learning environment in schools helps at-risk learners to succeed. Early intervention in elementary grades will prevent the need for retention and social promotion. The best alternative to retention or social promotion is identifying at-risk learners and utilising appropriate interventions to minimise academic failure (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012). The relationship between at-risk learners and teachers contributes to positive learning. Strong parental involvement contributes to academic progress (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the school must ensure that the intervention strategies developed can yield results.

In addressing the issue of personalised learning, the SIAS policy promotes the development of Individual Support Plans, which must be designed for each learner experiencing barriers. The policy primarily aims to manage and support teaching and learning processes for learners with barriers to learning within the framework of the NCS (DBE 2015a, 2015b). The question is whether this policy is being implemented and if it is yielding the required results. The study aimed to explore what the challenges were that might have led to the non-implementation of the recommended strategy in the case where the strategy might not have been implemented.

A study conducted in secondary schools in the Limpopo province revealed that teachers could not monitor the progression policy's implementation due to

overcrowded classes, heavy workloads, limited resources and learner behaviour (Mogale & Modipane, 2021). Another study conducted in Kwa-Zulu Natal secondary schools by Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) revealed that the progression policy's effects on learners' performance were negatively impacted by socio-economic factors such as lack of resources and parental involvement, and learner absenteeism. Noting that most of these studies focused on secondary schools, this study intended to look at the primary schools' ability to implement the policy successfully. Another reason for focusing on primary schools is the fact that the importance of early intervention cannot be overemphasised; therefore, I believe that if the interventions are successful in bridging the content gap at primary schools, then we may tend to see a decline in the need for this policy to be implemented in the higher grades as the learners would be promoted with the minimum required content.

The study focused on finding realistic management strategies that can ensure progressed learners are supported in Grades 3 and 4 to meet the requirements to be promoted to the next grade with the content of the next grade or minimum expectations in the institutions of higher learning.

1.3 Statement of purpose

This study aimed to explore the management of the learner progression policy in primary schools and how these learners are supported. It should be noted that we cannot discuss the learner progression policy without exploring the interventions implemented to support the policy. The following will be investigated to achieve the purpose of this study:

- 1 The management of intervention strategies used to improve the academic performance of progressed learners in primary schools from Grades 3 to 4.
- 2 The roles played by Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads and Educators in supporting these learners.
- 3 The strategies used by schools in tracking the progress of these learners.

1.4 Rationale

The research was triggered by the South African education systematic approach to the promotion and retention of learners. The introduction of the "National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12" (DBE, 2013) stated that a learner might only be retained once in a phase to prevent them from being retained in a phase for more than four years

(DBE, 2013). A learner who has been retained in previous phases for four years or more and is likely to be retained again in the next phase should receive help to reach an adequate level of proficiency. This policy meant that no learner that could repeat a grade twice. Also, no learner could be kept in a phase for more than four years whether they had met the minimum requirements or not.

As a former Educator in one of the public schools and currently an Education Specialist in the Gauteng East District I have witnessed learners being progressed to the next grades without having mastered the basic concepts in the previous grades irrespective of them have been retained in the phase for four years. According to the Ministerial Committee on Learner Retention in South African Schools, a percentage of learners beginning Grade 9 cannot continue secondary education, but the system does not provide them with appropriate alternatives. In Grades 10–12, failure, repetition, and dropout are high, wasting many years of learning (Department of Education, 2008).

The Grade 12 pass rate has been affected since the implementation of this policy. Some learners have been progressed throughout the system because the policy only allows learners to be retained once in a phase (DBE, 2013). Learner progressions have led to the introduction of multiple examination opportunities in Grade 12 (DBE, 2017). This adaptation meant that progressed learners could choose only to write some of the six subjects after the preparatory examination based on their performance in the preparatory examination (DBE, 2016). The remaining subjects could be written during the mid-year examination period the following year. This circular was later withdrawn due to challenges with implementation (DBE, 2019). Many over-age learners are within the FET phase due to repeating preceding years (perhaps even more than once). Learners will be progressed to Grade 12. We can expect a large number of learners in the next four years to be in Grade 12, many of whom would not have reached Grade 12 on merit. This large number of learners will negatively impact the Grade 12 pass rate (Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015).

Urgent attention should be given to the management processes that are being put in place in schools to ensure that the progressed learners are given the necessary support, as it becomes difficult for the teachers to teach learners who have not

mastered the previous concepts. This leads to teachers being demotivated when they teach under these circumstances. Progressed learners do not sufficiently grasp the prescribed academic concepts and content presented and assessed (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The extra year spent in the phase should be used efficiently to ensure the learner can grasp the relevant concepts to meet the promotion requirements to the next phase.

The study sought to investigate strategies used by the schools in managing learner progression and the systems used to assist teachers, school management and education leaders in realising the need for planned intervention strategies and ensuring that every learner's progression is monitored and supported. The support for progressed learners should be intensified so that the implementation of the learner progression policy does not compromise the standard of South African education.

Learner performance is a cause for concern, and there have been many discussions around the issues of progressing learners. This phenomenon was addressed by minister Angie Motshega's address of the 2014 matric results as she stated that the strategy of progressing learners who have not met the promotion requirements was not uniquely South African as the mechanism was also used in European countries like Denmark, Finland and Sweden, Asian countries like Japan and Korea and the United Kingdom (More, 2015). These countries support automatic progression instead of retention and repetition because of its efficiency. However, this only partly addresses inefficiency; we must also follow through with a support programme for such learners (More, 2015). It should be noted that according to this policy, progressed learners are highly dependent on the support given in the next grade. This support must be nurtured and encouraged by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and school management officials (Bojuwoye *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the study must explore how school managers and educators manage the support programmes intended for progressed learners.

Opponents of progression say it stigmatizes, lowers self-esteem, disrupts peer relationships, and alienates learners from school. These effects may, in turn, negatively affect the learners' academic achievement and increase the probability of dropping out of school (Koppensteiner, 2014). Therefore, learner support should be

coupled with intervention and discipline, improving low esteem and parental involvement. Truancy was also found to be a challenge to the automatic learner promotion (ALP) policy. Progressed learners tend to miss many more classes than other learners, and their dropout rate is also higher, comparatively speaking (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). Most progressed learners are either demoralised or have developed low self-esteem because of labelling and mocking happening within the school or classroom environment. Through intensified support systems, these learners can be motivated to work harder, and learner dropout can also be reduced.

This study aimed at exploring the quality support systems implemented in schools in managing learner progression, which may assist both the learners and the teachers in strengthening standards of performance in our education system. The special focus on Grades 3 and 4 in this study is based on investigating the ability of schools to manage learning barriers experienced by progressed learners and intervening early. The focus is based on the premise that if learners get support in the elementary stages of their education, they will have a high possibility of success in their higher grades. Research suggests that many learners with learning difficulties are identified in the age range of 9-14 years. There is also an indication that most children aren't recognised until they're nine when they start school and struggle to acquire the necessary skills to grasp reading, arithmetic, writing, and other subjects presented (Karunanayake *et al.*, 2020)

Another reason for focusing on these two grades is that in Grade 3, the intensive support is expected to focus on learners who may have been progressed either in Grades 1 or 2, or may have been retained in Grade 3, and would have been automatically progressed to Grade 4 in that particular year. In Grade 4, the focus of the study will be looking at the learners who have been progressed from Grade 3 to 4 and what support systems are in place to ensure that they grasp the concepts missed in Grade 3.

1.5 Research question

1.5.1 The main research question

How are progressed learners supported in Grades 3 and 4?

In this question, the study aimed to look at the intervention strategies used by schools to support progressed learners in Grades 3 and 4, and the role played by the school management in ensuring that this was done.

1.5.2 Research sub-questions

- 1 What support programmes are in place in Grade 3 and 4 to support progressed learners?
- 2 What planned interventions are available for Grade 4 progressed learners?
- 3 How is this support monitored by the school management team?

1.6 Preliminary literature review

The literature review on learner progression will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. This section will start by clearly defining the concept of learner progression. In so doing, I will also elaborate on the different terms like “automatic progression” and “social promotion”, as used by different countries. A look at learner progression against learner retention will be explored. The literature will further explore the implementation of the progression policy in South Africa and other countries. The effects of this policy, and the different intervention strategies implemented in different countries will also be closely discussed.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The theory I will use is the ecological system model of Bronfenbrenner (Ryan, 2001) for realising system accountability in implementing the policy of progressing learners. The main principle of the theory is the relationship/interaction between systems layers.

- **Microsystem** – According to Johnson, the microsystem consists of “layers [that] form a set of structures with which a person has direct contact, and the influences between the developing person and these structures are bi-directional” (Johnson, 2008). This study will investigate if there is a relationship between the learner environment and achievement.
- **Mesosystem** – This system connects the structures of the learner microsystems and various structures. The parents expect to receive feedback on learner achievement.

- Exosystem – “The exosystem represents the larger social system encompassing events, contingencies, decisions, and policies over which the developing person has no influence” (Johnson, 2008, p. 42). In my study, the policy on progression may negatively or positively affect learner achievement.
- Macrosystem–The macrosystem is formed by the interrelation between micro-, meso- and exosystem. The learner's environment and experiences may influence learner development and behavior.
- Chronosystem – The chronosystem can refer to individuals' short-term, long-term, and socio-historical time dimensions throughout their lives. There has been an increase of progressed learners since the policy's introduction, affecting learner performance and achievement.

1.7.1 Ecological system model: Urie Bronfenbrenner

My study aimed to investigate how the school management teams and district officials manage intervention strategies aimed at supporting progressed learners. The school management teams and district officials, as related systems, are expected to monitor the implementation of the school progression policy. The research in the article of Munje and Maarman (2016) found that the lack of monitoring and evaluation by the DBE resulted in a blanket policy for all schools. The schools surveyed either misinterpreted, disregarded, or applied policy requirements in their own distinctive, apparently contradictory ways, limiting learner options. Social interaction of systems interacting with a learner is therefore important for the positive development of learners, in this case, achieving and improving academic performance and ensuring all learners succeed.

The authors found that how teachers handle high-stakes policies, such as supporting low-achieving learners, affects learner motivation and passing rates (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

In my view, there is a need to investigate the monitoring, and management of the intervention strategies to support progressed learners so that all involved are accountable for the performance of learners.

1.7.2 The relevance of the theory to the research

Microsystems are the direct interaction of the child that influence his achievement in the home environment. Poor socio-economic origins of parents, insufficient housing,

and lack of parental support for education are home-related impediments to learning (De Villiers, 1997). Poverty has major consequences for learners' achievement. Hence, supporting families with low health and socioeconomic status to reduce learning hurdles is crucial (Bojuwoye *et al.*, 2014). Researchers believe safe and secure learning settings are essential to learning support and learner performance. (Bojuwoye *et al.*, 2014). Relationships between at-risk learners and teachers contribute to positive learning. Strong parental involvement contributes to academic progress (Hughes *et al.*, 2017).

The exosystem of the learners includes the DBE's policy, although not directly interacting with the learner. However, this policy may positively or negatively affect the learner's development. This policy becomes a burden to both learners and teachers. It requires the progressed learners to grasp both previous content and new knowledge. This requirement causes performance standards to drop because even the learners promoted on merit are affected by needy learners who take more time on support (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Apparently, educators and school psychologists intervene similarly for all learners without considering their individual needs (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

Macrosystems have a cascading influence throughout the interaction of the other layers. The learner's environment and lifestyle influence the behaviour towards achievement and performance. In their open-ended replies, a recurring theme was that progressing learners are sluggish, uninspired, indifferent, ill-equipped, and ill-disciplined, frequently skipping class and additional courses and not doing their assignments. These challenges in progressed learners make it hard for the teacher to keep up with the pacesetter (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

Chronosystems—Consistent failure to satisfy promotion standards might result in students dropping out of school with poor skills and employability (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

1.8 Research methods

1.8.1 Paradigms

Ontology describes what reality (Guba, 1990) is. The reality of my research is that there is an increase in learner progression compared to the first time the policy on

progression was introduced. The paradigm best related to this study is the constructivist paradigm.

Epistemology describes how you know something (Guba, 1990). According to Stott *et al.*:

The high numbers of over-age learners present in Grades 10-12 suggests that there are large numbers of learners within the FET phase who have repeated previous grades and will be progressed to grade 12. Therefore, for the next four years, we expect particularly high numbers of progressed learners to reach Grade 12 and impact Grade 12 pass rates. (Stott et al., 2015)

The lower the quintile of school, the more progressed learners there are. “The figures given by Motheo [TVET college] range from 27,7 % in quintile 1 and 2 schools to 4,2 % in quintile 5 schools” (Stott et al., 2015). The approach concentrates only on the number of students promoted to the next grade without taking into account the conditions in these new grades or if the promoted students might acquire the essential content knowledge to succeed academically (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Learners explained that they struggled when the environment was not conducive to accessing support. School administrators and department of education officials at the local and provincial levels must develop and promote support structures (Bojuwoye *et al.*, 2014). Teachers and schools may be using the same intervention to assist all learners without considering their individual needs (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

1.9 Research Design and Methodology

I chose a qualitative method to approach this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) characterise it as a comprehensive, face-to-face strategy for gathering data from individuals in their natural circumstances. Qualitative techniques collect data in the form of words rather than numbers. Maree *et al.* (2010) describe this approach as “research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context to develop an understanding of what is being observed or studied”. In this instance, the site and participants were creatively selected to ensure the goal and understanding of the management of progressed learners in primary schools.

The research process comprises emerging questions and processes, data acquired in the participant's context, data analysis inductively leading to the development of specific and general themes, data interpretation, and the documentation of findings. For this research, data collected from interviews conducted on the participants' sites were analysed and grouped into themes. Engaging in this form of inquiry supports a research model based on an inductive style that focuses on the individual meaning and reflects the importance of determining the essential elements of a complex situation (Creswell, 2014)

The case study research design method was the appropriate approach for this study as it allows us to gain an understanding on the issues directly from the curriculum implementers. A case study was advantageous because it could give me in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences in the schooling context. It allowed for a series of interviews and the time available for me to be on the field.

1.9.1 Data collection

The interview method used was semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are brief and require participants to answer predefined questions. It allowed the researcher to probe for clarification of questions and responses. The researcher was attentive to the participants' responses to explore and probe new emerging lines related to the phenomenon being studied. The interviews were audio recorded and saved for reference. The researcher obtained permission from participants for recordings and supplemented the interviews by taking notes. The researcher listened to recordings, made transcripts of the digital recording and used these to analyse data.

1.9.2 Participants

Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads and Grade 3 and 4 educators participated in this study. The Deputy Principals and Departmental Heads were selected because one of their roles is managing, monitoring, and supporting curriculum implementation. They are also responsible for implementing policies and guidelines on learner performance. Grade 3 and 4 educators who have taught for more than two years were selected to share experiences supporting progressed learners. They were also selected because they are knowledgeable about this phenomenon, and they are the implementers of the policy the study is based on.

The method used to sample the participants was the Stratified sampling. “Stratified purposive sampling means selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria for a specific research question” (Maree *et al.*, 2010).

Data analysis procedure

Maree explains content analysis as “a systematic approach to qualitative analysis that identifies and summarises message content” (Maree *et al.*, 2010).

The interview recordings will be transcribed, saved and kept ready for coding. Coding is “the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units” (Maree *et al.*, 2010). Categories were verified, analysed data was structured into categories, and interpreted to make sense of the findings and conclusions.

1.10 Ethical issues

An ethics approval application to proceed with the research was submitted to the ethics committee. Conditional approval was granted with recommendations. Immediately, once the recommendations were affected, the research was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. The permission to conduct the study was granted through the application to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and selected school principals. A meeting was arranged with individual schools to mediate the research's purpose and establish trust between the researcher and the participants. Consent forms were given to the Principals, School Governing Bodies, DPs, Departmental Heads, and Educators. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the process if they wished to do so.

