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The implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools of the Limpopo province in South Africa

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Globally, policy implementation in the education system has been found to be a challenging area of development. The South African education system is no exception to the ineffective implementation of policies. For example, in South Africa, the progression policy was introduced by the Department of Education in 2013 for the purpose of minimising school drop-out rates. It was intended particularly for learners who had been retained for more than 4 years in a phase. However, progressed learners have been said to be contributing to the decline of Grade 12 national results in 2015 and 2016. We argue that due procedures in the implementation of this policy could have affected the performance of progressed learners, and in turn the overall matriculation results. A qualitative approach was followed and a descriptive case study design was adopted in the study reported on here. Data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews from 2 secondary schools in the Dimamo circuit, Limpopo province. We found that the progression policy was not implemented according to the stipulations. Communication breakdown, negative teacher attitude, overcrowded classrooms, a lack of knowledge and support were found to be contributory factors in the ineffective implementation of the policy.

Keywords: implementation; progression policy; secondary schools

Introduction and Background

Policies in the education system across the world are developed to address educational challenges, but the implementation of these policies remains a challenge. In countries such as Belgium (Tuytens & Devos, 2014), the United States of America (McCarthy, Wiener & Soodak, 2012) and Kenya (Abuya, Admassu, Ngware, Onsomu & Oketch, 2015), the implementation of different policies is a challenge. Nevertheless, it is difficult to cite evidence on whether the implementation of the said policies was effective or not. The poor implementation of policies also remains a challenge in the South African education system. For instance, Moodley (2013) found that teachers experienced challenges in the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) because they were not trained. Moreover, there was no implementation of safe schools and child-friendly school programmes in the Limpopo province (Mabasa, 2013). The studies mentioned above highlight problems on the implementation of policies which need to be addressed.

Like other policies, the progression policy was formulated to reduce school drop-out rates globally. However, the ineffective implementation of this policy defeats its intention. For instance, the expected shift on students' operational skills did not occur during the implementation of the progression policy in Estonia (Soobard, Ranniekmäe & Reiska, 2015). Furthermore, a study conducted in Madagascar found that the implementation of the progression policy was ineffective because only half of the parents interacted with their children's teachers (Glick, Rajemison, Ravelo, Razakamanatsoa, Raveloarison & Sahn, 2005). The ineffective implementation of the progression policy could defeat the education system's intention to remedy the high drop-out rates of learners in schools. This ineffective implementation needs to be investigated in order to establish how schools implement the progression policy.

As in other countries, attempts were made in South Africa to remedy the unnecessary drop-out of learners in schools. This was done through the formation of the progression policy. This policy was meant for learners who had been retained for more than 4 years in a phase (Department of Basic Education [DBE], Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2012). The progression policy was introduced in 2013 and was fully implemented in 2015. However, the 2015 Grade 12 results dropped in comparison to the 2014 results (DBE, RSA, 2016). Subsequently, the 2016 national Grade 12 results showed an improvement of 1.8% compared to 2015 (DBE, RSA, 2017). While this was the case, the Grade 12 result in the Limpopo province indicated a decline for 2 consecutive years, that is 2015 and 2016 compared to 2014 (DBE, RSA, 2016, 2017). Furthermore, the progressed learners were cited to be among the contributing factors to the decline of the Grade 12 results.

Perhaps the reason for the progression policy not yielding positive results thus far was because the recommended phase of implementation was not followed. The ineffective implementation of the progression policy means that the Grade 12 results may continue to drop, while more learners remain in the system. Eventually, such learners are more likely to add to the school drop-out rates. It is against this background that we sought to describe the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools in the Dimamo circuit,

Limpopo province. The drop in the Grade 12 results in 2015 and 2016 compared to 2014, prompted us to focus on those learners who were progressed from Grade 11 to 12.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how the progression policy was implemented in secondary schools in relation to the decline in the 2015 and 2016 Grade 12 results compared to those of 2014.

Research Questions

The questions that defined the research problem were:

- How are consultation measures with teachers, progressed learners and parents carried out in secondary schools?
- How do parents fulfil their role as final decision-makers in the implementation of the progression policy?
- What curriculum support and monitoring do secondary schools provide progressed learners?

