THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARNER PROGRESSION POLICY: PERSPECTIVES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Discipline of Educational Leadership Management and Policy.

College of Humanities, School of Education

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Co-Supervisor: Dr B.N.C.K. MKHIZE

Declaration of originality

I, Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred Ngema, declare that this research report, The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: Perspectives of secondary school principals, abides by the rules:

i.   The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Supervisor's statement

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval.

Signature

Supervisor: Dr S.D. Bayeni   Date: 21/02/2022

Signature: Date: 21/02/2022

Co-Supervisor: Dr B. N. C. K. Mkhize

Ethical clearance letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

11 April 2021

Mr Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred Ngema (217080281)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Ngema,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002021/2020
Project title: The ripple effects of the Learner progression policy: Perspective of secondary school principals
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 16 October 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 11 April 2022.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Acknowledgments

Abstract

This study focused on exploring the perspectives of secondary school principals regarding the ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy on teaching and learning in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. This is a qualitative study and is located within the ambits of the interpretive paradigm. Four school principals were purposively selected for this study. This study utilised semi-structured interviews as a method of generating data from the principals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through WhatsApp Video Call platform to observe the Covid-19 basic rule of social distancing. The study used thematic data analysis to vigorously scrutinise the generated data from the principals. The findings of the study exposed that secondary school principals have a clear understanding of policy implementation. Conversely, principals encounter challenges such as the overcrowding of learners' classrooms, uncontrollable noise, ill-discipline learners, lack of individual attention, and educators' demotivation. The strategies that are used by secondary school principals to mitigate the challenges involved the following: parental involvement, expanded learning opportunities in the form of morning classes and Saturday classes, and lastly the supervised compulsory afternoon classes. This study recommended the following involvement of learners' parents during the LPP implementation phase at school, SLB's involvement during the policy formulation, and SMT's and educators to have a final say.

Lists of Acronyms

ATP   Annual Teaching Plan

DBE   Department of Basic Education

DoE   Department of Education

ESSA   Every Student Succeeds Act

FET   Further Education and Training

KZN   KwaZulu-Natal

LOLT   Language of Learning and Teaching

LPP   Learner Progression Policy

MTK   Management Tool Kit

NCLB   No Child Left Behind

NCS   National Curriculum Statement

NPPPPR   National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements

UCLA   University of California Los Angeles

SBA   School Based Assessment

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ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study explored the perspectives of secondary school principals regarding the ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy (LPP) in secondary schools at the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. The LPP is a policy designed for the benefit of learners in that it gives a special concession to a learner who does not meet the minimum promotion requirements for that grade to be awarded a chance to move into the next grade (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019; DBE, 2015; Munje & Maarman, 2016). As principals try to ensure that the policy is properly implemented, intended and unintended consequences occur during the process. One of the policy intentions is to have learners who failed to meet the minimum requirements for a promotion given a chance to move to the next grade (Branson et al., 2013). In addition to that, educators to assist the learners progressed through the policy implementation to achieve promotion in the grade learners have been moved to (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The implementation of the policy has seen the occurrence of unintended consequences such as the failure of educators to provide the progressed learners with the indispensable assistance learners need (Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). Another unintended consequence is the poor overall school matric results (Maarman & Lamon-Mbawuli, 2017). This chapter serves as an introduction to the study and provides some background to the research problem. This is going to be attained through me reflecting on the background and the statement of the problem. Further on, I spell out the purpose and the rationale of this study, where the emphasis is on the ripple effects of the implementation of Learner Progression Policy (LPP) on the learners' academic achievements and the school management, and how the principals manage to achieve the best outcomes under such circumstances. After this, I outline the significance of the study followed by objectives and the key research questions which informed this study. I move on to clarify the key concepts followed by a literature review. Lastly, I present the organisation of chapters of the dissertation which explains what each chapter entails.

1.2 Background to the study

The promotion of learners from one grade to the other has taken several dimensions in the South African education system over a few decades. I will not delve much into such dimensions as they are not the focus of this study. Special attention is paid to the current promotion of learners' policy using LPP (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011).

1.2.2 The background of the Learner Progression Policy

The LPP as a policy to be implemented was promulgated in 2011 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011). Since then, several circulars have been introduced as amendments to the LPP that were promulgated in 2011(Samuel & Dudu, 2017). In terms of Assessment Instruction 38 of 2016, the DBE issued a criterion about how progression should be implemented in Grade 10 and Grade 11 which is the Further Education and Training phase (FET) (DBE, 2016). Again, Circular E22 of 2016 was issued by the DBE dealing with the criteria to be implemented during the progression of learners in the FET phase (DBE, 2016). Later the DBE amended this progression policy by introducing Assessment Instruction 48 of 2016 which emanated from Circular E35 of 2015 (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2016). The circular referred to as the Assessment Instruction mainly focused on the criterion to be implemented when progressing learners in the FET phase (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Even though circulars were issued now and then, the DBE decided to issue Assessment Instruction 48 of 2016 (DBE, 2016). This circular was issued after the realisation that other progression policy implementations were not properly aligned with the stipulated minimum requirements for the National Senior Certificate (DBE, 2015). Progressed learners must be able to meet the basic requirement which will assist them to cope with the demands of the new grade they have been moved to (DBE, 2015).

In terms of the DBE, the following are the criteria to be followed during the progression of learners to the next grade. A learner must have been unable to meet the minimum promotion requirements of either Grade 10 or Grade11 and must have repeated Grade 10 or Grade 11; The learner must not fail the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and pass any other three of the seven subjects offered including Life Orientation. In cases where the LOLT serves as the home language, a minimum of 30% will be accepted to implement this criterion; The learner must not be absent from school for more than 20 days without a sound reason. This

serves to qualify the learner when progression is implemented; The learner must have written and submitted all the approved School-Based Assessment (SBA) for that particular year; lastly, the learner must have met all the above requirements to be progressed to the next grade

1.2.3 The conceptualisation of the Learner Progression Policy

Unpacking the learner progression concept and its use as found in the scholarship is crucial for this study before going into detail about the policy itself. The LPP is not new in the school systems of the world. Scholars locally and internationally regard LPP as a special concession that is given to a learner who does not meet the minimum promotion requirements for that grade but is awarded a chance to move into the next grade (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019; DBE, 2015; Munje & Maarman, 2016). It is necessary to make a distinction between progression, learner progression, and progressed learner as used in the Learner Progression Policy document. Progression is referred to as the movement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R in the policy, despite the learner failing to achieve the desired promotion requirements (DBE, 2011). This policy allows learners who would not have mastered the subject contents of a grade to move to the next grade. This process is referred to as learner progression (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). In this policy, the promoted learners are termed "progressed learners" (DBE, 2011, p. 35).

The policy requires that the progressed learners be given support and extra tuition to fill the knowledge gap between the previous and the current grade so that learners can cope with the current grade academic demands (Louw, Bayat & Eigelaar-Meets, 2011). The definition of these above concepts was drawn from the National Policy Pertaining the Programme and Promotion Requirements (NPPPPR) of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R—Grade 12 (DBE, 2012). The application of and compliance with this requirement is found to be challenging. There is a scholarship available on learner progression, highlighting that teacher are already overloaded with current curriculum contents and other responsibilities (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Slyvester, 2014; Grinspun, 2016; Gustafsson, Baker, Bauhus, Beese, Brodie, Kouki & Neyland, 2012). Hence, there is no time for teachers to support these learners as they do not have any free period (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Slyvester, 2014). The scholarship further highlights that class sizes are too large to allow teachers to give individual attention to the progressed learners (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Grobler, Knight, Lens & Lacante, 2014; Waltons, 2018). It is also found that the

progressed learners are unable to cope with the work of two grades (Louw, Bayat & Eigelaar-Meets, 2011; Subramoney, 2016). The LPP has been implemented by the DBE in schools to provide support to progressed learners and thus equip them academically to pass the grade and proceed to complete secondary schooling.

Before the promulgation of the LPP in 2011, secondary schools used to have a committee that was called the condonation committee. The condonation committee was responsible for deciding which learners to be promoted, progressed, and retained. This was done by this committee considering certain characteristics from learners who did not meet the minimum requirements to pass to the next grade. Some of the attributes that were observed by this committee were the learner's willingness to learn, learner's discipline, learner attendance record, and the possibility of a learner to pass on his or her own in the next grade (Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015). The advantages of having this committee were that learners who progressed into the next grade were not problematic to the educators in terms of discipline and commitment towards learning (Beyers, 2018, Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015). The committee would address the learner because he or she was given a chance to move to the next grade. This engagement with the learner would normally inspire the learner to be disciplined, cooperative in class, motivated, and committed to meeting the minimum required to pass to the next grade. Through this thorough screening conducted by the condonation committee, schools were not overwhelmed by the unintended consequences of progressing learners like most schools nowadays are exposed to. Most schools were in order when it comes to discipline and producing quality results as required by the DBE. The sad part is that learners who would not meet the requirements as stipulated by the condonation committee were retained (Beyers, Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015, Tigere, 2016).

It is important to highlight that LPP was introduced to reduce learner retention (Grossen, Grobbler & Lacante, 2017; Hall & De Lannoy, 2019). South Africa is facing the highest level of learner retention in comparison to all other countries of the world (Grossen et al., 2012). To reduce the highest level of learner retention in South Africa, LPP is used, and it also serves as a strategy to motivate learners to remain within the school system up until Grade 12 (Quintal, 2016). Proper implementation of the policy would reduce learner retention in countries with limited socio-economic resources (Van der Berg, 2015). Besides reducing learner retention, the policy is also expected to successfully reduce the dropout level as it is commonly practiced

by learners in secondary schools (Grobler, Knight, Lens & Lacante, 2014; Van der Berg, 2015). Retaining learners has financial implications for the country.

Retaining learners would mean that the DBE would have to subsidise the learners more than once in the same grade (Grinspun, 2016). This would utilise the budget that would have been allocated to the other learners. Retaining learners would result in developing low self-esteem among learners (Department of Basic Education, 2014; Munje & Maarman, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2013). To prevent the development of low self-esteem in learners that could not cope with the work of the Grade to which they are progressed, the Department of Basic Education used learner progression as a means (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Department of Basic Education, 2011).

1.2.4 Policies related to the Learner Progression Policy [LPP] in other countries

Learner progression has got many different models as it is implemented in different countries. Different countries use different terms to refer to it. In Sub-Saharan countries such as Uganda, Ghana, and Zambia, it is termed Automatic promotion (Okurut, 2015). In Florida and California in the United States of America, learner progression policy is termed social promotion (Greene & Winters, 2006). Anglophone countries including countries in the Caribbean termed it the Automatic promotion (UNESCO, 2002). In the United States of America, some other states have a program like LPP is "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009). Unlike the LPP, the NCLB put pressure on all involved stakeholders and relevant structures to measure up to the standards set (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009). The stakeholders and structures need to ensure that learners master the work. Like the LPP directives, NCLB stipulates that learner should be given extra support and tuition so that they can cope in the grade to which they have been progressed (Fisher, 2006). Further, NCLB advocates that the required standards are not compromised. This is also a requirement of the LPP. It is believed that the success of NCLB is dependent upon collaboration between teachers, schools, district officials, and parents sharing the common goals (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009).

Studies done in Anglophone countries indicate that automatic promotion tends to have a potentially disruptive effect on classroom practice (UNESCO, 2002). It has destroyed learners' commitment and created complacency which demotivated educators and learners (Chohan & Qadir, 2011). In Chicago, learners who are promoted without meeting the required standards

are called "bubble kids" (Gilborn & Youdell, 2000). After promotion, they were expected to be provided with a lot of extra academic attention (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). This posed a serious problem since there are not enough teachers to assist weak learners (Muziransa, 2016). Therefore, it is clear that automatic learner progression has both advantages and disadvantages as well. While retention of learners is financially expensive, giving them automatic promotion causes some disruptions of various kinds as scholars cited above to indicate. Therefore, one of the important questions to ask is whether there are other alternatives to addressing the retention of learners who do not meet minimum requirements for promotion or not.

1.2.5 Alternatives to automatic learner progression and retention

To progress learners in secondary schools when they are unprepared or retain learners without addressing their needs denies them access to opportunities at the next level of schooling, in postsecondary education, and the workplace (United States Department of Education, 1991). Other alternatives could be implemented to empower learners to achieve promotion on their own such as the early identification program, new or expanded opportunities for learners, teachers, and administrators as student advocates, and preventing failure or selected promotion-plus interventions and activities (Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). All the mentioned strategies to learner progression are discussed.

1.2.5.1 Early identification programme

At this stage, professional educational personnel must be committed to assessing the causes of why a learner is not performing satisfactorily from an academic or behavioural standpoint (Jimerson, Pletcher & Kerr, 2005). There are systematic procedures to identify learners' needs at the beginning of each academic year which provide the foundation for effective intervention efforts (Jimerson et al., 2005). This systematic procedure makes it easy to know that the learner is not mastering the subject material then he or she should (Jimerson et al., 2005). When analysing the status quo of the slow learners, several questions must be addressed like which specific subject material is the student failing to master and what instructional methods appear to be unsuccessful in the learning process (Jimerson et al., 2005). Areas identified as problematic can facilitate the early diagnosis of problematic subject areas and help to focus on interventions for remediation activities (Johnson & Rudolph, 2001). Continuous progress

monitoring and evaluation are required to provide evidence for modifying subject content and instructional methods for each learner (Johnson & Rudolph, 2001).

1.2.5.2 New or expanded opportunities for learning

Schools to provide alternatives to learner progression and retention could use block scheduling as a method to expand learning opportunities. Block scheduling refers to the needed changes being made in the scheduling of the school year or school day that can allow for an adjustment in the use of time for meeting the special needs of all learners (Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017). Block scheduling also provides the needed time for professional staff planning and development (Maier, Daniel, Oakes & Lam, 2017). Block scheduling is very much effective when it comes to the facilitation of individualised instruction. This type of scheduling has proven to be of value when it comes to enabling pupils to spend more time where they need to improve (Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). Another added advantage is that it has the potential benefit of centers for capitalising on the concept of time on task. If a learner's primary weakness is in reading, block scheduling provides the learner with additional opportunities to concentrate on the specific reading skills (Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017, Maier, Daniel, Oakes & Lam, 2017, Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). Besides this method, the literature provides a variety of other programs and instructional arrangements that purport to be profitable strategies for what slow learners should do in the classroom (Maier, Daniel, Oakes & Lam, 2017, Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). Most strategies provided are not new such as the provision of transition classes, Saturday school program, class size reduction, one-on-one tutoring, personalised instruction, mandatory summer classes, looping, and extending the learning day (Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017).

1.2.5.3 Teachers and Administrators as student advocates

Another alternative that has proven to be effective is that of having teachers and administrators acting as learners' advocates (Norton, 2011). Schools that have got teachers and administrators acting as true learners' advocates are student-centered (Norton, 2011). In this alternative, the personal needs and interests of each learner are the focus of this policy and regulations decisions. What advocates do is to create a school environment in which learners can focus on their interests and strengths in learning activities (Norton, 2011). The advocates can see things from the learners' perspective about problems faced and propose the best possible solutions.

One of the requirements for teachers and administrators who are students' advocates is to be a good listener (Norton, 2011). This normally helps them to seek opportunities where they can confer with learners about their needs and personal interests. They comprehend that a good way to learn about learners' thoughts is to ask them why they have become disengaged. This would help the learners to become reengaged in school and learning, it is of paramount importance that teachers and administrators serve the learners in a supportive way (Norton, 2011). In this way, the learner's current interests are considered whenever changes in the learner's current program and learning activities are under review. Learners should be provided with a variety of options and involving them in programs' decision making would be an effective way to enhance their engagement in learning which will improve their learning and performance (Centre for Mental Health in Schools at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), 2007).

1.2.5.4 Preventing failure

Principals and teachers need to take the responsibility of making sure that all learners are motivated to complete high school and continue with their advancement through life-long learning (Norton et al., 2012). To achieve this, the idea of "failure is not an option" should be established amongst the school staff. To make this idea materialise it should all begin with the setting of more realistic expectations for the learners. Besides setting realistic expectations an improvement in the individualisation of instruction should serve effectively to drop the learner's self-concept of failure (Norton, 2011). However, efforts to improve learning within the school will be inhibited by certain factors if the school does not have a healthy environment that facilitates the learning of the learners (Norton, 2008). Further on from these schools, parental involvement and support of the learners' progress in education should be considered as of paramount importance (Norton, 2011). To put this into practice other schools have adopted activities that require parents to attend learners' future planning sessions. It is in these sessions in which the learners' program is reported, progress is celebrated, and parents' input is solicited (Norton, 2011).

1.3 Rationale for the study

The rationale for undertaking this study has got my personal experience, professional experience, and the theoretical elements to it. As I look back to the time I was attending secondary school, when a learner was academically struggling and did not meet progression requirements set by the condonation committee, that learner could be retained in that class for more than three years. I had a friend during my school days who was struggling academically and did not meet the requirements stipulated by the condonation committee on more than one occasion. This resulted in him being retained in one class for more than three years at the FET phase until he decided to drop out of school without reaching Grade 12. Even though this committee managed to prevent the unintended consequences of progressing learners, such as the poor matric results, and the failure of the educators to complete the Annual Teaching Plans in time but there was a high rate of learner retention and a high level of learner dropout. Most learners who were retained suffered in terms of their self-esteem, psychologically and emotionally.