In abiding by ethical guidelines and principles, I ensured participants were informed of electronic recordings and assurance of their confidentiality and anonymity. I strived to eliminate any biasness that the study might bring by constantly reflecting on the research process. The supervisor, in ensuring content validity, assessed interview questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The cumulative research evidence indicates that continued retention of learners does take place though there is evidence that the negative effects surpass positive outcomes (Stott *et al.*, 2015). No evidence suggests that retained learners tend to do better than previously socially promoted or progressed learners (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

Abraham Iyambo, the then-Minister of Education in Namibia addressed the Namibian ALP policy in education as follows:

Automatic promotion introduced as part of the wholesome education reform after independence was aimed at giving slow learners a chance to adapt once they have moved to the next class. However, over the years learners have become complacent and disinterested in learning, thus heavily relying on the system of automatic promotion, knowing fully well that repeating a class twice was out of the question. (Namibia National Students Organisation [Nanso], 2009)

According to the progression policy, a learner who has been unable to meet the minimum criteria for passing a grade for the second time must be moved or promoted to the next grade, although they have not met the previous grade's minimum requirements for promotion (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The learner would then be deemed to have met the minimum pass requirements as stipulated for the grade by the education authority. Therefore, progression happens despite a learner being unable to meet these minimum requirements (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

In the United States, the US Department of Education produced a document describing social promotion as allowing failed students to be considered to have met the performance and academic standards to pass on to the next grade with their peers instead of being retained to complete or satisfy the requirements.

2.1.1 Learner Progression

The South African DBE defines progression as “the movement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, despite the learner not having complied with all

the promotion requirements” (DBE, 2015). Progression prevents learners from staying in a phase for longer than four years. Normally, learners are promoted when they meet the grade's minimal pass standards. However, progression means moving forward despite not meeting these basic needs (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

Both teachers and learners are affected by learner progression. Teachers are expected to ensure that the progressed learners are supported in the next grade, whilst at the same time, the learners are also expected to be able to grasp concepts they have missed out on in the previous grade and catch up with new concepts at the current grade (Munje & Maarman, 2016). The question is how this can be achieved within the allocated annual time frame (Stott *et al.*, 2015). The study hoped to get the views of managers and educators as the policy implementers on their successes regarding meeting these policy objectives.

Munje and Maarman (2016) recommend surveying and observing teachers, specifically monitoring teaching quality, time spent on lower grades, and promotion and repetition regulations that may affect advancement. In this research, the focus will also be on Grades 3 and 4, which are lower grades, and in looking at the management of this progression policy, aspects of teaching quality cannot be ignored.

Stott *et al.* (2015) also maintain that these expectations cause teachers' burnout from afternoon and weekend classes. Pressure from the DBE to improve progressed pupils' performance demoralises instructors (Stott *et al.*, 2015). In the schools evaluated, reducing standards in teaching evaluation to integrate needy learners did not have the desired effect since these learners were being conditioned to be less competitive (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Though previous scholars have identified these challenges, we cannot ignore that school management and educators' implementation of this policy has not been sufficiently explored. Therefore, this must also be studied before conclusions can be made on the effectiveness of the learner progression policy.

The look at how the different countries are implementing this progression policy is explored in the next discussions.

2.2 South Africa

The South African government introduced a system of automatic “progression” to keep failing students in school, allowing students who have not fulfilled the promotion criterion for their current grade to be promoted to the next grade under specific conditions. However, this policy resulted in a large deterioration in the 2015 matriculation rates (Grossen *et al.*, 2017). In her speech, Motshekga said, “the results would have been better if it were not for students who had been promoted to Grade 12 without necessarily having passed Grade 11” (Shange, 2016). This new system of progression saw a decline in the matric results performance. As of 2015, we noted that the matric pass rate fell to 70.7% from 75.8% in 2014 (More, 2016).

Improving learners’ primary school performance will reduce the need for retention or progression and later lead to a reduced dropout rate (Grossen *et al.*, 2017). Additional resources and evidence-based treatments are needed to provide all learners with a fair chance to succeed academically and economically in a global society. In poor socio-economic settings, dramatic increases in learner performance are needed in the foundation phase before student deficits grow too large and fall too far behind (van der Berg, 2015). Learners who struggle in one grade but are promoted to the next are more likely to struggle in a more difficult academic topic or class (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019).

Previous research indicates that most teachers have negative attitudes towards this policy of progressing learners. This negative attitude then also negatively influences the effectiveness when implementing this policy. This study's main findings are as follows: 1. Public elementary schools under study lack enough instructors to undertake automatic class promotion. 2. The public elementary schools under study lack skilled teachers for automatic class promotions (Tani, 2018). There is also pressure on schools to continuously improve learner performance even though the context in schools is challenging and increasingly diverse. This pressure subsequently exacerbates the disparity between the desired policy outcomes and reality in particular schools (Honig, 2006). Hence, as a result, LaRocque (1986) contends that politicians expect educators to effortlessly comply with policy demands, notwithstanding the reality that complicates policy implementation.

A study by Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) revealed that the education system in South Africa, from the Foundation Phase level up, is faced with serious challenges. Parental support, absenteeism, ill-discipline, demotivation, resource allocation, and teacher-learner ratios have been found to affect teaching and learning negatively. A poor socioeconomic milieu also makes schools dysfunctional, hindering teaching and learning (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

A proactive deployment of educational officials providing intensive support and prioritising the vulnerable and progressed learners will make a meaningful improvement. This need emphasises that the effective execution of techniques to enhance learners' performance requires a collaborative effort on the part of all stakeholders (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

The school progression policy aims provide access to school, keep retention rates realistic, and meet government objectives of fairness and excellent education. Given its minimal contribution to learner experience, capacities, and freedoms in the classroom, this strategy is controversial (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Munje and Jita (2020) stated: "Automatic promotion focuses on maintaining learner dignity and ensuring that all learners complete primary school".

The Learner Progression policy affects teachers and learners, as teachers must ensure that progressed learners are supported in the next grade. At the same time, learners are expected to be able to grasp concepts they have missed out in the previous grade and catch up with new concepts in the current grade (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The question is how this can be achieved within the allocated annual time frame. Stott *et al.* (2015) maintain that these expectations have effects where we see educators experiencing burnout due to having to provide more sessions in the evenings and on weekends. Instructors are feeling demoralised because of the low performance of advanced learners and DBE pressure for the learners' performance to improve (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

There is a belief that progressed learners tend to be less competitive based on a study examining the benefits of lowering standards in teaching assessment to accommodate struggling learners. The findings did not indicate any consistent

improvement in understanding and learner performance (Munje & Maarman, 2016). There are no well-defined structures and intervention strategies; thus, the policies provide abstract rather than practical guidelines, leaving the learners and teachers to their own devices and initiatives. Research has shown that in many instances, teachers neglect lower grades, especially Grades 8 and 9, whereby teachers don't attend their periods to give support to progressed learners in Grades 11 and 12 (Stott *et al.*, 2015). In the study of Munje and Maarman (2016), the principal stressed the need to motivate Departmental Heads to prioritise monitoring and assessment of teachers in connection to the execution of the school progression policy and other parts of the curriculum. Learners are also affected during this process Picklo and Christenson (2005) state that "learner progression sends the message to all students that they can get by without working hard".

Research has shown that many learner progressions are coming from low-quintile schools. Stott *et al.* (2015) show that high quintile schools attract many learners coming from high socio-economic backgrounds who enjoy more support for their studies and homework assignments throughout their academic careers. Therefore, they are less likely to fall behind educationally, as is often the case in economically deprived communities. The percentage of progressed learner's increases with a decrease in quintile. "In Motheo [TVET College], this ranges from 27,7 % in quintile 1 and 2 schools to 4,2 % in quintile 5 schools" (Stott *et al.*, 2015).

Table 2.1: The number of learners promoted in school A needing assistance from Grades 3 to 4

	3A	3B	3C	3D	Total
Number of learners in class	43	41	44	40	168
Ready to progress	22	28	20	26	96
Ready to progress with support	21	13	24	14	72
Not ready to progress	2	4	8	1	15

Sourced from Munje and Maarman (2016)

Table 2.1 above from Munje and Maarman (2016) summarises data from the sampled schools, showing the total number of learners for each Grade 3 class and the status of achievement and performance. Seventy-two out of 168 learners needed support in Grade 4. The support that is needed is not the same for all learners but depends on the subject and the concept that requires intervention. Factors such as class size and shortage of resources make it difficult for teachers to support individual learners as expected.

Munje and Maarman (2016) suggest that for further research, teachers need to be surveyed on their quality of teaching and the time spent on teaching a lower grade, and implementing admission and repletion policies to determine whether there is really a need for progressing learners.

Alternatives to the retention versus the progression debate, included learning strategies, group work, one-to-one tutoring, smaller class sizes, curriculum-based measurement to make instructional changes, within-class ability grouping, small-group instruction changes, looping [i.e. teaching the same students for more than one school year], intensive remedial help before or after school, homework programmes, coordinated home-school interventions, instructional consultation, peer-

assisted learning strategies, and instructional support from paraprofessionals or volunteers. (Picklo & Christenson, 2005)

There should be more focus on elementary grade learning increases and improving learner performance so learners are promoted on merit. Progressed learners from lower grades caused challenges in the FET phase, hindering progress in higher grades.

“Many scholars agree that the best solution to the retention versus social promotion debate is to curb academic failure before it occurs” (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). The policy of progression is not unique to the context of South Africa. Several countries have long started to implement this policy.

2.3 Cameroon

Cameroon's primary school system is split into three parts: Cycle I is made up of Classes I and II, Cycle II is made up of Classes III and IV, and Cycle III is made up of Classes V and VI (VII for the Anglophone system). This is done because the curriculum for each cycle is the same and related. The idea of ALP is that it happens in a cycle. That is, from class I to class II, class III to class IV, class V to class VI or VII, but not from class II to class III or class IV to class V, because later promotion means changing the cycle (Nalova, 2016). Students who are automatically promoted even though they aren't doing well are given "remedial" or "compensatory" education to help them catch up so they can be promoted (through normal exams) to the next cycle. Because there are now only three exams for promotion, there is a lot less need to try again (Nalova, 2016).

In response to the frequent repetition of grades by learners in primary schools in Cameroon, a Ministerial instruction on February 21, 2006, established an ALP policy in primary schools (Nalova, 2016:13). Analysing the frequency of repeated grades from 2006 to the present reveals that higher repetition rates in courses where ALP is applicable. Although headteachers and teachers do not strictly follow the administrative prescriptions of the ALP policy, they do adhere to the pedagogical prescriptions (Nalova, 2016, pp.20). Therefore, the implementation of the policy of ALP automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools is fairly effective. The findings also show that the automatic class promotion policy is utilised more in urban

than rural schools. However, it was also found that many head teachers and teachers have negative perceptions of and attitudes towards the ALP policy. (Nalova, 2016).

In this system, learners are only progressed once in a cycle; the learner must then meet the promotion requirements to move to the next cycle. This approach will reduce the curriculum gaps.

2.4 Brazil

The General Education Act of 1996 opened the door for automatic learner progression in Brazil. In addition to the traditional yearly grade promotion regime, the option of ALP was introduced, in which children can proceed to the next grade automatically at the conclusion of the school year (Koppensteiner, 2014). A hybrid of both regimes was also authorized between these two extremes. Schools in the mixed regime establish "learning cycles" that span multiple - usually three - school years (Koppensteiner, 2014). Students are promoted automatically throughout the first years of the cycle. Students who fail to satisfy the curriculum's minimal standards are kept in the last year of a cycle (Koppensteiner, 2014). Students that lag behind their peers have a lengthier amount of time to make up on the material. This strategy seeks to reduce the long-run effect of transient negative shocks, such as missed school days due to illness or bad family circumstances (Koppensteiner, 2014). Grade retention is not totally removed in mixed regime schools that have implemented ALP in learning cycles, but it is confined to the last year of the cycles (Koppensteiner, 2014). Therefore, the learner can enjoy ALP (progression) until the final year in each cycle where the minimum requirements must be met before promotion to the next cycle. This intervention, therefore, ensures that the minimum requirements of the previous cycle (phase) are met before a learner can be moved to the next cycle (phase).

According to Koppensteiner (2014) study, estimating a deterrent impact linked with ALP contributes to closing the gap in the literature on the consequences of grade retention. It also helps to understand why many nations continue to use the repetition regime. Grade retention affects internal flow efficiency in schools and is an expensive policy, but it may benefit academic attainment by deterring failure, which Koppensteiner refers to as a "deterrent impact."

In light of the federal law that implemented universal ALP in all primary schools in Brazil in 2011 (Koppensteiner, 2014), we discovered that exposure to social promotion decreased grade delay, which persisted during the transition from junior to senior primary school (Straub *et al.*, 2019). While the Brazilian experience may not transferable to all other nations – especially ones experiencing lower repeat rates – the results may be important for countries under pressure to reach the Millennium Development Goal of primary education for all. These nations may be considering the implementation of ALP as an appropriate strategy to minimise repeat rates and reduce school dropout rates (Koppensteiner, 2014).

2.5 Uganda

In Uganda, ALP (progression) was embraced and implemented in 2005 to improve primary education's internal efficiency and quality (Okurut, 2015). The implications were that it was and continues to be aimed at eliminating, if not decreasing, grade repetition, lowering school dropout rates, and boosting pedagogical time and effectiveness, hence improving learning outcomes (Okurut, 2015). Most Ugandans, however, think that ALP has harmed the quality of basic school and education in general in the nation (Okurut, 2015).

One of the recommendations from the findings in the research conducted by Okurut (2015) is that the government and education development partners must undertake awareness campaigns concerning ALP to highlight why its importance and relevance for Uganda's long-term supply and growth of education. One growing concern (reported in Ugandan print and electronic media) is the lack of previous discussions and awareness campaigns and/or programmes aimed at different stakeholders on the relevance, strengths, and weaknesses of the ALP policy (Okurut, 2015). The need of comprehensive consultation and awareness-raising programmes cannot be overstated, particularly considering that the "merit-based" system of promotion has been in place across the nation since the beginning of formal schooling in the 1890s. The ALP system was only established and implemented in 2005 (Okurut, 2015). As a result, the performance-based promotion system has produced parents, teachers, and administrators (at the national, local government/district, and school levels). Policy opponents in Uganda may oppose changes in the education system because they do not fully grasp the need for the changes due to a lack of broad policy consultation and strong public awareness campaigns (Okurut, 2015).

Collective promotion is often seen negatively by teachers, who feel it negatively impacts quality. However, the crucial component in ALP is its execution (Nalova 2016, pp.20). Automated promotion should not be used alone. Automatic learner advancement was meant to be supplemented by Cameroon's mastery learning method, which needs remedial and individualized training, alternative resources, a competency-based approach, and a new pedagogical style. Unfortunately, these components are seldom employed, which has a detrimental effect on quality (Nalova, 2016). The participants comment that education quality should be checked, teachers should be encouraged, as many teachers as possible should master the Competency-Based Approach, and slow learners should not be promoted automatically. Children should be allowed time to learn, and ALP should only be considered if a learner passes in two terms (Nalova, 2016). In conclusion, Nalova (2016) believes there is a need for greater human and material resources and a standard model for collective promotion implementation that must be monitored to assure quality.

2.6 Namibia

The research study showed that one of the issues primary school instructors confront at the chosen schools is the low performance of automatically promoted pupils. (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). Some learners struggle to meet the standards of the grades while learning the subject matter. They have a backlog of work from the previous grade they did not pass, as well as fresh grade work. Instructors get demotivated to teach in such situations. The mandated academic ideas and material offered and evaluated have not been well understood by automatic or socially encouraged learners. The studies also found that truancy was a barrier to the strategy of ALP. Automatically promoted learners skip more courses than other learners and drop out at a higher rate in comparison (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). They're disinterested in school. When "weary" of repeating a grade, some learners quit school and join their families (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The survey also found that primary school instructors at the chosen school struggle with student bullying. Failed-but-promoted learners may also disrupt class because they think they know the content (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). As a result, their behaviour may jeopardize the educational development of other and younger learners. Learners who fail but are mechanically or socially promoted may acquire "learned helplessness," as he calls it.