Literature Review

The literature review points to the challenges of policy implementation in general, the implementation of the progression policy, and the comparison of the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Grade 12 results in the Limpopo province of South Africa. These challenges could defeat the intentions of the progression policy. The slow pace of the implementation of the teacher evaluation policy in Belgium led to frustrations in other schools and in turn to the ineffective implementation of the policy (Tuytens & Devos, 2014). A European study on issues of education policy implementation highlights that education stakeholders have different attitudes that might lead to conflict among education providers and education users (Katiliute, 2005). Sánchez, Hale, Andrews, Cruz, Bettencourt, Wexler and Halasan (2014) found that there was no consistency regarding physical and nutritional policies in the implementation of school wellness policies.

The implementation of inclusion policies in public high schools in Kenya was not successful because of factors that were excluded during the implementation process (McCarthy et al., 2012). There were challenges in the implementation of the language-in-education policy in Botswana because language barriers and different lifestyles were not considered in the implementation process (Mokibelo, 2016). Different studies reveal that there is a gap between the formulation and the implementation of policies which lead to the ineffective implementation thereof. However, there is no evidence of the description of how such policies were implemented. Perhaps the unavailable evidence questions the extent to which various schools are ready to implement change (Weiner, 2009).

In South Africa, the poor implementation of policies within the education system is also a challenge. For example, the inclusive education policy is hampered by teachers' lack of skills and knowledge to address the diverse needs of learners (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012). School governors are facing challenges in implementing their roles and responsibilities due to the blame game among themselves (Xaba, 2011). The implementation of the life orientation programmes in schools remain a challenge because teachers are not well trained (Prinsloo, 2007). Nevertheless, the said studies indicate the ineffective implementation of policies but not the process of the implementation itself.

Literature divulges that the inclusion of teachers in the development of a policy is an important aspect that has to be attended to rather than involving them during the implementation process. For instance, Werts and Brewer (2015) point out that the application of a policy while overlooking the lived experiences of teachers increases the ineffective implementation of such policy. This view aligns with the idea that successful implementation of school-wellness policies depends on community involvement (Sánchez et al., 2014). However, the study did not assess the implementation successes or challenges for individual policies, but for policies in general. We concur with the notion of teacher involvement in policy formulation as teachers may feel consulted during the process rather than simply being expected to implement a policy that was imposed on them. Perhaps, teacher involvement could lead to greater commitment to the effective implementation thereof, as teachers might feel more invested in the implementation of a policy to which they contributed (Weiner, 2009).

The progression policy was introduced for the first time in 2013 with the intention of minimising unnecessary school drop-out rates (DBE, RSA, 2012). The policy suggests that various consultation measures need to be carried out with teachers, parents and learners during the implementation process (DBE, RSA, 2015a). Moreover, parents/guardians of identified learners are said to be final decision-makers of whether a learner can be progressed or not. The guideline for the implementation of promotion and progression requirements for Grades 10 to 12 (DBE, RSA, 2015a) also stipulates that schools must offer support and monitor progress of the learners. However, the progression policy was blamed for the decline in the Grade 12 results of schools. As a result, a need existed to describe how secondary schools addressed each stipulation in the process of the implementation of the progression policy.

Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017) argue that progressed learners appeared to have experienced difficulties in attaining their Grade 12

certificates because they did not cope. As a result, the intention of the progression policy, which was to allow learners to enter Grade 12 and graduate from it, was defeated. This means that most learners were more likely to fail along the way, resulting in them ultimately dropping out of the system. In a study conducted on the crisis of decolonising education, Musitha and Mafukata (2018) highlight that the progression policy can only be beneficial to the progressed learners if they were provided with favourable learning environments, as that could enable such learners to succeed in the subjects that they had failed.

It is worth noting that progressed learners are allowed multiple examination opportunities (MEO) where they can register to write their Grade 12 exam over a period of 2 years (DBE, RSA, 2015b). However, this means that such learners need to study from home while they wait to write the remaining subjects in the following exam. Furthermore, there is no guarantee of the motivation to study and register for the remaining subjects, especially because these are learners who did not meet the Grade 11 promotion requirements.