The promotion of learners from one grade to the next has been understood as a simple and linear process. There is a false notion that LPP as a directive from the government would be followed without question. The fact is that though the implementation of LPP may look simple, advantaging the affected learners, it has a serious ripple effect on many other elements of the school (DBE, 2015). Drawing on my experiences as a teacher since the inception of this policy in 2011, its implementation brings about intended and unintended consequences. One of the unintended consequences is that most learners "pushed" into the next grade still fail to cope with the academic work of the new grade. Another pedagogical challenge is that teachers struggle to teach effectively in an intellectually diverse class with learners with a different knowledge base. Although progressed learners are expected to be provided with extra tuition to cope with the standard of the current grade, my experience suggests that these learners are not given extra tuition as there seems to be time to offer progressed learners extra academic tuition. The situation has been made worse by the lack of discipline on the side of the learners, especially at a FET Phase. The lack of discipline does not only affect teachers when they are trying to educate them in overcrowded classrooms, but it also negatively affects their academic performance. Most of the progressed learners I know lack self-discipline. Self-discipline is what encourages a learner to behave, study, and pay attention to whatever is done in class so

that the learner could achieve academically (Marzuki & Basariah, 2017; Mbaluka, 2017; Ngila & Makewa, 2017). As learners are aware of the Learner Progression Policy, they are now demonstrating a lack of commitment towards studying since they know that they will be given that special concession if they have done badly.

The literature reviewed (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Munje & Maarman, 2016; Nxumalo, 2015; Samuel & Dudu, 2017; Van der Berg, 2015; Wicks & Raborife, 2017) reveals that there is some South African literature that is based on the implementation of the LPP. One stream of literature focuses on the importance of this policy. For example, this policy is noted for reducing the problem of high learner retention which results in learners dropping out (Wicks & Raborife, 2017). In addition, it also tries to address the psychological effect suffered by retained learners (Wicks & Raborife, 2017). Current literature on LPP does not address the ripple effect faced by schools as they implement this policy. Implementation of this policy is accompanied by certain resultant problems which negatively impact the smooth functioning of the school. It is important to expose those unintended consequences of implementing the LPP.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The implementation of the Learner Progression Policy just like any other policy implemented has intended and unintended consequences. The implementation of this LPP may be likened to the stone dropped into the dam resulting in the creation of circular waves that spread out.
(Text is changed from American to British text by correcting the spelling of "program to programme"
The implementation of the LPP programme has caused a problem that spread out of the school system affecting many principals. In describing this spreading process of a problem affecting all other elements of the school, I use a concept: "ripple effect." The ripple effect denotes how the problem starting from the centre spreads out to affect all other members within the school. In this study, I want to investigate how the implementation of the LPP has "ripple affected" other processes in the school.

The main aim of LPP is to reduce the high learner retention and the high drop-out rates experienced in South African schools (Samuel & Dudu, 2017). Besides reducing the high retention and the high drop-out rates, the policy aims to increase the number of learners who

leave school after writing matric examinations (Munje & Maarman, 2016). However, a huge number of learners who have been moved to the next grade through the LPP struggle academically and sometimes end up failing to matriculate (Ngoepe, 2016). This is reflected in the Grade 12 annual results, which indicate that most progressed learners are failing to meet the minimum pass requirements (Van der Berg, 2015). Matric results normally indicate that there are underlying factors for the academic difficulties. Therefore, the intervention strategies targeting progressed learners have a limited positive impact on improving their academic achievements (Ngoepe, 2016). The indispensable support is required to improve the academic outcomes of these learners.

The LPP has got regulations for schools and districts to have properly constructed intervention strategies. These properly constructed intervention strategies are to include early identification of low achieving learners and the ones who are considered as at-risk learners (Ngoepe, 2016). In terms of the LPP, schools are expected to address the barriers to learning vigorously. However, in the absence of properly constructed intervention strategies learners may have to be progressed up until Grade 12. Therefore, if barriers to learning are not properly attended to in the previous grade, learners may continue to battle academically and ultimately even fail to matriculate. If intervention strategies are not properly implemented in schools, it will result in ill-equipped learners that will forever be depending on the LPP to move to the next grade. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some schools, learners progress without addressing the specific challenges facing them and without providing the necessary support required to improve their chances of passing in the next grade (Munje & Maarman, 2016). There are, therefore, intended and unintended consequences of implementing LPP and this is a problem for the current study. Currently, there are not enough studies done concerning the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP. The purpose of this study is to explore the ripple effects of the implementation of LPP on learners' performance in the FET Phase. The study will also provide insight into how principals manage to achieve the best outcome under such circumstances.

1.5 The focus of the study

The focus of this study is to explore the perspectives of secondary school principals regarding the ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy (LPP) in secondary

schools at the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase. The study will investigate what the principals do to achieve the best outcomes under such circumstances.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:
- To explore the perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase.
- To explore how the principals dealt with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase.

1.7 Research questions

The research questions for the study were:
- What were the perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?
- How did principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?

1.8 Location of the study

This research was conducted in four secondary schools. Two of these secondary schools are in Folweni on the outskirts of Umlazi township and the other two schools are at KwaMakhutha. Folweni is a semi-rural area and KwaMakhutha is a township area. The schools are in areas with a Black African population only. All schools are Secondary Schools, ranked as Quintile 3 and under the Umlazi Education District.

1.9 Clarification of key concepts used in the study

According to Mpya (2007), it is very important to explain and understand key concepts that are frequently used in the study to avoid misinterpretations. Mpya (2007) further points out that if the true meaning of the concept is used, then it will be that each term fits into place. The main concepts to be elucidated on are Retention, Promotion, and Learner progression.

1.9.1 Retention

Retention is also referred to as the non-promotion of learners. Retention in a grade requires a learner to remain in a grade for another year purposefully to provide an opportunity for a learner to achieve a mastery of skills needed in later grades (Kinlaw, 2005). The learner must achieve the needed maturation and improve personal behaviours desired for successful learning. The practice of using grade retention in dealing with underperforming learners reportedly began in the United States in 1850 (Kinlaw, 2005). Grade retention harms all areas of learner achievement including reading, maths, language, social aspect, and emotional adjustment (Jimerson, Pletcher & Kerr, 2005).

1.9.2 Learner progression

Learner progression refers to a special concession that is awarded to those learners who have portrayed the inability to master the work of the grade they are currently doing to pass to the following grade excluding Grade R (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

1.9.3 Promotion

Promotion refers to the right that is given to a learner to move to the next grade after having met all the minimum requirements as stipulated in the Learner Promotions Policy documents (DBE, 2011). Promotion in this study is used to refer to the legal status given to a learner who has qualified to move to the next grade by meeting the stipulated minimum requirements without receiving any assistance from the implementation of the LPP.

1.10 Limitations

This study had certain limitations just like any other research study conducted (John & Rule, 2011). Some of the limitations of this study were related to the nature of the study itself and others to the researcher himself and the context in which the research was taking place. The first limitation that relates to the nature of the study was the small size of the sample. This study was a small-scale qualitative study. This shows clearly that the number of participants were limited, and the issue of convenience, distance, and accessibility also had an impact on the choice of the sample and its size. Another limitation was that the results of this study would

not be generalised, but dependability is possible. Dependability is possible since the study findings could effectively provide useful information about the perspectives of secondary school principals which could assist future researchers. My intention was not to generalise the findings of this study but to contribute to the knowledge in this area. The findings of the study could also be useful in the future in a similar context to provide interventions to support school principals with the implementation of LPP. To mitigate the limitations of this study, it would offer better results if it is conducted at a much bigger scale. The study findings could be more generalisable if it is not limited to the principals only. Further on from this, the context of the study to consider all situations like the rural secondary schools in the most deprived context and schools categorised as Quintile level 3 and 4.

1.11 Structure of the research

The research is organised into five chapters, and the content of each chapter is outlined below.

1.11.1 Chapter One

This chapter serves as an orientation which provides a background to the learner progression including an overview of relevant policies, circulars, and documents related to the LPP. This chapter includes the statement of the problem, the rationale for the study, objectives of the research, research questions as well as key concepts underpinning the study.

1.11.2 Chapter Two

This chapter consists of the literature review clarifying the information, background, and current debates regarding the ripple effects of the LLP within the South African context. As this is an under-researched area and a relatively new policy in South Africa, international literature was also sourced and incorporated into the chapter to provide an understanding of the unintended consequences of implementing the LPP. The focus of the literature review is on the ripple effects of the LPP in secondary schools in the FET Phase. This chapter also covers a discussion of the theoretical framework. Theories relevant to the implementation of the LPP are discussed in depth.

1.11.3 Chapter Three

This chapter presents the discussion of the research methodology and design of the study. It focuses on various methodological discussion such as the data generation techniques, and data analysis techniques. Data generation techniques included semi-structured interviews and documents' reviews. Ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

1.11.5 Chapter Four

This chapter embarks on presenting and discussing data that was generated through semi-structured interviewing the principals.

1.11.6 Chapter Five

This chapter provides the findings of the study. The chapter begins by first presenting a synthesis of the study, thereafter, it presents the main findings of the study using the research questions. Based on the findings made, recommendations are made for future research.

1.12 Chapter summary

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the study by introducing the reader to the focus, purpose, background of the study, rationale for the study, and the significance of my study. I also provided the objectives for this study, research questions, research design, and methodology for the study. The structure of the chapters of the study was also provided. The next chapter deals with the literature review on LPP.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a detailed discussion about the background and rationale for the study. This chapter has got two main sections. The first section reviews the local, continental, and international literature on the ripple effect of the implementation of the LPP in secondary schools, and the following section deals with the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The goal of the chapter was to ascertain the different views from the scholarship on understanding the perceptions of secondary school principals concerning the ripple effects of implementing the LPP.

2.2 Conceptual and practical issues relating to school leadership and management in the South African context

The study was about principals' perspectives about ripple effects of the implementation of Learner Progression Policy on curriculum delivery at school level. Therefore, it was important that I discuss what was already known about this phenomenon in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. However, before I do that, I thought it was important I briefly outline some key conceptual issues relating to the work of school principals in South Africa that relate to their leadership and management functions. Therefore, some of the conceptual issues to address include the concept of leadership and the concept of management; this was followed by a brief discussion of principals as leaders in the policy implementation arena and principals as managers in policy implementation arena.

2.2.1 Conceptualising leadership

The duty of school principals is about exercising leadership in the schools. However, to understand their work, it is important this concept is clarified in broad terms as leadership happens in all organisations, not just in education or in schools. Leadership is the ability for a person to utilise strategies that would influence others to work towards achieving organisational goals (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016). Other scholars describe leadership to be

about motivating others within the organisation to work and combine their efforts towards the desired outcomes (Nzinga, McGivern & English, 2018). Leadership is a special skill that a person utilises to influence others to commit towards the attainment of organisational aims (Kulophas, Hallinger, Ruengtrakul & Wongwanich, 2018). Drawing from what scholarship is saying about leadership, it is evident that for schools as organisations to achieve organisational goals, people who are tasked with leadership responsibility have to work with and influence others in such a way that they all pull together towards the realisation of school goals. In the context of this study, it is important that the implementation Learner Progression Policy does not disturb the process of achieving effective teaching and learning outcomes. Therefore, effective combination of a person's competencies to effectively influence others to work together towards achieving the organisational desired goals is of paramount importance.

2.2.2 Conceptualising management

Some scholars have described management to be the other side of leadership (Bush, et al., 2019). Others describe management as a series of steps undertaken by an incumbent tasked with handling formal administrative roles within the organisation (Hallinger, 2018). In the context of schools, principals are the incumbents that are tasked with this responsibility highlighted by Hallinger (2018). Management can also be described as the ability to control, organise structures, implement policies, and manage operations through thorough planning and vigorous organising tasks together (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman & Legood, 2018). Management refers to an act of keeping everything in hand, by ensuring that all the organisational structures are utilised efficiently and effectively (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013; Tran, Hallinger & Truong, 2018). Drawing from what these scholars are saying, I can define management, in the context of this study, as the ability of the principals to plan, organise, control, and evaluate the effective utilisation of the organisation's resources to achieve effective implementation of Learner Progression Policy.

2.2.3 Principal as leaders in the policy implementation arena

The issue of effective leadership is of major concern to both local and international scholarship. Principals are perceived as leaders in the implementation of the policies within South Africa and other African countries (Bush, 2018). Principals' leadership abilities are very much essential in the success of implementing policies in schools (Nzinga, McGivern & English, 2018). The principal is the most essential person to influence educators to implement policies correctly (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2019). The inability of the principal in most African schools to correctly influence the implementation process of policies result in outcomes not desired by the policy (Daire & Gilson, 2014). The closer principals are as leaders in the implementation phase, the more likely they are to reduce the negative ripple effects of policy implementation (Netshitangani, 2018). Negative ripple effects are related to the different styles of leadership demonstrated by the principal at school (Harber & Mncube, 2012). Quality leadership skills demonstrated by the principal regulate the unintended policy outcomes during LPP implementation (Netshitangani, 2018). Sound school leadership skills from the principal are accompanied by the successful implementation of the LPP in their schools.

2.2.4 Principals as managers in the policy implementation arena

Principals serve as the main major points of entry in schools within the South African education system (Mnguni, 2017). The position that is held by the principals empowers them to manage, control and direct how policies are implemented at school level (Bayeni, 2016). Principals as managers are supposed to utilise their inherent powers to channel the implementation of policies successfully (Nkuna, 2017). The failure of the principal to utilise their inherent powers fruitfully to channel the implementation phase of policies has been the main cause for the ripple effects of policy implementation encountered within the South African schools (Bayeni, 2016). For example, the different interpretations that principals have in different implementation sites affect the intended policy outcomes. The different outcomes experienced in different implementation sites easily convert to the ripple effects (Phaiphai, 2017). Studies conducted locally advocate that there are challenges encountered in many African schools as a result of principals' failure to standardise the conversion of the policy into practice (Ampaire, Jassagne, Providence, Acosta, Twyman, Winowiecki & Van Asten, 2017; Mnguni, 2017; Nkuna, 2020; Phaiphai, 2017; Thabede, 2017).

The failure to manage the implementation of the policies uniformly by principals is not a South African crisis but even the international scholarship has a lot written regarding this phenomenon. The international scholarship maintains that managing the convection of policy into practice creates a huge challenge to the successful implementation of policies (Ahmad, 2017; Jawas, 2017; Signe, 2017; Thamann & Sager, 2017; Viennet & Pont, 2017). The huge challenges encountered are a result of skills that principals as policy implementers possess (Signe, 2017). The international scholarship suggests that some principals lack skills to conceptualise and contextualise policy. This leads to policy implementation not evenly done (Viennet & Pont, 2017). The lack of management skills that would make it easy for principals to conceptualise and contextualise policy implementation results in the policy's unintended outcomes (Thamann & Sager, 2017). Another huge challenge that has been unearthed by the scholarship is the failure of the principal to figure out and understand their role during policy implementation (Jawas, 2017). The failure of the principals as policy implementers to perform their role during policy implementation easily convert into the negative ripple effects (Ahmad, 2017).

2.3 Complexities involved in the implementation of policies on learner progression

The implementation of policies relating to learner progression worldwide is perceived as something that is neither linear nor unproblematic (Rania & Siperto, 2018). In the process of learner progression implementation, some misinterpretations occur (Rania & Siperto, 2018). The misinterpretations that occur easily convert into the complexities known as negative ripple effects throughout the local and international sphere (Farah, 2020). In trying to unpack the complexities that are involved in the implementation and their implications, the discussion begins with the local or continental scholarship literature review. Most of the South African schools especially public schools are challenged with the crisis of overcrowding of learners' classrooms after the LPP implementation (Masango & Kweingoti, 2018). The overcrowding of learners' classrooms occurs as a result of the principals' failure to properly plan during and after the implementation of the LPP (Ahmed, 2018).

One of the complexities that are involved as a result of the overcrowding is the lack of capital resources like desks for learners (Makietsi, 2018). Overcrowding of learners' classrooms brought to the surface many complexities such as the failure of educators to administer quality

assessments, failure to group learners according to their potential, and the inability of the norms and standards to assist the schools with these negative ripple effects (Masango & Kweingoti, 2018). The failure on the side of the principal to implement the LPP may result in any unintended outcome, including uncontrollable noise occurring in the classroom (Ojeje & Adondo, 2018). The failure to plan to reduce the number of learners in a classroom after the implementation of the LPP may create unnecessary complexities like uncontrollable noise (Majamana, 2018). Uncontrollable noise is also caused by the failure of certain educators to control the class as a result of poor classroom management skills (Van Vuuren, 2020). The lack of the proper implementation of the LPP in South African schools has seen an increase in the number of ill-disciplined learners (Van Vuuren, 2020). The policy is implemented incorrectly so that the policy removes ill-disciplined learners by progressing bad behaving learners (Adebola, 2020). This strategy that is implemented by the principals during the policy implementation has increased the number of learners becoming ill-disciplined in schools (Tarmo, 2018).

Complexities involved in the implementation of LPP are not only prone to the African continent, but the international sphere also encounters challenges too. Having explored what is articulated by the locally reviewed scholarship, it is time to review what the international scholarship is saying. One of the biggest challenges that have been encountered as a result of the implementation of the policy on learner automatic progression is the lack of individual attention due to the high number of learners in a class who needs it to perform better (Miller, 2018; Rodriguez, 2017). Educators can no longer give individual attention since classrooms have got too diversified learners in terms of their mental capabilities (Ahmad, Arshad & Qamar, 2018; Chen & Vibulphol, 2019). Besides learners being highly diversified in terms of their mental capability, even educators do not have time to assist progressed learners (Cowell, 2018, Krings, Thomas, Lee, Ali & Miller, 2018). Generically, policies on learner progression state that learners must be assisted academically but, I have not found a policy that provides for a specific time for progressed learners to be assisted (Sou & Han, 2017). The complexity concerning the provision of individual attention is that educators are not obliged to do that during educators' spare time (Krings et al., 2018). Another complexity that is experienced throughout the world is the educator's demotivation (Daniels, 2019; Krings et al., 2018). The challenge that is brought by the improper implementation of the policy without educators' input is that it demotivates educators (Rodriguez, 2017). Educators have been demotivated by the

implementation of the policy since educators do not have a final say in the selection of learners who must be progressed to the next class (Ahmar et al., 2018).

2.4 Perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy on effective teaching and learning

In this section I discuss principals' perspectives about their views regarding the ripple effects of the implementation of policy on learner automatic progression. The review of literature encompasses local literature, which is specific to the LPP policy, I also discuss international literature which does not speak directly to the LPP policy as it is called in South Africa, but the discussion focuses on learner progression policies broadly. I therefore appeal to the readers that when I use the abbreviation LPP, I do not only restrict my discussion to this particular policy, but I include other policies in the international arena that are about learners' automatic progression after they have not met the minimum requirements for progression.