Learned helplessness is a phenomenon in which a learner believes they are incapable of reaching a goal and, as a consequence, quits attempting to achieve it (Lawrence-Turner, 2011).

According to the literature, teachers allocate much of their time to assisting learners who cannot cope with studying in the new grades (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). They provide remedial teaching to assist these students in catching up with the rest of the other learners. Many automatically promoted learners are absent at the remedial classes despite the teachers' efforts. Teachers cannot cater to each learner's learning requirements due to these additional lessons. This argument is reinforced by Lamb and Rice (2008) when they suggest that ALP compels teachers to cope with under-prepared pupils while attempting to educate the prepared ones.

According to research, more is required than either grade retention or social promotion in isolation to succeed in improving learners' academic, behavioural, social, and emotional performance (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012). As with so much in education, a focused strategy addressing learners' academic, social, and mental health challenges and directing specific evidence-based interventions tailored to learners' unique requirements is the most likely to be successful (Algozzine, Ysseldyke & Elliot 2002; Shinn & Walker, 2012).

Grade retention has long been considered a rational, uncomplicated option for pupils performing below grade level or exhibiting persistent behavioural difficulties. It is also increasingly seen as a superior option to social promotion. Prevention, and early and intense targeted interventions are the most effective alternatives to retention and social promotion. Several schools use response to intervention (RTI) and positive behavioural interventions and support (PBIS) models to help with problem-solving and progress tracking.

2.7 Learner Progression vs Learner Retention

Accumulative research evidence shows that negative effects persistently outweigh positive outcomes when continuing to retain learners at grade level (Stott *et al.*, 2015). Thus, research has proven that retention is not the solution to improving learner performance. Picklo and Christenson (2005) further emphasised that retained learners did not do better than previously progressed learners. Reducing or

eliminating grade retention, the policy aimed at improving the internal efficiency of education saves costs for both governments and households by reducing learners in a grade and the number of years low-performing learners spends in school (Mehrotra, 1998; Ndaruhutse *et al.*, 2008). It must be noted that education quality is expected to play an important role when making decisions on progression, hence the importance of ensuring that some content gaps are closed as learners progress. This study looked at how schools managed this policy to determine if this was achievable in our South African schools.

Some scholars still believe that the learner progression policy results in learners being less competitive and expecting to be progressed automatically without putting any effort into improving (Makhanya, 2021). Researchers' displeasure with ALP is that it eliminates competition among learners, demotivates both learners and teachers, and in turn, affects the expected outcomes of teaching and learning (Chohan & Qadir, 2011; Koppensteiner, 2014; Taye, 2003). The question of whether this is true or not in our schools will be discussed in the study.

Researchers suggest that the best solution to retention or ALP is preventing an academic failure before it happens. Learning strategies which may be an alternative to prevent failure, retention and social promotion is teaching learners for more than a year, grouping learners for intensive remedial teaching and support after school, homework programmes, and planned home and school programmes (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). These alternatives, with proper implementation, support the progression policy. It mostly bases its implementation on learner support, which may yield great results. The question is: How effective is this policy managed in our schools?

There should be more focus on elementary grade increased and improved learner performance so that learners are promoted on merit (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012). Progressed learners from lower grades caused challenges in the FET phase, thus hindering progress in higher grades. Picklo and Christenson (2005) agree that the best alternative to retention and ALP is to prevent academic failure before it happens. The focus on Grades 3 and 4 in this study tried to address this, noting that if enough

support is given in the lower grades, then academic failure may be prevented in the higher grades.

2.8 The effects of learner progression

Automatic learner promotion is used to safeguard learners' self-esteem, keep them together by age (in the same age cohort), allow learners to participate in sports teams, and allow learners who are strong in one area but weak in another to advance in the strong area (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). In many South African schools, the number of learners in each grade who need individual help exacerbates poor academic performance.

Automatic promotion prioritises preserving learner dignity and ensuring all students finish elementary school (Munje & Jita, 2020). According to Chataa and Nkengbeza (2019), one of the system's issues is that learners are promoted without thoroughly comprehending the required academic material. Although some failures might be attributable to laziness, others can be related to an inability to comprehend the ideas and information offered and graded. If a learner who struggled in one grade gets promoted to the next and/or higher grade, they are more likely to suffer in a more difficult academic topic or class (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). Learners who fail but are automatically promoted may disrupt the classroom because they believe they understand the content. As a result, their behaviour may jeopardize the educational process of other younger learners (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). According to Lawrence-Turner (2011), learners who fail but are later promoted mechanically or socially may acquire what he refers to as "learned helplessness." Learned helplessness occurs when a learner does not believe they can reach a goal and, consequently, quits trying. If learners perceive that their professors accept their failure, they may give up trying (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019).

Opponents of the ALP system claims that by promoting academically undeserving learners, schools adjust their teaching and assessment to the needs and standards of these learners instead of the learners adapting to the school standards (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). Since this programme's commencement in South Africa, the school system's hard effort in providing assistance for advanced learners has shown

great outcomes. On releasing the results of the 2015 class, Motshekga, the minister of education, said:

An analysis of the raw data on progressed learners paints an extremely interesting picture, in particular this year. For the class of 2015, we had 65 671 progressed learners, which was 9.8% of the total number of full-time candidates registered for the 2015 NSC examinations. Of the progressed learners that wrote their exams, 37.6 % (22 060) of them passed their exams, while 3,97 went on to receive Bachelor passes and qualify to be admitted to university. The progressed learners also scooped over a thousand distinctions. Eight thousand four hundred and seventy-three obtained diploma passes, and some 10 264 obtained higher certificate passes. (More, 2016)

All learners are valued and deserve equal opportunities to progress educationally and economically and contribute to the global society. These opportunities can be realised with more resources and evidence-based intervention in general and deprived socio-economic communities (Grossen *et al.*, 2017).

Teachers believe that collective promotion negatively affects the quality of education (Nalova, 2016, pp.20), which is why ALP implementation is important. Automatic promotion in Cameroon involves applying different resources, a mastery learning approach, and individualised instruction, requiring a different teaching approach. Thus, the quality of education would not be impacted. This further proves that ALP cannot be done in isolation (Nalova, 2016). The respondents said that teaching quality must be evaluated. The majority of the teachers must be trained to understand and apply the competency-based method and refrain from automatically earmarking slower students for support in the ALP program. The ALP program should only be utilised if a learner meets the minimum academic criteria in two terms; otherwise, it should not be considered for the learner (Nalova, 2016). In ensuring quality, in-depth monitoring for collective promotion is key. According to Nalova (2016) there is a need for more human and material resources and a standard model for the implementation.

Nalova (2016) indicates that the implementation is the key factor in automatic progression. He further states that a closer look at its implementation may provide

clues for the outcomes. Hence this study explores the strategies employed to support progressed learners.

In the next chapter, the researcher will look into the research methodologies adopted in this research.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Henning *et al.* (2004, p.36), methodology refers to “the coherent group of methods that complement one another and have the ‘goodness of fit’ to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose”. This chapter describes the research methods and approaches used for this study in answering the research questions. This description includes the research approach, paradigm, design, data collection and sampling strategies and data analysis. This chapter will further discuss measures used to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the study. It will further address the ethical procedures that the research adhered to in the study.

3.2 Research approach, paradigm and design

3.2.1 Research approach

The study was guided by a qualitative research approach. Tsanwani *et al.* (2014) describes this approach as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data regarding a particular phenomenon or context to develop an understanding of what is being observed or studied. In this study, the researcher explored how primary schools manage progressed learners and the support provided to these learners.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) describe it as a face-to-face, in-depth examination. Emerging questions and processes, data obtained in the participant's environment, data analysis inductively growing from particulars to general themes, and the researcher's interpretation of the data are all components of the research process. The study collected the data through individual interviews in schools. Thus, “qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants by visiting this context and personally gathering information. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background” (Creswell 2014, pp.38).

Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at “research that honours an inductive style, focuses on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (Creswell 2014, pp.32). Qualitative researchers want to obtain information directly from the source. They do this by

focusing much attention on directly interacting with the settings, participants, and documents they are studying (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2014).

3.2.2 Research paradigm

This study will be guided by the constructivism paradigm. Constructivism and interpretivism are related concepts that address understanding the world as others experience it (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012), reality is mind-dependent and a personal or social construct. This paradigm will therefore be used to explore experiences of intervention strategies are used by Grades 3 and 4 in supporting progressed learners.

3.2.3 Case study design

This study adopted a case study research design to explore the experiences of Grades 3 and 4 educators in supporting progressed learners. Case studies are an inquiry design suitable in many fields, especially evaluation, where the researcher investigates a case, which is often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more persons (Creswell, 2014). Case studies may prove cause and effect by monitoring consequences in real-world situations, recognizing that context strongly influences causes and effects. The previous study shows that case studies often use interpretative research, seeing the event through participants' perspectives, rather than quantitative research. However, this need not always be the case.

A case study research design was an appropriate approach for this study. A case study technique is typically used to construct a rich entity dataset by collecting various persons' viewpoints, perceptions, experiences, and thoughts about the case (Maree et al., 2010). Four Primary schools in the Gauteng East District were selected, two ex-model C town-based and two township primary schools.

The study aimed at answering the how and why questions of the management of progressed learners and intervention strategies used for progressed learners. It opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless (Maree et al., 2010). In this study, Deputy Principals, departmental heads for both foundation and intermediate phases, and Grades 3 and 4 educators had the opportunity to express their views on the learner progression policy. The ecological systems theory allowed me to interact with different systems involved in the child's development.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Research site

Although all South African public primary schools may have qualified to participate in this study, I purposively selected four primary schools in the Gauteng Province from the Gauteng East District, which is in the Ekurhuleni region. The two ordinary public primary schools were township schools (quintile 3), and the other two ordinary public primary schools were town (quintile 5) schools. Researchers, particularly in qualitative studies requiring extensive observation or interviewing at a specific place, should be aware of their influence and attempt to alter the physical environment as little as possible (Creswell 2014, p.137). For this study, schools will be the main setting to conduct interviews. The interviews were conducted in the afternoon after contact time to avoid and minimise disturbances to the school environment.

3.3.2 Sampling

“Stratified purposive sampling means selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria for a research question” (Maree *et al.*, 2010). The researcher must then seek well-informed key informants, and information-rich organisations, locations, or events to examine. These participants at the chosen localities and in these contexts are then selected to provide information about the phenomenon under study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). For this study, DPs, departmental heads and educators in Grades 3 and 4 were selected as participants selected as they are knowledgeable of the policy of progression, and they will share rich information about the phenomenon being investigated.

3.3.3 Research Participant

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the schools and participants – Deputy Principal, Departmental Heads for the foundation and intermediate phase, and Grade 3 and 4 educators with at least two years’ experience in the grade.

The participants were selected because one of their roles was managing, monitoring and supporting curriculum implementation. They are also responsible for ensuring appropriate policies and guidelines on learner performance. Selected Grade 3 and 4 educators who have taught for more than two years so that they could share experiences of supporting progressed learners. They were also selected because they are knowledgeable about this phenomenon, and they are the implementers of the policy the study is investigating.

Deputy Principals, departmental heads, and teachers with more than two years of teaching experience were selected as they were deemed relevant to answering the research question of this study. A case study was advantageous because it could give me in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences in the schooling context. It allowed for a series of valuable individualised data to be provided if it was collected and used correctly (Maree *et al.*, 2010). The researcher sought detailed descriptive data to comprehend the participant's knowledge and social reality building. The semi-structured interview seldom spanned long and usually required participants to answer predetermined questions. For this study, semi-structured questions allowed me to probe for clarification of questions and responses. I was attentive to the participants' responses so that I could explore and probe new emerging lines related to the phenomenon being studied. The interviews were audio recorded and saved for reference. I obtained permission from participants for recordings and supplemented the interviews by taking notes. I listened to recordings, transcribed the digital recordings, and used these to analyse data.

3.4 Data collection strategies

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In qualitative interviews,

the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve a small number of unstructured and generally open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. (Creswell, 2001, p. 239)

Qualitative interviews seek to perceive the world through the participants' eyes, and they may be a powerful source of information when utilised effectively (Maree *et al.*, 2010). The objective is to collect abundant descriptive data to assist the researcher in comprehending the participant's knowledge and social reality constructions. Interviews with a semi-structured format are often brief and require participants to answer pre-set questions. It permits inquisitive and clarifying queries. The researcher is expected to be attentive to the participants' responses so that the researcher can

explore and probe new emerging lines related to the phenomenon being studied. During the interview, the researcher should ensure participants stay focused on the study and are not tempted to get side-tracked. The participants will be informed/briefed before the study on the purpose of the research and their role as participants. There will be no deception of participants.

3.4.2 Interview Schedule

An interview schedule (Refer to Annexure F) was developed for this research to direct the purpose of the research. Cohen *et al.*, (2017)) explains that this popularly used interview technique is employed in qualitative research using a semi structured interview where an open-ended schedule is prepared to enable the contents to be recovered, digression and expansion made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken. This schedule involves translation of research objectives into questions that will make up the main body of the schedule (Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

3.4.3 Audio recordings

Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.266) suggest that the researcher should “plan to develop and use an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview”. In this study, the researcher informed the participants about recording and explained how the interview would be conducted. A total number of ten questions were prepared in advance. All the participants were asked the same questions from the schedule. There were two sets of questions for the school management team and educators. While data was being recorded during the interviews, notes were also taken in case the recording equipment was disturbed or failed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The recordings were used to transcribe data, and the transcripts were used during data analysis.

3.4.4 Data analysis procedure

Qualitative data analysis uses interpretive philosophy to examine meaningful and symbolic material. It examines individuals' perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, emotions, and experiences to determine how they interpret phenomena (Maree *et al.*, 2010). Maree explains content analysis as “a systematic approach to qualitative analysis that identifies and summarises message content” (Maree *et al.*, 2010).

“Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretive philosophy to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data” (Maree *et al.*, 2010).

Alternatively stated, it attempts to determine how individuals build the meaning of a certain phenomenon by analysing their perception, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, emotions, and experiences (Maree *et al.*, 2010). The approach for this study will be based on content analysis. Maree explains content analysis as “a systematic approach to qualitative analysis that identifies and summarises message content” (Maree *et al.*, 2010).

The interview recordings were transcribed, saved and kept ready for coding. “Coding is the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units” (Maree *et al.*, 2010). Categories were verified, analysed data was structured into categories and interpreted to make sense of the findings and conclusions. Maree emphasises that assessing trustworthiness is of the utmost importance in qualitative research, and the researcher must keep procedures that can be used for assessing trustworthiness in mind.

3.4.5 Trustworthiness (validity)

According to Creswell (2014, p.295), “validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures”. The strategies I used for this research to ensure the accuracy of findings were field notes, voice recorder, note taking, member checking and triangulation. During the interviews, both voice recording and note-taking methods ensured that I didn’t miss any information during the interviews. Member-checking was done by availing the transcriptions of interviews to the participants. This process allowed participants to amend their responses or elaborate on them before data analysis. The research used more than one participant. Senior management team from different post level was used, 4 deputy principals, 3 departmental heads from senior phase and 4 foundation phase departmental heads. 4 grades 3 and 4 grade 4 educators were also included in the study. This ensured credibility of responses.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Application for ethics approval to proceed with the research was submitted to the ethics committee. Conditional approval was granted with recommendations. Immediately after the recommendations were affected, the research was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. Permission to conduct the study

was granted through an application to the GDE and selected school principals. A meeting was arranged with individual schools to mediate the research's purpose and establish trust between the researcher and the participants. Consent forms were given to the Principals, School Governing Bodies, Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads, and Educators. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the process if they wished to do so.