In reflecting on the intention of the progression policy, there is a need to compare the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Grade 12 results in order to describe the implementation of the policy. Records show that the 2015 Grade 12 results declined nationally in comparison to the 2014 results (DBE, RSA, 2016). In 2014, the results showed a 75.8% pass rate, and in 2015, the pass rate dropped to 70.7%. This was a decline of 5.1%. Although the Grade 12 results dropped, the records show that without the result of progressed learners being included, the results could have been 74.1% (DBE, RSA, 2016). Subsequently, the 2016 Grade 12 results improved by 1.8% to 72.5% as compared to 2015 (DBE, RSA, 2017). The 2016 Grade 12 results, with progressed learners excluded, was 76.2% (DBE, RSA, 2017). The improved results with the exclusion of progressed learners point to the need to describe the implementation process of the progression policy.

The Grade 12 performance in the Limpopo province showed a decline in 2015 (65.9%) and 2016 (62.5%) compared to 2014 (DBE, RSA, 2016, 2017). Nonetheless, the performance could have been much better had the results of the progressed learners been excluded – 71.5% and 68.2% respectively (DBE, RSA, 2016, 2017). The poor implementation of the progression policy could have contributed to the decline in the Grade 12 results, as the results excluding those of the progressed learners' results seemed to be positive. Hence the need to describe the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools of the Limpopo province became clear.

Theoretical Framework

In the study we employed Weiner's (2009) theory of organisational readiness for change. According to this theory, readiness for change refers to organisational members' shared decision to implement change (change commitment) and shared beliefs in their collective capability to do so (change efficacy). This theory assumes that change varies as a function of how much organisational members value change. For schools to effectively implement the progression policy (change), teachers, parents and learners must be committed to the implementation process. That is, all stakeholders of the school must be willing and able to pursue the course of action. Change valence is drawn from the motivation theory that says that the more an organisation values the change, the more it will want to implement it (Weiner, 2009). Progressed learners might not cope with the requirements of the next class considering the fact that they did not meet that of the previous class. As a result, the implementation of the progression is described in relation to the commitment and capability of a specific school, considering that schools vary. And, a particular education policy might be implemented differently in different schools in the same province. Weiner (2009) further proposes that change efficacy is drawn from the social cognitive theory, which is a function of organisational members' cognitive appraisal of the three key determinants of implementation capability, that is task demands, resource availability and situational factors. Therefore, the implementation of the progression policy is described through the available key determinants for a particular school to address the academic challenges that the progressed learners might come across.

Methodology

This study was placed within the interpretivist paradigm and we adopted the qualitative research methodology (Yin, 2011). We attempted to make meaning of how secondary schools in the Dimamo circuit implemented the progression policy. We employed a descriptive case study design (Yin, 2011), which enabled us to describe teachers', parents' and progressed learners' views on the implementation of the progression policy. The description enabled us to establish the relationship between the development of the progression policy and the actual implementation (Rule & Vaughn, 2011).

Research Procedures

Data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews from the two selected schools in the Capricorn district of the Dimamo

circuit of the Limpopo province. The documents served as supporting data to provide a background and verify the details that were provided in the interview process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the study we focused on the progression of learners from Grade 11 to Grade 12 because we were intrigued by the decline in the Grade 12 results in the same year that the progression policy was fully implemented in schools.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected purposively because we identified those that had the capacity to provide us with relevant information on the implementation of the progression policy (Yin, 2011). We purposively selected 12 participants from two schools in the Dimamo circuit. The selected participants were two teachers who taught Grade 12 learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) band, two learners who were progressed from Grade 11 to Grade 12 and still in school, as well as two parents of the children who were progressed from Grade 11 to Grade 12 in each of the two schools. The FET phase teachers had between 3 and 27 years' teaching experience. The parent participants were selected by virtue of their children being identified as progressed learner participants. This was done in order to match a progressed learner with their own parents or guardians.