My review of literature on principals' perspective on ripple effect of policy implementation on effective teaching and learning or curriculum delivery, has generated three broad issues. The three issues are 'Benefits of implementing the policy on learner progression; 'Complexities and contradictions in the conception of policy process: policy makers and policy implementers and Tensions and dissonance in translation of policy into practice at school level. These three dimensions of their perspectives dominated the discourse, and hence, my focus on them as I discuss them below.

2.4.1 The benefits of implementing the policy on learner progressions

The analysis of the literature relating to the principals' perspectives on the ripple effect of the implementation of LPP is South Africa is characterised by positive narratives. Empirical research conducted in this country suggests that principals see this policy as beneficial to the schools, the parents and the learners. These positive views emanate from history of earner academic performance in the country and its implication for the country's fiscus, as I have indicated in Chapter One. South Africa before the implementation of the LPP has been known to be a country with one of the highest-grade repetition rates from Grade 9 to Grade 11 (Kika

& Kotze, 2019). Studies conducted in South Africa reveal that the implementation of the LPP has managed to positively reduce the high retention the country used to have (DBE, 2018; Kika & Kotze, 2019; Moses, van der Berg & Rich, 2012). The highest proportion of learners who used to repeat the grade declined abruptly especially for those learners who had to repeat a grade more than once in the FET Phase (Kika & Kotze, 2019). Therefore, the implementation of the LPP in the South African education system has resulted in the anticipated grade repetition pattern throughout the DBE (Moses et al., 2017). Scholars agree that there are many benefits associated with the implementation of the LPP in South African schools (DBE, 2018). The implementation of the LPP in the local sphere especially the South African schools has served as a panacea in the reduction of the highest dropout rate in secondary schools (Ngoepe, 2016; Samuel & Dudu, 2017).

In the past, learners who failed to meet the minimum promotion requirements, were not given a chance to move to the next grade until they have mastered the work of that grade (Van der Berg, 2015). The LPP offered a chance to the learners who have failed to meet the requirements of the minimum promotion to move to the next grade as a benefit of the policy implementation (Wicks & Raborife, 2017). Learners who have been given that special chance to move to the next grade through the implementation of the policy are to be given special assistance to help them catch up with promoted learners (Munje & Maarman, 2016). The implementation of the LPP has been successful when it comes to the positive motivation of underperforming learners at school (Munje & Maarman, 2017). The majority of underperforming learners were easily demotivated with schooling and, before the implementation of LPP underperforming learners were falling far behind their peers at school (Wicks & Raborife, 2017). Before the implementation of the LPP, South Africa used to have the highest number of learners retention (Samuel & Dudu, 2017). Ever since the implementation of the LPP, the number of learners to be retained has declined drastically throughout the country (Samuel & Dudu, 2017).

The implementation of the LPP in South Africa, and other policies similar to it has been practiced even in the international schooling system (Ennis, 2017). From the international perspective, other countries implementing policies similar to the LPP advocate that the policy has assisted in improving underperforming learners' self-esteem at school (Sou & Han, 2017), although such benefits have not been without challenges. One of the challenges that even the international schooling system has been faced with is that underperforming learners have lower

self-esteem at school (Chen & Vibulphol, 2019). The implementation of the LPP worldwide has been acknowledged as one of the strategies that assist underperforming learners to progress with their cohorts or same age group (Chen & Vibulphol, 2019). What this literature shows is that the benefits of having this policy implemented are not only acknowledged in South Africa, but also globally.

2.4.2 Complex and contradictory conceptions of policy process: Policy makers and Policy implementers

The discourse of policy process, especially policy implementation, is dominated by complexities and contradictions when viewed from the perspectives of policy makers and policy implementers (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). That is one reason there is dissonance between implementers on the ground and makers in the upper levels. The dissonance of effective vertical coordination between policy crafters at the upper levels and the implementer on the ground is a matter of serious concern in the field of policy implementation. Studies conducted globally reveal that this is not a South African challenge but a global phenomenon (Adam, Huaka, Knill, Peters & Steinback, 2019; Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018; Jessani, Kennedy & Bennet, 2016). There is a big difference in policy intentions and what is done on the ground by principals as policy implementers as a result of poor planning and execution (Chikudu, 2016). The lack of vertical coordination between principals as policy implementers in schools and policy crafters is an essential source of challenges occurring during and after policy implementation (Benit-Gbaffou, 2018). Any misunderstanding from the principals regarding policy intentions during the implementation emerging will create implementation deficits and result in the policy negatively ripple effecting (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Principals are not involved during the discussions at the top level but, at the same time, policy makers depend on principals as implementers to produce quality outcomes (Chikudu, 2016). Another cause for the dissonance is that principals as implementers try to address different social problems which are very complicated to reconcile due to inherent situations (Jessani et al., 2016). Principals implement the LPP not based on policy crafters but based on realities on the ground (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018).

The disconnect between policy crafters and policy implementers is a global phenomenon that should be viewed in the light of international scholars. International scholars have written many articles advocating that the lack of vertical coordination between policy designers and policy implementers results in undesirable outcomes (Chheng, Leang, Thomson, Moore & Crofts,

2012; Colebatch, 2018; Flynn & Curdst-Christiansen, 2018; Spaulding, Szulga & Figueroa, 2012, Tressen & Smillie, 2017). Policy implementation has never been easy; sometimes, policy implementers misunderstand or challenge the policy, and fail to practise it as prescribed by the policy crafters (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Yapa & Barnighausen, 2018). There are policies in the African continent that have been rightly crafted, they are beautiful, but have been incorrectly applied (Chikudu, 2016). This suggests that there is likely to be a disconnect between the two spheres of policy theatre.

2.4.3 Tensions and dissonance in the translation of policy into practice at school level

In an attempt to conceptualise the translation of policy into practice at the different implementation sites, literature is drawn from various conceptions of policy and other contextual factors in South Africa. Principals in South Africa are just like in other countries play a major role in the translation of policy into practice in schools (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Principals are faced with the huge challenge of uniformly translating the policy into practice in schools (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). The challenges that hinder that is created by the conflicting expectations from the DBE, the contextual factors that principals are faced within their schools (Khanyangale & Dyasi, 2018). Choosing which policies must be implemented according to the DBE expectations, and which ones not to be put into practice at school is difficult, but it becomes an option for policy implementers on the ground (Akangawa & Smith, 2018). The translation of the policy that the principal is going to implement is mostly informed by the contextual factors experienced at school (Akangawa & Smith, 2018). Other principals' translation of the policy into practice may be informed by the perception of the principal as the chief accounting officer of the DBE (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Principals are, from the international perspective, entrusted with the responsibility of translating policy into practice in schools (Bhamidipati, Haselip & Hansen, 2019). Principals have certain inherent powers to control the translation of policy into practice in schools (Bayeni, 2012). The inherent powers that principals have to establish a challenge since the translation of policies into practice might be abused to further the principal's intention not the policy expectations (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Principals in schools by the virtue of the powers possessed act as powerful players in the translation of policy into practice (Fussy, 2018). It is very difficult for the DBE to expect that policy will be translated into practice as prescribed in the text as a result of the principal's inherent powers (Benit-Gbaffou, 2018). The different skills that principals possess when it

comes to the translation of the policy into practice create a difference in policy implementation (Kanyangale & Dyasi, 2018).

Some principals implement the policy with infidelity making it support their intentions (Kanyangale & Dyasi, 2018). Other principals as a result of the misinterpretations continually contradict the translation of policy into practice in schools (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018). Moreover, principals sometimes select certain aspects of the policy to implement so that the focus could be on what positively assists in achieving the desired goals (Bayeni, 2016; Bhengu, 2012). The different behaviour that is portrayed by the principals during policy translation into practice is the main reason the policy like the LPP has got negative ripple effects. The different acts by the principals as a result of the powers inherent in them are the cause for the policy to be implemented differently in different implementation sites (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018).

The challenges arising from the translation of policy into practice in different implementation sites is not an African phenomenon, but the international sphere is not immune from it. Scholarship reveals that the translation of policy into practice in the international sphere is neither smooth nor unproblematic (Bode & Karlsud, 2019; Dearing & Cox, 2018; Geerlings, Rankin, Sherperd & Butow, 2018; Mittelman & Bartels, 2014). There are many causes of such a challenge occurring such as the ability of the principal to comprehend the policy intentions, resources available, and context (Seltzer & de los Rios, 2018). The failure to translate policy into practice in the international sphere occurs as a result of the lack of support (Bode & Karlsud, 2019). To effectively translate the policy into practice the support that is given to policy implementers is not the same (Seltzer & de los Rios, 2018). The failure of the DBE to offer similar support during the process of translating policy into practice results in the policy being implemented differently in different schools (Geerlings, Rankin, Sherperd & Butow, 2018). The difference in terms of the policy translated differently in different implementation sites results in the different outcomes (Mittelman & Bartels, 2014). The different outcomes from different implementation sites occurring reflect the difference in the translation of policy into practice (Dearing & Cox, 2018). The lack of continuous communication with the policy implementers has been identified as the main source of policy being translated differently, practiced differently, and achieving different outputs (Bode & Karlsud, 2019). Other principals decide to translate the policy as it is from the text while others decide to modify it to make the policy suit their needs (Dearing & Cox, 2018). This difference in the behaviour of principals worldwide creates the foundation for the translation of policy into practice yielding different

outcomes. The difference in the outcomes during the translation of policy into practice makes the policy implementation negatively ripple effect (Geerlings et al., 2018).

2.5 How principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy in secondary schools

The review of literature on this subject indicates that principals in various parts of the world have found ways of dealing with ripple effects associated with the implementation of the policy on learner progression. My analysis of what emerged from the review of the literature indicates four ways in which they dealt with the ripple effects. The first one is the acknowledgment of the role that parents play or can play in supporting the teaching and learning of progressed learners. The second way was the actual promotion of parental involvement in supporting the learners to cope with teaching and learning materials. The third one relates to organising extended teaching and learning time, including organising study times over and above that allocated in the normal timetable. The fourth entails encouraging teachers to give extra support to the progressed learners. These are discussed below.

2.5.1 Acknowledging the role of parents in the education of their children

According to literature reviewed within the South African contexts majority of underperforming learners is a result of the failure of parents in acknowledging their role in their children's education (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Mampane, 2017; Obonyo, 2018; Thompson, Herman, Stormont, Reinke & Webster-Stratfon, 2017). Majority of the parents of children who have been progressed to the next grade through the implementation of the LPP still fail to acknowledge their role in the education of their children in South Africa (Van der Berg, Van Wyk, Selkirk, Rich & Deghaye, 2019). Most of the parents of the underperforming learners do not attribute their children's underperformance to their failure as parents to assist them academically (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Children who come from families where parents acknowledge their role in the education of their children perform much better at school (Mampane, 2017). Progressed learners continue to underperform at school because the parents still fail to acknowledge the role they must play to change the child from being progressed to achieving a promotion (Obonyo, 2018). Parents who acknowledge their role assist their children to work hard and strive towards achieving at school (Thompson et al., 2017).

International literature reviewed advocates that parents who acknowledge their role in the education of their children feel responsible for whatever the child achieves at school (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Hemmerechts, Agirdag & Kavadias, 2017; Lang, Schoppe-Sullivan & Joen, 2017). Most of the parents involve themselves in the progression of their children to the next grade and acknowledge that they have to assist them to improve their academic achievements (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Parents who acknowledge that children's achievements at school rely on the active role they play in assisting them to achieve tend to be actively involved in their education (Williams, 2020; Wilson, 2018).

2.5.2 Promotion of parental involvement in the education of their children [progressed learners]

The literature reviewed locally and internationally agree that it is very essential for schools to promote parental involvement in the education of their children (Davies et al., 2017; Mwoma, 2017; Thompson et al., 2017; Van der Berg et al., 2019). Most of the schools that are not doing well locally do not effectively have parental involvement in the education of their children (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Parental involvement is not promoted in many aspects of schooling from the beginning of the year until the end of the year (Mampane, 2017). The failure to promote parental involvement negatively affects the implementation of the LPP in our local schools (Jay et al., 2017). Most parents do not know what to do to assist their children who have been progressed to the next grade since their involvement was not promoted (Inoa, 2017). Schools that promote the active involvement of parents in their children's education experience less negative ripple effect of implementing the LPP (Obonyo, 2018).

International literature reviewed advocate the fact that the promotion of parental involvement in the education of their children is essential (Ahmadi & Keshavarzi, 2017; Bessell, 2017, Bido, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2019). The promotion of parental involvement should occur from the beginning of the year until the end of it (Wilson, 2018). Parental involvement should be promoted during the implementation of the LPP in schools (McDowal et al., 2017). Promoting parental involvement during the implementation of the LPP helps the parents to know what is expected from them (Massingill, 2019). Involving the parents during the implementation phase of the LPP assist in reducing negative ripple effects associated with the policy implementation (Smokoska, 2020).

2.5.3 Organising extended teaching time for progressed learners

The LPP just like the other policies related to the progression of learners who did not meet the minimum requirements for a promotion state that progressed learners should be given support in the form of extended learning (Maarman et al., 2017). Organising the extended teaching time for progressed learners is a serious challenge since educators are not obliged to offer extended teaching (Maier et al., 2017). Educators willing to offer extended teaching time are faced with the challenge of the workload that is supposed to be covered within a certain stipulated time in the ATP (Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). The failure on the side of the principal to organise extended teaching time for progressed learners has been the main reason for the implementation of the LPP to negatively ripple effect.

Policies related to the learner progression practiced in other countries encourage the utilisation of the extended teaching time for progressed learners (Bode & Karlsud, 2019). Scholars internationally advocate the similar challenges that are experienced in South Africa (Bode & Karlsud, 2019; Dearing & Cox, 2018; Geerlings et al., 2018). Educators are not compelled to offer an extended teaching time for progressed learners which created a negative ripple effect of implementing the policy (Mittelman & Bartels, 2014).

2.5.4 Encouraging and motivating teachers to provide extra support to the progressed learners

Progressed learners worldwide rely on the support that is given to them by educators at school (Makietsi, 2018). Policies are similar to the LPP all over the world advocate that progressed learners should be given all the indispensable support they deserve (Masango & Kweingoti, 2018). South African literature reviewed on the implementation of the LPP stipulates that progressed learners should be given all the support in the form of interventions and extra classes (Adebola, 2020; Masango & Kweingoti, 2018). However, educators are not obliged by the policy to provide extra support that is needed by the progressed learners (Ojeje & Adondo, 2018). Since no policy obliges the educators to provide extra support, most of the progressed learners do not receive it (Tarmo, 2018). For teachers to provide the extra support they need to be encouraged by the principals (Van Vuuren, 2020). Principals use a variety of strategies to

encourage and motivate teachers to provide extra support (Makietsi, 2018). Some principals use incentive-based strategies to encourage and motivate educators to provide extra support (Van Vuuren, 2020). Educators are paid for the extra support provided to the progressed learners (Adebola, 2020). Encouraging and motivating teachers to provide extra support to the progressed learners is a huge challenge to some principals as a result of the huge number of learners in their classrooms (Adebola, 2020).

Educators are faced with the challenge of providing progressed learners with the extra support they need academically (Christiansen, 2018). International literature review maintains that it is very difficult for educators to provide the extra support that is needed by the progressed learners at school (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017; Chheng et al., 2012; Colebatch, 2018). Scholarship agrees that one of the challenges that educators encounter is work overload (Flynn & Curst-Christiansen, 2018; Spaulding et al., 2012; Yappa & Barninghausen, 2018). Educators internationally and locally are overloaded with work making it difficult for them to provide the extra support needed by the progressed learners (Colebatch, 2018). Principals are faced with the challenge of encouraging and motivating teachers to provide extra support to the progressed learners (Chheng et al, 2012). Educators worldwide find it difficult to provide extra support since there is no time set aside specifically for providing the support (Spaulding et al., 2012).

2.6 The role of parental involvement in supporting their children's learning

The role of parental involvement in the education of their children has been addressed by many scholars, locally and internationally. The emphasis on how important it is to be involved in their children's education cannot be over-emphasised. The international literature review on the role of parental involvement affirms that parental involvement plays a significant role for any child that is at school to acquire knowledge, skills, and proper education (Koh & Wing, 2020). The challenges that are occurring in the majority of the schools are caused by the lack of parental involvement during the process of LPP implementation (Malone, 2017).

The more involved parents are in their children's promotion and progression, the more they get to understand them (Beck, 2018); and the parents' get to figure out the characteristics of their children's attitudes towards learning (Koh & Wing, 2020; Seifert, 2017). Some scholars

D'Haem & Grinswold, 2017; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Hemmerechts, Agirdag & Kavadias, 2017; Lang, Schoppe-Sullivan & Jeon, 2017;   Malone, 2017; McDowall, Taumoepeau & Schaughency, 2017 agree that the active involvement of parents during LPP implementation is important, and it systematically cascades the significance of maintaining high expectations for children and communication that is consistent with the academics. Children experiencing more parental involvement in the implementation of the policy tend to develop more academic competencies and educational values (Wilson, 2018).

Developing academic competencies and educational values contribute to improving learners' behavior, engagement emotionally, and successful transformation to adulthood (Williams, 2020). Through involvement parents have a chance to cascade the significance and value of education (Wilson, 2018), engage in vigorous discussions of what are the plans assist the parents to motivate learners to be more involved in their academic work behaviourally and spiritually (Rodriguez, Nunez, Valle, Freire, Ferradas & Rodriguez-Llorente, 2019). Parental involvement during the process of LPP implementation creates an internal value to their children about the importance of education whilst they assist them in becoming successful academically (Ahmadi & Keshavarzi, 2017). The involvement of parents in their children's promotions, progression, and retention results in better academic achievements by their children (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Children who experience the highest level of parental involvement in the policy implementation tend to perform much better than those children who experience less parental involvement (McDowall, Taumoepeau & Schaughency, 2017; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017; Wilson, 2018).