In abiding by ethical guidelines and principles, I ensured participants were informed of electronic recordings and given assurance of their confidentiality and anonymity. I strived to eliminate any biasness that might be brought into the study by constantly reflecting on the research process. The supervisor assessed interview questions to ensure content validity.

3.5.1 Permission granted.

The request to conduct research in Gauteng schools was submitted to the GDE, which was approved. The researcher also filed authorisation from the University and the GDE detailing the research to the district director and principals of sampled schools, requesting permission to perform the study.

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Gauteng East District Director, school governing bodies and principal of schools. Copies of the letters used are attached as annexures.

3.5.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

A meeting was arranged with the sampled participants from each school, the purpose of the study was explained, and participants were given an opportunity to ask clarity-seeking questions before signing the consent forms.

Participants were assured that the information would only be used for this study. The participants were further assured of the importance of moral consideration and that there wouldn't be any negative effects on their participation in the study. Their participation "should be seen as voluntary, and the researcher should explain in the instructions for the consent form that participants can decide not to participate in the study" (Creswell, 2014). The participants agreed to participate after the researcher explained the purpose and approach of the study. The participants received informed consent letters addressed to them. The letters informed them that participation was

voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study (See Appendix E). All participants agreed to participate and signed consent letters. Participants in the study participated voluntarily and were not coerced to participate.

3.5.3 Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality

Anonymity indicates that the researcher cannot identify the participants from the collected data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

While researchers will know who contributed the information or will be able to identify participants based on the information provided, they will not reveal the relationship publicly; the confidentiality of the shared secret will be maintained (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). The participants were informed during the briefing session and through consent letters of the confidentiality of all their information.

The idea of anonymity is that the information of participants should not identify their identity (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Cohen *et al.*, (2017) added that avoiding using the participants' names and other personal identifiers is the primary means of maintaining anonymity. For this research, pseudonyms were used for both selected schools and participants.

The participants and selected schools were provided with pseudonyms to ensure that both were not identifiable. The codes were used for both schools and participants to ensure this study's anonymity.

Confidentiality implies that no one other than the researcher(s) has access to individual data or the participants' identities, and that the subjects know before they participate who will have access to their data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). They were further assured that the responses would only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisor. The notes, participants' information, field notes, audio-recorded discussions, and audio transcripts were kept private and safe on the researcher's laptop. The researcher's personal computer was accessed with a password. The researcher's supervisor will have access to all data, and the participants will only have access to their own data, not everyone else's.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology used to collect data, the research process, the data collection methods and how data was going to be analysed were discussed.

Interviews were held. The data was collected from two former Model C schools and two township schools. This chapter provides the findings of how the school management teams (the Deputy Principals, and Departmental Heads in both foundation phase and intermediate phase), managed and supported educators as a way of ensuring that the policy on progression gave the intended outcome.

The study was guided by the following main research question:

How are progressed learners supported in Grades 3 and 4?

The following research sub-questions were used to guide the study:

1. What support programmes are in place in Grades 3 and 4 to support progressed learners?
2. What planned interventions are available for Grade 4 progressed learners?
3. How is this support monitored by the school management team?

“Stratified purposive sampling means selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria for a research question” (Maree et al., 2010). The data was collected using semi-structured interviews which were conducted at each of the four selected primary schools, with one educator from Foundation Phase Grade 3, one educator from Intermediate Phase Grade 4, the Foundation Phase Departmental Head responsible for Grade 3, the Intermediate Phase Departmental Head responsible for Grade 4 and the Deputy Principal. The researcher’s role was to ask questions, take notes and also conduct recordings during the interviews. The interview recordings were then transcribed and coded. The analysed data was then structured into categories and interpreted to make sense of the findings.

In presenting the findings, I will quote the participants verbatim to support my interpretations. Participating schools were given pseudonyms to ensure that they are

not identifiable, as school A, B, C and D; therefore, the acronyms for participants will follow the same pattern, i.e. DPA (Deputy Principal School A), DHFPA (Departmental Head for Foundation Phase School A), DHIPA (Departmental Head for Intermediate Phase for School A), ED3A (Grade 3 Educator Foundation Phase for School A), and ED4A (Grade 4 educator Intermediate Phase for School A). These naming conventions were used to identify participants and their schools.

4.2 Participants' profiles

The Deputy Principals, Departmental Heads for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, Grade 3 and 4 educators of selected schools participated in the study. These participants were then profiled so that we could get the different levels of policy management based on acquired knowledge, years of experience and designations.

4.2.1 Background of School A

The school is a former model C school, a quintile 5 fee-paying public primary school in the town of Springs. The school caters for learners from surrounding suburbs and townships. Deputy Principal A (DPA) was a white male with 27 years of experience and a B Ed degree. The Departmental Head (DH) for Intermediate Phase (DHIPA) is a white female with 12 years of teaching experience and a B Ed degree. The Departmental Head for Foundation Phase (DHFPA) is a white female with 30 years of teaching experience and a Higher Education Diploma. The Grade 3 Educator (Ed3A) is a white female with 20 years' experience and a B Ed degree in the Senior and FET phase. The Grade 4 educator (Ed4A) is a white female with 11 years of experience and a B Ed degree.

4.2.2 Background School B

The school is an ex-model C, quintile 5 fee-paying public primary school situated in the town of Springs. The school caters for learners from surrounding suburbs and townships. Deputy Principal B (DPB) is a white male with 16 years of education experience and a B Ed Honours degree. He is very passionate about learners and strives to ensure educators do what they should.

The Departmental Head of the Intermediate Phase (DHIPB) is a white male with 29 years of teaching experience and holding a Higher Diploma in senior phase education. The Departmental Head Foundation Phase (DHFPB) is a white female with 18 years of education experience and a B Ed Honours Degree. The Grade 3 educator (Ed3B) is a white female with 28 years of education experience and a Higher

Diploma in Education. The Grade 4 educator (Ed4B) is a white female with 16 years of education experience and a B Ed Degree.

4.2.3 Background of School C

The school is a no-fee-paying township public primary school in Tsakane in Ekurhuleni. The school caters to learners from Tsakane and the informal settlement around the area. Deputy Principal C (DPC) is an African male with 29 years of education experience and a B Ed Honours Degree in Inclusive Education. The Departmental Head Foundation Phase (DHFPC) is an African female with eight years' experience and a B Ed degree. The Grade 3 Educator (Ed3C) is an African female with six years of education experience and holding a B Ed degree. The Grade 4 educator (Ed4C) is an African female with five years of experience in education and holding a B Ed degree.

4.2.4 Background of School D

The school is a township no-fee-paying public primary school in Kwa-Thema in Ekurhuleni. The school accommodates learners from the local area and informal settlement around the area. The Deputy Principal D is an African female with 26 years of experience and holding a B Ed degree in Inclusive Education.

The Departmental Head Intermediate Phase (DHIPD) is an African female with 28 years of teaching experience and holding a Further Diploma in Education Management. The Departmental Head Foundation Phase (DHFPD) is an African female with 24 years of experience and Junior Primary Teachers Diploma. The Grade 3 Educator (Ed3D) is an African male with four years of experience and a B Ed degree in education. The Grade 4 educator (Ed4D) is an African female with 29 years of experience and an ACE –GET Science Diploma.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below summarise the participants interviewed and the selected schools' profiles from the research sites.

Table 4.1: Summary of participants

School	Designation	Post level	Pseudonym	Gender	Years of experience	Highest Qualification
A Town School	Deputy Principal	3	DPA	Male	30	B Ed (Hons)
	Departmental Head FP	2	DHFPA	Female	30	HED
	Departmental Head IP	2	DHIPA	Male	12	Bed
	Educator GR3	1	Ed3A	Female	20	B Ed (Hons)
	Educator GR4	1	Ed4A	Male	11	B Ed
B Town school	Deputy Principal	3	DPB	Male	16	B Ed (Hons)
	Departmental Head FP	2	DHFPPB	Female	18	B Ed (Hons)
	Departmental Head IP	2	DHIPB	Female	29	Higher Diploma
	Educator GR3	1	Ed3B	Female	28	Higher Diploma
	Educator GR4	1	Ed4B	Female	18	B Ed (Hons)
C Township School	Deputy Principal	3	DPC	Female	29	B Ed (Hons) Inclusive Education
	Departmental Head Foundation Phase	2	DHFPC	Female	8	Bed
	Educator GR3	1	Ed3C	Female	6	Bed
	Educator GR4	1	Ed4C	Female	5	Bed
D Township school	Deputy Principal	3	DPD	Female	26	B Ed (Hons) Inclusive Education
	Departmental Head Foundation Phase	2	DHFDPD	Female	24	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma
	Departmental Head IP	2	DHIPB	Female	28	Further Diploma in education management
	Educator GR3	1	Ed3D	Male	4	Bed
	Educator GR4	1	Ed4D	Female	29	ACE- GET Science

Table 4.2: Schools' profiles

School	Principal (PL4)	Deputy Principal (PL3)	Departmental Heads (PL2)	Educators (PL1)	Number of learners
A	1	1	4	20	981
B	1	2	4	28	1273
C	1	2	5	26	1499
D	1	2	4	29	1040

4.3 Emerging themes from the research questions

The interviewed participants can be classified into three categories: Educators, Departmental Heads and Deputy Principals. On analysing the findings, it should be noted that although some of the emerging themes from the three categories are similar, the level of discussions in the findings differs based on the role the participants play in implementing the progression policy at their school. Tables 5, 6 and 7 below present interview questions and themes that emerged from the data analysis of responses. These themes will lead to the findings, which will then answer the main question of the research on the management of learner progression in primary schools in Gauteng.

Table 4.3: Deputy Principal themes

Interview Questions	Themes
1. What criteria are used by management to monitor learner performance?	Monitoring and support
2. How does the SMT communicate findings from monitoring?	Curriculum Management, Monitoring and Support
3. How do you monitor and support implementations of interventions for progressed learners at your school?	Implementation of remedial programmes
4. How often is this monitoring conducted?	Curriculum Management, Monitoring and Support
5. How often do you discuss the performance of progressed learners during information-sharing sessions?	Curriculum Management, Monitoring and Support
6. How often is the performance of progressed learners communicated to parents?	Parental involvement
7. How do you track the performance of progressed learners?	Curriculum Management, Monitoring and Support
8. What challenges have you experienced in implementing the progression policy?	Policy implementation
9. What successes have you experienced in implementing the progression policy in your school?	Remedial programmes

Table 4.4: Departmental Head themes

Interview Questions	Themes
1. What criteria is used by management to monitor learner performance	Policy implementation
2. How does the SMT communicate findings from monitoring?	Monitoring and Support Educator accountability Parental involvement
3. How do you monitor and support the implementation of interventions for progressed learners at your school?	Monitoring and support Educator accountability Tracking of progressed learners
4. How often is this monitoring conducted?	Tracking of progressed learners
5. How often do you discuss the performance of progressed learners during information sharing sessions?	Tracking of progressed learners Monitoring and support
6. How often is the performance of progressed learners communicated to parents?	Parental involvement Tracking of progressed learners
7. How do you track the performance of progressed learners?	Tracking of progressed learners
8. What challenges have you experienced in implementing the progression policy?	Time for support Support in overcrowded classrooms Policy implementation
9. What successes have you experienced on the implementation of the progression policy in your school?	Policy implementation

Table 4.5: Grade 3 and 4 educators' themes

Research Questions	Themes
1. What criteria are used by management to monitor learner performance	Monitoring and support by the school management
2. How does the SMT communicate findings from monitoring?	Monitoring and support by the school management
3. What intervention strategies are implemented from findings?	Overcrowding and time for support Learner support strategies Learner referrals
4. What intervention strategies are you implementing to support progressed learners in your class?	Learner support and intervention strategies
5. What do you do with progressed learners who do not show progress?	Policy implementation Parental involvement Learner referrals
6. How does the school management team monitor and support the implementation of interventions for progressed learners at the school?	Monitoring and support by the school management
7. What support or development do you receive from management to be able to support progressed learners?	Monitoring and support by the school management
8. How often is the performance of progressed learners communicated to parents?	Parental involvement
9. What challenges have you experienced in implementing the progression policy?	Policy implementation Overcrowding and time for support Parental involvement
10. What successes have you experienced on the implementation of the progression policy in your school	External factors affecting learner performance

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.4.1 Findings from Deputy Principals

The following themes emerged from data analysis on the interview with the Deputy Principals.

4.4.1.1 Policy implementation

The discussion from Deputy Principals of Schools A and B indicated that the educator assessments are developed as per the policy prescripts outlined in the CAPS Policy document.

***DPA:** First you see teacher assessment plans, we are busy standardising that, we started our policy for each subject as management you know that, because you can't kick off to monitor the performance and you can't start without policy, if you don't have guidelines on where to go and how to go in measuring the learner performance then you can't start at all. We've also got the ATP that the Departmental Head check.*

The above response gives evidence that schools know the expectations regarding curriculum implementation. The CAPS policy is followed, and the criteria as stated for different subjects are applied to monitor learner performance. Monitoring and verification of curriculum implementation are also conducted.

According to the research, the socioeconomic environment leads to a dysfunctional situation in schools, which adversely impacts the teaching and learning experiences of educators and students (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

It was indicated that the learning barriers also include socio-economic challenges experienced, especially in the townships. One Deputy Principal from School B indicated that he is unsure if she fully understands the policy on progression and how to link this with the SIAS policy. Most of the interviewed Deputy Principals were clear on the importance of following policy when dealing with learner promotions and progression.

***DPB:** We have certain tasks that we have to do throughout the year and according to those certain tasks there are certain criteria that learners*

need to meet in order to be promoted to the next year, and if they don't meet that certain promotion requirements, they either get progressed or they have to be retained. We follow policy when it comes to school-based assessment.

The Deputy Principals believe that novice educators seem to lack the passion and the skills to support the learners. It was raised that since there are no prescriptive methods to be followed on support, the ability to support will generally be based on the educator's experience and trial and error. This approach to support may pose a challenge for novice educators who are still familiarising themselves with the department's policies.

The issue of the learners that have been progressed throughout the system is also a challenge. The paper trail for the Department is very challenging, and the focus is more on "paperwork", as mentioned by the Deputy Principal from School A. The data collection seems to be the main focus rather than the actual support required by the learners in the classroom.

The Deputy Principal from School A stated that "the schools are trying to make it work. There is a need for alternative skill schools to support learners who are struggling academically."

All these facts indicate that though there is a clear policy that is understood by managers in the schools, there is still a need to strengthen the implementation processes in order to benefit all progressed learners and also give confidence to the educators implementing this policy.

4.4.1.2 Curriculum management, monitoring and support.

Out of the four school Deputy Principals, when asked about the criteria used to monitor learner performance, three indicated that this depends on the analysis of results. At this time, the management can detect learner challenges and then put systems in place for intervention and support. Therefore, this is the only time the management can detect, and address challenges experienced by learners through summative assessments, which only take place at the end of the term.

The method of communicating findings from monitoring differed from one school to another, but one-on-one discussions were a common communication strategy where the Deputy Principals` discussed the challenges as they noted during monitoring with the Departmental Heads and educators. The Deputy Principals indicated that the discussions are mostly on the general performance of learners per subject rather than on specific learners who are struggling. The discussions did not specifically focus on progressed learners.

Subject meetings with Departmental Heads were indicated as another platform for discussions on the findings. School D's Deputy Principal indicated that sometimes the challenge is the ability of the educator to deliver the curriculum. Recognising this requirement suggests a need for developing the ability through the quality Management System "to track and ensure that the teacher gets support through workshops", as stated by the Deputy Principal.

What was common in the responses of the Deputy Principals was the monthly monitoring of the implementation of intervention strategies. Two of the Deputy Principals indicated that they have the item on progressed learners in their agenda for phase or subject meetings in their school.