Ethical Issues

Throughout the process, we recognised the ethical issues of the research; this involved obtaining an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo before commencing with the study. Furthermore, permission to conduct a study in schools was secured from the Limpopo Department of Education, circuit and the individual schools. In the request we explained the purpose of the study and clearly stated that the study was voluntary. The participants were requested to sign consent forms before the interviews to show their understanding of the purpose and agreement to participation. Parent participants were visited through schools to explain the purpose as well as signing of the consent forms. The selected schools were labelled as School A and B, while the selected participants were assigned codes: T for teachers, PL for progressed learners and P for parents. This was done to ensure anonymity of the participants (Yin, 2011). We offered support and an opportunity to stop or continue when emotions were provoked by some of the sensitive questions. Lastly, we did not amend participants' responses to our advantage but presented their opinions as they were given.

Data Analysis

Document analysis was done through Bowen's (2009) model. We skim read the requested

documents in order to get the overall picture. We also did a thorough examination of each document in order to make sense of the implementation process. This was done in order to gain understanding of the documents. The documents were the 2014 to 2016 Grade 12 results, the progression policy, minutes of meetings, progressed learner profiles, and documents supporting and monitoring PLs.

Data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed through Neuman's (2011) structure of content analysis. We transcribed recorded data, and read transcribed texts in order to obtain an overall and complete impression of the content and context. The abstraction process of coding, where units of meaning were identified and labelled, followed. We assigned codes to specific units. The coding process involved the identification and naming of segments of meaning from the notes and transcripts. Axial coding was done by reviewing and examining the initial codes that were identified. Themes and sub-themes were identified and organised. The selective coding involved the scanning of all codes that were identified for comparison, contrast and the link to the description of the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools (Neuman, 2011).

Findings

The findings of this study reveal a range of components that were categorised as follows.

Findings from the Documents Analysis

The documents analysed included the 2014 to 2016 Grade 12 results, the progression policy, minutes of meetings, progressed learner profiles, and lastly, documents supporting and monitoring progress.

The 2014 to 2016 Grade 12 results

School A indicated a performance of 47.4% in 2014, 37.2% in 2015 and 50% in 2016. This school implemented the progression policy in 2015 only. Although the school underperformed for 3 consecutive years, the 2015 results showed a decline compared to 2014. School A's 2016 results showed some improvement. Perhaps the improvement resulted from the fact that the school did not progress any learners. School B showed a performance of 74.4% in 2014, 88.9% in 2015 and 49.5% in 2016. The school implemented the progression policy in 2016 and the results declined compared to 2014 and 2015. This was probably because the schools had not followed the provision of the progression policy, hence the decline in the Grade 12 performance.

The progression policy

We found that both schools were in possession of the progression policy, and thus used this document as a guide during the implementation process. The

availability of the progression policy in both schools could mean that the schools were ready to implement change. The progression policy serves as a starting point for the implementation of progressions because it clearly articulates the procedures to be followed upon implementation.

Minutes of meetings

With regard to minutes of meetings, we found that there were no minutes specific to the implementation of the progression policy in both schools. This could mean that neither School A nor School B consulted the relevant stakeholders. School A indicated that they made announcements on the implementation of the progression policy during meetings. However, the announcements were not recorded. School B had invitations for special meetings with parents of PLs. However, it was said that parents failed to attend the meetings. Hence, the unavailability of minutes.

Progressed learner profiles

We discovered that School A had learner profiles but some important information like learners' medical conditions and parents' details, were missing. When questioned about the missing information, School A responded that most learners did not provide the relevant information. School B did not have learner profiles; they relied on the school admission book and class registers for the parents' details.

Documents to support and monitor progress

The progression policy states that the School Based Support Teams (SBST) must monitor and report on the progress of learners at risk, referred to as PLs (DBE, RSA, 2015a). School A did not have a SBST. As a result, it was a challenge to access the required documents. The SBST in School B had developed enrichment programmes and kept records of every progressed learner's response to the programmes for quarterly reports to parents. This school had a file containing information needed on how the school monitored and supported progress. The file also contained a report to the district office about the challenges faced during the implementation process.

Findings from the Interviews

Findings from teachers, PLs and their parents were divided into three themes: consultation measures taken during the implementation process, the final decision-making of the implementation process, and lastly, the curriculum support and monitoring of progress.