Having reviewed international literature on parental involvement then it is time to review the local or African literature on parental involvement. The locally reviewed literature on the role of parental involvement affirms that many initiatives have been done to motivate school personnel to promote parental involvement to improve children's achievement (Thompson, Herman, Stormont, Reinke & Webster-Stratfon, 2017). One of the initiatives that have been used to motivate educators to support parental involvement as a strategy to improve children's achievement is the implementation of the LPP in schools (Thompson et al., 2017).

 The implementation of the LPP is based on an extensive body of research literature postulating that children improve their achievements when their parents are involved in the education (Thompson et al.,2017). Parental involvement is perceived to have a positive effect on

children's achievements, social-emotional health, and reduced dropout and substance abuse (Van der Berg, Van Wyk, Selkirk, Rich & Deghaye, 2019). The positive perception of parental involvement during the process of LPP implementation by school personnel is one of the contributing factors to the school success of learners' (Lumadi, 2019; Herman & Reinke, 2017). The relationship helps if a learner is struggling academically or behaviourally making it easy for the educator to communicate with the parents of a learner in a supportive manner (Thompson et al., 2017). The educator can do this if the educator perceives that the learner's parents are supportive of, involved with, and committed towards the educator's efforts to help the learner (Herman & Reinke, 2017). However, if the educator feels that the parents of the problematic learner are not involved in his or her efforts to help the learner, the educator may resort to interacting subtly with that learner in ways that hinder the facilitation of successful academic and behavioral outcomes (Thomson et al., 2017, Van der Berg et al., 2019). How educators perceive parental involvement during policy implementation may provide a malleable avenue for enhancing teacher classroom instruction (Herman & Reinke, 2017), and leading to rational practices that are predictive of successful outcomes. Moreover, educators normally feel more efficacious in dealing with a problematic learner whose parents are perceived as being actively involved (Mampane, 2017; Obonyo, 2018). If educators perceive efficacy in them are more likely to motivate and support that learner to adopt more acceptable behaviours (Mampane, 2017). In addition, the learner will be motivated to be involved in supportive academic instructional practices which are predictive of successful outcomes (Thompson et al., 2017). Conversely, educators who perceive that there is less parental involvement during policy implementation and comfort with parents automatically perceive the learners as having more disruptive behaviours and concentration problems (Herman & Reinke, 2017).

In addition to the views expressed in the paragraphs above, educators perceive that learners' have less emotional regulation and academic competencies when compared to learners whose parents are perceived by educators as having high contact and comfort (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Thompson et al., 2017). Many scholars (Jay, Rose & Simmons, 2017; Mampane, 2017; Obonyo, 2018; Thompson et al., 2017; Van der Berg et al. 2019) agree with that active parental involvement during the LPP implementation always stimulates positive effects on learner's attitudes and in academic achievement. Similar sentiments to Jay et al. (2017) are shared by Oates (2017) by saying that the active involvement of parents during policy implementation forms an integral variable that produces an important value in the overall academic success and

learning process of a learner's academic journey. Therefore, all parents need to play a major role in their children's policy implementation on academic achievement from primary through middle and finally, to high school (Oates, 2017).

To make parents more involved in the implementation of the LPP, the school needs to develop action plans that will assist in the inclusion of parents (Mwoma, 2017; Oates, 2017; Obonyo, 2018). This plan will be more effective at strengthening the positive relationship between parents and school personnel to meet the academic needs of learners (Mwoma, 2017). Most of the evidence presented by scholars (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Mampane, 2017; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Oates, 2017; Van der Berg et al., 2019) suggests that the involvement of parents in the implementation of the LPP is normally high at primary level but rapidly declines as the child reaches middle school and reaching its lowest around the secondary school. So, educators in middle school need to choreograph more academic activities to get parents to connect and become more involved with teachers during the policy implementation (Oates, 2017). This could easily facilitate parent-educator collaboration assisting educators to formulate goal-orientated activities that assist learners in education and highlighting parental involvement (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Oates, 2017). Some scholars (Davies, Marshal & Brown, 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Jay, Rose & Simmonss, 2017; Lumadi, 2019; Mampane, 2017; Oates, 2017; Van der Berg et al., 2019) agree that learners' parents who continuously interact with their educators regarding the LPP implementation reflect a more positive attitude towards school and normally achieve more educationally and socially.

In addition, there is more scholarship advocating that the active involvement of parents in the LPP implementation during the teenager stage as well as during other stages of development, facilitates learner's engagement and success (Davies et al., 2017; Jay, Rose & Simmons, 2017). Parental involvement during these stages of development provides a validating function that supports children (Davies et al., 2017).

The support provided by parents during involvement conveys to children that they are competent and of worth, thereby, enhancing their perception of competence (Mwoma, 2017; Oates, 2017). Furthermore, the support provided by parents through involvement during policy implementation plays an important role in learners' learning attitudes and educational performance (Mwoma, 2017; Oates, 2017). Children of parents who have high expectations in their performance, tend to be more actively involved in their children's welfare at school as

well as in the implementation of policies regarding their performance (Davies et al., 2017). However, parents who have less hope and aspiration in their children's performance, tend to be less actively involved in their welfare and the implementation of policies concerning academic performance (Davies et al., 2017).

Mwoma (2017) suggests that the active involvement role played by parents is a participatory procedure where a parent is involved in his or her child's different exercises. The different exercises that a parent may be involved in, may range from the participation of parents in schoolwork, extra curriculum activities, LPP implementation, and in other school programs (Mwoma, 2017). Parents actively involving themselves in monitoring homework, policy implementation, correspondence with educators (Davies et al., 2017), and taking part in school-based activities have likewise been perceived to fit in the bundle of parental involvement (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Besides, parental involvement stimulating an improvement on the side of academic activities, parental involvement during the implementation of the LPP also boosts learners' participation at school and decreases dropout rates (Inoa, 2017). Therefore, the literature has shown that parents play a critical role in the education of their children, and such a role can assist in supporting their progressed children.

2.7 The benefits of parental involvement during the policy implementation

The previous section focused on the discussion of parental involvement in the education of their children. This section pays special attention to the benefits of their involvement during the implementation of LPP. The benefits of parental involvement during the LPP implementation include learners demonstrating an increase in achievement motivation, learners having higher achievements, and the reflection of higher levels of emotional, social, and behavioural adjustment (Goshin & Mertsalova, 2018).

Parental involvement during policy implementation instills academic achievement that lasts a lifetime (Bido, 2020; Massingill, 2019). Furthermore, the collaboration between the parents and teachers during the policy implementation increases learning beyond the classroom leading to a child's growth academically (Massingill, 2019; Smokoska, 2020). Bessell (2017) states that parental involvement during the implementation of the LPP is perceived as an important supportive measure that helps children succeed at school (Massingill, 2019). Children succeed

at school since parental involvement during the policy implementation provides the necessary support that children need and increases the level of communication between home and the school (Bido, 2020; Smokoska, 2020). The active involvement of parents in the implementation of the policy is almost always more beneficial to children's academic activities (Jay, Rose & Simmons, 2017). Parental involvement establishes in learners the spirit of willingness to succeed more not only at school but also throughout life (Oates, 2017). Besides the willingness to succeed, parental involvement benefits include the improvement in the behaviour and interest of learners towards their studies (Davies et al., 2017). Another benefit of parental involvement in the policy implementation is the decrease in learner's absenteeism, dropout rate, a decrease in misconduct, and an improvement in academic performance (Davies et al., 2017; Oates, 2017).

2.8 Implementing the policy to motivate underperforming learners

One of the main reasons in South Africa for the implementation of the LPP is to motivate underperforming learners at school (Kika & Kotze, 2019). Policy designers crafted the policy as a panacea to the highest rate of learner retention in South Africa which was demoralising underperforming learners in school (Moses et al., 2012). Implementing the policy to motivate underperforming learners has negatively ripple effected on teaching and learning (Samuel & Dudu, 2017). The implementation of the LPP has created a serious negative effect on achieving learners' motivation (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The policy has been implemented to motivate underperforming learners only leaving the achieving learners with no instrument to motivate them (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Some scholars in South Africa still maintain that retaining a learner serves as a source of motivating them to work hard to achieve success (Kika & Kotze, 2019). Conversely, implementing the LPP to motivate underperforming learners who were progressed to the next grade through policy implementation still underperforms in the grade they have been moved to (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). The implementation of the policy to motivate underperforming learners in most schools has created a serious decline in the overall matric results (Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019). Most of the learners who progressed through the policy implementation still fail to achieve National Senior Certificate (NSC) (Branson et al., 2013).

Policies related to the LPP implemented in the international arena to motivate underperforming learners have not produced the desired outcomes (Miller, 2018). Principals raised different challenges emanating as a result of implementing the policy to motivate underperforming learners (Kring et al., 2018). One of the biggest challenges is that the policy itself fails to motivate underperforming learners since learners do not know the reasons for their progression (Sou & Han, 2017). Another challenge is the fact that it motivates underperforming learners (Ahmad et al., 2018). The criteria that are used in the implementation phase sometimes advantages even learners who are not motivated at all to work hard (Rodriguez, 2017). Implementing the policy without proper consultation with an underperforming learner fails to serve the purpose of motivating them (Cowell, 2018).

2.9 Theoretical Framework

This study was underpinned by the theory of "Street-level bureaucracy" (SLB) developed by Michael Lipsky in the 1980s. This theory normally presented a theoretical framework for understanding the role that public service workers play in policy implementation (Lipsky, 2010). The term "street-level bureaucrats" was used to describe teachers, judges, police officers, health workers, public defenders, and more (Lipsky, 2010). Street-level bureaucrats are very important since they are at the lower levels of bureaucracy in majority and very powerful at influencing the practice (Lipsky, 2010). The numbers SLB's have makes it easy for them to change the decisions of the organisation (Lipsky, 2010). SLB's could easily use their powers and embark in a strike bringing all the services of the organisation to a stop (Paudel, 2009). Street-level bureaucrats were considered to have first-hand experience of what clients needed (Paudel, 2009). This occurred because they were the ones who had direct contact with the public (Paudel, 2009). I decided to use this theory as a relevant framework for inquiry because of the following reasons. This theory was more relevant when it comes to exposing the difficulty of implementing public policy (Lipsky, 2010). The theory would be more effective when it came to exposing the disconnect between the intended policy goals and actual policy outcomes (Lipsky, 2010). Another important thing about this theory was its general relevance across different policy implementation outcomes.

This theory was stronger in identifying the problems and coping mechanism that occurred because of policy implementation (Lipsky, 2010). SLB's often felt that their own resources

were chronically and vigorously insufficient in meeting the demands that were placed on them (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky (2010) asserted that street-level bureaucrats used special coping mechanisms to survive between the service demands and their limited resources. SLB's would normally respond to the challenges they were faced with by utilising a number of conscious or unconscious coping mechanisms (Lipsky, 2010). As the street-level bureaucrats used these coping mechanisms, they tended to be biased during the implementation process (Lipsky, 2010). This biasness tended to negatively hamper the achievement of positive policy outcomes (Lipsky, 2010).

The theory amongst other things allowed me to assess the extent of coping behaviours more precisely (Lipsky, 2010). Moreover, it was versatile in the sense that it could be used to inquire about different types of individuals in various settings, countries, and policy areas (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky (2010) further asserts that street-level bureaucrats were not only tasked with the implementation of public policy, but they also developed it since they were the important agents in the delivery of public services (Lipsky, 2010). Teachers decided which learners got special attention and "who was teachable" (Lipsky, 2010). Street-level bureaucrats' roles were mostly dichotomised by management expectations and documents emphasising organisational policies and goals (Lipsky, 2010). Above all this SLBs were expected to be compassionate treating everyone on a case-by-case basis (Lipsky, 2010). Along with exhibiting discretion, SLBs also had a degree of autonomy from the demands of management due to the nature of their work (Lipsky, 2010). Ultimately, their discretion could alter or skew the policy intent (Lipsky, 2010). Drawing from the above discussion, this theory would assist me in fully identifying and understanding the problems faced by schools as a result of the implementation of LPP.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the literature reviewed which covered conceptual and practical issues relating to school management and leadership in the South African context; principals as policy implementers, the conceptualisation of leadership and management; principals as managers in policy implementation; principals as leaders in the policy implementation arena. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodological issues.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on reviewing the literature and discussing the SLB theory as a theoretical framework underpinning this study. In this chapter, I present and discuss the research design and methodology that I adopted for this qualitative case study. The study explored the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP in secondary schools. The justification for all actions taken and decisions made is provided. I begin by declaring and describing a paradigmatic stance adopted in this study. I then present the research approach and methodology to describe procedures I used to generate and analyse data to answer the research questions. The sampling method used, and the data generation method are also discussed. Lastly, I discussed the issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues as well as the limitations of this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

This study is rooted in the interpretive research paradigm. Interpretive paradigm refers to a way of gaining insights through discovering meaning by obtaining an understanding of the subjectively created social world (Mattila & AAltio, 2006). The main aim of this paradigm was to characterise how people experience the world, the ways they interacted together (Parker, 1999), and the settings in which these interactions took place (Abdel-Fattah & Galal-Edeen, 2009). Interpretive paradigm would assist by making me acknowledge that reality was subjective and differs from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There were many realities out there just like individuals, and interpretive research paradigm would assist me in understanding social world within which people operated, that it was individually constructed. Therefore, the way they viewed their world would influence the way they interacted with it as they implemented the LPP in their schools. The core beliefs of the interpretive paradigm were that reality is individually constructed (Willis, 2007). Similar sentiments were shared by Kaplan and Maxwell (1994); Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) that interpretive paradigm attempted to understand the phenomena through the means that people assigned to them. The acceptance of multiple perspectives in interpretivism often lead to a more comprehensive

understanding of the situation (Klein & Meyers, 1998; Morehouse, 2011). Through this paradigm, I would be able to elicit insights about how secondary school principals explained and dealt with the ripple effects of the implementation of LPP.

3.3 Research Design

The research design refers to a plan that the researcher is going to use to systematically gather and scrutinise the data that is required to answer the research question (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Similar sentiments are shared by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) by stating that planning research depends on the design of the research. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2001), all social research needs a design or a structure before data generation or analysis can commence. This study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is normally perceived as a rough sketch to be filled in by the researcher as the study proceeds (Astalin, 2013; Brooks & Normore, 2015; Frankel & Denvers, 2000). Qualitative research design will assist me to understand that information is not out there alone without the people to know it. In other words, people and their social world cannot be separated as it is the case with for example, positivist research paradigm. Through the use of this design, I will be able to understand the phenomenon that is being explored through the perspective of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative research design will make it easy for me to understand that participants interpret events, context, and situations and act based on their interpretation of those events. Therefore, the voices of the participants were used to generate data to answer the research questions. Data for this study was generated in the participant's natural setting.

3.4 Research methodology

In this study, I chose qualitative case study methodology. A case study is a professionally organised and in-depth study of one case in its natural context (Rule & John, 2011). In this study, the case I focused on was the implementation of the LPP which seemed to have met several challenges. Natural settings were the schools where the principals were actively involved in the implementation of the LPP. In a case study methodology, a case can be a person, a group of people, a school, a community, or an organisation (Rule & John, 2011). In this research, I paid attention to a group of principals that constituted research participants in this study. Qualitative case study provided me with the necessary tools to study the complex

phenomena within their contexts using a variety of data sources as an additional benefit (Davies, Nutley & Walter, 2007). Another reason for choosing a case study was to get a close, in-depth look at the ripple effects of implementing the LPP by the participating principals. Case studies allowed for lots of details to be collected that cannot be easily generated from other forms of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The focus of the study was to answer the questions such as "how and "what" (Krishnannair, 2010; Myers, 2009; Yin, 1989) of the participants. This methodology, therefore, became the best method for this study because it assisted me to generate more in-depth data for this study than any other methodology.

3.5 Sampling method

Two sampling methods I chose for this study are purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive sampling makes it clear that the chosen sample is for a particular purpose (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It is also termed the non-probability sampling technique since the researcher has the autonomy to purposefully select participants deemed knowledgeable from a population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). This aims to locate an information-rich participant, selected specifically to be insightful, comprehensive, articulate, and honest. The participants for this study were recruited using the Department of Basic Education database for the schools situated closer to me. The criteria that I used to select the participating principals is that of looking at the schools that have performed above the 65% benchmark that is set by the DBE for more than five consecutive years. Besides selecting those schools closer to me, I also targeted schools with principals with more than five years' experience. Four principals from four different secondary schools were used as the participants for this study. Principals were identified as the main participants because they are at the face of the implementation of the policy at school level.

The second sampling method/techniques is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was used to select participants that fitted the purpose of the study and were easily accessible to me in terms of distance (Silverman, 2013). Convenience sampling was beneficial to me in that it was cost and time efficient. Convenience sampling does not simply refer to participants that are most conveniently situated to the researcher, but they must first meet a purposive criterion. Factors such as willingness to participate, geographical proximity from the researcher, and availability are considered for the convenience of the researcher (Silverman, 2013).

Geographical proximity is a driving factor for selecting these cases; therefore, all four cases are located not far away from easy to reach by me.

3.6 Data generation method

In this study, I generated data using semi-structured interviews. This type of interview was very much essential for exploring the perceptions of an individual towards a certain issue in question (Van Teiilingen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews gave the interviewee enough time to respond freely to those long, sometimes, rambling questions (Alvarez & Urla, 2002). Getting participants to think, reflect and talk was important because the study was interested in the "how and what" questions and words were essential in answering these. I chose to use semi-structured interviews because they allowed me to dig deep from the participants' experiences to gain more information and achieve a deeper understanding of the research topic. Furthermore, probes were used to seek more clarity where the participant had responded not in detail sufficiently or where I felt that there was still more to come out. By digging deep, I was able to bring to the surface those deep-seated issues that were not going to be exposed without being vigorously interrogated.