When the deputies were asked about how often they monitor and track the progress based on the implementation of interventions for progressed learners, the end-of-term schedules came out as the main tool used by schools in tracking the learners' performance, including progressed learners. Each school has a tool to track the progressed learners' performance specifically. The question remaining is whether this is done for the actual monitoring or for compliance purposes.

It is clear though that the schools do put an effort into ensuring that the systems are in place for the curriculum management processes to support the policy of learner progression. These processes are not standardised though as they are implemented differently in each school. Some strategies like your one-one one feedback discussions with educators, and learner specific discussion meetings may need to be looked at as standards to be enforced in all the schools to improve the incorporation of the learner progression management into the curriculum management, monitoring and support processes.

4.4.1.3 Implementation of Remedial programmes

The Deputy Principal from School B, which is a Full-Service School, also mentioned the implementation of the SIAS policy in trying to support the learners' experiencing barriers and the involvement of the School Based Support Team and the District Based Support Team (DBST).

When the Deputy Principals were asked about the intervention strategies they are implementing what came out strongly was that, there are no specifically prescribed intervention strategies used, as this depends on an individual educator and an individual learner. Including the remedial programme in the timetable was indicated as a common practice, especially in the two Full-Service Schools which is School C and D that were part of the research.

The two Deputies from the Full-Service Schools indicated that they have Learner Support Educators responsible for the remedial teaching of the progressed learners and other learners identified as per the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). There is also the involvement of the School Based Support Team in supporting learners who, after tracking, there is still no improvement noted. After identifying this, the DP will communicate with the educator to complete the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form.

DPB: *At least once a month we actually meet together with the SBST coordinator and the SBST committee. Generally, we ask for a report from teachers, and they submit to the Departmental Heads and Departmental Heads submit to me so I can have a look.*

It was indicated that intervention classes are available in School A and B in the afternoons for learners that need extra support. These intervention programmes target the progressed learners and other learners struggling with the concepts taught. The issue of time came out as a cause for concern as one Deputy Principal indicated that the learners are tired by the time they need to attend the extra classes that the educators had planned.

DPB: *Generally, we have intervention programme which we run in the afternoon.*

The Deputy Principal from School A also indicated requesting a written report on the progressed learners from each educator. This report must also indicate if the learner is attending the intervention classes provided at the school level. This information is used to assist the school with information on whether the intervention classes are effective.

School B also indicated that they put the progressed learners in a special class where they were the only focus. The Deputy Principal indicated that this allowed them to give attention to the learners' abilities and how they could learn. The school noted that this has really brought improvement as some of these learners manage to show improvement and even cope at high school. There are, of course, those who would still need further referral even after this intervention.

The intervention strategies that are employed by the schools as mentioned are an effort to ensure that there is no learner left behind. As mentioned by the different managers the issue of the time available for these extra lessons also taking into consideration the available time for teaching new concepts for the grade and the concentration span of both learners and educators has an impact on the success of these interventions and remedial classes.

4.4.1.4 Parental involvement in schools

When I asked about the role of the parents in supporting progressed learners the Deputy Principals indicated reporting to parents concerning the progress ranging from monthly to quarterly. It was indicated that a lack of parental support could also be one of the reasons for poor performance.

DPD: *Normally we invite the parents to communicate challenges. It is very important that they also assist their children. Remember, there are two groups. Others are not performing because of laziness, because they lack support from parents or because parents are not knowledgeable. Then there are learners with severe cases. So those with severe cases we refer them to the SBST, invite parents, complete SIAS forms, educators complete the SNA 1 and SBST completes SNA*

2 and district will complete all the other forms. So, the process is explained to parents before we do that.

The SIAS policy has come up as one of the reasons parents were continuously called into the school, as there is an SNA form that can only be acknowledged if signed by the parent so that the learner can receive further support from the SBST. The question of compliance to policy implementation reveals itself once more.

The school managers also indicated that the lack of parental involvement can also be attributed to the fact that parents also find learner progression a very sensitive topic, as they sometimes feel they have failed as parents when their children are not performing as expected.

4.4.2 Finding from Departmental Heads

The following themes emerged from the data analysis on the interviews with the Departmental Heads.

4.4.2.1 Policy implementation

The CAPS Curriculum and Policy Statement guides schools on what to teach and assess regarding the learner. Each subject has its own expectations of what learners should meet for them to be promoted to the next grade. It clearly guides educators on what assessments should be in place and the weighting for each topic. From the policy document, educators are provided with an Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) for each subject which should be followed to ensure that the topics and contents are covered. The ATP is divided into four terms with the formal and informal assessments, which should be done in each term. These are aligned with the content taught.

From the findings, it can be noted that the Departmental Heads for Foundation and Intermediate phases in different schools supported implementing the CAPS policy.

DHIPA: *“The first criteria that we use is that which is in your CAPS document, everything that is there in the CAPS document and how to assess is what to look at”*

DHFPA: *We’ve got [a] task and use ATP for what need to be taught, assess according to that and, of course, always referring to CAPS documents for what we need to assess and if we are unsure of the task and what need to be assessed we use our policy document.*

DH FPC: *“Assessment tasks are linked to annual teaching plans.”*

DH IPA: *“Then you will also have an ATP that’s your annual teaching plan and in your annual teaching plan it tells you what to do with the learners.”*

When Departmental Heads were asked about the criteria they are using to monitor learner performance they indicated that the performance from the assessment tasks seems to be the main source that the Departmental Heads are using to monitor learner performance and make decisions concerning the interventions that need to be put in place. What came across mostly was that the decision for referral to the School Based Support Team (SBST) is strictly based on the assessment performance. Foundation phase Departmental Heads also indicated the importance of using daily activities for decision-making.

A high number of progressed learners have been identified in Grade 4. Most of this progression is due to the issue of age cohort and the fact that learners cannot be retained anymore as they can only be retained once in each phase. School A Intermediate Phase Departmental Head indicated that the policy is beneficial to the learners if implemented correctly because continuous retention may also affect the learners’ self-confidence as some of the learners don’t necessarily struggle on all the subjects but may just be retained because of the promotion requirements in a particular subject that are not met.

DHIPA: *Progression is a good thing because you have to think of the child’s self-confidence as well. He might get 70% or 80% for Maths and be failing Natural Sciences. This might destroy the child’s self-confidence. If implemented correctly, this policy may benefit the children.*

The improvement in self-esteem has also been repeatedly indicated as a success noted in the implementation of this policy, as no learner likes to repeat a grade multiple time. It was also supported by Munje and Jita (2020), “Automatic promotion focuses on maintaining learner dignity and ensuring that all learners complete primary school”.

School B Intermediate Phase Departmental Head indicated that another success in implementing this policy is the ability for the educators to be more involved with the learners and give support. Reporting learner problems was also identified as a success, as this policy pushes educators to keep records of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

The schools have put systems in place, including the use of Learner Support Educators (LSE), the involvement of parents, intervention notes, referrals, evidence of communication with parents etc. This is another success brought by this policy, as the officials continuously monitor policy implementation. This success indicates that “the effectual implementation of strategies aimed at improving learners’ performance requires a joint effort of stakeholders” (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

4.4.2.2 Monitoring and support by school management

When the Departmental Heads were asked on how they monitor and communicate their findings it was indicated that the departmental meetings are a platform used to analyse the results with the educators. It is based on this analysis that learners are identified. Learners’ books are collected by the Departmental Head for book control. Monitoring the learners’ books with a special focus on curriculum coverage is done. In School A, there are also class visits that are conducted with a specific focus on educator support.

The diagnostic analysis also came out as one of the methods used by the Departmental Heads in finding the areas that needed to be addressed. These analyses are done by educators. The Departmental Head will then use the results from these analyses to decide whether the challenge was with the assessment, the teaching method, or the learners.

With the quarterly monitoring of books for all the learners and sampling of poor, moderate and highflyers, some schools focus on all the learners, not only the progressed learners. School C Foundation Phase Departmental Head stated that “It’s not only for learners who need support, but for all learners”,

Some of the learners need more time to adapt to the new content. *“Some learners just need that additional support; the extra year does help”*, stated School B

Departmental Head. It was further stated that these progressed learners are moved to the next grade with a gap in the curriculum. When these learners move to the next grade with this gap, it becomes difficult for them to adapt to the new load.

DHFPC: *Learners get overwhelmed by a lot of work they are faced with; this is just a challenge since even in the next grade they can't be retained because they cannot repeat a phase more than once. They are constantly pushed to the next grade, hence we have so many referrals.*

The time to implement the remedial activities has been indicated as one of the biggest challenges. In the school, there is limited time as there is also a need for curriculum delivery.

DHIPB: *Learners stay behind, because you have an ATP to follow, and you don't always have the time. I think that is the biggest challenge. There are always curriculum percentages that must be covered. There are also certain amounts of assessments that need to also be covered.*

Some of the learners that are being supported as progressed learners tend to improve, even though most participants stated that it normally becomes a small percentage. However, the participants also indicated that the issue of time is still a factor as support for these learners is limited.

Overcrowding in the classroom has also been identified as a hindrance in implementing the progression policy. Implementing curriculum differentiation becomes a problem as the educators must also race to ensure that they cover the Annual Teaching Plan formerly known as the syllabus. This problem, in turn, disadvantages the progressed learners who need more time and individual attention.

The participants indicated that though some schools use the support of the Learner Support Educators available in their post establishments mostly in Full-Service Schools. These educators can only take a certain number of learners at a time where they then focus on addressing the curriculum gaps. This restriction has led to educators only sending learners with severe challenges, which is still disadvantaging some learners who need support.

4.4.2.3 *Educator accountability*

The importance of educator accountability was stressed by the Departmental Heads when asked about the monitoring and support strategies that are put in place for the implementation of interventions for progressed learners at their schools. The Departmental Heads indicated that educators must account for poor performance in one-on-one meetings that are held.

The process where each educator is given a list of progressed learners, clarifying which learners are progressed and in which subjects is followed. A comparison of the marks is based on where the progressed learners have performed poorly and where they have improved. Based on this information, decisions are then taken.

The Learner Support Educators have also been identified as a resource the schools use to help address learning barriers.

4.4.2.4 *Tracking of progressed learners*

Departmental Heads also indicated the difficulty of tracking each learner that has been progressed due to the number of learners at the school whose performance also needed to be monitored. School C Intermediate Departmental Head mentioned that they are using the attendance registers to monitor learner attendance to intervention programmes and support classes. These attendance registers are, in turn, used as evidence to support the retention of learners by departmental officials.

The Departmental Head announced that based on the fact that the District Officials visit schools to monitor the foundation phase curriculum implementation, they thus monitor the progressed learners at the school level in preparation for these visits. Departmental meetings are held ranging from monthly to quarterly. School A foundation phase indicated that the minutes also indicated the names of the progressed learners discussed during these meetings.

Meetings with the SBST, where the specific focus is on progressed learners and additional learners experiencing barriers, were also highlighted as an effective method used. School C Intermediate Phase Departmental Head explained that during these meetings, as they discuss specific learners, those identified as “improved” will be identified. These learners will then be removed from the list to be discussed. The

progressed learners' performance is discussed during these meetings, and a term-to-term comparison is made. This comparison also focuses on improving the implementation of interventions for progressed learners.

One-on-one meetings with parents and meetings during parent evenings are common in all schools. The one-on-one meetings strictly focus on learners that are progressing or have learning barriers. The schools record these meetings.

The LSE assists educators in supporting the learners. In two schools, progressed learners and learners with learning barriers are allocated a specific class, "C class", as the Departmental Head in School D mentioned.

The lack of parental support was also mentioned as a challenge in the case of the learners that are not achieving academically, as the schools try to refer these learners to special schools. School B Intermediate Phase Departmental Head indicated that since the policy does not allow the schools to retain a learner again in that particular phase, these learners will then have to be progressed, and in that case, there is no improvement because of the continuous curriculum gap; therefore, a referral will be the only option. The question is, "Are schools doing justice by moving to this option?"

The district has put a tracking document for progressed learners in place, and each school uses the document to track these learners' progress. In comparing each learner's performance per term, per subject, the Intermediate Phase Departmental Head from school B indicated that she would then look at the averages per subject and compare these with the previous term. These statistics will be the determining factors on whether the challenge lies with the learner or the educator. The relevant intervention will then be sought.

4.4.2.5 Parental Involvement

On trying to find out the frequency of the schools in communicating issues of learner performance to the parents it was mentioned that the progress reports are issued to all the parents, including the parents of progressed learners, once per term to ensure they are updated on their children's progress.

A challenge was identified in parents' cooperation by all the schools. The parents are called to the school, but some do not attend these one-on-one sessions. This omission poses a challenge, and the school will generally keep the evidence of the letters that they used to inform parents about the meetings as evidence. This evidence will then be attached during the submission of summative assessments and in cases where the learner may need to be retained or progressed.

Getting the parents to support the learners is also challenging, as some parents cannot assist the learners. Some of the parents are busy and do not have the time to assist at home, and in other cases, some parents are uninterested due to the fact that they do not have the time as they are working.

School A Foundation Phase Departmental Head stated that in the previous year at their school, they only had five progressed learners. She stated that their success in reducing the number of progressed learners was due to their approach to early intervention programmes and their insistence on continuous parental support.

4.4.3 Findings from Educators

The following themes emerged from data analysis on the interviews with the Grade 3 and 4 Educators. The analysis was then categorised into themes as outlined below.

4.4.3.1 Policy implementation

The policy issues in the case of educators were raised though they did not come out as strongly as with the Departmental Heads and Deputy Principals. Most educators and managers believe that reteaching to fill the curriculum gaps is the solution to assist struggling learners as this has become a common practice amongst all participants.

The challenge raised by participants in the implementation of the progression policy is the issue of time. There is not enough time to implement remedial activities to struggling learners. These learners are then referred by following the SIAS process. Learners not improving are then referred to either a skills or special school, depending on the assessment by the departmental psychologists. It was noted that even though some of the progressed learners end up being referred to special schools, these special schools are also full, and the placement can take two to three years.

Therefore, in the meantime, these learners will be kept at the school and continuously progressed with these barriers.

ED3B: *I can tell you of a few cases I had since I started teaching where learners who were progressed are still struggling. They cannot cope they need to eventually follow the process in place that need to be followed for learners to be placed in LSEN school, but it is not possible to go there. It's either there is no space, or they are not old enough to be referred but it doesn't happen, and we keep them in the system. We are managing them by supporting but they just get progressed.*

Educators also indicated that learners and parents now know about the progression policy; therefore, once a learner has repeated a phase, no extra effort is made, as automatic learner progression is expected. The literature by Picklo and Christenson (2005) states that learner progression creates the perception with all learners that they can get by without working hard.

ED3C: *It's very challenging. Learners they know they will not repeat again so they don't put more effort. Even the parents because they know, they don't put an effort.*

4.4.3.2 Monitoring and Support by the School Management

Educators were asked questions on whether they are receiving any support from the school management team in the implementation of the progression policy and they indicated that there are cycles that managers use to monitor learners' books and curriculum coverage. Educators send a sample of learners' books to the Departmental Heads for verification. Managers check the books to verify the support given to the learners.

Ed3B: *We have support files, take them in during CMM. They check support files, I have a list of learners with barriers. This list I give in with my CMM and she check if these learners are supported. The support files for them can show extra work that I have done with them.*

Sometimes they go with our word that we are supporting these learners and we show them in our books how we support them.

Ed4B: *We've got lists of retained and progressed learners. We keep updated record of learners who were retained or progressed on that list we regularly update what is the progress of the child, is the child showing progress yes or no, what progress is the child showing. Obviously, we talk to their teachers again and teachers need also to have a list of progressed learners. Teachers also need to have copy of list of specific learners involved in their classes so that they can also keep managing them. Obviously that list is also with management to make sure these are the learners that need to be supported and can follow up on the process if are learners supported or not.*

Educators interact with Departmental Heads to discuss the analysis of results and the findings after monitoring. Educators indicated that the monitoring is mostly based on statistics. Most educators indicated that the main focus of monitoring is on ensuring that the assessments are done, and the performance is analysed. Moderation of assessments is done by management.

Communication is based on the findings from the management after they have analysed the end-of-term results. The management uses these results to detect challenges and then communicate with the educator. If there is generally poor performance, the educator is made to account for poor performance in the subject.

Ed4D: *The meeting is called for the staff. The analysis of results is presented by means of white board or screen. We then look at the result on how learners performed in all learning areas. For teachers who didn't perform well in their subjects the management will request them to put more effort to assist learners so that they can improve in that particular subject.*

The analysis of results has proven a common feature in all schools and is used as the basis for interventions and support. One participant indicated that the School Assessment Team at their school is also actively involved in assisting with intervention strategies shared with the educators during information-sharing sessions.

Ed3D: *They give written feedback as evidence of monitoring. Comments will show if the learners are performing, or improvement is needed. They also organise workshops for teachers.*

Grade 3 educator from school B indicated that the educators are expected to develop their own management plan, which indicates how support to progressed learners will be provided. The school management then follows up on the implementation of these management plans. The participant indicated that this approach is interactive as there are discussions between the educator and the manager.

ED3B: *“They don’t just say, this is what we need to implement. They want to know the results and they follow up all the time to see if there is progress”.*

The SBST plays an important role in assisting the school management team in managing the progressed learners. The school management team manages and monitors learners’ books, including progressed learners. Educators also keep support files or support books monitored by the school management team.

When educators were asked about the support they received from the management, they indicated that the support is mostly based on trial and error as there are no clear set strategies to be used. Training available is only for dealing with accommodations, SBST and SIAS processes. There is still no training for educators on how to support learners. Most participants indicated that the school management focuses more on monitoring than supporting the educators. The departmental officials also follow the same pattern of monitoring how the progressed learners are supported. Peer support amongst colleagues also emerged as a method that educators depend on for support.

4.4.3.3 Learner support and intervention strategies

Extended school days have been indicated as one of the strategies used by the schools when asked about the intervention strategies used to support progressed learners in their classrooms. Swapping classes, whereby a different educator will offer the same lesson to a different group in the grade, is another strategy used. This lesson is now re-taught as an intervention.

Ed4C: *I would say they are supporting us because they have suggested for extra classes for example a teacher who will specialise in maths if I have a free period, I take learners who are struggling in maths and take them to the staff room because classrooms are not enough. It's like a period for support of learners and I then take them, I support them, then the isiZulu teacher will do the same. Sometimes it is not that the child is struggling that much but because we are rushing the syllabus you find other learners are left behind and you find when you are doing face to face with them and explaining step by step you find the child can grasp and you see the difference.*

Re-teaching concepts is a strategy that all schools use. There is no indication of the use of different teaching methods like the use of different modes of teaching, including computers, videos, etc.

One strategy used is twinning a progressed learner with a well-performing learner. This twinning is done with the belief that the well-performing learner will constantly support the progressed learner.

Ed3D: *Pair the struggling learners with those who can (Peer Assistance).*

Curriculum differentiation, by lowering the level of the worksheets to accommodate the progressed learners, is one of the strategies implemented. The Grade 4 Mathematics educator from school C indicated that she starts the progressed learners with Grade 3 work before proceeding to the Grade 4 content. The challenge of overcrowding and transport after school makes it difficult to offer these learners sufficient support as they need to get to the transport and end up not attending the extra classes offered.

Ed4C: *There's a lot of challenges one is time we try to support them even though the time is limited, two the expected syllabus coverage rushes them and we are unable to explain everything thorough, we teach just to cover the curriculum. The transport issues as I said because we can't channel the parent to say your child to say I will keep your child after school because learners use transport. So, there's very limited time to support the learners.*

Ed4C: *The transport issues as I said because we can't channel the parent to say I will keep your child after school because learners use transport. So, there's very limited time to support the learners. Parents are also a challenge because you call them in, and they don't come. So, they give us challenges.*

There was an indication of the use of a support book which learners take home for lower-level homework. The expectation is that parents must then support these learners at home. The question is whether this is practical and implementable, noting that some parents may not even understand the work, and the availability of time is also a challenge.

Ed3D: *They are given a lower level of activities so that they can catch up, for an example in the grade 2 work instead of doing 3 letter sound, we will do 2 letter sound.*

Early identification and support have also been noted as a challenge. Participants indicated that learners identified or progressed to Grade 3 have already missed the Grades 1 and 2 content. These learners then feel demotivated as they are not making any progress. "Many researchers agree that the best solution to the retention versus social promotion debate is to prevent academic failure before it occurs" (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

4.4.3.4 Overcrowding and time for support

The participants' responses when asked about the intervention strategies implemented based on the findings of the SMT findings clearly indicated the different

programmes in schools to support progressed learners. All the schools have indicated on their strategies that they are also having the School Based Support Teams who are also assisting with remedial programmes.

Ed3B: *We have School Based Support Team (SBST) so once a month the children we have identified as possible retention, possible progression or all those that are progressed, for example in my class I have 4 children that have repeated grade 3 that I know of and 4 learners that repeated grade 1 or grade 2 so they will be progressed at the end of the year but I also identified 4 children that will possibly not finish grade 3.*

Ed3B: *We have intervention classes in English, Maths and Afrikaans. What happens in grade 3 that's what I will talk about. So, the last period on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday we have been extended the days for extra lessons.*

Ed3C: *"I use an observation book to assess the performance of learners. The support book is arranged for parents to support learners at home. LSE assist with learners who are struggling."*

Some students struggle to meet the standards of their grades in terms of subject matter mastery. They have a backlog of work from prior grades in which they did not pass, in addition to the work for the present grade (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019).

When educators were asked about the frequency of them monitoring the progress that the progressed learners make it was indicated by one participant that due to the high number of learners in his class, he mostly focuses on progressed learners only when the management indicates that this report is required. Although educators know how to support these learners, implementation is difficult due to the curriculum requirements, overcrowding and the availability of time. Honig (2006) indicated that in increasingly diversified environments, the demand on schools to enhance student performance becomes more difficult, thereby expanding the gap between governmental aspirations and the reality of particular schools.

Participants indicated that one-on-one teaching and marking the work with the learner had proven the best method, as the educator could practically show the learner where he was struggling.

Ed4B: *Obviously what I would like to do when I mark that learners book what I will do instead of marking that book at home with the rest of the books I will mark the book with the child next to me sitting together at least I can show this learner this is what you did, this is what you did wrong fixing it with the learner giving that type of support.*

However, this has proven impossible in most cases due to limited time and the number of learners in the class. This time still has to be shared with the different challenges like sports seasons and educator absenteeism, where relief has to be provided. However parental involvement can also be a solution to this, but this has also proven unsuccessful as very few parents are willing or able to assist. The issues of absenteeism by educators were also stated as a challenge. These learners are now split into the already overcrowded classroom. This, in turn, delays learner support.

Ed3A: *We are almost successful but it's hard especially when we have the athletics season, and we have sport in the last period or the teacher is absent then you can't do it because the teacher is absent.*

4.4.3.5 Learner referrals

Participants were asked about the progressed learners who do not show progress after the implementation of interventions and most participants also indicated that there are one on one meetings which are held with by the SMT with the educators where specific learner challenges are discussed, although educators view these as accounting sessions rather than support. If the learner is not improving, then further communication with the SBST is done, and relevant forms are completed.

Ed3C: *Take them to LSEs and we fill in SNA and arrange with the district for screening. If they don't improve the are referred to skills school.*

Ed4C: *We keep evidence of support, fill the support/ SNA forms, so that the child can be referred to a suitable school, because the child is*

struggling but we don't just do that , it is a process. They will be progressed until we also include the department and the officials from the department will also assess the child. Sometimes they are able to place them in special school or schools that are suitable for them`

Psychological assessments are being delayed, and even once the learner has been assessed, the placement process is also delayed. The educators indicated that they are sitting with learners diagnosed with Autism Syndrome Disorder in their classes as they are awaiting placement.

Ed3A: *This normally with the extreme child. So, 2 years ago I had an autistic child she was not interacting with the class. It was chaos. I didn't know how she got to be in Grade3.*

4.4.3.6 Parental involvement

Parental involvement is another method educators use to try and support the learners. All the participants indicated that when everything fails, they then take the challenge back to the parents. Issues of the home background and the establishment of learning barriers stemming from the home environment are examined. The reality is that in some cases, this does not yield any better results, and then the ultimate solution still becomes referral to a special school. Parental communication is normally scheduled from at least once per term, to twice a year, even though the educators try to communicate constantly where possible. The communication diary is also used to ensure continued interaction with the parents.

The language barrier was also indicated as a challenge where a learner is learning in English as a home language, whilst the learner is Zulu speaking at home. Parental involvement then becomes crucial so that the school can address the issue of communication at home.

Ed3A: *Challenging having to teach them all subjects in English especially grade 1 like our grade 1 teacher get children who have never spoken English and they come to English school. Most of them are not fluent in one of the other languages.*

4.4.3.7 External factors affecting performance.

Though educators when asked if any noted successes in their progression policy implementation there are indicated that there is not much success in implementing the progression policy, it was noted that this policy had helped educators to give attention to the learners that needed support. Early identification of learners has been noted as one of the successes. Educators indicated that this policy had motivated them to be able to identify learners at an early stage. In his study, Van der Berg (2015) states that to guarantee that all students have a fair and equitable chance to advance academically and contribute economically to a global society, more resources and evidence-based interventions are required. This statement is particularly true in disadvantaged socioeconomic settings, where significant increases in learner performance are necessary in the foundation phase before learner deficits become too great and learners fall too far behind.

School A grade 3 educator gave a practical example of a learner who was identified to be lacking concentration, was disruptive and had behavioural issues. The parent was informed of this behaviour. After being taken to relevant specialists and given a prescription, the learner's performance improved and has moved from a nuisance to a top learner.

Ed3A: *I had little girl I think I was still teaching grade 3. She scraped, she didn't concentrate, she was talking, she was playing, and she and I were constantly telling her to behave. I always asked her parents in because I thought she had behavioural issues. They put her on a natural form of concentration medicine things like that and in grade 6 she is top 10 because she has just matured and is one of the possible prefects' candidates.*

Some learners who are given sufficient support due to being progressed tend to overcome the barriers, and as they move to higher grades, they manage to be promoted on merit rather than being progressed.

The ecological system model of Bronfenbrenner, on which this research's theoretical framework is based, mentions that the learner's environment and experiences may affect learner achievement. Some cases were mentioned by the educators where multiple factors are affecting the learners' progress, including language barriers due

to the home language being different from the language of teaching and learning. Although support is given to this learner, limited or no progress must be noted.

Motivation has also been mentioned as one aspect that improves the learners' performance. Due to several psychosocial challenges, learners seem to be demotivated. The extra attention, help and motivation offered by the educator promotes trust between the educator and the learner. With this positive motivation, improvement tends to be realised.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings indicated that all the schools, both the township and former Model C schools, are aware of the learner progression policy and have implemented their own systems to ensure successful implementation. Curriculum Management, which in most schools happens at the end of each term, is the vehicle all schools use to track the progressed learners. Participants interviewed also indicated their knowledge of the learner progression policy, although they indicated several challenges regarding the actual implementation in the classroom.

The findings further indicated that there is no standardised method and support for progressing learners. These findings, in turn, lead to limited professional development for educators. Every school has its own method that they follow to make the policy implementable.

In the next chapter, the final chapter of the research, we will further discuss all the findings based on the themes identified and then make recommendations on how identified challenges can be improved.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and summary of the study's findings. The primary purpose of the research was to determine how schools handle the learner progression policy. The focus was on finding out how schools implement the progression policy, with a particular focus on how the schools manage to support the progressed learners and their way of ensuring that they manage to bridge the curriculum gap caused by progression. The study further explored how the schools deal with situations where no progress is noted, irrespective of the different intervention strategies implemented. The findings and conclusions presented in this chapter ensured that the main research question, "How are progressed learners supported in Grades 3 and 4?" is answered.

The participants used in the study were the Grade 3 and 4 educators, Foundation and Intermediate phase departmental heads, and Deputy Principals. The reason for the sampling of these participants was to ensure that the information gathered was relevant since these participants were all directly involved with the implementation of the progression policy in either Grade 3 or 4, and, in most instances, the Deputy Principals managed both grades.

This chapter presents the recommendations of this study. Some limitations have been noted and will be outlined as the study's shortcomings. Further opportunities for research and research and finally, a brief conclusion will be presented.

5.2 The background of the study

The national policy on the Programme and Promotion Requirements of National Curriculum Statement policy details how and when a learner moves from one grade to another. This policy states that learners cannot spend more than four years in a phase. This restriction implies that a learner who fails to meet the minimum promotion requirements in a grade for the second time cannot be retained and must be allowed to progress to the next grade (DBE, 2015). The policy instructs support for at-risk learners and those who have progressed to the next grade. Progression can prevent retention for more than four years if previous underperformance is addressed in the new grade (DBE, 2013). The policy's aim was, amongst others, intended to reduce

high dropout rate and improve school retention as it was established that many learners get discouraged due to continuous failure and end up dropping out of school. The purpose of this policy was also to ensure the reduction of learner dropouts due to being over age. Learner dropout is often caused by frustrations and a feeling of hopelessness experienced by learners consistently exhibiting patterns of underperformance (DBE, 2015). The progression method was designed to help students remain in the educational system and graduate effectively (Grossen *et al.*, 2017).

The progression policy emphasises supporting learners who have progressed to their current grade. Except for Grade R, a student who does not complete promotion standards may still advance to the next grade to avoid being held back in the Foundation Phase for more than four years (DBE, 2017). A learner who has been retained in the first phase for four (4) years or more and who is likely to be retained in the second phase for four (4) years or more shall get the necessary assistance to advance to the next grade level. This study looks at how primary schools are implementing the progression policy. The study focuses on the support given in Grades 3 and 4 to progressed learners. The participants highlighted the challenges and achievements in the implementation of support strategies. This focus was the study's main objective so we could establish how this policy was implemented and managed in public primary schools. It was important to establish the activities the school management team implemented and the educators' experiences in implementing the progression policy.

The study further explored how both educators and learners are coping with the extra demands of the policy. Learners who are progressed to the next grade without them achieving all the minimum requirements of the previous grades are expected to catch up on the missed content whilst also mastering the content of the current grade. The study looked at how the primary schools with progressed learners in Grades 3 and 4 implement support strategies to achieve the policy goals. The next discussion will be to summarise the findings and discuss the recommendations based on the following main themes that are a summary of all the themes which emerged from the study:

- The implementation of progression policy in schools (How is a policy implemented, who are responsible and what challenges do they encounter, and what are possible solutions?).
- Tracking, Monitoring and Support of progressed learners. This theme summarises how support is implemented, the challenges (time, overcrowding etc.), and what can be done.
- Parental Involvement in supporting progressed learners (this theme summarises the findings, challenges, and recommendations).

5.3 The implementation of the progression policy in primary schools

A learner who could not comprehend the principles in one grade and was then advanced to a more advanced class or more difficult academic topic is likely to struggle even more (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The importance of promoting learners because they are meeting the minimum promotion requirements rather than progressing them can never be overemphasised. Continuous retention's effects on learners not meeting the progression requirements cannot be ignored.

All the participants interviewed in this study clearly understood the progression policy and what it entails. Participants were also clear on the policy's expectations on the support required for the learners at risk of being progressed and those who have been progressed to the next grade. Though the policy is clear on the importance of supporting progressed learners, it is not prescriptive on how and when this support should be implemented while also considering the demands and requirements of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The strategies and a number of challenges were highlighted by the participants on the actual implementation of the policy.

In interaction with participants in this study, one of the conclusions realised was that when the progression policy was introduced, its main focus was to reduce the dropout rate and also improve learner retention. There may be evidence that this was achieved, but another negative option has also opened for some schools where they cannot support the progressed learners sufficiently and resort to completing the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) forms for referral to special schools. The form's name is self-explanatory, and it is also explained in the SIAS policy that it is for support. This definition means that it is a resource to assist the educator in identifying

the support needs of the learner, but from the information gathered from the participants, it can be concluded that this form is viewed as the document pulled out when everything else fails. Participants indicated that when supported learners are not improving, the next option is to refer them to the schools where they will be offered specialised support:

DPA: *You track if there was any improvement or not. If not, we take these learners to SBST to intervene by completing SNA and it will intervene on the academic, behaviour and so on, and if there's still no improvement the learner will be referred to LSE and escalate to district-based support team.*

This comment then indicated that the diagnosis used by schools to refer learners to special schools might not imply that the learner needs specialised support, it may be that this learner is just slow in grasping the English First Additional Language and Mathematics content in Grade 3, whilst managing to be competent in the Home Language and Life Skills. Because the promotion requirement also requires competency in the other two subjects, this learner is at risk of being referred to a special school without sufficient time and support with the current content, which is a cause for concern.

In the literature review, it was stated that Abraham Iyambo, the then Minister of Education (NANSO, 2009) in Namibia, indicated that over the years, after the introduction of automatic progression, “learners have become complacent and disinterested in learning, thus heavily relying on the system of ALP, knowing fully well that repeating a class twice was out of the question”. The participants also indicated during the research that some of the progressed learners were aware that they would not be retained twice; thus, progression becomes an expectation.

The DPs indicated that when they meet with their SMTs, their discussions are mostly on the general performance of learners per subject rather than on specific struggling learners. This comment indicates that the statistics have become more important than actual learner achievement.

The educators also indicated the pressure they feel as they are expected to support learners on the content they didn't grasp in the previous years whilst also introducing

new concepts simultaneously. It was also emphasised by Lamb and Rice (2008) when they stated that ALP requires instructors to cope with under-prepared students while attempting to instruct those who are well-equipped.

Depending on how it is implemented, automatic promotion may be beneficial or harmful. ALP eliminates waste but demands a substantial amount of human and material resources, especially in countries with large class sizes and low socioeconomic conditions (Nalova, 2016). The participants indicated the difficulty in supporting progressed learners in their classrooms due to the high number of learners they have in a class.

5.4 Tracking, Monitoring and Supporting of Progressed Learners

The end-of-term schedules came out as the main tool used by schools in tracking the learners' performance, including progressed learners. This finding thus indicates that the only time the management can detect, and address challenges experienced by learners is through summative assessments, which only occur at the end of the term. Tracking progressed learners primarily depends on these assessments, as identified from the findings. The question is how these assessments address the content gap experienced by progressed learners. Assessments are always based on the current grade's assessment standards, not considering that progressed learners also need to be assessed on the content they struggled with in the previous grade to verify if they are actually ready for the new content. The other question will be whether all learners are performing poorly due to their lack of academic knowledge or whether it is the system's challenge of basing every performance on the outcome of assessments.

It should also be noted that assessments are also affected by external factors which are not directly linked to the mastery of the content taught. The question is whether issues like anxiety before assessments and all other psychological factors are considered. There is a need to look at alternative ways of measuring progress rather than strictly basing all progress on formal assessments.

There are intervention classes that take place after school, especially in schools where there are no Learner Support Educators (LSE's). During this time, the educators are already exhausted as they have been teaching throughout the day. The

learners receiving the instruction have also been at school throughout the day. The quality of these afternoon support classes is questionable. Are these classes achieving the intended goal, or are educators having these classes so they can tick relevant boxes for evidence of support as required by the policy? Stott *et al.* (2015) maintain that these expectations lead to burnout amongst teachers due to having to give extra classes in the afternoons and weekends.

The findings also indicated that if the interventions are not assisting the learners in improving their performance, the next step, as per the SIAS policy, becomes the consideration for referring the learner to a special school. The question is – Is this not an easy way out? Are we putting enough effort into trying to avoid referrals? Why is the SIAS only implemented at the end of the process? Isn't the SIAS policy supposed to be implemented as a first step from the time we have screened and identified that the learner has challenges? The SIAS guiding principles for decision-making regarding the placement of a learner states that "Placement of a learner in a specialised setting to access support provisions is a last resort and should also not be seen as permanent" (DBE, 2014). Some learners identified as progressing are not given enough chance to adapt because they mustn't stay in phase for long. If they can be given a chance, they may adapt as time continues. Progression may have to be dealt with in a case-by-case management system.

Evidence presented by educators indicated system challenges like overcrowding, lack of time for support due to curriculum requirements, educator absenteeism, time for sporting events that affect daily teaching and learning, learners using transport who cannot attend the intervention programmes, etc., which eventually delay progress. In these cases, alternative support classes in all the schools are recommended. These support classes will still follow the same strategy of using the LSE to support learners experiencing barriers. Instead of having these classes in certain identified schools, referred to as Full-Service Schools, this should be a standard requirement for all the schools as the learning barriers cut across all learners.

The findings indicated a maximum of three Learner Support Educators in a Full-Service School. This finding indicates that not all the grades are allocated to an

educator who strictly focuses on supporting struggling learners. This finding can be viewed as exposing a flaw as the support educator is expected to master the content in different grades as the curriculum gap differs from one learner to the other. The support classes must be available in all grades. If each grade has a support class where learners experiencing barriers are continuously supported on a daily basis in each grade, then the number of learner referrals will be reduced. This outcome, in turn, will also minimise the situation of having learners who are continuously progressed throughout the system.

5.5 Parental Involvement in supporting progressed learners.

Nkosi and Adebayo (2021:199) indicated the lack of parental involvement as one of the challenges that were identified by the educators in implementing the progression policy. One of the SIAS policy's organising principles on support is that

“The child must be viewed within his or her context. The extent to which intrinsic factors, the home and school context, are impacting on his or her accessing education, remaining enrolled and achieving to his or her optimum potential, must be evaluated”.

The participants also noted that this is still a challenge as parents are reluctant to work together with the school when called about their learner's progress.

In reality, as indicated by some of the educators, several factors cause parents being unable to support the progressed learners fully. Some of the parents do not understand the work done by the learners; therefore, they believe that if the learner cannot be taught at school, then on their own, they feel helpless. There are also issues of the parents that are working and hardly have the time to support the learners on homework issues and check if the work done is correct. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) state:

Today's parents are often preoccupied with the distractions and demands of daily life. Burdened by low-income, inflexible work hours and language barriers, some parents are unable to attend school activities or participate in the schooling of their children on a regular basis.

Implementing strategies to improve learners' performance requires a joint effort of stakeholders (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

5.6 Recommendations

The officials managing the implementation of policies need to note that though the emphasis is placed on curriculum coverage, at the same time, the quality of support given to the progressed learners must be closely monitored. When monitoring this support, it's important to differentiate the assessments offered to progressed learners to see if the content gap is closing, particularly at the primary school level.

The importance of assessing learners to determine the level at which they have grasped the content cannot be denied. However, one has to review the methods of assessment. Continuous assessments that focus on learners' abilities and build on them, rather than only evaluating them at the end of a learning period, could be helpful support to consider moving forward.

The implementation of the SIAS policy in schools needs to be closely monitored. Departmental offices must have facilitators strictly for monitoring the implementation of the SIAS policy in schools. The SIAS policy is meant for support, not referral; schools must adhere to this consideration and ensure that all learners are correctly identified and supported. Learner progression should not be used as a measure for a possible referral to special schools.

The time for support is also a challenge. When implemented in the afternoons by the same people teaching the same learner the same concept during the day, it may possibly yield the same results. The issues of fatigue from both the learner and the educator must also be considered. All primary schools in every grade should have assistant educators to support learners struggling with the content during lessons. This support will lead to learners accessing support immediately when required. Learners identified as slow in grasping the concepts will then be referred to the assistant educators for immediate support.

Incorporating the intervention programme within the daily timetable may also be one of the options to be explored in ensuring all progressed learners are effectively supported. This may be accomplished while also giving expanded opportunities to

thriving learners. The practicability of the implementation may have to be explored based on the school context.

All schools must be Full-Service Schools, especially primary schools with learner support educators trained in Remedial Education. When learners are given quality basic education at the primary level, they tend to excel in higher education. “Many researchers agree that the best solution to the retention versus social promotion debate is to prevent academic failure before it occurs” (Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

In Chapter 2, Lawrence-Turner (2011) introduced us to the term “learned helplessness”. He referred to learned helplessness as a condition in which a learner feels that they are not capable of achieving a goal and, as a result, stop trying. This issue was raised by the participants and indicated in the findings where learners end up making progression an expectation and stop putting in an effort. Parental Involvement workshops need to be conducted by schools whereby parents are given strategies to support their children without being expected to master the content. These must be strategies that they can implement to motivate learners and provide them with confidence. The intended outcome is for the learners to see value in education and be motivated to achieve rather than being relaxed and expecting to be automatically progressed without making an effort.

Our schools can also explore using parents and community volunteers to assist in curriculum support. Many stay-at-home parents and student teachers can willingly volunteer some of their time to support the learners. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) emphasise that there must exist trust and respect in the family, school, and community. Partnerships with schools could educate volunteers on how to assist in the classroom. The volunteers will then gain an understanding of school procedures and expectations through this training. The schools must engage as many parents and community members as possible in educating their students through effective partnership programs to demonstrate the value of education.

Alternative schools that offer a variety of curricula are important in ensuring that those learners that are not academically gifted get a chance to explore their skills in other spheres.

5.7 Opportunities for further research

We have recently seen an increase in learners with special needs. Even before the progression policy's introduction, several long-standing factors may have contributed to this increase, including socio-economic factors, access to medical care during pregnancy, etc. This study has opened a door for further research into whether there is a link between the introduction of the progression policy and the increase in learners with special needs in our schools. Several factors will have to be explored, including how SIAS is implemented in mainstream schools and at which point educators start the support process. Is it at the beginning when they note the challenge after screening as per policy requirement, or t at the stage where they are now planning to refer the learner to a special school because the school has failed to give the necessary support that was required?

The induction of novice educators must also incorporate the management of learner progression and strategies to support these learners into their classrooms and highlight some relevant strategies that may benefit these learners and improve their confidence and self-worth in the classroom.

5.8 Limitations

No data was collected from the school principals, as the school principals are mostly not directly involved with the day-to-day curriculum implementation. Based on the strategic position in which they are placed, they may have a more positive impact on influencing policy implementation by educators. In this light, I feel it is crucial for the school principals to have full knowledge of the policy and how it is implemented in their schools so they can easily motivate the implementation during their interaction with the SMT and staff.

Issues of learners' self-confidence and the poor feelings of self-worth brought up by the interviewed participants may need to be dealt with at the school level in a more strategic way that will also incorporate the school values. There is no better person who is well placed strategically than the school principal in ensuring the implementation of these values.

One intermediate departmental head withdrew from the research due to personal issues (the loss of a family member from COVID-19), and it was difficult for her to participate in the research; therefore, this research could not incorporate her views.

5.9 Conclusion

Ensuring learners are moved to the next grade with at least a minimum required content knowledge can never be overemphasised. The reality that learners do not learn at the same pace and do not grasp the concept taught in the same way could also not be ignored. The importance of early identification of challenges and immediate intervention will remain one of the solutions that may assist in addressing issues of ALP or progression.

The progression policy aims to keep learners at school for as long as possible and preferably leave the schooling system with at least a matric certificate. The fact that not all learners are not academic can also not be ignored; hence the importance of a flexible education system that will acknowledge all the capabilities and differences among the learners is important.

Primary schools provide the foundation of a schooling system, and it is thus expected that the support on learner capabilities become the main focus. The research managed to unveil the pressures brought by the policy requirements, including the assessment requirements and the reporting procedures, which tend to prioritise data collection issues rather than ensuring that learners grasp the required basic content that will be used throughout the schooling system.

The recommendations above indicated the need for strengthening the support strategies that are implemented by the schools in giving support to learners that didn't meet the minimum requirements and are progressed, especially at a primary level of schooling. Grades 3 and 4 are critical in a learner's education as they symbolise a movement from a mastery of the basic content required to a more abstract movement. Thus, in this part of schooling, sufficient support needs to be given, and proper identification of learners is required. If struggling learners are identified at this level, and their capabilities are also clearly and correctly diagnosed, the goals of the progression policy may be realised sooner than imagined.

REFERENCES

- Adu, E.O. and Ngibe, N.C. 2014. Continuous Change in Curriculum: South African teachers' Perceptions. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), p.983.
- Algozzine, B., Ysseldyke, J.E., and Elliot, J. 2002. *Strategies and tactics for effective instruction*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Bojuwoye, O., Moletsane, M., Stofile, S., Moolla, N. and Sylvester, F. 2014. Learners' experiences of learning support in selected Western Cape schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(1), pp.1-15.
- Chataa, B.M. and Nkengbeza, D. 2019. Challenges Faced by Primary School Teachers in Implementing the Automatic Promotion Policy at a School in the Zambezi Region. *Creative Education*, 10(7), pp.1731-1744.
- Chilisa, B. and Kawulich, B. 2012. Selecting a research approach: Paradigm, methodology and methods. *Doing social research: A global context*, 5(1), pp.51-61.
- Chohan, B.I. and Qadir, S.A. 2011. Automatic Promotion Policy at Primary Level and MDG-2. *Journal of Research & Reflections in Education (JRRE)*, 5(1).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. 2017. The ethics of educational and social research. In *Research methods in education* (pp. 111-143). Routledge.
- Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research design*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.0
- De Villiers A.P. 1997. Inefficiency and demographic realities of South African school system. *South African Journal of Education*, 17, pp. 76-81
- Department of Basic Education. (DBE). 2013. National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement. Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Policies/NATIONAL%20POLICY%20NPPPR%20%2005%20Feb%202021.pdf?ver=2021-02-24-105532-663> on 23 March 2023.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2014. *Draft policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS)*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/sias-revised-final-comment.pdf on 23 March 2023.

- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2015a. Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for the Foundation Phase. Retrieved from [https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements\(CAPS\)/CAPSFoundation.aspx](https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements(CAPS)/CAPSFoundation.aspx) on 23 March 2023.
- Department of Basic Education. (DBE). 2015b. Circular no. E35 of 2015 Guidelines for the implementation of promotion and progression requirements for Grade 10-12. Retrieved from <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/c0cc1c10/files/uploaded/CIRCULAR-E35-PROGR-CRIT-Gr-1011.pdf> on 23 March 2023.
- Department of Basic Education. (DBE). 2016. Provincial assessment circular no. E22 of 2016: Criteria for the implementation of progression Grades 10-11. <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/Circular%20E22%20of%202016.pdf?ver=2016-08-29-131130-683>
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2017). Basic Education on policy on progression and policy on multiple examination opportunity. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/basic-education-policy-progression-and-policy-multiple-examination-opportunity-31-oct-2017>
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2019. *Provincial assessment circular no E29 Of 2019: The discontinuation of the multiple examination opportunities (MEO) dispensation with effect from 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/Circular%20E29%20of%202019.pdf?ver=2019-10-28-142703-507> on 23 March 2023.
- Department of Education. 2008. Ministerial committee on learner retention in the South African schooling system. Retrieved from <https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/DOe-2008-Learner-Retention-report.pdf> on 23 March 2023.
- Durisic , M. & Bunijevac, M. 2017. .Parental involvement as an important factor for successful education. *Centre for Education Policy Studies Journal*, 7, pp. 137-153.
- Grossen, S., Grobler, A.A., and Lacante, M. 2017. Repeated retention or dropout? Disputing Hobson's choice in South African township schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(2).

- Guba, E.G. 1990. The paradigm dialog. In Alternative paradigms conference, mar, 1989, Indiana University, School of Education, San Francisco, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Harley, K. and Wedekind, V. 2004. Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990 to 2002. *Changing class: Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa*, pp.195-220.
- Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W., and Smit, B. 2004. Finding your way in qualitative research. Van Schaik: Pretoria.
- Honig, M. 2006. *Complexity and policy implementation. New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity*, 63, pp.1-25.
- Hughes, J.N., Cao, Q., West, S.G., Smith, P.A. and Cerda, C. 2017. Effect of retention in elementary grades on dropping out of school early. *Journal of School Psychology*, 65, pp.11-27.
- Jansen, J.D. 1998. Curriculum reform in South Africa: A critical analysis of outcomes-based education. *Cambridge journal of education*, 28(3), pp.321-331.
- Jimerson, S.R. and Renshaw, T.L. 2012. Retention and social promotion. *Principal Leadership*, 13(1), pp.12-16.
- Johnson, E.S. 2008. Ecological systems and complexity theory: towards an alternative model of accountability in education, 5(2008), pp. 41-48.
- Juan, A., Reddy, V., and Hanna, S. 2021. The success of failure: What progressed learners reveal about our education system. <https://www.timss-sa.org/blog/the-success-of-failure-what-progressed-learners-reveal-about-our-education-system>
- Karunanayake, D., Madushani, K. and Vimukthi, N. 2020. The importance of identifying students with learning difficulty in the school context. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 12(4), pp.8-18.
- Koppensteiner, M.F. 2014. Automatic grade promotion and student performance: Evidence from Brazil. *Journal of Development Economics*, 107, pp.277-290.
- Lamb, S. and Rice, S. 2008. Effective Intervention Strategies for Students at Risk of Early Leaving. Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning The University of Melbourne. http://samordningsforbund.se/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/06/rapport_university_of_melborne_080501.pdf

- LaRocque, L. (1986). Policy implementation in a school district: A multiperspective approach. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 486-508.
- Lawrence-Turner, J. 2011. *Social Promotion Puts Students on Rough Path*. Passage
- Makhanya, P.D. 2021. Effect of the implementation of the Progression Education Policy at public institutions: a case study of Pinetown district in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal).
- Maree, K., Creswell, J., Esberssohn, L., Eloff, I., Ferreira, R., Vankova N., Jansen, J., Nieuwenhuis, J., Pitersen, J., Clark, and V. van der Westhuizen, C. 2010, *First Steps in Research*, 5th edn., Van Schaik, Pretoria.
- McMillan J.H., and Schumacher, S. 2001. *Research in education. A conceptual introduction*, Longman, United States.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. 2014. *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. Edinburgh Gate, England.
- Mehrotra, S. (1998). Education for All: Policy Lessons from High-Achieving Countries. *International Review of Education*, 44(5/6), 461-484. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/a:1003433029696>
- Mogale, M.L. and Modipane, M.C. 2021. The implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools of the Limpopo province in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 41(1).
- More, M. 2015. Do not abandon your studies. SAnews: South African News Agency 06 January 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/minister-motshekga-dont-abandon-your-studies>
- More, M. 2016. 2015 matric retains above 70% pass rate. SAnews: South African News Agency 05 January 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/2015-matric-class-retains-above-70-pass-rate>.
- Munje, P., and Maarman, R. 2016. A capability analysis on the implementation of the school progression policy and its impact on learner performance. *Journal of Education*, 66:185-206. Available at <http://joe.ukzn.ac.za>. [Accessed 5 May 2016].
- Munje, P.N. and Jita, L.C. 2020. Parental aggravation of learner absenteeism in south African primary schools: implications for learner progression. In *South Africa International Conference on Education* (p. 150).

- Nalova, E. 2016. Teachers' perception and practice of automatic promotion in English speaking primary schools in Cameroon. *British Journal of Education*, 4(11), pp.11-23.
- Namibia National Students Organisation (NANSO). 2009. *NANSO's Position on the Automatic Promotion Policy*. Windhoek: NBC. [Paper reference 3]
- Ndaruhutse, S., Branelly, L., Latham, M. and Penson, J. 2008. *Grade repetition in primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa: an evidence base for change*. CfBT Education Trust.
- Nkosi, T.P. and Adebayo, R.O. 2021. An exploration of the progression policy and its effects on learner achievement in KwaZulu-Natal. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Management*; 9(3). <https://hdl.handle.net/10321/3698>
- Nomahlubi, J. 2018. Progressed learners do well in 2017 Matric, says Lesufi. *Sunday Times* 05/01/2018
- Okurut, J.M. 2015. Examining the Effect of Automatic Promotion on Students' Learning Achievements in Uganda's Primary Education. *World Journal of Education*, 5(5), pp.85-100.
- Picklo, D. and Christenson, S. 2005. Alternatives to retention and social promotion: The availability of instructional options. *Remedial and Special Education*, (26)5, Retrieved from the EBSCO database.
- Ramputla, P.G. 2020. Teachers' and learners' experiences of the implementation of the progression policy: the case of schools in Dimamo Circuit, Limpopo Province (Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo). http://ulspace.ul.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10386/3439/ramputla_pg_2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Reschly, A.L. and Christenson, S.L. 2012. Moving from "context matters" to engaged partnerships with families. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 22(1-2), pp.62-78.
- Ryan, D.P.J. 2001. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Retrieved January, 9, p.2012.
- Scott, I. 2018. Designing the South African higher education system for student success. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 6(1), pp.1-17.
- Shange N., 2016. 2015 matric exams were tougher than previous years. *Sowetanlive* 06 /01/2016

- Shinn, M.R., and Walker, H.M. (Eds.). 2012. *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems in a three-tiered model including RTI*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Stott, A.E., Dreyer, H. and Venter, P. 2015. Consequences of the progression law in the FET phase: a case study. *Journal of Education*, (63), pp.89-110.
- Straub, S., Leighton, M. and Souza, P. 2019. Social promotion in primary school: effects on grade progression. *Brazilian Review of Econometrics*, 39(1), pp.1-33.
- Tani, M.C., 2018. The effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon public primary schools: the case of North west and South West regions. *Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy*, 12(1), pp.63-100.
- Taye, D.E.R.E.J.E. 2003. Automatic promotion practices in the first-cycle of primary schools in west Gojjam zone. *Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies*, pp.1-123.
- Tsanwani, A., Harding, A., Engelbrecht, J., & Maree, K. (2014). Perceptions of teachers and learners about factors that facilitate learners' performance in mathematics in South Africa. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 18(1), 40-51.
- Van der Berg, S. 2015. What the Annual National Assessments can tell us about learning deficits over the education system and the school career. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(2), pp.28-43.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 APPENDIX A: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

APPENDIX A



GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE AMENDED RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	28 October 2019
Validity of Research Approval:	10 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/63A
Name of Researcher:	Moeketsa M.D
Address of Researcher:	11 Kerkenberg Street Eastvale Springs, 1559
Telephone Number:	084 660 6602
Email address:	doronamane@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Management of learner progression in public primary schools in Gauteng.
Type of qualification	Master's in Education
Number and type of schools:	Four Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng East

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

[Signature] 28/10/2019

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 28/10/2019

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

6.2 APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT



Faculty of Education

APPENDIX B

TO: Gauteng East District Director

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT OFFICE**

I am Dorothea Molobane Moeketse, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree in the Department of Education Management and Policy studies under the supervision of Dr K.S Adeyemo. The purpose of this letter is to request for permission to conduct research in Primary schools in the boundaries of Gauteng East District.

The title of the study is "Management of progressed learners in public primary schools in Gauteng". The purpose of the research is to explore the educators and management teams' experiences in managing progressed learners in schools. The study will answer the following core questions: What support programmes are in place in grade 3 and 4 to support progressed learners? How do school management teams' support and monitor the support provided to progressed learners? The study will give an insight on implementation and management of progressed learners.

On understanding what the study is about and if you agree to participate in the study below is a detailed process to be followed.

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured individual interviews where the grade 3 and 4 educators, head of department and deputy principals will be requested to spend some time sharing their experiences on the progression policy.
- There is a minimal risk assumed to take place during the processes of the interviews as participants are expected to share their experiences on progressed learners. The education counsellor will be on standby or available should they require debriefing and assistance to process this experience.

- The individual interviews with each participant will be approximately 45 – 60 minutes after school hours within the school premises.
- Discussions/interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Data collected from the study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in the report.
- Participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process and data will be destroyed according to UP policy.
- There will be no incentives for participants.

If there are any queries regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below).

Yours in education

Researcher: M.D Moeketse

Supervisor: Dr K.S adeyemo

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

Email: samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za

Cell No: 084 660 6602

Tel: 012 420 4279



Faculty of Education

**PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF
GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT**

PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING AND SEND IT TO:

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

I _____ (Full names and Surname) the
Director of Gauteng East District Office, hereby give permission to Molobane Dorothea
Moeketse to conduct her research at the primary schools identified for the research.

Contact details:

Email address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

6.3 APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH - PRINCIPAL



Faculty of Education

APPENDIX C

TO: The Principal

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PRIMARY SCHOOL WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT OFFICE

I am Dorothea Molobane Moeketse, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree in the Department of Education Management and Policy studies under the supervision of Dr K.S Adeyemo. The purpose of this letter is to request for permission to conduct research in Primary schools in the boundaries of Gauteng East District.

The title of the study is "Management of progressed learners in public primary schools in Gauteng". The purpose of the research is to explore the educators and management teams' experiences in managing progressed learners in schools. The study will answer the following core questions: What support programmes are in place in grade 3 and 4 to support progressed learners? How do school management teams' support and monitor the support provided to progressed learners? The study will give an insight on implementation and management of progressed learners.

On understanding what the study is about and if you agree to participate in the study below is a detailed process to be followed.

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured individual interviews where the grade 3 and 4 educators, head of department and deputy principals will be requested to spend some time sharing their experiences on the progression policy.
- There is a minimal risk assumed to take place during the processes of the interviews as participants are expected to share their experiences on progressed learners. The education counsellor will be on standby or available should they require debriefing and assistance to process this experience.

- The individual interviews with each participant will be approximately 45 – 60 minutes after school hours within the school premises.
- Discussions/interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Data collected from the study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in the report.
- Participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process and data will be destroyed according to UP policy.
- There will be no incentives for participants.

If there are any queries regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below).

Yours in education

Researcher: M.D Moeketse

Supervisor: Dr K.S Adeyemo

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

Email: samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za

Cell No: 084 660 6602

Tel: 012 420 4279



Faculty of Education

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING AND SEND IT TO:

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

I _____ (Full names and Surname) the
chairperson of the school governing body, hereby give permission to Molobane Dorothea
Moeketse to conduct her research in the primary school as identified for the research.

Contact details:

Email address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

6.4 APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY



Faculty of Education

APPENDIX D

TO: Chairperson of the School Governing Body

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF GAUTENG EAST DISTRICT OFFICE

I am Dorothea Molobane Moeketse, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree in the Department of Education Management and Policy studies under the supervision of Dr K.S Adeyemo. The purpose of this letter is to request for permission to conduct research in Primary schools in the boundaries of Gauteng East District.

The title of the study is "Management of progressed learners in public primary schools in Gauteng". The purpose of the research is to explore the educators and management teams' experiences in managing progressed learners in schools. The study will answer the following core questions: What support programmes are in place in grade 3 and 4 to support progressed learners? How do school management teams' support and monitor the support provided to progressed learners? The study will give an insight on implementation and management of progressed learners.

On understanding what the study is about and if you agree to participate in the study below is a detailed process to be followed.

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured individual interviews where the grade 3 and 4 educators, head of department and deputy principals will be requested to spend some time sharing their experiences on the progression policy.
- There is a minimal risk assumed to take place during the processes of the interviews as participants are expected to share their experiences on progressed learners. The education counsellor will be on standby or available should they require debriefing and assistance to process this experience.

- The individual interviews with each participant will be approximately 45 – 60 minutes after school hours within the school premises.
- Discussions/interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Data collected from the study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in the report.
- Participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process and data will be destroyed according to UP policy.
- There will be no incentives for participants.

If there are any queries regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below).

Yours in education

Researcher: M.D Moeketse

Supervisor: Dr K.S Adeyemo

Email: donnamane@gmail.com

Email: samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za

Cell No: 084 660 6602

Tel: 012 420 4279



Faculty of Education

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING AND SEND IT TO:

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

I _____ (Full names and Surname) the
Principal, hereby give permission to Molobane Dorothea Moeketsi to conduct her research at
the primary school identified for the research.

Contact details:

Email address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

6.5 APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER



APPENDIX E

TO: The Participant

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH

I am Dorothlia Molobane Moeketse, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree in the Department of Education Management and Policy studies under the supervision of Dr K.S Adeyemo. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in my research.

The title of my study is "Management of learner progression in public primary schools in Gauteng". The purpose of the research is to explore educators and management teams' experiences in managing progressed learners in schools. The study will give an insight on the implementation and management of progressed learners in South Africa.

The following are the details related to the data collection.

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured individual interviews where the grade 3 and 4 educators, head of department and deputy principals will be requested to spend some time sharing their experiences on the progression policy.
- There is a minimal risk assumed to take place during the processes of the interviews as participants are expected to share their experiences on progressed learners. The education counsellor will be on standby or available should they require debriefing and assistance to process this experience.
- The individual interviews with each participant will be approximately 45 – 60 minutes after school hours within the school premises.
- Discussions/interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Data collected from the study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in the report.

- If you decide to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process and data will be destroyed according to UP policy
- There will be no incentives for participants

If there are any queries regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor (see contact details below)

Yours in education

Researcher: M.D Moeketse

Supervisor: Dr K.S Adeyemo

Email: doronamane@gmail.com

Email: samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za

Cell No: 084 660 6602

Tel: 012 420 4279

Informed consent form Participant to be interviewed

Title of Research Project:

Management of Progressed Learners in Primary Schools in Gauteng .

I _____ agree to participate in the research which will be conducted by Dorothea Molobane Moeketse supervised by Dr K.S Adeyemo in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies in the University of Pretoria. I confirm that I have been informed about the purpose of the research and understood the following conditions.

- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. There will be no any consequences for my withdrawal.
- I understand that if I give consent to participate I will be interviewed.
- I understand that the interview will only be used for this research.
- Presentations and interview will be communicated in English.
- I grant permission for an interview/discussion to be audio-recorded.
- The individual interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes after school hours within school premises.
- I was assured that the school counsellor will be available should I need debriefing and assistance to process this experience.
- I will be given an opportunity to review verbatim transcripts, audio recorded discussions and make changes to statement or responses
- I understand that I will not be exposed to any undue physical or psychological harm.
- I understand that by signing the consent letter I am agreeing to participate in this study.
- For more information and questions I may contact the researcher, Dorothea Moeketse, cell phone number 084 660 6602, e-mail doronamane@gmail.com or the supervisor, Dr K.S Adeyemo; e-mail samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za

Signature: _____ Date: _____

3 | Page

6.6 APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Faculty of Education

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

Teachers

1. What criteria is used by management to monitor learner's performance?
2. How does the school management team communicate findings from the monitoring?
3. What intervention strategies are implemented from the findings?
4. What intervention strategies are you implementing to support progressed learners in your class?
5. What do you do with progressed learners who do not show progress?
6. How does the school management team monitor and support the implementation of interventions for progressed learners at a school?
7. What support or development do you receive from management to be able to support progressed learners?
8. How often is the performance of progressed learners communicated to parents?
9. What challenges have you experienced in implementing the progression policy?
10. What successes have you experienced on the implementation of the progression policy in your school?

Deputy Principal and HODs

1. What criteria are you using to monitor learner performance?
2. How do you communicate findings from the monitoring?
3. How do you monitor and support implementation of intervention strategies for progressed learners in your department?
4. How often this monitoring is conducted?
5. How often do you discuss the performance of progressed learners during information sharing session or meetings?
6. How often is the performance of progressed learners communicated to parents?
7. How do you as a manager track the performance of progressed learners?
8. What challenges have you experienced in implementing the progression policy?
9. What successes have you experienced on the implementation of the progression policy in your school?