Lack of adequate consultation

The teacher participants in the two schools under study agreed that they were not consulted during the implementation of the progression policy.

Teachers relied on circulars that were not interpreted, which led to implementation without clear understanding of the policy. T1 in School B said that *"the stipulations of the progression policy were not discussed, we just got information through circulars and that was it, so we were not consulted."*

One of the three parents interviewed mentioned that he was consulted during the implementation of the progression policy. This parent seemed to be familiar with the policy stipulations. The parent (P1 in School A) mentioned the following: *"I was shown the performance of my son and I signed the forms for him to be progressed after some discussions with the principal."*

Progressed learner participants in the schools under study were also consulted. However, they did not know that they would have to register for MEOs. Learner 1 in School A said: *"I did not know that I have to write my exams in halves ... they should have told me when they told me that they will progress me, or at least if they were giving us options."* Learner 1 in School B stressed: *"I was not told every detail during our meeting with teachers, in fact the fact that I am allowed to enter twice doesn't sit me well ... eeh I want to write all the subjects I do and if I fail I want to come to school like any other child."* Although learners were consulted, they were not informed in detail, which resulted in confusion.

Decision on the progression of a learner

We found that three of the parents who were interviewed were not final decision-makers on whether the learners should progress or not. This was seen by a remark from P2 in School B: *"They gave us forms to sign so I can't say that I have decided on my kid's progression."* On that note, parents were of the view that teachers must ensure that learning takes place and should not worry about decisions taken in their absence. P1 in School A argued: *"what will teachers do if we have to do all this work? I have my own personal issues and do not have to go to school regularly. I can only manage to go once in a quarter to check on the performance. They just have to do what they do, I don't have a problem."* One parent decided on the progression of the child, and entered into partnership contracts with the school according to the stipulations of the implementation of the progression policy. P1 in School B said:

Yes, I was told I have to support my child to pass form 5. I also signed the forms to show that I will help him with school work ... I allowed my son to be progressed because he is old and passionate with school and I'm willing to assist him with everything I can.

The two schools complained that parents were not actively involved in the implementation of the

progression policy. T1 in School B had this to say: “we always call parents to discuss burning issues but ... (smiles) they don't come because they think we are wasting their time ... we just do things because the department said so, if we wait for parents we won't survive the pressure we get from the state.” This made it difficult for the teachers and parents to enter into partnership contracts in order to support PLs.

Support and monitoring of progress of learners

Both schools organised additional learning opportunities for PLs. However, parents of PLs did not form part of the support committees. This was supported by T2 in School B: “we go as far as going to fetch children to come to school from their respective home in the presence of their parents.” We found that secondary schools did not offer curriculum support and monitoring of progress. L1 in School A noted: “sometimes we remain alone in school and other learners are troublesome, they distract us, you find that we remained but did not do anything.” Schools also mentioned that the MEO served as a monitoring device and curriculum support system in the implementation of the progression policy. Teachers stressed that the MEO should not be a choice, but a prerequisite. T2 in School B said:

PLs are given an option to modularise after writing a trial exam, which I think we don't have to make them choose. Isn't that these are learners who don't cope? All that has to be done is to tell them to write exams in halves.

Parents highlighted that the MEO dragged learners out of school. PLs might not have the motivation to register for exams only and they stood a chance of losing the opportunity to acquire a Grade 12 certificate. P1 in School A said: “These children will not be able to wait for exams the following year, what will she be doing before she goes for June exams? At least if they say they will allow them to attend the failed subjects.” Some learners were tripped up along the way and lost the motivation to sit for the next exam, resulting in them adding to the number of school drop-outs. The huge number of learners in classrooms and a lack of resources might be contributing to the insufficient support offered to PLs. T1 in School A had this to say:

We don't have resources to do extra lessons, we don't have laboratories for experiments ... we don't have enough textbooks ... eish on the other side we faced with overcrowded classes ... How will I focus on a certain group of learners whilst this affects the whole school?