The structure in semi-structured interviews was embedded in the interviewer leading the direction of the interview through prepared questions (Fossey, Harvey, McDermont & Davidson, 2002). For the objective of this study, setting a structure was necessary to answer the research questions. The use of an interview structure assisted with determining the sequence of the interview (Versland, 2012). This helped me stay within the topic of discussion. The interview structure was prepared before the interview. Questions were structured in such a way that allowed me to probe deep in cases where in-depth information was required. Research questions used were open-ended and this allowed participants to speak at length.

To encourage participants to speak at length, and both English and IsiZulu were used during the interviews. Such a decision was based on the knowledge that all participants speak IsiZulu as their home language although they were able to communicate in English. The use of the home language was considered for two reasons: that it allowed the participants to freely express themselves much better, precisely, thus providing more information. Secondly, it made them feel relaxed enough to talk freely and I was able to build a good rapport with the participants. Due to the presence of coronavirus, I used virtual technology so that these interviews could be

conducted easily. The virtual technology used was in the form of WhatsApp video calls and the Zoom virtual system. This helped me overcome the problem of not being able to make physical contact with the study participants.

3.7 Data analysis

Data generated for this study were analysed through the thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns of meaning or themes across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). By focusing on meaning across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006); thematic analysis allowed the researcher to see and make sense of collective and shared meanings and experiences. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis served as a way of identifying what was common to the way a topic was talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities. Patterns of meaning that thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify the need to be important about the phenomenon, and the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The main purpose of the analysis was to identify those patterns that were appropriate to answer the research question. If the analysis was thoroughly conducted it normally produces the answers to the research question. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis was a flexible method that allowed the researcher to focus on the data set in numerous different ways. The many forms of thematic analysis can take a form that it suits a wide variety of research questions and research topics (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A good thematic analysis entailed more than simply reporting what was in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006); it also involved telling an interpretive story about the data about a research question.

In this study when I was conducting thematic analysis, I began by listening to the audio recordings that I had recorded during the interviews. After thoroughly listening to them, I then transcribed the audio recordings into written data generated. I then embarked on familiarising myself with the data. Familiarising myself with data means that I immersed myself in the data set by reading and re-reading the data contained inside out. This helped me identify and record potentially interesting features of the data, relevant to the research question. I aimed to tell a rich and sophisticated story of their analysis, situated within the relevant field of literature, in a way that convinces the reader of the trustworthiness of their interpretations.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of any research lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as reliability and validity (Seale, 1999). Reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigour, and quality in the qualitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Trustworthiness in this research was achieved by eliminating bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) and increasing the researcher's truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon by using a variety of strategies. Qualitative researcher uses a combination of strategies to ensure trustworthiness (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Strategies that I used in this study to ensure trustworthiness included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and these are discussed below.

3.8.1 Credibility

According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), credibility deals with all aspects of the research which influences how accurately the research questions can be answered. Similar sentiments are shared by Bengtsson (2016) that credibility refers to the research process whereby, the research process reveals how data was generated, and how the analysis procedure was carried out to ensure that all relevant data have been included to answer the research questions. Credibility in research can be demonstrated through strategies such as the triangulation method, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Padgett, 2008). Triangulation is whereby the researcher uses multiple methods to generate data for the same topic (Moon, Brewer & Januchowski-Hartley, 2016).

Using multiple methods of data generation enabled me to overcome the weakness or intrinsic bias and the problems associated with using a single method, single observer, and single-theory studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). This study used both semi-structured interviews and documents review to generate data. To ensure that this study was credible, I used several strategies which are meant to enhance credibility. One of the ways that I used to ensure credibility was ensuring that the participation of each participant is voluntary, thus nobody is forced to participate. Therefore, I can say with confidence that the findings can be trusted because no participant was forced to participate as each participant gave his views voluntarily.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study apply to other settings or contexts (Bengtsson, 2016). The findings of qualitative research are not transferable (Flyvberg, 2006; Maxwell, 1992). A researcher needs to state clearly that the findings of a qualitative study may not be relevant to other settings (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative studies are associated with making small claims since they are mostly focused on in-depth smaller samples which generalise their finding's problem (Morse & Richards, 2002; Patton, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2006). To ensure that there is transferability in this study, I used the construct termed thick description of the participants and the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the context of this study, I ensured that I provided a detailed description of every step that I took. I did this to ensure that any researcher who wants to conduct a study on this topic could use my study as a source of reference.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the findings of the study would be reliable and consistent if the study is repeated with similar participants in the very same context (Polit & Beck, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986; Streubert, 2007) making it easy for the research findings to be accepted with confidence by the research community. Dependability also requires the researcher to document all the research procedures to make it easy for someone outside the study to follow, audit, and critique the research procedure. One of the techniques that I implemented to establish dependability was the construct of Inquiry audit.

Inquiry audit is one of the measures that is used by qualitative researchers to enhance dependability in their study (Bengtsson, 2016). In this study, I described in detail how the data were generated, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (Bengtsson, 2016). The main objective was to check the accuracy and check whether the research findings, interpretation, and conclusion are supported by data. This provided an opportunity for the research community to challenge the process and the findings of a study. Important feedback from the research community could lead to additional data gathering and the development of stronger and better-articulated findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance dependability of the findings, the process of conducting the study was reported in detail. In addition, I used multi-methods as a way of enhancing the dependability of the

findings. In that way, findings from semi-structured interviews were checked against those elicited from the documents reviewed.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the measures taken by the researcher to ensure that the study is objective (Polit & Beck, 2006). Confirmability can be perceived as a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by the researcher's bias, agenda, motivation, or interest (Guba, 1981). To ensure confirmability, I ensured that my interpretations were confirmed by the participants. To ensure that my interpretation of what emerged from the interviews was accurate, I did member checking to confirm my interpretation. In addition, after the transcriptions have been completed, I sent them to my participants to check the content and confirm whether the transcripts reflect exactly what they said during the interviews.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to moral issues that need to be considered when dealing with the research participants. Ethics play a very significant role in research since they remind the researcher to always consider what is morally correct. For my study, I ensured that I consider them. Firstly, I began by requesting permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee. Secondly, I applied for permission from the Head of Department in the KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Education where all schools in the province are managed.

Thirdly, I requested permission from my participants from the four chosen secondary schools. To strengthen the ethical aspect, I had a meeting with my research participants making use of What's App video call before they participated in the study. The meeting was about informing them about the nature of the research and the objectives of the study (Oosthuizen, 2015). Participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary. Furthermore, they were informed that there were no incentives provided for having participated in the study. I informed them that we might have more than two sessions of interviews with them. I brought to their attention that nothing was compelling them to be part of the study. If they felt that they want to pull out at any point in the course of the study, they were free to do so. They were also

informed that to ensure confidentiality, *pseudonyms* would be used for the participants and their schools. These measures were adopted to ensure that any information which might lead to their exposure to real information was avoided. Finally, letters of consent were e-mailed to participants to append their signatures and acknowledge that participation is voluntary.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a detailed discussion about the different research approaches and the methodology underpinning them. I have provided the reasons for the different steps undertaken involving the type of research paradigm and the type of qualitative methodology that I adopted. The data generation, sampling methods were discussed, the issues of trustworthiness, as well as issues of ethical consideration, were highlighted. In the following chapter, I discuss the findings from the vast amounts of data generated through interviewing secondary school principals.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the methodology and the research design utilised in this study were discussed. This chapter presents data and discusses the findings generated through the semi-structured interviews and documents attained from principals. Data presentation and discussion is to address the following critical research questions:

- What were the perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?
- How did principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?

To remind the readers, the study's main objective is to explore the perspectives of secondary school principals concerning the implementation of the LPP. In the presentation and discussion of data, verbatim robust quotations are utilised to ensure that the actual voices of the principals are not lost. To enhance the quality of the discussion, I inject literature that I presented in Chapter Two.

4.2 Biographical information of participants

Four principals participated in the study, two from the Folweni area on the outskirts of Umlazi and the other two from KwaMakhutha township. The two areas fall under the Umlazi District.

Participants	Age	School	Teaching experience	Highest qualification	Position
Mr. Mhluhlu	53	Vusisizwe secondary school	30 years	Bed (honours)	Principal
Mr. Thatha	49	Phakamani secondary school	28 years	Bed (honours)	Principal

| Mr. Ceza | 55 | Singabo secondary school | 32 years | Bed (honours) | Principal |
| Mr. Mthobeni | 56 | Vulamasango secondary school | 34 years | Med (Master of education) | Principal |

Mr. Mhluhlu

Mr. Mhluhlu is the principal of Vusisizwe Secondary School in KwaMakhutha. He has been a principal for more than five years. Vusisizwe Secondary School has an enrolment of about 1150 learners. The school is in a township area with various other secondary schools as neighbours.

Mr. Mthobeni

Mr. Mthobeni is an experienced principal, highly qualified, and very much knowledgeable principal of Vulamasango Secondary School. He was employed in this school as an educator, and he rose through all the ranks of management until he was appointed as the principal of the school. Vulamasango Secondary School has an enrolment of 1800 learners.

Mr. Thatha

Mr. Thatha, the principal of Phakamani Secondary School in the Folweni area is a recently appointed principal with more than 3 years of experience. Mr. Thatha acted in the post of principalship for more than eighteen months before getting appointed. Before taking the post he served as the Deputy Principal for nine years. Phakamani Secondary School has an enrolment of 1100 learners.

Mr. Ceza

Mr. Ceza is the principal of Singabo Secondary School in the Folweni area. He has been a principal for nine years. Before joining Singabo Secondary School, he was a Deputy Principal in Senior Primary School in another school. Singabo Secondary School has an enrolment of 1500 learners.

4.3 Perspectives of secondary school principals regarding the effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy

When the principals were asked about their views with regards to the effects of the implementation of the LPP, they alluded to quite a few benefits and some challenges of this policy. Below, I discuss the benefits that they highlighted.

4.3.1 Principals' views about the benefits of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy

All the principals highlighted that the implementation of LPP has some benefits that are perceived to be positive for the learners and the schools. The aspects that were highlighted by the principals pointed to giving learners who did not meet the minimum promotion requirements a chance to progress to the next grade, positively motivating learners, reducing the high learners' retention rate in secondary schools, reduction of the high dropout rate, and improving learners' self-esteem. These benefits will be discussed as subthemes.

4.3.1.1 Giving learners who did not meet the minimum promotion requirements a chance to progress to the next grade

All four principals shared similar sentiments that the implementation of LPP gave the learners who did not meet the minimum promotion requirements a chance to progress to the next grade. These principals highlighted that the policy benefitted the learners since learners were given a chance to not fall behind the peer group. Mr. Mhluhlu of Vusisizwe Secondary School had this to say:

> *When we implement this policy in our school, we implement the policy to give learners a chance to move to the next grade. Learners that we normally give such*

a chance are the ones who do not meet the minimum requirements for promotion in that phase or grade. We implement this policy because we think that the learner will be able to get assisted academically in the next class or grade (**Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha of Phakamani Secondary School echoed similar sentiments that the implementation of LPP has good intentions by giving a special concession to the learners who are struggling academically to move with their peers to the next class or grade. He said:

I feel that we are doing the right thing when we implement the policy. One of the main reasons why we are implementing it in our school is to give a chance to learners who did not do well academically at the end of the year to progress to the next grade. They are given a chance so that they can try and improve their weaknesses. These learners are given a chance to move with their group or classmates to the next class that has not met the minimum requirements for a promotion at school (**Mr. Thatha).**

Giving learners a chance to move to the next grade that have not met the minimum requirements is perceived to be a good move by the Department of Basic Education. This is what Mr. Ceza of Singabo Secondary School said:

Giving learners a chance to progress to the next grade has not met the minimum requirements for a promotion is a good thing for learners. Learners need to be given all the chances to improve academically so that learners could try their best in everything that they do in life (**Mr. Ceza).**

Similarly, Mr. Mthobeni of Vulamasango Secondary School echoed similar views that were shared by Mr. Mhluhlu, Mr. Thatha, and Mr. Ceza that the implementation of LPP gives learners a chance to progress to the next grade. Mr. Mthobeni added that these learners should be assisted in the grade they have been moved to for them to improve their weakest areas. He said:

When we implement the learner progression policy, I feel that we are doing something good for the learners in our school who are underachieving. Underperforming learners are given a chance to move to the next grade so that they can be assisted by educators in the next class to improve in the areas they are weak in or at (**Mr. Mthobeni).**

The remarks by the four principals were in accord with the prescripts of the Department of Basic Education (2011) that the LPP was designed to give a special chance to the learners who had failed to meet the minimum requirements for a promotion to move to the next grade. Grossen, Grobbler, and Lacante (2017) posited that the policy was implemented to give a chance to learners who did not meet the requirements of the minimum promotion as it was stipulated in the document. Samuel and Dudu (2017) argued that the good thing about the implementation of the LPP was that no learner who failed to meet the minimum requirements for a promotion would be unfairly denied a chance to move to the next class, thus negatively destroying the learners' hopes and dreams. Principals added that further to the learners being given a chance to move to the next grade, there was a condition that these learners must be assisted by educators to improve their weaknesses. This was corroborated by international, continental, and local scholars. For example, according to the No Child Left Behind policy used in the USA for underperforming learners who do not meet minimum requirements for promotion, which was similar to LPP, learners were given a chance to move to the next grade (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). In terms of continental scholarship, Igwe, Okolie and Nwokoro (2019); Turuthi (2018); Wara, Aloka, and Odongo (2018), stated that the Social Promotion policy that was implemented in their countries also gave learners who did not meet the requirements for promotion to move with their peers to the next grade. Mthimunye and Daniels (2019) from South Africa posited that once these learners who failed to meet the requirements for a minimum promotion were moved to the next grade, educators in the next grade had a responsibility to assist the learners in their weaknesses.

In line with the theoretical framework of street-level bureaucrats, the street-level bureaucrats were supposed to know what learners need in the next grade so that their weaknesses could be professionally addressed (Paudel, 2009). Giving learners a chance to move to the next grade who did not meet the minimum requirements a chance was a positive benefit. This positive benefit created a welling up of a need for them to be assisted in the next grade learners have been moved to. The need for these learners to be assisted in the next grade made policy ripple effect negatively when it was implemented. Therefore, one of the ripple effects was the need for the teachers to synchronise their teaching plan such that those teaching the previous grade feedforward information about the learners who have been progressed. In that way, the teachers receiving the learners know where to put their energies on in terms of assisting the learners close their knowledge gap and be able to catch up with the rest of the classmates.

4.3.1.2 Positively motivating learners

Principals felt that one of the positive benefits of implementing the LPP was that it positively motivated learners at school. Principals highlighted that even though the learners were underperforming academically but progressing them was positively motivating for them. This was particularly essential for the underperforming learners who sometimes lack motivation. All four principals revealed that underperforming learners needed to be motivated so that they could work hard and improve their performances. Progressing the academically underperforming learners to positively motivate them sometimes did not effectively produce the desired motivation on learners who were doing well and on the educators. Educators felt demoralised when they saw these learners progress to the next class or grade. For Mr. Mhluhlu motivation played a very essential role in an underperforming learner. This was what he shared:

> *I have experienced that learner can change and perform better if there is positive motivation. It is difficult for any underperforming learner to be motivated if the learner is retained in the very same class. In our school, we have managed to positively motivate some other learners through the implementation of this policy. However, educators feel very demoralised to perform their duties to their level best. As learners get motivated educators get demoralised* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Retention of learners has been the main cause of most learners becoming demotivated. Learners' progress seemed to be positively motivated since learners felt that educators were sympathetic to their feelings. Learners who were progressed were positively motivated to excel in the next grade because they did accept that educators were trying to motivate them to pull up their socks. As this motivated the underperforming learners, it also demotivated the excelling learners. This is what Mr. Ceza had to say:

> *Over the years as a principal, I have noticed how much it demotivates the learner to be retained in the same class or grade. You could see in the learners' eyes how much he or she becomes demotivated when the learner is retained in the same class or grade. I have experienced a sense of being motivated by learners who have been progressed to the next grade having underperformed. I have heard some learners saying that this is the first and the last time they are progressed. From this statement, I could tell that the learner is positively motivated. However, it*

negatively affects learners who are working hard to pass to the next grade (**Mr. Ceza).**

There is no other recipe that is effective in positively motivating underperforming learners like being progressed to the next grade. Learners are positively motivated since the learners are moving with his or her peers. The learner is positively motivated since the learner realises that there is still a belief that he or she can do better than before. As the policy is motivating others, it also demotivates the others at school. Mr. Mthobeni commented:

When we implement the learner's progression policy in our school, we perceive the progression of learners as a recipe that is needed to positively motivate them. We have realised that learners become so demotivated to learn when they stay for far too long in the same class or grade. I have personally noticed that the motivation that is experienced by a promoted learner is not the same motivation that is experienced by the progressed learner. On the other hand, as it is motivating to underperforming learners, it is also negatively destroying capable learners' motivation (**Mr. Mthobeni).**

Comparably, to the views shared by the three other principals, Mr. Thatha maintained that progressing the underperforming learners positively motivated them in life. Most learners were motivated to join groups of learners who were doing well at school. Learners were positively motivated to behave well and attend school on regular basis. Learners who were underperforming at school and not getting progressed automatically became demotivated to learn. Mr. Thatha asserted:

When we implement the learner progression policy, we are trying to motivate underperforming learners. On the other hand, we forget to consider whether educators will be motivated or not. Progressed learners are psychologically motivated by the special concession they received. Some of the learners we have progressed who were underperforming in the previous grades were motivated to work hard to succeed and form study groups to assist them to improve academically. Learners' behaviour changes completely and they begin to commit themselves to attend intervention programs designed to assist them. Learners become motivated to learn if they see that they are still given the benefit of a doubt (**Mr. Thatha).**

All four participants revealed that the implementation of the learner progression policy did positively motivate the underperforming learners to do well in the next class or grade. The findings were consistent with the literature reviewed on underperforming learners' motivation. Underperforming learners who progressed to the next grade normally felt motivated to work hard and improve academically (Department of Basic Education, 2014; Munje & Maarman, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2013). According to Paudel (2009), the Street-level Bureaucrats were fully conversant with what the underperforming learners needed so that they could be motivated to work hard and improve their academic performance. Underperforming learners needed to be encouraged that would positively motivate them academically at school. There was one principal who viewed the implementation of the policy as having a positive result in the overall learners' conduct. Underperforming learners needed to be given all the love, support, and all types of motivation that they deserved as a key to do better at school (Adedidba & Sulaiman, 2020; Van der Berg, 2015). There was a view that was shared by three principals that the implementation of the policy tended to have a demoralising effect on educators and excelling learners. In line with the existing literature, even the most excelling learners needed to be motivated so that their attitudes towards learning were not negatively affected (Hiver & Larsen-Freeman, 2020; Hiver & Papi, 2020). These differences of opinion that were revealed by principals exposed to the ripple effects of the policy implementation.

4.3.1.3 Reducing the high learners' retention rate in secondary schools

One of the issues that our country has been faced with was the high level of learners' retention, especially in secondary schools (Govender, 2018). It emerged from the principals that the implementation of the LPP served as a positive benefit in the reduction of the high learners' retention rate in secondary schools. Unlike in the past, the learner could be retained in the same grade without providing any procedural fairness to the retention process. All four principals agreed that the policy has been effective in the reduction of the high learners' retention rate in their schools. To support this, Mr. Mhluhlu made the following statement:

> *I would say that the policy has successfully managed to bring down the highest retention rate of learners in our school. It has become very difficult to retain a learner in the same grade because the process has become a lengthy one. Since educators cannot provide enough reasons and did not follow the correct*

procedures, the majority of learners who are supposed to be retained end up moving to the next grade **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Academically underperforming learners benefitted immensely from the implementation of the policy. There are several learners who cannot be retained in the very same grade due to the stipulations of the policy. This is what Mr. Thatha expressed:

> *Over the years it has been the discretion of the condonation committee at school to decide which learners are to be retained in that grade. As a result of this committee, the numbers of learners that were retained were increased on yearly basis up until the implementation of the policy. Of course, one might say that without fear that the policy has managed to bring down the highest numbers of learners who were supposed to be retained in a grade big time* **(Mr. Thatha).**

The retaining of the underperforming learners has been reduced drastically by the policy in our school. Mr. Ceza had this to say:

> *In our school especially in grade eleven, we used to have a huge number of learners retained as a result of the targeted number of matric learners.For this to happen, we had to increase the number of retained learners in all grades on yearly basis to avoid overcrowding in the classrooms. We had our condonation committee which was responsible for this process to materialise. Since the implementation of the policy, we saw a very huge drop in the number of learners who were to be retained annually. Yes, the policy has been successful in reducing the highest retention rate we had in our school* **(Mr. Ceza).**

Similarly, Mr. Mthobeni concurred with the three other principals. This is what Mr. Mthobeni had to say in this regard:

> *Yah---- yes. I would say yes, the policy has been successful in reducing the highest rate of learners' retention we use to have here in our school. As the school for the past number of years, we had a projected number that we wanted to keep at grade twelve so that our school performance may not drop below a certain percentage. To achieve this, we had the numbers of retained learners increasing yearly per grade. This was bad but it helped us maintain the desired standard at grade twelve* **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

It was fascinating what was emerging from the data gathered from the principals that the policy has been successful in reducing the highest retention rate in their schools. All the principals agreed that they had the highest learners' retention rate in their schools before the implementation of the LPP. Drawing from the SLB's theory, this theoretical framework was more relevant when it came to reviewing the implementation of any policy outcomes (Lipsky, 2010). The findings were consistent with what had been argued in both local and international literature. According to Govender (2018), South Africa has been regarded as amongst the countries of the world that have been recording the highest learners' retention rate for so many years before the policy implementation. The introduction and the successful implementation of the LPP have had an amazingly positive effect on the reduction of retaining underperforming learners in the majority of secondary schools worldwide (Ayoub, 2019). It was clear from the principals' utterances that the policy had been successful in reducing the high learners' retention rate since the procedures were properly followed. The reduction of the high learners' retention rate as a positive benefit unintentionally results in the establishment of the outbreak of overcrowded learners' classrooms in the next grade. The outbreak of overcrowded learners' classrooms was what causes the policy implementation to have a negative ripple effect.

4.3.1.4 Reduction of the high dropout rate

It emerged from the principals that the way learners were dropping out especially in secondary schools was a matter of serious concern to the DBE. The principals said that this crisis of learner dropout was very much high in public schools in comparison to private schools. The implementation of the LPP as a positive benefit managed to cause the reduction of the high dropout rate. Principals advocated that the DBE had got a very significant role to play in the reduction of the highest learner dropout rate. The principal, Mr. Mhluhlu had this to say:

> *You can imagine what happens to the life of a learner after he or she has dropped out of school. We have held several meetings as a staff to discuss this issue of learners' dropping out. The meetings were held to remind one another about the main causes of learners' dropping out of school. So, when we implement the policy at school, we are trying to positively reduce the dropout rate amongst our learners as it is a part of the Department of Basic Education initiative* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha responded that many teachers in this school tried to reduce the dropout rate. In the discussion, he revealed the important role that he played in ensuring that most learners were progressing. This is how he responded:

The role that I play in the reduction of the dropout rate in my school is that I become part of the policy implementation. I ensure that we adhere to the policy implementation procedures. I ensure that as we implement the policy no learner is unfairly discriminated against to be progressed. Avoiding unfair discrimination in the progression of learners reduces the dropout rate **(Mr. Thatha).**

Mr. Ceza felts that it was part of his core duty as principal to ensure that the learner dropout rate was reduced at school. He said:

I fight against the unfair treatment of learners during the implementation of the LPP in my school. I have personally advised educators to be more careful when they implement the policy. I am always encouraging educators to implement the policy fairly so that we can reduce the highest dropout rate from our learners as a result of the unjust treatment **(Mr. Ceza).**

Mr. Mthobeni highlighted the most important benefits of reducing the dropout rate of the learners at school. This is what he said:

When we implement the policy, we have in mind the negative implications of learners' dropout. We are always trying to encourage learners to stay at school. We are trying to reduce the number of learners becoming criminals, drug addicts, and unplanned pregnancies because of being high school dropouts **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

What was astonishing from the principals' perspective regarding their implementation of the policy, was that they seemed to understand that the policy should be used as an instrument to try and reduce the highest learners' dropout. The SLB's theory promoted the notion that public service personnel understood the role they played during policy implementation (Lipsky, 1980). This was in line with the local and international literature review on strategies to reduce the highest learners' dropout. Progressing the underachieving learners through policy implementation managed to keep the underachieving learners at school positively reducing the highest dropout rate (Quintal, 2016). According to Grobbler, Knight, Lens, and Lacante (2014);

Van der Berg (2015) the LPP successfully managed to reduce the highest dropout rates in South African public secondary schools.

What I noticed from the principals which was more interesting was that the implementation of the LPP did have a positive effect on the reduction of the highest level of learners' dropout. All principals revealed that one of the major reasons why learners dropped out was the failure to achieve a promotion to the next class. The principals revealed that before the implementation of the LPP the dropout rate was extremely high. The LPP had been the most successful strategy to motivate learners to remain within the schooling system until learners reached Grade 12 (Quintal, 2016). The principals' view that was continuously coming out was that the policy had a reduction of the high dropout rate which deluged into classes with ill-disciplined learners and uncontrollable noise. The positive benefit of a reduction of the high dropout rate negatively ripple effect to ill-disciplined learners and uncontrollable noise in the next grade.

4.3.1.5 Improving learners' self-esteem

Positive self-esteem in learners was the most essential tool for them to succeed academically and in life (Quintal, 2016) . Principals were of the view that improving learners' self-esteem was a positive benefit of the implementation of the LPP in secondary schools. Principals alluded to the fact that implementing the policy to move learners who did not meet the minimum requirements for a promotion at school had a positive effect on learners' self-esteem. If the learner's self-esteem was positively affected, the learner could change their behaviour towards life and strive for better things out there. Mr. Mhluhlu revealed the following:

> *I have seen how retained learners at school suffer when it comes to their self-esteem. You could see when you enter a class, how badly it affects their self-esteem to be in the same class. It becomes even more difficult for a teacher to find activities that would boost their self-esteem. When we implement the policy, we implement it to boost learners' self-esteem so that they can have the strength to overcome the challenges they are faced with in life* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha shared similar sentiments with Mr. Mhluhlu that whenever they implement the policy, they show more concern about the learners' self-esteem. This is what he said:

> *It is very much painful to see how failure to progress negatively affects underperforming learners' self-esteem. I have witnessed learners who would have*

their self-esteem almost destroyed. When we implement the policy, we are trying to protect learners from losing their self-esteem. I have noticed that learners with positive self-esteem succeed much better in life than the ones with low self-esteem **(Mr. Thatha).**

One of the things that should be developed in a learner at school is positive self-esteem (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Learners with positive self-esteem are the go-getters in life (Quintal, 2016). Their views were that learners who did not have positive self-esteem did not go very far in life. Mr. Ceza had this to say:

As principals, it is very much important to ensure that our schools are a place where positive learners' self-esteem is stimulated. As we teach and test learners, we have to ensure that these lead to the boosting of their self-esteem positively. Progressing learners play an important role in boosting learners' self-esteem in life **(Mr. Ceza).**

The data indicates that positive self-esteem plays a major role in the attainment of effective learning. For learners to contribute effectively to the outside world, they needed to have their self-esteem elevated. Elevated self-esteem assisted the learners to conquer whatever challenges they will face shortly. This is what Mr. Mthobeni had to say:

When we educate learners, we begin by developing their self-esteem. Learners leaving the school with very low self-esteem find it difficult to overcome life challenges. As we progress them we are elevating their self-esteem so that they can try and overcome the new challenges brought by the next grade or class and life outside the school premises **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

What I have noticed which was more intriguing from the data gathered was that there was a synergy between progressing a learner and the stimulation of their self-esteem. All participants agreed that progressing learners positively impacted their self-esteem. The DBE utilised the LLP to prevent the development of low self-esteem in underachieving learners (Department of Basic Education, 2014; Munje & Maarman, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2013). The LPP successfully managed to curb the development of low self-esteem to learners who could not cope with the work of the grades they were doing (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; DBE, 2011). The implementation of the LPP as a positive benefit successfully managed to improve underperforming learners' self-esteem whilst it negatively ripples effect at demoralising the educators at school.

4.4.1 Challenges regarding the implementation of Learner Progression Policy

Principals' attention was also drawn to the fact that there were challenges associated with the policy implementation phase, and they acknowledged that view and reality. When principals were asked to share their views with regards to what they regarded as the challenges of implementing the LPP, they mentioned several challenges that they believed occurred as a result of the policy implementation. Some of the challenges that principals revealed were the overcrowding of learners' classrooms, uncontrollable noise, ill-discipline amongst the learners, the lack of individual learner attention, and the educators' demotivation. These challenges will be discussed as subthemes.

4.4.1.1 Overcrowding of learners' classrooms

One of the biggest challenges that most schools were facing as a result of the policy implementation was the overcrowding of learners' classrooms. Progressing of the underperforming learners had made the problem much worse than it used to be because of the shortage of resources. When principals were discussing the challenges that emanate because of overcrowding of learners' classrooms, they expressed the view that learners were forced to share the smallest available resources. The situation was made even worst by the lack of furniture in the classrooms. Desks designed to accommodate two learners were occupied by three or four learners. The lack of furniture in their schools was one of the biggest challenges that they are faced with on yearly basis. Mr. Mhluhlu revealed the following:

> *Seating of learners in groups of three or four at a desk in our school has become a norm. Learners are squashed together in one desk like this because of the lack of furniture or desks. Our learners are the ones responsible for this situation since they are the ones who are breaking the furniture on yearly basis. I strongly feel that if we progress the learners, this problem will always be there* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha's response indicated that he was frustrated and confused by the overcrowding of learners' classrooms. He indicated that even the Norms and Standards' allocations were not enough to help them solve this crisis. He commented:

It is very much disturbing when you walk into a classroom as a principal and see learners squashed together at a desk. You could see that there is a lot of discomfort and frustration amongst the learners themselves. I am even frustrated and confused by this situation that I cannot resolve easily. When we progress the learners, we sometimes forget to think of the negative implications that might occur in class. For now, it is a bit difficult to resolve this crisis due to our limited financial resources **(Mr. Thatha).**

The overcrowding of learners' classrooms has made it difficult to administer class activities and learners' work. It is more difficult to do the tasks in time in class and finish it. The discomfort reflected when learners were writing was heart-breaking. Mr. Ceza had this to say:

The sight of learners packed together tightly at a small desk is heart-breaking. We have deliberated several times in our meetings about the challenges associated with overcrowded learners' classrooms. When we implement the policy we are fully aware of the negative effect it has on our available capital resources. There is nothing that one can do but implement the policy **(Mr. Ceza).**

The lack of furniture made it even difficult to divide learners into groups inside the classroom. It was even much more difficult to do group activities since educators could not do anything concerning learners' seating arrangements. Mr. Mthobeni expressed the following:

Once the educator has been allocated to teach an overcrowded learners' classroom, he or she complains about being unable to group learners accordingly to their abilities. Whenever we implement the policy, there is a huge outcry from educators to consider the number of learners that will be in a class the following year. The lack of furniture seriously interferes with the activities that need to be done in class **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

It was quite interesting what was emerging from the data generated from the principals. The data that was generated from the principals revealed that one of the challenges regarding the implementation of the LPP was the overcrowding of learners in a classroom. The first two principals perceived the implementation of the LPP as the main cause of learners seated in groups of three or four at a desk meant to seat two learners. There was a corroboration between what the principals said, and the local literature reviewed. The South African public schools were often characterised by the shortage of capital resources

which contribute to the overcrowding nature of the classrooms (Makietski, 2018; Meier & West, 2020). The third principal revealed that it was very difficult to administer a controlled test because the learner's seating was uncomfortable. The seating of learners in this fashion compromises the standards for effective quality assessment (Adebola, 2020). The fourth principal exposed that it was not easy for educators to group learners according to their abilities so that they could be assisted or assist each other. Overcrowded classrooms made it very difficult for educators to utilise learner-centred methods during the process of teaching and learning (Masango & Kweingoti, 2018; Van Vuuren, 2020). The challenges that emanated from the overcrowding of learners in a classroom as described by the principals could easily turn to negative ripple effects when the policy was implemented. The SLB's theory provided a much more relevant lens in this study to reveal the difficulties regarding the implementation of any public policy (Lipsky, 2010).

4.4.1.2 Uncontrollable noise

Principals complained about the uncontrollable noise that occurred inside the classrooms during the process of teaching and learning. Principals perceived the occurrence of uncontrollable noise in the classrooms as one of the challenges brought by the implementation of the LPP. The principals were asked about the strategies that they used in dealing with the uncontrollable noise occurring in classes Two principals maintained that learners in all classes big or small made noise in them. Noise was always present as long as there were learners in the classroom. There was a perspective that noise occurred because of the educator's failure to exercise his or her classroom management skills. Mr. Mhluhlu expressed the following experience:

> *I have experienced educators teaching overcrowded classrooms with no learners disturbing the teaching and learning. Whilst other educators are complaining about the uncontrollable noise in the classroom during the process of learning. I would not say that the policy implementation is the cause of the uncontrollable noise, but it all depends on the educators' classroom management skills. Learners select educators systematically where they would be making noise during the process of learning. It is not the case that progressed learners are the noisy ones in class* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Similarly, Mr. Thatha shared his view this way:

When we first implemented the policy, I saw classes becoming bigger. I was amongst those educators who associated big classes with progressed learners in them as the noisy classrooms. What I experienced seriously changed my perspective since I uncovered that learner are the same in big or smaller classes. The noise inside the classrooms is not created by progressed learners but by the failure of an educator to control the class. Noise occurs because of learners undermining the educator in front of them **(Mr. Thatha).**

Contrary, Mr. Ceza, and Mr. Mthobeni highlighted that the noise occurred as a result of the progressed learners. Mr. Ceza commented:

When we progress learners to the next class, we are mainly creating the crisis of uncontrollable noise. We know the saying that goes like this "An empty vessel makes a lot of noise". What I have experienced is that progressed learners are the noisy ones, and they disturb everyone with their noise. It is very difficult to find a class full of promoted learners being the noisiest at school. Most classrooms with progressed learners are the noisiest classrooms in schools **(Mr. Ceza).**

What Mr. Ceza expressed was corroborated by Mr. Mthobeni. This is how he expressed his view of the uncontrollable noise:

Ever since we began implementing the policy and the classrooms became overcrowded and much noisier. I have personally witnessed educators getting disturbed by the noise in the classrooms created by the progressed learners. Most of the cases that we have dealt with of the noisy learners come from classrooms with the highest number of progressed learners. Implementing the policy means that educators will forever have to deal with the problem of uncontrollable progressed learners with no respect for educators. The biggest problem is that they do not stop talking in class whilst the teacher is teaching. This is a common problem, and it is like overcrowded classrooms with progressed learners are the same all over **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

It was clear that the principals that participated in this study expressed divergent views regarding the occurrence of uncontrollable noise inside the classrooms. The first principal asserted that learners tended to weigh educators teaching them. According to Kweitsu (2019), for an educator to deliver the lesson successfully he or she must be able to control

the noise inside the classroom. The second principal stated that noise occurs because educator fails to stamp authority over the learners in a classroom. Poor classroom management skills on the side of an educator result in the destabilisation of all learning activities that were meant to take place (Donnelly, 2019; Hachem & Mayor, 2019).