Learners did not want to modularise as they felt that they wasted time waiting for the following year to complete Matric. Learners indicated that they were well supported and did not see a need to go for modularisation. L1 in school B said: “I am coping well and believe that I will pass this year, I

am going to write a full exam in November. The support I'm getting from my school gives me hope and I also don't want to upset my parents by failing.” Somehow, learners felt that the implementation of the progression policy was taking them away from school.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that there was a flaw in the implementation of the progression policy. This could have had an impact on the performance of PLs, and in turn the overall Grade 12 results. Therefore, such learners were more likely to exit school without a Grade 12 certificate, which defeated the purpose of the progressions policy.

Consultation Measures

We found that there was a flaw in the implementation of the progression policy regarding consultation measures. This results from uncertain conceptualisation of this stipulation which, in turn, had a huge impact on the implementation. Kader (2012) reported a similar finding that educators' lack of understanding on grade progression and promotion policy led to unsuccessful implementation. These findings from the document analysis were in agreement with those from interviews. The unavailability of the progression policy and evidence on how each stipulation was implemented confirmed that teachers and parents were not consulted. Although parents were not consulted, it has come to our attention that teachers were negative towards the implementation of the progression policy. The actual progression policy that was available in schools served as a starting point for the effective implementation, but teachers seemed not to be interested in making sense of this policy. While this was the case, one of the four parents indicated that he was consulted during the implementation of this policy. However, as PLs were also not consulted, this indicated that the consultation measures with stakeholders was insufficient.

Decision-Making

Although stipulated in the progression policy, parents did not take the final decision on the progression of their children. Three of the four parents confirmed that they signed forms, but that they did not decide whether their children should be progressed or not. This was in contradiction with the policy, because signed forms serve as evidence to the decisions taken. Furthermore, the two schools did not have minutes for meetings about the process of implementing the progression policy. However, outdated progressed learner profiles in School B and unavailable profiles agreed with interview responses that indicated that parents were not the final decision-makers on the

implementation of the progression policy. Teachers alluded to the fact that parents did not attend parents' meetings, which was also found by Glick et al. (2005). There seemed to be a communication breakdown between the stakeholders (teachers, parents and PLs) regarding this policy, which negatively affected effective implementation thereof.

Support and Monitoring

The findings of this study reveal that schools did not offer adequate support in the process of the implementation of the progression policy. PLs in School B mentioned that they were supported, which was proven by the enrichment programmes that were developed by the SBST. This finding was inconsistent with those of other studies on this issue. For instance, Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2008) noted various forms of learning support but did not indicate any learning support for PLs. Contrary to responses by PLs, teachers and parents acknowledged that the schools under study did not offer adequate support to PLs. Teachers highlighted the lack of resources and overcrowding as barriers to monitoring and offering curriculum support to PLs. Consistent with Musitha and Mafukata (2018), a lack of resources inhibits flexible curriculum support because teachers might not be creative and innovative enough to offer support to PLs.

Parents indicated their own responsibilities and lack of knowledge as obstacles. This contradicts the finding that non-educational services contribute towards the improvement of quality and effective educational activities (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). However, this does not directly link to curriculum support but to educational activities in general. Documents used to monitor and offer curriculum support in one school portrayed inconsistency with teachers' and parents' responses indicating that PLs were not supported. Nevertheless, there was agreement between the contents of documents and learners' responses regarding monitoring and curriculum support.

We found that secondary schools in Dimamo circuit tried to offer curriculum support and to monitor progress during the implementation of the progression policy. However, the implementation of this stipulation differed between the two schools. For instance, the two secondary schools organised learning opportunities, but the monitoring of such opportunities remained a challenge. Teachers, PLs and parents blamed each other for non-accomplishment of the implementation process. This could mean that secondary schools were not ready to implement change due to situational factors.

Overcrowded classrooms probably distract from the flow of teaching and learning, which then prohibits sufficient support. This finding concurs

with that of Knight (2010) in that a lack of resources remains an obstacle to learning. Learning and teaching material also contribute to the ineffective implementation of the progression policy. Rammala (2009) is of the view that a lack of learning and teaching materials prohibits the effective running of the day-to-day activities in schools. While this is the case, secondary schools complain that parents do not support their children in the learning process. This finding corresponds with Dikgale's (2012) finding that parents do not encourage learners to attend school. This could mean that PLs do not get sufficient curriculum support. Such learners' progress is not monitored, which brings us to the issue of multiple examinations.

While teachers feel that MEO must be a prerequisite, PLs and parents were of the opinion that the MEO took learners away from school. This contradiction could have contributed to the ineffective implementation of the progression policy. Parents assumed that learners might lose motivation and not register for the next exam. Concurring with Weiner (2009), PLs thought that they were ready to write full exams with the support that they got from schools. Maybe teachers have developed a negative attitude towards the policy because they were not part of its development. The effective implementation of the progression policy could depend on positive attitudes of stakeholders, which could be triggered through involvement during the formulation of the policy.

Overview of the Findings

The participants in the study were of the view that the implementation of the progression policy was a challenge that created conflict among stakeholders. They were aware that if the progression policy was implemented according to its stipulations, schools were more likely to produce better results. However, teachers' views with regard to the implementation of the progression policy revealed that workshops were required. This was because stakeholders (i.e., teachers, PLs and parents) did not understand the progression policy. Secondly, the responsibility for the implementation of the policy was shifted to the South African School and Administration Management System committee. Thirdly, stakeholders' lack of understanding lead to negative attitude towards effective implementation of the progression policy.

Teachers articulated that they were unable to monitor the implementation of the progression policy due to overcrowded classes, heavy workload, limited resources and learner behaviour. As a result, they regarded the progression policy as an addition to challenges they had already faced in schools. The incapability to monitor the process of implementation contradicted with the Theory of

Organisational Readiness for Change (Weiner, 2009). Perhaps, teacher attitudes towards change (learner progression) have implications for their commitment to implementation.

Some of the PLs stated that schools implemented the progression policy effectively; however, they did not get the full support from some educators and the parents at home. Learners were committed to the implementation of the progression policy (change commitment), however, they were unable to pursue the course of action as the implementation of the progression policy required a joint capability from all stakeholders of the organisation (Weiner, 2009).

Three of the four parents interviewed admitted that parental involvement was not implemented as stipulated. As a result, they did not know what was expected of them during the implementation of the progression policy. Furthermore, they did not know how to support their children academically. Contrary to Weiner's (2009) key determinants of implementation capability, the situational factors such as poor attendance of school meetings, child-headed families, and a lack of knowledge about the type of support to be offered to learners lead to the ineffective implementation of the progression policy.

Implications of the Study

There are three implications of the study. Firstly, teachers should be involved in the formulation of policies rather than being expected to simply implement new policies. Teachers as end users of policies should be involved during the development process so that implementation could be simplified. Secondly, stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners) require sufficient preparation for the implementation of new policies. This might clarify misunderstandings and develop a positive attitude towards implementation. Thirdly, policy developers should liaise with schools in order to check the possibility of implementation across the board. This must also be monitored because schools experience different challenges and address them differently, even though the policies are the same.

Conclusion

Although the progression policy was, among others, cited as a contributing factor for the decline of the 2015 and 2016 Grade 12 results, we conducted this study in Limpopo in response to the issues raised at national level regarding the progression policy. The study revealed that there was a flaw in the implementation of the progression policy in secondary schools of the Dimamo circuit in Limpopo. Similar studies can be conducted to establish the state of affairs in other provinces. The implementation of this policy remains a complex process that requires full attention. Stakeholders (teachers, parents and PLs) in the progression of

learners must be part of the process (development and implementation) for effective implementation. The school as an organisation needs to be prepared to implement change. Sufficient resources, enrichment programmes for PLs, a willingness to implement change, adequate support and communication among stakeholders are some of the requirements for the effective implementation of the progression policy (Weiner, 2009).

The effective implementation of the progression policy depends on the procedural implementation of each stipulation because the one stipulation informs the implementation of the second.

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Authors' Contributions

ML wrote the manuscript with the support of MC. MC contributed to the study conception and design. ML conducted interviews and provided data for the manuscript. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

Notes

- i. This article is based on the master's dissertation of Makobo Mogale.
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- iii. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
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