There seems to be a convergence of views in the data generated from the last two principals that noise occurs because educators failed to exercise authority over the learners in the classroom. The last two principals associated the challenge of the uncontrollable noise with the presence of the progressed learners in the classroom because of the implementation of the LPP. Learners who progressed through the implementation of the LPP were very much difficult to work with since progressed learners were the noisiest in the classroom (Rodriguez, 2017). The SLB's theory was utilised as the most suitable lens in this study since educators were the ones who were in constant contact with the learners (Paudel, 2009). Educators normally were the ones who have first-hand experience in all the challenges created by public policy implementation (Paudel, 2009). The diverging views from the data that was generated from the principals reveal the main causes for the ripple effect of the policy during its implementation.

4.4.1.3 Ill- discipline amongst the learners

Principals raised another serious cause of concern as a challenge brought by the implementation of the LPP which was the escalation of learners becoming ill-disciplined at school. The principals revealed that it was very difficult to manage discipline at school since the level of learners becoming ill-disciplined was increasing instead of it going down. All four principals perceived the implementation of the policy as the main cause of the challenge of learners' ill-discipline at school. The policy was implemented in certain schools to get rid of ill-disciplined learners. This tendency of getting rid of ill-disciplined learners through the policy was the main recipe for the escalating ill-discipline amongst the learners. Mr. Mhluhlu commented:

> *When we implement the policy at school, we sometimes use the policy to get*
> *rid of the ill-disciplined learners in our school. However, the problem of ill-*
> *disciplined learners is not gone since learners think that if you are ill-*
> *disciplined you get progress when you fail. By progressing the most ill-*
> *discipline learners we have unintentionally escalated ill-discipline amongst*

the learners. The policy is not a solution to the problem of ill-discipline, but it fuelled the problem **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha added that the implementation of the policy was a factor that was destroying learners' discipline. This is what he said:

In my entire life, I have never seen learners becoming so ill-disciplined just like they have become. It seems as if learners are becoming ill-disciplined almost on daily basis. What I have noticed is that learners are becoming ill-disciplined in everything that they do at school. Learners have become so arrogantly ill-disciplined to such a level that they even demand to be progressed if they fail. I would say that the policy does not solve the problem of ill-discipline, but it escalates it **(Mr. Thatha).**

Progressing more learners at school did not necessarily resolve the problem of ill-discipline but it opened the doors wide open for other ill-discipline learners to emerge. Mr. Ceza had this to say:

We have tried to utilise the policy as a method of cleaning up the school from ill-disciplined learners. What happened in the process is unbelievable. Instead, we saw a huge increase in the number of learners who are ill-disciplined from the ones who are still at school. We saw even changes from learners who were once good becoming ill-disciplined because they thought that the school is progressing them because of fear **(Mr. Ceza).**

The issue of learner academic performance and learner discipline is a recurring problem. There is also a recurring view in this study that learners were failing at school because of being ill-disciplined. The participants argued that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) instead of coming with a solution to learners' ill-discipline, the DBE offered the learners the policy as a reward to the most ill-disciplined learners. Mr. Mthobeni shared this view:

We thought that ill-disciplined learners when they get progressed, would change and become disciplined. The implementation of the policy in our school was perceived as one of the tools that were going to effectively assist us in reducing the escalating rate of ill-discipline amongst the learners. What we witnessed was the opposite of what we had expected. The progression of

ill-disciplined learners is the main cause of an ill-discipline number of learners escalating in our school (**Mr. Mthobeni).**

Principals revealed divergent views with regards to the main causes of the escalating ill-discipline amongst the learners. The first principal opined that the policy was implemented to remove the ill-disciplined learners in their school. According to Masango and Kweingoti (2018), some schools used the policy to maintain order at school by progressing ill-disciplined learners as a strategy to push out bad learners from school. The second principal shared that learner have become so arrogantly disrespectful to an extent of demanding to be progressed when they did not meet the promotion's requirement. This view was supported by many pieces of literature. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2018); Osai et al. (2021) maintained that learners were no longer willing to study hard since learners would demand to be progressed if they did not do well at the end of the year. The third principal expressed that the implementation of the policy had opened doors very wide for the ill-disciplined learners to be more disrespectful than before. Learners believed that the policy worked to the advantage of ill-disciplined learners at school (Meier & West, 2020). The fourth principal perceived the policy implementation by the Department of Basic Education as offering a reward to the most ill-disciplined learners. This finding was in congruence with one study conducted by Cowell (2018); Siddique (2018) that there was a misinterpretation by the learners that the policy was implemented to benefit the most ill-disciplined learners at school who were feared by the educators. According to Lipsky (2010), SLB's theory was effective when it came to exposing the differences between the policy intentions and the outcomes of public policy implementation (Lipsky, 2010). The divergent views shared by the principal expose the main reasons for the ripple effects experienced because of policy implementation.

4.4.1.4 The lack of individual learner attention

 Learners who did not meet the minimum requirements for a promotion needed a lot of individualised attention at school so that they could meet the minimum promotion requirements stipulated in the LPP. Principals felt that the implementation of the LPP had stimulated the challenge of the lack of individual attention in schools. Schools were now faced with the challenge of failing to provide this as an intervention strategy. It emerged from the principals that was difficult if not impossible to provide individual attention to the progressed learners in the next class or grade. Principals alluded to several factors

making it difficult to provide individual attention. Some of the factors were that there were too many learners who needed individual attention; teachers were under pressure to finish the Annual Teaching Plans, and no time could be set aside for individual learner's attention. Progressed learners desperately needed individual attention to perform well in the next grade. The lack of individual attention became a contributing factor making it difficult for progressed learners to perform well in the next grade. Mr. Mhluhlu revealed the following:

> *I have personally experienced that it is very difficult to provide progressed learners with individualised attention. The problem I have encountered is that there are too many learners who need it in a class. Even if you want to try and offer individual attention, it is impossible because there is no time to be used for providing individual attention at school.*

He added:

> *The time that is available at school is only for teaching and assessing. It is difficult to provide everyone with individual attention when you are faced with the challenge of completing the Annual Teaching Plan* (**Mr. Mhluhlu).**

According to the Management Tool Kit, learners who are struggling academically need to be provided with special individual attention. Special individual attention is used to address the academic problems the progress learners have got. This is what is supposed to be happening, but this cannot be easily provided. This is what Mr. Thatha had to say:

> *In our school, we have been providing struggling learners with individual attention to help them overcome their weaknesses academically. After we have implemented the policy numbers grew bigger making it difficult for educators to provide it. I would say that no educator is now capable of providing it in our school because of the number of learners who need it* (Mr. Thatha).

To successfully provide individual learner attention, a teacher needed to know the weaknesses of the learners concerned. Learners in a classroom have got different individual needs. Mr. Ceza asserted by saying this:

> *You cannot successfully provide individual attention if you do not know your learners very well. I have noticed that individual attention is no longer*

provided at school. Too many learners make it difficult to identify what type of individual attention progressed learners need (**Mr. Ceza).**

Mr. Mthobeni shared similar sentiments by saying that:

When teaching a class that is full of progressed learners, you could hardly find time to attend to their individual needs. You cannot even identify a learner's area of weakness because there are too many to single certain individuals. There is no time because of the pressures placed on your shoulders by the demands of the workload. Teaching progressed learners is very much stressful to such an extent that you cannot provide individual attention (**Mr. Mthobeni).**

Interestingly, what was emerging from the data generated from the principals was that there was a challenge of the lack of individual attention because of the implementation of the LPP. The first two principals revealed that it was very difficult for educators to provide individualised attention because of the huge number of underperforming learners who desperately needed it. The Management Tool Kit stipulated that learner who were struggling academically needed to be given individualised attention as part of the intervention strategies (Cash, Letargo, Graeter & Jacobs, 2017). The other two principals asserted that it was practically impossible to provide individualised attention since educators could not identify each learner's area of weakness. Fareo and Ballah (2018) maintain that educators were under a lot of pressure to finish the Annual Teaching Plans and do not have any extra time given to them to pay attention and assist the learners who were academically challenged.

The huge number of learners who needed individual attention created a surge of challenges in providing it. The SLBs theory utilised the framework which was much more effective in exposing what was stipulated in the public policy and the real challenges of implementing the policy (Lipsky, 2010). The challenge of the lack of individual attention turns out to be one of the negative ripple effects of policy implementation on effective schooling.

4.4.1.5 Educators demotivation

One of the pillars of successful teaching and learning was the educators' motivation (Kakar & Pathan, 2017). Principals perceived the implementation of the LPP as one of the challenges leading to the educators' demotivation at school. The views of the principals in this study suggested that the implementation of the LPP negatively affected the educators' motivation to teach effectively in classes. Principals highlighted that since the LPP implementation, there had been a lot of educators who were demotivated to work as hard as they used to do before. Progressing underperforming learners compromised the level of educator commitment to consistently achieving better learner academic results. Educators' demotivation was reflected in the fact that many were no longer committed to going the extra mile in their schoolwork. Mr. Mhluhlu commented thus on this matter:

> *I have never seen educators losing hope in the system like the way they are losing it right now. Most of the best-performing educators in our school are complaining that they are becoming demotivated since whatever they are doing to assist the progressed learners seem to be not bearing any positive fruits* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Educators needed counselling to assist them to regain their motivation in the teaching fraternity. Educators were complaining about becoming demotivated on daily basis as a result of what they referred to as the DBE not being fair to them. This is what Mr. Thatha had to say:

> *I have organised a session with the counsellors to come to our school and counsel educators so that their spirits are uplifted back again. I have witnessed how much educators are stressed and demotivated to teach like they use to do. Some educators are demotivated to such an extent that they are now beginning to be on sick leave on regular basis* **(Mr. Thatha).**

The data indicates that the situation was getting worse on daily basis, and the teachers needed to adjust to the situation. At the same time, the failure to adjust would contribute to increasing the level of the educators' demotivation at school. This is what Mr. Ceza articulated on this matter:

> *Educators at school are complaining that it is now extremely hard to be an educator. Most of the educators are saying that they are no longer enjoying*

being educators in this situation. Some others are even demotivated to come to school and teach. They say what is the use of teaching learners and maintain standards if those standards are not going to be considered. They say that they are demotivated as a result of all these changes happening daily **(Mr. Ceza).**

Mr. Mthobeni shared similar sentiments to what was shared by the other three principals:

What educators are demotivated with is the fact that some of the changes proposed by the Department just like this one did not get their approval. The top-down approach that is used by the Department concerning the implementation of this policy has got educators demotivated. Educators are demotivated since they cannot maintain the standards of quality work they have been producing for many years in the system **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

What was emerging from the data gathered from the principals was a matter of serious concern, that educators' demotivation occurred because of the Department's poor planning. The views expressed in this data that was gathered from Mr. Mhluhlu and Mr. Thatha were also consistent with the view held by Mr. Ceza that progressed learners were difficult to educate and assist them to get promotion easily. Mthimunye and Daniels (2019) emphasise the idea that educators needed to be supported and motivated by the Department of Basic Education and the School Management Teams to successfully educate progressed learners as a result of the LPP. It was evident from the principals' perspective that educators were demotivated even though the fourth principal stated that educators were demotivated as a result of the policy, which uses a top-down approach. For every policy to be effectively implemented so that all the structures were comfortable with, consultation from all stakeholders should be done thoroughly (Kakar & Pathan, 2017; Oga-Baldwin, 2017). The failure to consult all the relevant stakeholders during the process of policy formulation easily converted to a ripple effect during the policy implementation just like this one. This was further supported by the theoretical framework of SLB that for the policy to be implemented successfully the SLB needed to be consulted vigorously during the policy formulation to avoid misunderstandings (Lipsky, 2010).

4.5 Strategies implemented to mitigate the challenges of implementing the Learner Progression Policy

The challenges that were pointed at by the principals could not be left unaddressed so that schools could keep on producing the desired results by the department. Principals stated that they used a variety of strategies to mitigate the challenges of policy implementation. They pointed to very few strategies that they used to mitigate the challenges of the policy implementation. They pointed at the strategies such as parental involvement, expanded learning opportunities in the form of morning classes and Saturday extra classes, and lastly the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes.

4.5.1 Parental involvement

For any school to function effectively and productively, parents have got an important part to play to assist the school produces the desired results at the end of the year (Koh & Wing, 2020). Principals perceived parental involvement as one of the important strategies that their schools implemented to mitigate the challenges of implementing the LPP. Principals agreed that this issue was the most important aspect that needed to be brought on board to solve all the challenges that occurred involving academic activities. Principals shared with me specific strategies that they used and how they improved parental involvement of the progressed learners. Principals perceived this stakeholder as the most important one and that failure to utilise them effectively could have a serious negative ripple effects on the overall school functionality. Active involvement of progressed learners' parents at school could have a positive impact on the progressed learner as a result of failing to meet the minimum requirements for a promotion.

Therefore, parents were invited to come and fetch their learner's term report cards. Mr. Mhluhlu offered the following perspective:

> *What I noticed at this school is that most of the underperforming learners change and improve if their parents are actively involved in their studies. We have decided to have parents' open days where parents would come with their learners to school to collect their end-of-term progress report cards. When their parents arrive to collect progress report cards, it is this time that we normally use to discuss with them their learners' academic progress. Sometimes, we experience poor attendance*

from progressed learners' parents because some parents were not given invitations by their learners. Parents of progressed learners that we have engaged with we do see some changes in them **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

The views expressed by the participants indicated that the involvement of parents at school played a very important role in the improvement of learners' academic achievements. Schools that have more parents involved at school tended to have a lower number of learners progress to the next grade. Mr. Thatha shared this view:

In our school, we normally write letters to parents inviting them to come to school so that we can deliberate about their learners' academic performances. But what we have noticed is that parents who would come are the parents of learners who are doing well at school. Some parents of the progressed learners would never come. When we progress the learners, we use to think that their parents would become more involved in their education, but the opposite happens **(Mr. Thatha).**

The other view that emerged from the participants' narratives is that of learners' unfaithfulness to share correct information with their parents. Other participants highlighted that learners' unfaithful conduct contributed to reducing the level of parental involvement at school. Mr. Ceza shared similar sentiments with Mr. Thatha by saying that:

What we have uncovered when we asked the parents of the progressed learners the reasons why were they not coming to school when they were invited? What most parents said shocked most of us as educators. Parents told us that they have never received any letters inviting them to school. Parents even asked us why they would run away from coming to school since they have progressed learners. It became clear to us that it is our learners who are not trustworthy and destroy parental involvement at school **(Mr. Ceza).**

One of the main causes for the reduction of parental involvement is as a result of not involving the parents in some crucial decisions that involve the learners academically during the process of promotions. Mr. Mthobeni asserted that:

When we progress learners we progress them without involving their parents. If we can involve their parents during the implementation of the policy we would not experience the reduction of their involvement at school. We have tried to use the strategy of inviting them by using written letters and the what's app after the child

has been progressed. Progressed learners do not give their parents letters and most of the parents do not have smartphones **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

What was emerging from the data that was generated from the principals was very much interesting to find out that principals made efforts to attract parental involvement at school to mitigate the ripple effect of policy implementation. The first principal revealed that they even used parents' open days at school to attract more parental involvement at school. Parental involvement plays a very critical role in the learners' academic success at school (Koh & Wing, 2020). The second and third principals stated that they even wrote letters inviting parents to school, but the unfaithful behaviours of the learners rendered that strategy unworkable. For the schools to achieve positive parental involvement, the school needed to conduct a background check on the learner since it affected any attempt to draw the involvement of parents at school (Williams, 2020). The fourth principal revealed that one of the mistakes that they did was not involving learners' parents during the process of progressing them. It was always important to involve learners' parents in whatever that was done at school concerning the learner's future (Wilson, 2018). Principal advocated that parental involvement was utilised in their schools as one of the strategies to mitigate challenges that occurred as a result of policy implementation. The challenges that were brought by learners in making this strategy successful easily converted to the ripple effects during the policy implementation. Drawing from the SLB theory, educators had got an important role to play during policy implementation such as attracting parental involvement in any academic activities done at school (Lipsky, 2010).

4.5.2 Expanded learning opportunities

The creation of expanded learning opportunities seemed to be a strategy that was implemented by many black schools to improve the quality of the overall results of the school (Smokoska, 2020). Principals asserted that this was a strategy that was commonly used and further explained how they used the expanded learning opportunities to mitigate the challenges of policy implementation. Principals alluded to a variety of strategies they used to implement the expanded learning opportunities. There was no other way of improving progress learners' academic performances such as keeping them learning all the time even on weekends. Progressed learners needed to have lesser time not getting taught or be involved in the intervention programmes. This was what Mr. Mhluhlu had to say:

In our school, we ensure that there are programmes designed to assist learners with improved attainment prospects. We have a timetable designed to increase the contact time in the Gateway subjects to assist progressed learners. We have got morning classes and on weekends we have got compulsory Saturday classes. The late coming of progressed learners in the morning is what is giving us a challenge and the absenteeism of progressed learners on weekends, but this strategy seems to be improving our results (**Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Progressed learners need to be occupied most of their time. The more time that we commit to their education assist they improve academically. Mr. Thatha expressed the following:

We are using morning classes and Saturday classes to expand learning opportunities for our progressed learners. Sometimes, we request the services of teachers from other schools to come and help on weekends as part of team teaching. This strategy assists us big time to improve the results (**Mr. Thatha).**

The most important thing is to occupy the progressed learners most of the time. The key is to use every opportunity that is available to teach them so that they can be committed to learning. Mr. Ceza said that:

Keeping progressed learners occupied assists them to remain committed to their schoolwork. The method that we are using to keep them glued to their schoolwork is through providing them with morning classes and Saturday classes. This strategy has been in place in our school for donkeys and donkeys of years (**Mr. Ceza).**

Intervention programmes have been provided for progressed learners even though they are sometimes a huge challenge for educators. Mr. Mthobeni had this to say:

We are using the intervention programmes to address the challenges of progressed learners. Sometimes, even these intervention programmes collapse because educators have no obligation to provide them. Another big challenge is that we are using extra classes as an intervention programme which are one-size-fits-all. But this strategy has been the most effective one in assisting the progressed learners in our school (**Mr. Mthobeni).**

It was amazing what was revealed by the data that was generated from the principals. The data that was generated from the principals revealed that schools provided expanded learning opportunities in ensuring that progressed learners were assisted. Three principals perceived the designing and implementation of extra classes as benefitting the progressed learners. According to Wekesa (2018), providing progressed learners with increased learning opportunities assisted them to improve their academic performance. The Management Tool Kit (MTK) specifies that for any intervention programme to be successful learners needed to be grouped according to their areas of weaknesses (Smokoska, 2020). All four principals asserted that the expanded learning opportunity was provided in their schools even though there were challenges regarding the provision of it. One principal out of four shared that the offering of extra classes in the form of the intervention programme was a huge challenge in their school since educators were not obliged to do it. The challenge that was revealed by the principals that educators were not obliged to provide the expanded opportunity was what makes this strategy negatively ripple effect during the process of policy implementation. The challenge of policy implementation emerging in this study could be better understood when it was viewed with the lens of the SLB's theory (Lipsky, 2010).

4.5.3 The supervised compulsory afternoon study classes

Principals averred that there were afternoon classes that were very much effective in assisting the school improved progressed learners' academic life. All four principals agreed that the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes were a strategy that was implemented to try and mitigate the challenges brought by the implementation of LPP. Principals went on to elucidate how they used supervised compulsory afternoon study classes to assist progressed learners to improve academically; they asserted that giving learners a chance to study at school assisted them to get into grips with the work done during the day. Giving the learners a chance to study at school was very much important since other learners did not have a place to study at home. This was what Mr. Mhluhlu had to say:

> *What we noticed at school as the main cause of our learner's failure was that they were not studying at home. Since we introduced compulsory supervised afternoon study classes, we began to see an improvement in the number of progressed learners who are doing well academically. We are still trying to encourage our learners to honour the afternoon study classes unsupervised* **(Mr. Mhluhlu).**

Mr. Thatha echoed similar sentiments to Mr. Mhluhlu by saying that:

There is no other effective tool that we are using here at school to assist progressed learners to improve academically except the supervised afternoon study classes. Most of our progressed learners have learned that studying is the only recipe they need to improve themselves academically **(Mr. Thatha).**

The data suggested that schools and teachers should not assume that learners can on their own do schoolwork unsupervised. The participants expressed a strong belief that teachers should set aside time for them to do work, and that is why they have set aside time for the learners to study after teaching time is over. Mr. Ceza expressed the following:

Providing our learners with time in the afternoon to study has produced a lot of good results. Most of our learners in their homes do not have a separate place they could use for studying alone. Compulsory supervised afternoon study classes assist progressed learners to join study groups that assist them to improve academically **(Mr. Ceza).**

Supervised compulsory afternoon study classes have just become a joke since there is always noise in them. Progressed learners disturb other learners who are studying by walking up and down the school corridors. This study is more strenuous to the people who are supervising it. Mr. Mthobeni lamented:

Ayi----Ayi !!! my brother. Ever since the progressed learners became part of the afternoon study classes, they have become so noisy and a serious headache to the person who is supervising them. I do not enjoy supervising them anymore since you are always fighting with the progressed learners who cannot stay inside the classroom. Afternoon study classes man have become a serious joke and the situation is getting worse on daily basis **(Mr. Mthobeni).**

It was quite interesting what emerged from the data that was generated from the principals. Principals maintained that the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes were used to reduce the challenges created by the implementation of the policy in their schools. Three principals out of four seemed to share a converging view regarding the supervised compulsory afternoon study. The three principals revealed that the compulsory supervised afternoon study was very much effective in assisting learners to improve academically. Progressed learners

needed to be given more time to study their schoolwork so that they could improve their performance academically (Herman & Reinke, 2017). However, there was one principal who shared a challenge regarding the supervised compulsory afternoon study for learners. The principal perceived it as a waste of time since there was an increase in the number of progressed learners in it. The principal alluded to chaos and noise that was ever-present in the afternoon study lately. According to Hachem and Mayor (2019), for learners to effectively study without making noise or chaos they needed to be monitored to reduce unnecessary chaos from occurring. The presence of chaos and noise in the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes served as a wave that caused the strategy to ripple effect negatively when the policy was implemented. The SLB theory was very much effective when it came to exposing any challenges associated with the implementation of any public policy (Lipsky, 1980).

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter's brief problem statement pointed out that what was articulated by the policy seemed to have ripple effects during the policy implementation phase. The policy stated that progressed learners should be given all the academic support they deserved in the next grade, and this is not happening which resulted in the occurrence of negative ripple effecting of the policy. The findings in this chapter showed that progressed learners were not given the attention they deserved to improve themselves academically. Educators found it was difficult to assist the progressed learners since there was no time set aside for progressed learners to be assisted. The huge number of learners who need academic support was too big making it difficult for educators to assist them. This means that if progressed learners could be assisted academically, there would be lesser unintended consequences being experienced in schools. The following chapter provided the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with data presentation and discussions. The discussion was arranged into themes and subthemes that emerged from analysing data. This final chapter provides the summary of the study and using the research questions as headings, presents and discusses conclusions of the study. Drawing from the conclusions, I made a few recommendations directed at relevant stakeholders.

5.2 Summary of the study

The study sought to understand the perspectives of four secondary school principals regarding the implementation of the LPP. In the first chapter, I had provided the rationale for the study with the focus on gaining deeper experiences from school principals. The research questions that guided this study were:

- What were the perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?

- How did principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in secondary schools in the FET Phase?

After stating the research question in the first chapter, the literature review chapter (Chapter Two), had outline what scholars said locally and internationally about this important issue of learner progression. The review of literature indicated that automatic learner progression was a universal phenomenon, and also that the challenges that this phenomenon and a policy adopted to guide the process of automatic progression of learners had similar challenges across the world. Towards the end of this chapter, I presented Street-Level Bureaucracy theory as a framework to be used to analyse the implementation of Learner Progression Policy. After reviewing literature, from national and international perspectives, I then discussed in detail the research and methodology adopted for the study. The methodology chapter discussed the qualitative approach and the used of case study methodology. I highlighted that all the issues

such as methodology, sampling techniques, data generation methods and analysis techniques were aligned with the research paradigm adopted for the study. Interpretive research paradigm had been adopted and all research processes had to be consistent with this paradigm. The fourth chapter constituted a core of the study because this was where the findings were discussed, and without the findings being presented and discussed, there was no way I would find out how the principals implemented Learner Progression Policy in their schools and what ripple effects they associated with this policy. This chapter was followed by Chapter Five which presents and discusses the conclusions and makes recommendations

5.3 Conclusions

Gleaned from the study findings, conclusions were drawn in the context of the study's aims, objectives, and critical questions.

5.3.1 What are the perspectives of secondary school principals about the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP on teaching and learning in the FET Phase?

School principals had a responsibility to ensure that the LPP was properly implemented so that learners who did not meet the requirements for a minimum promotion benefit from it. Therefore, it was important for me to note that all four participants expressed extreme awareness of the role they should play in terms of policy implementation. They were conscious of the fact that the policy must be implemented despite several challenges and difficulties that their respective schools faced. The findings have also indicated that the principals' experiences and perspectives were dominated by the challenges that they associated with implementing the LPP in secondary schools. Principals confirmed that their schools encountered several challenges concerning the policy implementation, which created a challenge and difficulties for them in attaining the desired results.

One major challenge was the overcrowding of learners' classrooms. Overcrowding of learners' classrooms was a serious challenge since educators cannot deliver quality education which would assist progressed learners to catch up with the other learners easily. Overcrowding of learners' classrooms forced the learners to occupy desks in a group which made it difficult for an educator to maintain quality assessment standards. The challenge of overcrowding of

learners' classrooms could not be easily resolved since the norms and standards were not enough to help schools overcome this challenge. The principals claimed that overcrowding of learners' classrooms created a challenge of uncontrollable noise. The huge number of learners in one class established a challenge for educators to control noise inside the classroom. Principals pointed to a few causes of uncontrollable noise occurring such as the poor classroom management skills on the side of the educator. I must declare at this point that, although overcrowding was raised by some participants as related to the policy, I had extreme difficulty understanding the connection between the two. I can understand if there was a situation where the system was clogged for example in situations where more learners were not progressed while many learners from the lower grades were progressed through this policy and the two groups met in one grade. Otherwise, if all peers progressed to the next grade, that should be a normal course of events. Therefore, overcrowding should be attributed to other factors other than the LPP. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the view that there was no single true social reality, and the realities of the participants receive priority in a study such as this.

The findings had also indicated that principals identified other factors as contributing to classroom management challenges. Some principals alluded to the educators' failure in stamping authority over the learners in a classroom during teaching and learning. Whilst principals claimed that educators lacked the necessary classroom management skills, cases of the escalation of ill-disciplined learners were revealed. The challenge of the lack of individual learner attention was also emphasised by the principals. These challenges brought about educators' demotivation which negatively affected the achievement of quality teaching and learning. Drawing from these findings, I could conclude that some of the classroom management challenges highlighted in this study had less to do with the Learner Progression Policy implementation, but more to do with other challenges relating to classroom management skills and experience.

5.3.2 How do principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP in secondary schools in the FET Phase?

The findings had revealed that the principals applied a number of strategies to mitigate the negative ripple effects associated with the implementation of the LPP in secondary schools in the FET Phase. The strategies that they implemented included the promotion of parental involvement in the education life of their children that had been progressed. Principals and the

SMT planned to increase progressed learners' parental involvement in their learners' education. Some of the strategies that principals used involve having all the progressed learners' parents' contact numbers. Parents were also given the principal's and subject educators' numbers to increase the level of communication between the parents and educators. Principals used What's App group chat as a method of cascading messages quickly to the progressed learners' parents. The What's App group chat was used to post any relevant information that needed to be forwarded to the parents. The What's App group chat assisted to inform learners' parents about the planned parental meetings with the School Governing Body, dates for assessments, tasks to be submitted.

Principals also utilised the Parent's Open Days to communicate with the progressed learners' parents about their academic progress at school. Principals perceived parental involvement as one of the strategies that were very effective in trying to improve the progressed learners' performance. The involvement of progressed learners' parents only was not enough but principals used the expanded learning opportunities.

Principals also engaged in expanded learning opportunities in the form of morning classes and Saturday extra classes, and also supervised compulsory afternoon study classes. Principals maintained that their schools had got planned programmes for progressed learners to be assisted with their attainment. Schools had got planned morning timetables that were used to increase the contact time in the Gateway subjects. In addition to morning classes, principals alluded that there were compulsory Saturday classes that were conducted in their schools. Morning classes and extra classes were done on Saturdays had been very effective in addressing progressed learners' academic achievements. Another strategy that had proven to be effective in reducing the ripple effects of the LPP implementation was the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes. Principals stated that the supervised compulsory afternoon study classes served as the most powerful tool in assisting progressed learners to improve their academic performance. In this regard, it was evident that principals were aware and very much sensitive to the negative ripple effects of the implementation of LPP.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were proposed and were informed by the conclusions presented above.

5.4.1 Involvement of learners' parents as part of the Learner Progression Policy implementation phase at school

The findings had shown that the participants placed high value in the involvement of parents in the learning of their children, especially the beneficiaries of LPP. The DBE in various policy documents advocated parental participation in schooling. Therefore, it would be unfair to expect the DBE to make any more policy prescriptions in this regard. It was comforting for me to find that the participants tried innovative ways of bringing parents on board in terms of their active involvement in the business of their children's learning processes. Therefore, I recommend that principals needed to strengthen their efforts of encouraging parents to be involved, particularly in the process of implementing LPP at school. It was the participants themselves that acknowledged the folly of only involving parents when interventions programmes were implemented. They should be involved quite early, before the learners actually failed to meet the minimum requirements for normal progress to the next grade.

5.5 Implication for further research

This study was conducted on four secondary schools. The study only focused on the four secondary school principals. Therefore, the findings did not reflect the broad secondary school community. Thus, further research was recommended on the ripple effects of implementing the LPP in secondary schools. Notwithstanding this, the findings from this study had various contexts for the ripple effects of the implementation of the LPP and how the negative ripple effects were mitigated at the school level. In short, more research tackling various dimensions of this phenomenon should be undertaken.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter began by reflecting on the previous chapter's data presentation and discussion of the findings. Secondly, it presented the summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations. The recommendations were done in line with the conclusions made based on the findings. The study had indicted a need for further research on this important phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE DHET

217080281

Z1308/5

Induna Place

Umlazi township

4066

Head of the Department

Department of Higher Education and Training

Private Bag X 174

Pretoria

0001

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred Ngema, a Masters's student in the school of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree

fulfillment, I am required to conduct research, I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct this research in four secondary schools under your jurisdiction in KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my study is The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: perspectives of secondary school principals.

This study aims to explore the perspectives of secondary school principals concerning the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy. The planned study will focus on secondary school principals. The study will use online semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 25—30 minutes at times convenient to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

You may contact my supervisors, UKZN Research Office, or me should you have any queries or questions:

Supervisors:

Dr. S D Bayeni

Tel: 031 2603534

Cell: 065 684 1007

E-mail: Bayeni@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

HSSREC-Ethics

Tel: 031 2608350

E-mail: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

converis@ukzn.coneris.clariv

My contact number:

Cell: 073 525 9121

E-mail: zwengema5@gmail.com

217080281

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Ngema S Z W (Mr)

███████████

APPENDIX B: Permission letter to secondary school principals

217080281   Z1308/5

                                                                    Induna Place

                                                                    Umlazi Township

                                                                    4066

The principal

--------------- secondary school

Isipingo

4110

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Mt name is Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred Ngema, a master's student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood campus). As part of degree fulfillment, I am required to conduct research, I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct this research at your

school. The title of my study is The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: perspectives of secondary school principals.

This study aims to explore the perspectives of secondary school principals concerning the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy, To examine the unintended consequences of implementing the Learner Progression Policy in secondary schools. The planned study will focus on principals. The study will use online semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 25---30 minutes at times convenient to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

. There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process.

. All the responses, observations, and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality.

. Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and the names of the participants.

. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

. Participants purposively selected to participate in this study will be contacted well in advance for interviews.

. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interviews.

You may contact my supervisors, UKZN Research Office, or me should you have any queries or questions.

Supervisors:

Dr. S D Bayeni

Tel: 031 2603534

Cell: 065 684 1007

E-mail: Bayeni@ukzn.ac.za

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HSSREC-Ethics

Tel: 031 2608350

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converis@ukzn.coneris.clariv

My contact number:

Cell: 073 525 9121

E-mail: zwengema5@gmail.com

217080281

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Ngema S Z W (Mr)

██████████

DETACH AND RETURN

Declaration

I ----------------------------------(Full names of the principal) of -------------------------------(School name) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures for the study: The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: perspectives of secondary school principals. I have received, read, and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily for the school to be part of the study, I understand that the school is at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should the school so desire.

I agree/ do not agree with the use of audio recording devices.

Signature of the school principal   Date:

School stamp

Thanking you in advance.

Ngema Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred

███████████

APPENDIX C: Permission letter to participants

217080281   Z1308/5

Induna Place

Umlazi Township

4066

The school principal

Durban

Isipingo

4110

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH

I am currently a master's student in Education Leadership, Management, and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am presently engaged in a research study that is aimed at exploring the perspectives of secondary school principals concerning the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy in the FET phase. The title of my study is

The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: perspective of secondary school principals. I would very much like to conduct the study on your school because I believe that you can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of knowledge on this concept.

This study aims to examine the unintended consequences of implementing the Learner Progression Policy in secondary schools and how the principals deal with the ripple effects associated with the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy in secondary schools. The planned study will focus on secondary principals. The study will use online, semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals. The study will use online, semi-structured interviews with secondary school principals. You (participants) will be interviewed for approximately 25---30 minutes at times convenient to you which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that you (participants) may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if you so wish without incurring any penalties.

Your identity in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I undertake to uphold your autonomy as the participant. You will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to yourself. However, you will be asked to complete a consent form. In your interest, feedback will be given to you during and at the end of the study.

You may contact my supervisors, UKZN Research Office, or me should you have any queries or questions.

Supervisors:

Dr. S D Bayeni

Tel: 031 2603534

Cell: 065 684 1007

E-mail: Bayeni@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

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converis@ukzn.coneris.clariv

My contact number:

Cell: 073 525 9121

E-mail: zwengema5@gmail.com

217080281

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Ngema S Z W (Mr)

███████████

DETACH AND RETURN

Declaration

I --------------------------------(Full names of the participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures for the study. The ripple effects of the implementation of the Learner Progression Policy: perspectives of secondary school principals. I have received, read, and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I desire.

I agree/ do not agree with the use of an audio recording device.

Signature of the school principal   Date:

School stamp

Thanking you in advance.

Ngema Sithembiso Zwelihle Wilfred

█████████

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Independent research questions

1) Can you briefly explain what is the first thing that you normally do on daily basis when you arrive at work?

2) How do you manage to keep your learners attending your lessons and actively involved during teaching and learning daily?

3) Which are the things that you do which are not implemented by other educators that keeps your learners motivated to learn?

4) Can you briefly explain what is it that keeps you motivated to do your work exceptionally well?

5) What are the positive and negative experiences that you have encountered in the process of trying to teach for quality in this deprived situation?

6) How do you deal with learners who are not disciplined in your classroom whenever you are teaching?

7) How do you deal with learners who do not do their homework and classroom activities?

8) How do you manage to organise resources that will be used during teaching and learning?

9) How do you deal with the issue of learners who are constantly underperforming in your subject?

10) Are there any challenges that you have encountered from other educators and the School Management Team?

11) Which are the other challenges that you encounter in the process of trying to teach for quality in this deprived situation?

12) Which strategies do you use to get support from the learners in this deprived situation?

13) Which are the strategies that you use to get the learners parents involved in their education?

14) Which strategies do you use to get support from the School Management Team?

15) Are there any other strategies that you have formulated personally that helps you to teach for quality in a deprived context?

APPENDIX E: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE