

The difference between failure and success: barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase of a school in KwaZulu-Natal.

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Declaration

I, Janet Lamont George, declare that:

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Student's signature

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my husband and mother – for their guidance, support, understanding and love.

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I wish to express my thanks to the following people who helped to make the completion of this research possible:

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Abstract

Academic underperformance, grade repetition, and subsequent non-completion of school are educational challenges that are not indigenous to South Africa. Progression (or social promotion), where a learner is promoted to a subsequent grade even though the learner may not have fulfilled the requirements for promotion, is one strategy that has been used in education systems worldwide to address these kinds of educational challenges. Within the South African context, even though the progression policy mandates that schools provide support measures and interventions targeting progressed learners, a high proportion of progressed learners still end up failing to complete school. The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the barriers and facilitators facing progressed learners, the influence of key role players, and aims to identify additional support initiatives, which could potentially aid in improving academic outcomes of progressed learners. Current literature in the South African context has not focused on the actual support measures being implemented to address progressed learners' barriers to learning. Therefore, this study provides some insight into the type of support measures employed by schools, and therefore assists in understanding the impact thereof and guides future recommendations of effective support measures. This was a qualitative study drawing on the perspectives of educators and progressed learners on how contexts and relationships with key role players impact on academic performance of progressed learners. The findings of the study illustrate that interventions provided for progressed learners typically only focus on the academic curriculum. Ideally, support measures should be multitiered and structured to the specific needs of individual learners across the classroom, home and community setting. Key findings of this research suggest that training on identifying learning barriers will need to be a priority of the Department of Basic Education and schools. Such identification will allow learning barriers to be addressed adequately by educators and likely lead to less learners requiring progression.

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Abbreviations

DOE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
MEO	Modular Examination Opportunity
NSC	National Senior Certificate
US	United States
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview of chapter

The cost of failing to complete school has direct consequences for an individual's prospects of entering the labour market (Spaull, 2014). Although a global phenomenon, in a country with a current unemployment rate of 38.5% (Webster, 2019), South African learners who do not complete school (i.e., Grade 12/matric) are likely to contribute to this unemployment rate. Moreover, the high repetition rates in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase of South African schooling are concerning given the value attached to it in determining post-schooling outcomes and labour market access (Kika & Kotze, 2018). Moses, van der Berg, and Rich (2017) also attribute the completion of Grade 12 and access to higher education, as directly related to employment outcome. They highlight that poor academic results are associated with greater prospects for unemployment, lower productivity jobs and lower income levels. In contrast, completion of the FET phase is associated with increased chances of employment, high productivity jobs and higher incomes. The South African Department of Basic Education (DBE), prior to 2008 called the Department of Education (DOE), initiated a policy which limited grade repetition to once within a phase (DOE, 1998). In this dissertation, the policy (and practice) of limiting grade repetition to once within a phase will be referred to as the progression policy. The DBE attempted to address the problem of learner non-completion of school through the progression policy, which specifically aims to reduce learner drop-out and increase the number of learners successfully completing school. This chapter first provides a background to the progression policy, including an overview of relevant policies linked to progression, and second, isolates a problem statement, which, underpinned the research reported in this dissertation. The chapter also presents an overview of the purpose of the study encompassing the aims, research questions, and objectives. The following section outlines the structure of the dissertation. The final section provides a brief summary of this chapter.

1.2 Background to the research and the progression policy

1.2.1 What is learner progression?

Learner progression, commonly known as social promotion in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and Europe, involves the promotion of a learner to a subsequent grade, even though the learner may not have fulfilled the requirements for passing the grade he/she is being promoted from. Progression in the South African education system, is defined as the

advancement of a learner from one grade to the next (excluding Grade R), despite the learner not having complied with all promotion requirements (DBE, 2011). Understandably, progression has generated much political and pedagogical debate over the rationale, efficacy, and purpose of implementing progression policies (Chen, 2019). Within the South African context, the vast majority of progressed learners in the FET phase continue to underperform academically and/or fail to meet the minimum pass requirements required for promotion and, ultimately, matriculate (Grossen, Grobler & Lacante, 2017). Progressed learners continue to fail despite schools having to provide support measures and interventions targeting progressed learners. No study, to date, seems to have focused on the fidelity of support measures instituted by either the DBE or schools targeting progressed learners in South Africa.

The progression policy has been applied by the DBE in schools to provide support to progressed learners and thus equip them academically to pass the grade and proceed to complete their secondary schooling. In light of continued poor academic outcomes experienced by progressed learners as demonstrated in the matric results, the DBE must determine which support measures targeting progressed learners are effective in ensuring progressed learners improve their academic results and complete secondary schooling. The purpose of this study is to identify the support measures targeting progressed learners at a selected site and determine their perceived effectiveness. The study will also provide insight into the barriers and facilitators facing progressed learners, the influence of key role players, and aim to identify additional support initiatives, which could potentially aid in improving academic outcomes of these learners.

1.2.2 Policies linked to progression in South Africa

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the relevant policies, circulars, and documents relating to progression in South Africa between 1998 to 2018. Progression was initially indicated as reducing grade repetition within a phase in 1998 but was only formally referred to as progression in 2007. A number of policies pertaining to implementation of progression were promulgated thereafter with additional circulars and guideline documents dictating the implementation of the progression policy in schools.

Table 1.1

Overview of relevant policies relating to progression

Title/Name of Policy or Document	Year	Purpose
Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools promulgated	1998	Initial policy introducing progression – limited grade repetition to once within a phase (DOE, 1998).
Ministerial Committee to address learner retention Report	2006	Ministerial Task Team established by Minister Pandor to investigate the extent of retention and drop-out in schools and to determine the reasons for drop-out amongst learners in Grade 9 – 12 for the periods 2003 to 2005 (DOE, 2006).
National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12	2007	National policy all government schools must apply in relation to criteria for determining promotion or grade repetition. Inclusion of progression criteria in this policy in 2007 (DOE, 2007).
Approval of the regulations pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12 promulgated as Notice No. R1114, in Regulation Gazette No. 9886 of 28 December 2012.	2012	Circular issued by the National Minister of Education (DBE) mandating that all schools apply the policy of progression in both GET and FET phases (DBE, 2012).

Title/Name of Policy or Document	Year	Purpose
National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12	2015	National policy all government schools must apply in relation to criteria for promotion to next grade, repetition of a grade or progression to next grade. The policy of progression forms part of this policy and specific criteria to apply to learners to determine progression is detailed within this policy (DBE, 2015a).
Guideline for the implementation of promotion and progression requirements for Grades 10 – 12	2015	The guideline is intended to support the implementation of the current policy and proposes a consultative approach that Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) can adopt to manage the progression of Grade 10 and 11 learners. To ensure consistent and uniform application by all Provincial Education Departments of the regulations pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12 promulgated as Notice No. R1114, in Regulation Gazette No. 9886 of 28 December 2012. (DBE, 2015b)
Circular E28 of 2017 (MEO addition to the 2017 progression policy)		Minister of DBE approved that progressed learners be allowed the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) option in the writing of the National Senior Certificate examination (NSC). Option only given to learners who have been progressed from Grade 11 into Grade 12. (DBE, 2017)
Assessment Instruction 44 of 2018	2018	Circular suggesting schools identify low achieving learners as potential candidates for progression, design and develop support measures for these learners, establish learner

Title/Name of Policy or Document	Year	Purpose
		receptiveness to curriculum intervention and support, evaluate general behaviour and attitudes of the learners towards their schoolwork, evaluate attendance history, and determine psychosocial support needs. (DBE, 2018)

1.2.3 The background of the progression policy and key concepts

The roots of progression in South Africa can be linked to the transformation in the education system post the 1994 elections. In 2003, the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, appointed a Ministerial Committee to address learner retention in South Africa (See Table 1.1, second row). The Ministerial Committee was appointed with the express focus of investigating the extent of retention and drop-out in schools and to determine the reasons for drop-out amongst learners in Grade 9 – 12 for the periods 2003 to 2005 (DOE, 2007). Similarly, the Global Monitoring Report of 2005 acknowledged the challenges facing the government in their efforts to expand basic education as being constrained by sub-optimal learner retention rates (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006). The seminal findings from the ministerial committee suggested a much higher incidence of learner drop out after Grade 9 and that less than 60% of learners reach Grade 12. The committee concluded that grade repetition was the single most powerful predictor of dropping out, and the risk of dropping out of school increased if the learner was above the median age of the grade (DOE, 2006). These findings led to the development and implementation of the progression policy aimed at increasing learner retention, particularly in the FET Phase. Maarman (2009) referred to the new democratic government as identifying the need to implement changes in schools and to develop educational policies with the intention of redressing an unequal schooling system created as a consequence of Apartheid. The education system continued to face numerous challenges including high failure, retention and drop-out rates in Grades 9 – 12 despite the change to a democratic government (DOE, 2007). The progression policy was one such attempt implemented by the government to address the inequalities in the education system. The premise for this was to improve retention as learner drop out was one of the indicators of poor education provision during Apartheid.

Progression is referred to as “the movement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, in spite of the learner not having complied with all the promotion requirements. Progression can be used to prevent a learner from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years. . .” (DBE, 2011, p.xi). Although the initial progression policy was part of the admission policy for ordinary public schools promulgated in 1998 it merely proposed grade repetition to be limited to once within a phase, therefore, learners should not exceed four years in a phase (DOE, 1998) (see Table 1.1, row 1). It was not mandatory to implement and many schools did not adhere to the policy (Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015). Amendments were

made to the policy in 2007 with the inclusion of progression criteria to be applied in all grades (DOE, 2007) (see Table 1.1, Row 3). When the progression policy of 2007 was implemented in South Africa it was only strictly applied in the General and Education Training (GET) phase of schooling for Grades 7 to 9 although in principle the policy could be implemented in both GET and FET phases (Stott, 2015). It was only after a circular was issued in 2012 by the Minister of Basic Education enforcing the consistent application of progression in FET phase that the policy was applied to the FET phase of schooling (DBE, 2012) (see Table 1.1, Row 4).

The progression policy now forms part of the National Policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12 (DBE, 2015a) (see Table 1.1, Row 5). and further guideline documents have been issued with stipulations and criteria of the progression policy which will be referred to in the dissertation. It is necessary to make a distinction between *promotion*, *progression* and *repeater* as used in the progression policy. Definitions of these terms were extracted from the National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12 (DBE, 2015a). Promotion refers to the movement of a learner from one grade to the next provided the learner meets the minimum required level of achievement per subject in a particular grade, as well as complying with the promotion requirements of the grade as stipulated in the policy document. The term repeater refers to a learner that has not met the minimum promotion requirements and as a result has to repeat a grade. Progression is the advancement or movement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, despite the learner not having complied with all the promotion requirements. Progression can be used to prevent a learner from being retained in a phase for a period exceeding four years with the provision that the underperformance of the learner in the previous grade is addressed in the grade to which the learner has been progressed into (DBE, 2015). The progression policy provides criteria that are applied in determining whether a learner qualifies to progress to the next grade if they do not meet the minimum promotion requirements. Minimum promotion requirements in the FET phase dictate that learners may only fail one subject (not including the Home Language, which requires a pass mark of 40%) and must achieve above 30% in all other subjects. If a learner has not met the promotion criteria but has repeated a year in the phase, they are not automatically progressed into the next grade but must meet additional criteria to be considered for progression. The additional criteria that

have been adopted as prerequisites for a learner to be progressed from either Grade 10 to Grade 11, or from Grade 11 to Grade 12 are:

1. The learner must have failed to satisfy the promotion requirements of either Grade 10 or Grade 11.
2. The learner must have passed the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and any other three of the seven subjects included. If the Home Language is the LoLT, then only for this criterion a 30% mark will be accepted.
3. The learner must have attended school on a regular basis. Absenteeism in excess of 20 days, without a valid reason, will disqualify the learner from being progressed; and
4. The learner must have complied with prescribed School Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for that academic year. (DBE, Assessment instruction 44 of 2018)

Furthermore, the policy stipulates progressed learners must be provided support to assist them to cope academically in the grade into which they have progressed, with the aim of promoting learner dignity and self-esteem. In addition to providing academic support and promoting their emotional well-being, the policy states that Districts¹ and schools must devise “clearly articulated intervention strategies” (DBE 2015, p. 6).

Therefore, whilst the progression policy stipulates that support be provided to progressed learners, this support is not prescriptive. Schools are therefore likely to individually interpret the nature and form of this support. This will presumably result in the adoption of varied support measures with subsequent variable success.

1.2.4 Application of the progression policy in South African schools

This section provides an overview of the stipulations of the progression policy as it should be implemented in schools in South Africa and the prescribed support referred to in the policy. The section also refers to the Promotion Guideline Document of 2015 (see Table 1.1, Row 6),

¹ Districts refer to geographic units that exist at a level between schools and the head offices of the Provincial education departments. Each district office is allocated schools within a designated geographical area. Their responsibility is to monitor implementation of policy, provide support and fulfil management roles for the province (Narsee, 2006).

the MEO addition to the progression policy and makes reference to Assessment Instruction 44 of 2018 (DBE) (see Table 1.1, Row 8) which provides a suggested approach to schools in the implementation of the policy.

The Department of Education adopted the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools in 1998 and the guideline stipulated herein for repetition stated that learners should not repeat more than one year per school phase (DOE, 1998). The implication of this policy was that a learner who failed a grade within a phase twice could not be retained a second time and were allowed to progress to the next grade. However, the policy mandated that the academic underperformance of the learner in the previous grade be addressed in the grade into which the learner was progressed (DOE, 1998). Since the policy's inception in 1998, progression was assumed to have been utilised in Grade R – Grade 9 (Kika & Kotze, 2018). However, it was only applied in the FET phase from 2013 after the inclusion of progression in the National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 on 28 December 2012 (DBE, 2012). Whilst schools may have potentially implemented this policy from Grade R to Grade 9 there is no research exploring the application of the policy or specific interventions for progressed learners. Such exploration could serve as a base for the development and adoption of potential support measures and initiatives for the newly implemented policy at the FET phase level.

The progression policy is prescriptive in the criteria to be applied to determine eligibility for progression as discussed in 1.2.2. The policy also refers to “clearly articulated intervention strategies” (DBE, 2012, p. 6) as a means of supporting progressed learners. Stipulations are also given that the Provincial Education Departments are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the progression policy in schools and ensuring support measures are provided. Kika and Kotze (2018) acknowledge though that the interpretation of the policy varies greatly which impacts on the form of support provided in schools.

Another circular provided to schools detailing an approach to applying progression criteria was the Assessment Instruction 44 of 2018. This circular provided suggested procedures for schools to identify barriers to learning for progressed learners, design and develop support measures for these learners, establish learner receptiveness to curriculum intervention and support,

evaluate general behaviour and attitudes of the learners towards their schoolwork, evaluate attendance history, and determine psychosocial support needs.

1.3 Rationale for the Implementation of Progression (Social Promotion) Policies

In South Africa, the focus in the existing literature is largely around the reasons for the implementation of a policy of progression, with progression being purported to be a means of reducing grade repetition rate and as a means of increasing equity in education. There is also reference to the contextual implications of implementing the policy.

1.3.1. Improving Equity and Learner Retention

The policy of progression is referred to as a transformation vehicle within the South African education sector (Hartley, 2006). Poorly resourced schools are characterised by learner underperformance and a high drop-out rate. One of the main reasons for implementing the progression policy was thus to improve learner retention in school, reduce repetition of grades and ensure a decrease in learners dropping out of school. Hartley (2006) further highlights the use of the progression policy as part of the strategy to address the current inequality that exists in schools. Hartley (2006) also emphasises that contextual factors impact on providing learners with the support required. However, Maarman (2009) argues that whilst the progression policy is meant to improve educational outcomes for learners in under-resourced communities, the poor implementation of the policy and a lack of monitoring is contributing to continued inequality in schools (Maarman, 2009). Debate in the United States around social promotion is not purported to be for equity reasons however, there is an acknowledgement that learners that fall under the policy of social promotion and retention are typically from minority, lowincome families (Doherty, 2004). Where this may be similar in relation to the South African context is that the less affluent schools with the majority of learners from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds experience higher drop- out rates (Romero, Hall, Cluver & Steinert, 2018)

1.3.2 Alternative to Grade Repetition

Hartley (2006) suggests that implementing progression in South African schools is a marker indicating the provision of quality education due to its impact on retention rates. High grade repetition rates and subsequent high drop-out rates were identified as an issue in South African

schools and therefore the use of progression was hailed as a preferred alternative to grade repetition (Branson, Hofmeyr & Lam, 2013; Hartley, 2006). Repetition is linked to negative outcomes in all areas of academic achievement as well as in social and emotional adjustment, such as peer relationships, self-esteem, and problem behaviours (Jimerson, 2001). The learner retention report prepared by the Ministerial Committee in 2007 (referred to in section 1.2.2) identified grade repetition as the most influential predictor related to dropping out of school. International studies referred to in their report cited that after grade repetition learners became “disillusioned” and “disengaged” (p. 25) from school activities and invariably dropped out (DOE, 2008). Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017) reported that 40% of learners in South Africa drop out of school after repeated failure.

The use of social promotion globally aims to reduce repetition rates with a focus on the social and psychological wellbeing of children (Owings & Kaplan, 2002). Social promotion initially emerged as an alternative to grade repetition in the 1960s and was seen as more favourable than repetition as it reduced the risk for dropping out of school and the learner remained with their age cohort, which was beneficial from a social and emotional perspective. However, Owings and Kaplan (2002) asserted that these benefits were short-lived as the learners soon realised they did not have to be accountable for learning nor did they need to expend much effort to proceed to the next grade as social promotion would be applied. Their research also reported that educators noted the impact of this lack of accountability on other learners, and that socially promoted learners were unable to cope academically due to skill and knowledge deficits that were not acquired from the preceding grade.

Similarly, a public school review conducted by Chen (2019) in the US also found that social promotion policies resulted in learners developing the perspective that hard work and achievement were not necessary, progressed learners become overwhelmed due to the academic demands, and schools did not provide adequate support to help socially promoted learners ‘catch up’ to their peers. It has also been argued that most recipients of social promotion policies are labelled as “victims” as this policy results in learners being undereducated and unable to access tertiary studies, advanced training and good employment opportunities (After over 50 years failure, 2019).

1.3.3 Support strategies

The MEO was a support strategy implemented in 2017 by the DBE to assist progressed learners by splitting their examinations over two years. As discussed in Chapter 1, the MEO, more commonly known as modularisation, allows Grade 12 progressed learners to complete matric over two years with the rationale that if the examinations are split it will reduce pressure on learners and potentially improve academic performance. Four subjects are thus written in the first year (in November) with the remaining subjects to be written in June of the following year.

An unintended consequence of the MEO is the contention over its application and in relation to the effectiveness of this as a support measure aimed at improving academic results of progressed learners (<https://www.polity.org.za/article/dbe-basic-education-on-policy-onprogression-and-policy-on-multiple-examination-opportunity-2017-10-31>). The academic results of progressed learners who opt for modularisation are not included in the school matric pass rate.

Whilst the policy expects schools to provide support measures for all progressed learners, the emphasis from DBE is on providing support to Grade 12 learners, which can be seen in the support measures they provide and in the expectation of schools. The Second Chance programme of the DBE provides detail of numerous support measures including face-to-face classes, Television broadcasts on free and paid subscription channels, internet access sites and online learning links (<https://www.education.gov.za/secondchance/Home.aspx>)

1.4 Problem Statement

The policy to progress learners aims to arrest the high drop-out rates and to increase school completion rates. However, a high proportion of progressed learners battle academically and ultimately end up failing to matriculate (Ngoepe, 2016). This is apparent from the Grade 12 results, which indicate that the majority of progressed learners are failing to meet the minimum pass requirements. The 2015 matric learners had the first group of FET progressed learners as part of the NSC examinations as the progression policy was first applied from Grade 10 in 2013. Specifically, of the progressed South African learners in Grade 12 in 2015 which consisted of 65 671 learners, only 34,6% passed nationally (Ngoepe, 2016). The total number of progressed learners in 2016 increased to 108 742 progressed learners although only about 67 510 wrote all their matric examinations. The pass rate for registered progressed matric

learners in 2016 was 27%. These results suggest that the underlying factors leading to academic difficulties and the support measures targeting progressed learners have a limited positive impact and that additional support is required to improve the academic outcomes of these learners.

The progression policy has stipulations for districts and schools to have clearly articulated intervention strategies that include early identification of low achievers or at-risk learners. As such schools are expected to address the barriers to learning however, in the absence of effective interventions learners may be continuously progressed through to Grade 12.

Therefore, if barriers to learning are not adequately addressed in the previous grades, learners may continue to struggle academically and ultimately fail to complete school.

The matric results of progressed learners in 2017 released by the DBE showed a pass rate of 55% for progressed learners (DBE, 2017). The total number of registered progressed learners for the class of 2017 was 107 430 however only 34 011 progressed learners wrote the requisite seven subjects during the 2017 NSC examinations due to the MEO. This means that only 32% of progressed learners were included in the 2017 results. In 2018 the trend continued. The matric results of 2018 reported by DBE showed that 60% of progressed learners passed nationally. However, out of 128 634 progressed learners in Grade 12 in 2018 only 33 412 wrote all their subjects which represents 26% of progressed learners in matric that year. The progressed learner results reported indicated that 20 122 learners passed. The matric results of the 2018 year excluded 95 222 progressed matrices and were unaccounted for in the national 78.2% pass rate (<https://www.polity.org.za/article/dbe-basic-education-on-policy-onprogression-and-policy-on-multiple-examination-opportunity-2017-10-31>).

If ineffective and unstructured support mechanisms are implemented in schools, the result is likely to be ill-equipped learners continuing to be progressed from grade to grade without addressing the specific challenges facing them and without providing the necessary support required to improve their chances of passing (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Given the increasing numbers of progressed learners, support measures need to become more refined and it is probable that learners could benefit from some form of screening to be able to devise more targeted interventions.

The rising number of progressed learners requires the implementation of support measures that address the specific challenges identified to ensure an improvement in academic performance. Progressed learners are struggling to cope with the curriculum leading to only a small percentage of learners managing to pass the grade they have been progressed into. Reddy's (2016) review on progressed learners concludes that it is not only necessary to develop an understanding of the value of progression but also to identify what factors result in passing. Using a case study of a specific school in KwaZulu-Natal, this research study aimed to identify support measures targeting progressed learners and to determine the perceived effectiveness of these intervention strategies. The researcher developed an interest in the application of the progression policy and support mechanisms for progressed learners during her 17 years of teaching experience in the FET phase. Her personal experience was that a number of learners were progressed into grades without clear guidelines from the DBE as to what kind of support or level of support was to be provided. Furthermore, there did not seem to be clear guidelines or stipulations in current educational policies around procedures to identify the potential barriers to learning or circumstances that may have resulted in the progressed learner not meeting academic criteria for promotion.

In the study reported in this dissertation, an understanding of the implementation and impact of progression on learners who have been progressed was developed through engaging with learners regarding their personal experiences of the support they received after having been progressed. In addition, educators' views on progression were also elicited to determine what the barriers and possible facilitators assist progressed learners to meet requirements for promotion at the end of their progressed year.

1.5 Aim of the Study

1.5.1 Aims

This research aimed to elicit narratives from progressed learners and educators regarding their experiences of progression with particular consideration of the support measures implemented within the progressed year. In addition, the participants were asked to reflect on the contexts/environments that impact on academic performance, and perceived deficits in the support offered to progressed learners. The progression policy as it is applied in the FET phase is relatively new as it was only implemented in 2013 with the first cohort of progressed learners

in matric in 2015. Although some research has been undertaken in South Africa on the progression policy and the implications thereof, no study has specifically focused on progressed learners' experiences and specific support measures implemented within the South African school context. There does not seem to be any scholarly reference to the support measures provided or consideration of the progressed learners' experiences and views of the barriers and facilitators influencing their academic performance.

This study investigates the barriers and facilitators that contribute towards the academic performance of progressed learners in the FET phase at a selected high school in the Durban South region of KwaZulu-Natal. As an English Home Language educator in the FET phase for 17 years, the researcher has had personal exposure to progression policies and the ensuing impact on affected learners. In the researcher's experience the majority of progressed learners were unable to meet promotion requirements in the grade they had been progressed into, an understanding of the circumstances leading to their progression was not taken into account by the school management team, and support measures for progressed learners were not individualised. The researcher also worked at the research site for ten years from 2009 to 2018. Herr and Anderson (2005) suggest researchers may have a greater desire to solve problems in familiar environments and therefore encourage researchers to work in environments that are familiar to them. The findings in this research could be used to provide insight into what support measures for progressed learners within the FET phase are being implemented, and how effective these measures are perceived to be. The research findings will, therefore, provide evidence-based guidance for the development and implementation of support measures for progressed learners in the FET phases that were regarded as effective by progressed learners and educators from the FET phase. The fact remains that with a large and increasing number of progressed learners, further research will be needed on what specific interventions and strategies are effective in assisting these learners in improving their academic performance.

1.5.2 Research objectives and questions

This research study set out to achieve the following objectives:

- 1). To explore progressed learners' and educators' views of the support measures implemented within the progressed year and their perceived effectiveness.
- 2). To identify the influence of role players in supporting and impacting on progressed learners' academic performance.

- 3). To gain insight regarding the perceived barriers or challenges to the implementation of the support measures in the progressed year.
- 4). To explore additional possible support measures for progressed learners

The following research questions are closely related to the research objectives identified above and are also embedded in the purpose of the research. The two research questions are:

Research Question 1:

What support measures do progressed learners and educators identify as having been implemented within the progressed year?

- a. How are the identified support measures for progressed learners experienced by progressed learners and educators?
- b. Who are the key role players in the identified support measures for progressed learners?
- c. What barriers/challenges hinder the implementation of the identified support measures for progressed learners?

Research Question 2:

What additional support measures do progressed learners and educators identify as possible for future implementation?

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provides a background to the progression policy including an overview of relevant policies, circulars, and documents relating to progression. The rationale for the study, research objectives and questions on which the study is based, and problem statement are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2 consists of the literature review in clarifying the information, background and current debates regarding 'progression' within the South African context. As this is an underresearched area and a relatively new policy in South Africa, international literature was also sourced and integrated into the chapter to provide an understanding of the consequences of such policies being implemented. The focus of the literature review is on the challenges and consequences of implementing the progression policy in schools in reference to stipulated support.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and design of the study. It focuses on the data collection techniques, data collection instruments (namely semi-structured individual interviews with learners and semi-structured focus group discussions with educators) and the analysis of the transcripts that the researcher produced from the audio recordings of the data collection techniques. The rationale for the selection of research design, sampling techniques, characteristics of the school investigated and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings following an analysis of the data collected in the selected school. It presents the themes that were generated from the interviews and focus group discussions.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion drawn from this research study. Recommendations are offered in light of the findings in the discussion.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes and identifies possible areas for future research.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the research and outlines the context, including the Department of Basic Education policy covering progression. The organisation of the dissertation, in terms of the chapters that follow, was outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction – Overview of the Chapter

This chapter explores relevant literature on progression (social promotion) which is central to understanding the progression policy as it has been applied in South African schools. The strategy of progression in South Africa is under-researched and therefore the global use of progression has been integrated into this chapter to deepen the understanding of its use within educational systems. The specific focus of the literature is on learner support in relation to progression and the stipulations embedded in this policy. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the barriers and facilitators impacting progressed learners' academic performance in the FET phase, and the learners' and educators' experiences of progression and the implemented support measures.

Chapter 2 is structured to provide an understanding of firstly the implications of the stipulated support in the progression policy, and secondly the resulting social and educational consequences. Finally, the last section of this chapter provides a rationale for Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as an appropriate theoretical lens for this study.

2.2 Implications of stipulations regarding support measures in DBE policies

The Promotion Guideline Document (2015) is used in conjunction with the National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – Grade 12. This guideline document is intended to create consistency in the implementation of progression in schools.

The Promotion Guideline Document (2015) provides information on the monitoring and implementation of these support measures. This document states that districts and schools must have “clearly articulated intervention strategies that include early identification of low achievers or at-risk learners” (p, 6) and that the school, district, and province are responsible for devising and implementing support measures (DBE, 2015b). If adequate support measures are to be devised and implemented these should be evidence-based and best practice in education should be applied to ensure specific challenges are being addressed. Picklo and Christenson (2005) highlight early identification of low achieving learners as imperative in

assisting learners with academic difficulties. However, concerning the progression policy guidelines, there is no detail or references provided as to what criteria should be applied in identifying the specific factors leading to learners' poor academic performance nor are there suggested criteria to determine the appropriate support to be provided, based on the specific needs of the learner. In the absence of evidence-based support measures, schools will remain at liberty to provide any such support they deem appropriate. Inadequate support measures could potentially result in the provision of ineffective or limited support.

In addition, the Promotion Guideline Document (2015) designates the key role players in the provision of support to learners with specific challenges and barriers to learning to the District Based Support Teams (DBST), School-Based Support Teams (SBST), parents and the Provincial Department (DBE, 2015). Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) highlight the role of the SBST as being the first level of support within a school. Schools are mandated to establish a School-Based Support Team (SBST) which should be comprised of staff members that identify, monitor and provide interventions to address learning barriers for underperforming learners. The guideline document further delineates their roles as co-ordinating support services within the school to identify and address the needs of learners, educators, and the institution, develop support programmes, train teachers and liaise with the DBST. The DBST is the next level of support and is required to assist schools in providing additional support to educators and learners and monitor the support being provided within the school. However, the functionality of the SBST and DBST has been found to be ineffective in provision of support and it has been argued that this is due to lack of support from the National DBE, and limited physical, material and human resources (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016). Another study found that if SBST's are to be effective in schools, educators need to be empowered with the requisite knowledge and skills to fulfil the role adequately, and that support should be determined based on educator capacity and broader socio-cultural contexts (Babalwa, 2014). The policy guidelines provided to schools (DBE, 2015b) are explicit in stipulating the responsibilities assigned to these role players. The provided guidelines are discussed below.

The responsibility of the DBST is to compile a database of progressed learners inclusive of identified subjects in which the learner is underperforming. Monitoring of the database should be conducted biannually. A DBST is tasked with communicating with parents detailing learner

performance and reporting on the support measures provided. The responsibility of the DBST to the school is to support schools in identifying the core aspects of the curriculum that the progressed learner requires assistance in and to provide a remedial plan. Subject Advisors (as part of the DBST) are tasked to assist educators in “crafting intervention strategies and improvement plans” (DBE, 2015b, p. 10) that are subject specific. The DBST should also offer ongoing training to schools and educators which focus on “teaching and learning, communication, and social and behavioural factors” (DBE, 2015b, p. 11). With the vast number of progressed learners in the system – 34 000 in Grade 12 in KZN alone in 2018 – it remains a significant undertaking for the District to oversee that support measures are being implemented for every progressed learner throughout all Grades in all schools. Reports suggest that provinces and districts do not have adequate resources to perform these roles optimally (Buthelezi, 2018). The concern extends to the practicality of tasking Subject Advisors with school specific interventions and improvement plans that are crafted individually for each learner. If one takes the Umlazi District, in which this study was conducted, into account subject advisors are responsible for approximately 513 schools (KZNDOE, 2012). It is, therefore, a mammoth task for Subject Advisors to service schools containing progressed learners according to the assigned responsibilities of the policy, and still fulfil other prescribed duties (Mbanjwa, 2014).

The guidelines for the progression policy task the SBST to compile a database of at-risk learners either quarterly or biannually and to monitor and report on the progress of these learners. The guideline also stipulates that the SBST should develop and implement remedial programmes. The only examples cited in the guideline document are study guides, previous question papers, and extra classes. These are examples and not prescriptive. The SBST is also expected to identify key areas of the curriculum, which these support measures should focus on, and institute additional assessment of the key areas for underperforming learners to ensure they have achieved the learning outcomes (DBE, 2015b). In addition to communication by the DBST with parents of under-performing learners, the SBST are expected to communicate with parents two to four times per year regarding learner progress, details of the support measures planned to improve their child’s academic performance, conduct regular parent meetings, and provide workshops for parents on how to support teaching and learning. Whilst it has been proven that parental involvement impacts on academic performance as supported by Christenson (1995) it is difficult to envision that schools will be able to not only engage with

parents regularly but also plan and present workshops to parents as a form of support stipulated by the guidelines of the progression policy.

The progression policy guidelines assign parents the responsibility of controlling, and monitoring learners' tasks and readiness for formal assessments, attending meetings, visiting the school to obtain information on the progress of their children, arranging extra tuition in subjects where possible, and ensuring their child/children complete all assigned tasks. Whilst parental involvement and support is not being disputed as a relevant suggestion for underperforming learners, the availability of parents to provide the designated support, and in some instances an understanding of the value and nature of this support is an issue that parents are not necessarily aware of (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999).

In accordance with this guideline document (DBE, 2015b), the Provincial education office must ensure learner schedules and report cards are randomly monitored to ensure the progression policy is being applied. Officials are expected to conduct spot checks at schools. They are also required to track the performance of learners across grades. Whilst Provincial officials are to ensure the policy is being applied there is no stipulation to determine the nature of support measures and the effectiveness thereof – merely the existence of these having been applied to at-risk learners.

2.3 Educational and social consequences of progression

One of the overarching themes identified by critics of social promotion (progression) is the unintended consequence of lesser effort being expended by progressed learners and its ensuing impact on society at large (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000). The unintended consequences referred to by Thompson and Cunningham (2000) imply that social promotion policies result in learners not equating effort and hard work with promotion and as such this has the potential of impacting on society when they enter the workforce. Their review of social promotion argues that placing learners in the next grade without having met the promotion requirements not only frustrates the learners in that they are unable to cope with the curriculum in the new grade but also sends the message to other learners that effort does not equate to promotion. This is a potentially dangerous message that could inculcate a negative school ethos and furthermore negatively impact on motivation levels.

The policy of progression allows learners who have not met promotion requirements to proceed to the next grade with the assumption that schools will provide support to not only meet the academic outcomes of their current grade, but also of the previous grade. The consequences of a lack of content knowledge and curriculum coverage are not necessarily envisioned by learners when they are progressed into the next grade. Moreover, if the support and interventions are not implemented by schools or educators, learners will continually underperform. Thompson and Cunningham (2000) emphasise that the unintended consequence of implementing such policies is the impact on educators having to address gaps in learning while continuing the curriculum with other learners who had acquired the necessary foundation from the previous grade.

A further impact of the progression policy, particularly in lower quintile² schools, is that the stipulations of the progression policy result in an additional burden being placed on schools that are already struggling with a number of contextual factors (Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015). These include a lack of resources, large class sizes, learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds, lack of parental involvement and poor infrastructure (Stott, Dreyer & Venter, 2015). Their study furthermore found an increase in depression in progressed learners in lower quintile schools. The resulting consequence thus is that the progression policy places additional pressure on schools, educators and the progressed learner.

Grossen, Grobler and Lacante (2017) concur with Stott, Dreyer and Venter's (2015) recommendations regarding lower quintile schools stating that in order to assist learners, particularly in deprived socio-economic communities, it is essential to devise intervention strategies that target learners from a young age. Using the 2015 matric pass rates for progressed learners as a proxy, only a small percentage of progressed learners in Grade 12 ultimately matriculate. In 2014 a total of 65 671 Grade 11 learners who had not met promotion requirements after progression into Grade 11 were subsequently progressed into Grade 12 and wrote the senior certificate exam in 2015. In relation to the policy implemented, they had been

² In response to unequal access to quality public schooling, the South African Schools Act was amended in 2005 to establish a quintile system. Under this system, schools are categorised into 5 groups (quintiles) based on the relative wealth of their surrounding communities. These schools are entitled to receive a minimum amount of funding per learner from the DBE (Ally and Maclaren, 2016).

automatically progressed to matric on the basis that they had already repeated Grade 11 and of this group, only 37.6% passed the matric exams (Ngoepe, 2016).

An area of concern in implementing progression in schools is that learners are not identified as progressed by educators and therefore are just a part of the larger school community within the grade/age cohort. Knight (2014) highlights this concern that once a student is socially promoted, he or she tends to blend in. The consequence of this is that the progressed learner is not targeted for interventions to try and address the problem areas that have led to prior grade repetition and subsequent progression. As such, there could be a resulting lack of attention and academic assistance provided to these learners.

Whilst one of the main intentions of implementing the policy of progression was to address learner retention in the FET phase, an unintended consequence could be that learners keep on being pushed through the system until Grade 12 where they eventually end up dropping out. As discussed in the problem statement in Chapter 1, in 2016 only 54.5% of learners reached Grade 12 as per the Grade 1 enrolment figures 12 years before. Of the 2015 progressed learners only 37.6% passed matric as indicated above. Chapter 1 also discussed in detail the matric pass rate for learners for 2017 to 2019 with progressed learner matric pass rates ranging from 55% to 60%. However, due to the MEO, less than 30% of registered progressed learners have been included in the final matric statistics. The DBE has not released any statistics of MEO candidates, therefore, it cannot be ascertained if the progressed learners finally matriculated - as was the intention of the progression policy - or whether they too have added to the statistics of learners who have not completed secondary schooling.

Although the DBE is providing some support to learners with specific challenges (both repeaters and progressed learners) empirical evidence on addressing learning challenges advocates intervention in the early school years. Interventions in this regard are intensive, highquality, pre-school programmes, early reading programmes, before and after school programmes, basic skill-building classes, and the provision of extra lessons (Temple & Reynolds, 2007). Looping, defined as one educator teaching the same class over two years/grades is also considered effective (Jimerson et al, 2006). Jimerson et al (2006) found that looping is particularly effective in transition years – for example Grades 3 and 4, and Grades 7 and 8 or Grades 10 and 11. They furthermore asserted that countries using looping have significantly higher retention rates. Further to this, they highlighted positive parental involvement, individualized programmes, individualised extra lessons, school-based mental

health programmes and behaviour modification as additional measures of support that have been proven to be effective (Jimerson et al., 2006).

Owings and Kaplan (2001) found that personalising the environment significantly reduces the need for repetition of grade and social promotion. These measures include creating a positive school culture with clear, high expectations supported by committed educators and management; fostering continuing educator-learner relationships through looping; provision of meaningful curriculum and instruction; lesson revision, mentoring, peer tutoring; and effective home-school partnerships between parents and educators. Moloi (2010) conducted a qualitative study in South Africa in which it was made evident that psycho-social support from educators, counsellors and principals in schools, as well as learner perception of educator commitment may positively influence academic performance of at-risk learners.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The literature discussed below focuses on the alignment between Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the purpose of this study in relation to understanding the barriers and facilitators on the academic performance of progressed learners.

Bandura's SCT is used as a theoretical lens through which to examine the impact of the progression policy on progressed learners because its principles are embedded within the circumstances and contexts the progressed learner interacts in and with. With regards to SCT, this dissertation highlights the cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors underpinning the perceived efficacy of support measures targeting progressed learners. The central principle of Bandura's theory is the concept of triadic reciprocal determinism, which is explained as a continuous interplay between personal, behavioural, and environmental determinants (Bandura, 2001). Bandura's SCT provides a framework for understanding the learners' views of support measures in their progressed year and their perceptions of support resulting in improvement of specific behaviours – academic performance in this study. Progressed learners and educators were asked to share views about their experience of progression and the barriers and facilitators to improving academic performance within the theoretical underpinning of SCT. Using SCT, the study aims to explore the cognitive and behavioural factors contributing to progressed learners' views of their academic performance, as well as the main environmental factors such as curriculum delivery, relationships with educators, the role of family and peers as facilitators or barriers for the progressed learner.

2.4.1 Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

SCT is a psychological model of behaviour that asserts that learning occurs through observation within a social context. (Frey, 2018). SCT views individuals as beings that are proactively engaged in their personal development. The individual is thus seen as being regulated through an interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental processes. The *personal* factors in SCT consist of learning traits, thoughts, feelings, and other individual motivations. *Behavioural* factors focus on the premise that individuals observe behaviours of others and the resulting consequences and use those observations to inform their own behaviours - knowledge and skill to achieve academic competence would form part of the behavioural process. *Environmental* factors are the social and physical environments that influence a person's behaviour academically and would include family, friends, and educators. In relation to this study, SCT can serve as a framework for understanding the personal, behavioural and environmental processes that progressed learners and educators regard as influencing the academic performance of progressed learners.

Pajares (1996) and Bandura (1997) demonstrated through their research that individual beliefs can assist in predicting behaviours, such as those related to whether one will engage, persevere, and accomplish one's goals. This links directly to the purpose of this study as the application of SCT to progression can help to understand the facilitators associated with improved academic performance and indicate the conditions that lead to such improvement. If there is a lack of improvement in the progressed setting this may assist in identifying the specific barriers, which impact negatively on the academic performance of progressed learners. The link between educational settings and achievement in a study conducted in 2016 were directly linked to Bandura (1997) in claiming that specific measures of beliefs were closely related to behaviour and academic outcomes (Doménech-Betoret, & Gómez-Artiga, 2017).

SCT has been applied in numerous studies and was specifically chosen for this study because of the influence of social contexts on academic performance (Erich & Russ-Eft, 2011). The value of education and attainment of a matric pass in the South African context has been discussed in Chapter 1 and as the majority of progressed learners in Grade 12 are not passing it is one of the underlying reasons for this study. Matriculation can be conceptualised as the goal for the majority of high school learners once they reach the FET phase. Bandura (1997) posits that individuals expect given actions to produce desired outcomes and believe they can

perform those actions (Bandura, 1997). If the purpose for continuing in the FET phase is to matriculate, then understanding what support measures will increase self-efficacy, and then implementing these, has the potential to result in the desired outcomes and influence progressed learners' belief that they can perform those actions. In turn, this may result in increased commitment and expended effort to obtain a favourable outcome.

Another reason for the selection of SCT in this study is the theory incorporates both the internal experiences of the individual and impact of the environment in explaining behaviour and behavioural outcomes. The use of this theoretical framework thus lends itself to understanding the individual experiences of progression by the study participants and the environmental influences they perceive to have impacted on their academic performance. Bandura's (1997) SCT posits that individuals are products of their environments and therefore the creation of a beneficial environment has the potential to impact positively on an individual. The use of this theoretical framework thus helps to develop an understanding of the environmental barriers and facilitators and their ensuing influence on progressed learners as well as provide insight into possible changes that could act as facilitators to improve progressed learners' performance. If one interprets environmental contexts as influencing individual outcomes, it stands to reason that if the ideal environment – both school and home – can be attained, this will augment and amplify results achieved from the implementation of effective support measures.

As such, SCT was used as a theoretical framework in this research study as a means of understanding the experience of progression and in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of these data. SCT considers varied influences impacting on academic performance. Personal factors such as beliefs, behaviour which is observable as in the behaviour exhibited by learners, and the environment - which is the social context within which the learners are engaged - are some of the processes that ultimately influence academic performance.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the implications of support as stipulated by the progression policy was provided. Within the context of the South African educational system the ensuing social and educational consequences were highlighted. Finally, the last section provided insight into the chosen theoretical lense of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory for this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction – Overview of Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to extend the information presented in the preceding chapters by providing information regarding the research design, area of study, study population, sampling method, data collection procedures, data collection instruments, interviews, ethical considerations, and study design limitations.

3.2 Research Design

This was a qualitative study drawing on the perspectives of educators and progressed learners on how contexts and relationships with key role players impact on academic performance of progressed learners. A qualitative approach was considered relevant as the study sought to not merely give an account of the selected participants' actions and events as correct or incorrect, but rather to understand the perceived facilitators and barriers impacting on learners' academic performance. Further to this, an interpretive approach was adopted to produce an account of lived experiences rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions. The small sample size enables a micro-level reading of the participants' accounts. Micro-level reading offers the possibility of an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of progressed learners. This form of analysis was inductive in conjunction with deductive analysis techniques employed. The interpretive approach was employed in order to provide an illumination of what is presented but also to ground what has been presented through close examination of what the participant has said (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). The central idea of interpretivism is to unpack the subjective meanings of individuals constructed from their social world by acknowledging their existence, reconstructing them, understanding them and using them as a base for theorising in the context of the research area (Goldkuhl, 2012). The interpretivist paradigm was infused into the analysis of the data. This approach has been used in order to understand the participants' views of their experiences and the context that impact both on their knowledge and experience of progression as based on their understanding and the meaning they attribute to it. The interpretive stance of this study will also take into account the view that data is mutually constructed between researcher and participants.

3.3 Recruitment of the Research Site

The researcher worked as an English Home Language educator for 17 years of which 10 years were at the selected research site between 2009 and 2018. Personal experience from working in this school environment as a Head of Department was that the school had implemented the progression policy as mandated by the DBE but the implementation of strategies to assist learners was a “one-size-fits-all” approach with no real understanding of individual progressed learners’ needs. This research study was thus conceptualised as a case study of a school that had implemented the progression policy and implemented support measures for progressed learners, specifically within the FET Phase. However, more importantly, the researcher wanted to ascertain the views of progressed learners and educators on the identified support measures provided at the study site and obtain an understanding of the varied barriers and challenges facing progressed learners.

This study was undertaken in a high school in the Durban South Region of the Umlazi educational district. The Umlazi District is the largest district in Durban and the selected school is in an urban area. The selected school is categorised as Quintile 5, which is considered to be a well-resourced school with the lowest level of Government subsidy according to the Quintile ranking system (Yamauchi, 2011). Although situated in an urban suburb the majority of the learners are not from the surrounding suburb but largely from areas south of Durban. The identified school has been anonymised in the dissertation write up. The principal of the school confirmed verbally that he was willing for learners and educators to participate in this research study. The DBE also provided gatekeeper’s permission for the researcher to conduct the study (See Appendix A). Once ethical approval was received from the HSSREC at UKZN (see Appendix H) on 20 June 2018, progressed learners in the FET phase and identified educators were contacted at the site (details of the sampling are discussed in Section 3.4.)

In considering the study site’s progressed learner statistics in the FET phase approximately 8 – 10 percent of learners are progressed in Grade 10 – 12 (principal, personal communication, July 22, 2018). Whilst the DBE have not released MEO statistics of progressed learners according to the principal (personal communication, July 22, 2018), 60% of the study site’s progressed learners in Grade 12, registered as MEO candidates from 2017 to 2018, with only half returning to school to write their June examinations in the final year of this programme. Of the learners that returned to complete their NSC examinations, none passed. In terms of the Grade 12 progressed learners in 2018, two thirds opted to register as MEO candidates with

only 50% of the learners returning to write their remaining examinations in June 2019. The results of the June examinations had not been released at the time of the study.

3.4 Sampling Method with Rationale

Purposive sampling was used to “maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context” (Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p. 277). Specific learners were targeted, with the sample limited to the number of progressed learners within the FET phase, at the study site. In relation to the educators in the sample, purposive sampling was based on roles and responsibilities assigning them to work within the FET phase and in implementation of the progression policy and its stipulations. The selected educators were thus Management members assigned to working with Grade 10 to 12 learners and with responsibility for implementation of support measures, monitoring and tracking of progressed learners in their respective grades. In addition, the sample size was restricted by the willingness of eligible participants to participate, of parents providing consent for relevant learners to participate in the study, assent of the learner participants to participate in the study, and by the researcher’s availability to align scheduling with consenting and assenting participants’ availability.

Given these constraints, it was necessary that further sampling within the progressed learners follow a convenience method (Patton, 2001). The largest possible population was identified first, consisting of all learners that had been progressed into and within the FET phase at the research site. This information was obtained from the school records detailing which learners had been progressed. These progressed learners were all sent information sheets (see Appendix B) and consent forms (see Appendix C) to request their participation in the study. Assent forms (see Appendix E) were also given to learner and verbal assent was asked for in the introduction of the interview session. The initial population consisted of 13 progressed learners. The final sample size of progressed learners was determined based on the willingness and availability of learners. The final number of progressed learners participating in the study forming the sample group was four – which is almost a third of the total number of progressed learners in the FET Phase at the research site in 2018. Of the seven management members in the school four were invited to participate in the study at the research site. They were selected based on their managerial positions within the FET phase. The specific selection was based on the phase in which they worked and was linked to their roles in implementing support measures for progressed learners. The remaining three management members are responsible for the GET

phase and were therefore not invited to participate in the study. The selected educator sample (management members) were invited to participate in a focus group discussion. The total study sample comprised eight participants – four learners and four educators.

Whilst this is a small sample, Sandelowski (2000) suggests that within qualitative research, the study samples tend to be smaller in order to “support the depth of case-oriented analysis that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry” (p. 525). An interpretive approach is more concerned with the nature of the experience being described and less with the nature of the population providing these descriptions.

3.4.1 Overview of the participants

Learner participants were aged between 16 and 21 and comprised three males and one female. The learners resided in Durban – one in an urban suburb, in the vicinity of the school, whilst the other three lived in the township of Umlazi. Participants in this study were progressed within the FET phase during the 2016-2017 or 2017-2018 school year. Learners are referred to in the dissertation by their pseudonym, grade and gender and educators by their pseudonym, designation, and gender. Participant 1 (“Sipho”) was progressed in Grade 10 (M, Gr 10); Participant 2 (“Sarah”) was progressed from Grade 10 into Grade 11 (F, Gr 12); Participant 3 (“Senzo”) was progressed in Grade 10 retained in Grade 11 for two years and progressed into Grade 12 (M, Gr 12); Participant 4 (“Sam”) was progressed from Grade 11 into Grade 12 (M, Gr 12). The educator participants in this study were selected based on their management roles within the school. Three of the educators are Heads of Department (“Mr Siya”, M, HOD; “Mr Benjamin”, M, HOD; and “Mrs Yolo”, F, HOD) and the fourth educator is a Grade Head (“Mrs Carter”, F, GH) – all within the FET Phase.

3.5 Data Collection

Consent was obtained from learner participants and their parents/guardians where applicable. Assent was obtained from learners under 18. The informed consent forms and information sheets were prepared for the study participants and the parent/guardian (see Appendix B - D). The information sheet explained the purpose of the research and the nature of voluntary participation. Consent was also requested to audio record the interviews (See Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, only data collected from the interviews with progressed learners and the focus group discussion with educators was analysed. The data was analysed in both an

inductive manner and a deductive approach in exploring the cognitive, behavioural and environmental processes associated with improved academic performance of progressed learners. Interviews were conducted with four learners and four educators participated in the focus group discussion. Fontana and Frey (2000) noted that selection of the appropriate data collection method is crucial as privacy has a substantial effect on response bias in relation to questions about sensitive topics or socially undesirable behaviours. Individual interviews were thus selected for learners due to the personal nature of the focus with regards to failing and poor academic performance. The focus group discussion was the selected method for educators based on practical reasons like time constraints, as well as the advantage of participants building on each other's ideas (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

It was thus assumed that the individual interviews with the progressed learners and the focus group discussion with educators would generate a rich, detailed understanding of the barriers and facilitators for progressed learners from the learner and educator points of view. Fontana and Frey (1994) refer to interviews as a powerful method of accessing information. The interview is a co-ordinated conversation with the aim of obtaining specific information. In this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was used for learners under three main headings/broad questions (see Appendix F). The duration of the individual learner interviews was approximately an hour. The educators constituted a focus group facilitated using a semi-structured focus group guide with open-ended questions (see Appendix G). Further to this, the focus group discussion guide for educators was comprised of group discussion topics and open-ended probe questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The questions posed to educators centred on their role in facilitating the improvement of learner performance utilising school resources, especially in terms of the progression policy and their interpretation of the policy. Questions also covered curriculum implementation, classroom management, difficulties encountered in the course of implementing the curriculum, classroom dynamics in relation to the progression policy and their view of the personal, behavioural and environmental processes in relation to the progressed learners. The duration of the focus group discussion with educators was one-and-a-half hours. The questions developed for and used in the interviews and focus group discussion were grounded in Bandura's SCT. The questions were developed by the researcher in line with the theoretical framework. The questions in both the interviews and focus group discussion were intended to elicit the participants' understanding of the personal, behavioural and environmental processes associated with academic improvement, and the challenges facing

progressed learners and educators. Hannan (2007) stated that semi-structured interviews are advantageous in that they have “some pre-set questions, but allow more scope for open-ended answers” (p.7). Whilst Harrell and Bradley (2009) encourage the use of discussion topics and probe questions to guide and develop the focus group discussion responses. For the purposes of this research, the use of open-ended questions, in both the interviews and focus group discussions, was very important in order to elicit in-depth information. This information was to focus on the individual experiences, and the meaning attached, to what constitutes barriers and facilitators in academic performance of progressed learners from the point of view of both progressed learners and educators who are principally responsible for their academic attainment. The selected method allowed the researcher to obtain detail of personal experiences and individual interpretations attached to views given in the interviews and focus group discussion. This was also in line with the interpretivist paradigm as the adopted approach in this study (Goldkuhl, 2012).

The individual interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed and analysed in line with Holstein and Gubrium’s (2003) characterisation of interviews as a co-construction of knowledge and meaning. The co-construction of knowledge and meaning meant that the researcher had to understand and engage with participants as collaborators by acknowledging their authority and expertise, remaining open to the views of the participants, in light of previous experience at the study site, and finally be cognisant of ethical consequences of research relationships and motivations (Ellis & Patti, 2014). The difficulty to maintain these roles will be discussed further concerning limitations in sub-section 3.8.1. The individual interviews and focus group discussion was structured with initial contact made with targeted educators and learners. The researcher arranged the location, explained the nature of the interview and focus group discussion process and asked pre-established questions and probe questions based on the responses until the interview and focus group discussion agendas had been fulfilled.

3.6 Data Analysis

Researchers need to be aware of their role as active respondents in the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and create a conversational space in which participants feel safe to share their experiences (Owens, 2006). In addition, data analysis begins even in the preparation for data collection. During the individual interviews and focus group discussion process it was important for the researcher to be aware of interpretations not being

preconceived on her own experiences of the study site. After the focus group discussion and after each interview, notes were made regarding what the researcher perceived to be linked to the current research, or contrary to the research. If links were found between interviewees, these were also noted.

The information obtained from the individual learner interviews and educator focus group discussion was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The initial phase of the thematic analysis began with looking for “patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15). These were noted directly after the interviews and focus group discussion were completed and additions were made on listening to the recordings prior to transcription. During the transcription process further notations were made. Potential themes in relation to similarity of ideas across transcripts were noted as well as possible quotations for discussion. Further to this, the transcripts were read thoroughly on repeated occasions. This type of thematic analysis was undertaken as it is a widely used approach in qualitative studies. A theoretical framework of thematic analysis, as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for these responses. Specifically, thematic analysis is a method used for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). In addition, the method posits that a “rigorous thematic approach [to data analysis] can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). As highlighted by Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) the close attention employed in data transcription assists in facilitating the closer reading and interpretative skills needed to analyse the data.

The next important consideration was to explain themes or patterns within data identified in an inductive and in a theoretical, deductive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Parker (2004) raises the importance of creating a balance between induction and deduction in all research. This process of data analysis necessitated employing the theoretical framework and research questions and applying them to the identified themes and quotations. It was, therefore, necessary to be cognisant of maintaining a balance between induction and deduction by exploring the phenomenon of progression in terms of whatever emerged from the data, establish themes, and unpack patterns of interest, whilst still ensuring application of useful theoretical perspectives and concepts to guide the exploration (Patton, 1991).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The following four ethical principles were abided by as suggested by Murphy and Dingwall (2001): Non-maleficence: participants should experience no harm as a consequence of taking part in the research; Beneficence: any research should result in an identifiable and useful outcome rather than be carried out for its own sake; Autonomy or self-determination: the values and decisions of research participants should be respected; Justice: all participants should be treated equally

3.7.1 Non-maleficence

All precautions were taken to safeguard participants from experiencing harm. The principle means of ensuring non-maleficence are the tenets of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). To address issues of anonymity in this study pseudonyms were assigned to participants. Confidentiality is linked to the issue of anonymity. Names referred to by participants in their responses were also changed to protect the identity of individuals and prevent the identification of the research site. All participants were informed of how the data was to be utilised. Whilst the identity of participants was protected, the emergent material cannot be bound by confidentiality as it is the crux of written and verbal research papers (Allen, 2017).

In order to safeguard participants, informed consent was considered paramount as guided by the literature (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks, and benefits, and consented to participate without coercion. This principle was adhered to in the form of information sheets provided to the participants which informed them of the intentions of the research, how it would be carried out, what it involved for them as participants, what the intended outcomes were and how the information would be shared (See Appendix D). Participants were made aware that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. This was articulated in the consent form (Appendix E) and was part of the introduction of the interviews in the Interview Schedule (Appendix F). All participants had to provide written consent prior to taking part in the study.

3.7.2 Beneficence

Fouka and Mantzourou (2012) refer to this ethical principle as "the professional mandate to do effective and significant research so as to better serve and promote the welfare of our constituents" (p. 18). Beneficence relates to the benefits of the research. In this study the research aims to assist both the school and the DBE by deepening the understanding of the facilitators and barriers to the academic performance of progressed learners, and through the identification of effective interventions, aid progressed learners within the FET phase.

3.7.3 Autonomy or self-determination

The ethical principle of autonomy or self-determination acknowledges that individuals are able to make reasoned and informed choices. As such this is closely linked to informed consent discussed in 3.7.1. For participants under 18 it was also important to obtain assent. The right of the individual to make his/her own decisions is paramount (Childress, 2014). Mindful of this, educators and learners interviewed were aware that they could request data to be excluded from the research dissertation and were in a position to withdraw from the research study at any point.

3.7.4 Justice

The researcher felt strongly that the inclusion of both learners and educators in the study was important so as to not privilege the perspective of those with power in the school setting, namely the educators. Rather it is because both learners and educators fulfil an integral role in the progression policy. As such it was necessary to include the perspective of both role players in exploring this focus area. Adams (2013) defines the ethical principle of justice as one that is upheld by ensuring that no one group is above another in the research process and that all stakeholders benefit from the research. In addition to this, both stakeholders need to benefit from the research. This study aimed to understand from the learners' point of view the barriers and facilitators in their academic performance, which could inform within which contexts support needs to be targeted and furthermore to ascertain from educators what programmes currently assist progressed learners and gain insight into their effectiveness. Both role players were therefore treated as equal stakeholders in the study.

3.8 Validity, Reliability, and Rigour

Validity of findings in this study were enhanced by creating a consistent environment within which all interviews were conducted. Participants were also interviewed on site – at their school – with the aim of providing a comfortable environment as guided by Kuzmanić (2009). Kuzmanić (2009) further urged a review of the whole research process stressing the importance of the process of preparation and transcription of data and interpretation. In relation to this study, an extensive understanding of the purpose of interviews had to be developed, theoretical frameworks had to be considered, and the concept of reflexivity had to be adopted as a stance. Therefore, the semi-structured interview guide and semi-structured focus group discussion guide consisted of open-ended questions as it allowed for in-depth responses as referred to earlier in the research design. The theoretical background of Bandura's SCT not only guided the interview questions but also assisted in probing techniques used in specific responses within the interview. Reflexivity as a researcher was another important consideration in the research process to be aware that the knowledge and interpretation thereof is also impacted on by the interviewer themselves. Merrick (1999) considers trustworthiness and reflexivity as principles that guide a qualitative researcher in his or her pursuit of quality qualitative research. Merrick (1999) thus acknowledges the role of the researcher in both the 'production of knowledge' as well as in assuring the validity of the whole process. Flick (2002) considers the validity to be based on their appropriateness for the topic and their embeddedness in the research process.

Joppe (2000) defines reliability as the extent to which results show consistency over time and provide an accurate representation of the total population under study. He also emphasises a study as reliable if findings can be reproduced under a similar methodology. The researcher made use of the same questions to all the respondents and there were large similarities in participants' responses.

3.8.1 Limitations

Having gained previous experience working at the school the researcher had already formed relationships with the educators participating in the study and three of the learner participants. In these terms, the researcher could not be considered to be an outsider. Although this allowed ease of access to the research site and a greater likelihood of participants agreeing to participate in the research study, it required the researcher to negotiate entry to the field in a dual role. It

would be naïve to assume that this would not impact on the interpretation of the data and that the researcher's own experiences would not have an influence on analysis. It was therefore incumbent on the researcher to be cognisant of this potential bias by assuming a reflexive position.

The term 'reflexivity' is essentially about embracing rather than discounting subjective involvement (Finlay & Gough 2003). Through engaging in ongoing reflexive practice, the researcher increasingly becomes aware of his/her bias, distortions and blind spots. Furthermore, Finlay and Gough (2003) noted that by acknowledging and developing an awareness of 'reflexivity' a researcher is able to transform subjectivity from a problem into an opportunity. In order to improve trustworthiness in the study the study objectives were clearly articulated to the study participants. In this initial discussed confidentiality and voluntary participation were also emphasised. The researcher addressed some of the potential bias arising from subjectivity through note-taking after interviews, critical reflection on own experiences, reflection on personal views related to participant responses, and discussion of possible subjectivity with academic staff.

Selection bias is a further limitation with learners who had a prior educator-learner relationship more willing to participate. However, literature suggests the need for researchers to build rapport with participants in order to enrich the information elicited in interviews (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009). As such, the learners and educators having a pre-existing relationship with the researcher may have resulted in a more open, productive conversation. In addition to learners possibly participating based on the existing relationship with the researcher, it was important for the researcher to also acknowledge that it can be difficult for minors to dissent from research activities in a domain like a school in which learners maintain a minority (subservient) status in relation to dominant adult groups (Devine, 2002). The researcher sought to address this by explicitly stating that participation was not compulsory. This was stated in the initial consent form and at the beginning of each interview. Moreover, the researcher assured learner participants that they would not suffer negative consequences if they chose not to participate. Confidentiality was also assured through the assigning of numbers to participants and their names were not mentioned throughout the recording of the interviews.

The potential limitation with relation to sample size has been discussed in the Research Design (Section 3.2) and in the Sampling Method and Rationale (Section 3.4). Richards (2009) supports the use of smaller samples in a qualitative design with the aim of acquiring rich and insightful data. The researcher also believed that by employing a semi-structured interview schedule the answers were open-ended allowing for in-depth, rich responses. As pointed out by Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn and Jackson (2000), 'Interviews can offer unique insights into the experience of respondents, allowing them to describe and explain their own social worlds' (p. 2).

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlined the research methodology for the study. The qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate in achieving the aims of this study, allowing the researcher to access appropriate information on the barriers and facilitators affecting the academic performance of progressed learners.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction - Overview of the Chapter

This chapter focuses on the findings generated from the thematic analysis of the data. In an attempt to support and substantiate the themes reported in the chapter, quotations from the transcribed data are provided. Each quotation includes the relevant participants' identifying characteristics, specifically the participants' pseudonym, gender, Grade for learner participants and pseudonym, gender, and designation for educator participants.

The themes identified in the chapter were generated from data collected from four interviews and one focus group discussion. Prior to identifying the themes, the researcher coded and categorised the data, examined commonalities and differences in the codes and categories within and across participants, and then refined these into specific themes. From these themes, textual descriptions were written in an effort to understand what the participants' experiences of progression were like from their point-of-view (Creswell, 2007).

The research questions for the study guided the structure of the interviews and focus group discussion and the subsequent findings. The first research question (and its three sub-questions) focused on the support measures implemented for learners within their progressed year. In addition, the sub-questions within the first research question also directed an exploration of the key role players in relation to the support measures implemented for progressed learners and the barriers identified as hindering the implementation of the support measures. The second research question aimed to explore participants' thoughts around additional support measures that could be implemented in the future.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Research questions and themes generated from data analysis

Table 4.1 serves as a visual representation of the research questions and the themes that were identified by the researcher during the thematic analysis. In conjunction with research question

1, three main themes were identified with a further eight subthemes. In relation to Research Question 2, one main theme was identified with two subthemes.

Table 4.1

Thematic table

Research questions	Themes	Subthemes
RQ 1: What support measures do progressed learners and educators identify as having been implemented within the progressed year?	Identified support measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal school initiated support measures • Formal DBE/District initiated support measures • Informal school and learner initiated support measures
	Key role players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of educators • Role of family • Role of peers
	Challenges to support measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic challenge – progression policy • Systemic challenge – homogenous application of progression criteria
RQ 2: What additional support measures do progressed learners and educators identify as possible for future implementation?	Additional support measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalisation of support measures • Alternative pedagogies

4.2.2 Identified support measures targeting progressed learners

A number of support measures were reported to have been implemented within the academic environment, both formal and informal, with varying degrees of perceived effectiveness. Whilst educator responses focused mainly on formal support measures, learner responses centred mainly around informal support measures.

4.2.2.1 Formal school initiated support measures

A number of formal support measures were identified as being implemented to target progressed learners. These included an extra lesson programme, academic resource packs, and goal setting.

The educators in the study identified that the school had implemented what they referred to as an extra lesson programme specifically targeting progressed learners. This formal support measure was aimed at progressed learners in Grade 12 from the beginning of Term 1. Educators indicated that details of the programme were given to parents of progressed learners at a meeting in Term 1. The extra lesson programme was conducted from Term 1 to 3 with all subjects reportedly covered. The lessons were reported to have taken place on alternate Saturdays during term time and selected days in the April and June holidays.

Educators identified the extra lesson programme as one of the main support measures provided to progressed learners. However, educators expressed concern that in spite of the offer of extra lessons, the attendance by progressed learners was reported to be poor. Mrs Yolo (F, HOD) noted that, “we have come but I have never seen learners”, while Mrs Carter (G, GH) remarked, “he didn’t show up for a single lesson.” The perceived lack of commitment to the extra lessons by the progressed learners suggests that this support measure was unlikely to have been effective. Consistent with the above educators’ comments, all learners in the study acknowledged that they had been informed of the availability of extra lessons, although none of them referred to the extra lesson programme as helpful or effective. In contrast to the views of the educators Sarah (F, Gr 12) suggested that it was the educators who were not adequately committed to the extra lesson programme, “... most of the teachers came really late and others actually didn’t even come you know... They were holiday classes. Only one or two teachers came and even those teachers that came always left early.”

In further commenting on the formal support measures put in place to support progressed learners, the educators referred to the provision of past examination papers, which were provided to learners, in addition to a remedial pack that was provided to progressed learners. The remedial packs were provided by subject educators to Grade 12 progressed learners and consisted of aspects of the Grade 11 curriculum/content, additional worksheets and information on difficult concepts in the subject, as well as a list of subject-specific key terminology. Again, participants identified challenges with regards to the implementation of this initiative.

Specifically, Mrs Carter (F, GH) pointed out that, “because the pack [referring to the remedial pack for progressed learners] was meant to go back to Grade 11 work to help him redo it all over again but he didn’t show up for a single lesson”. None of the learners identified the provision of a remedial pack in their responses presenting the possibility that the learners did not consider the remedial packs as particularly useful. Academic support was, however, referred to in relation to discussing past examination papers and approaches to tackling examination questions as Sam (M, Gr 12) referenced:

Every time after a lesson I just go to her and ask questions about things I didn’t understand on the past papers so I’d ask her with a group of my friends and we would actually analyse the questions and she would say don’t view it this way, she actually used to show us how to answer the question.

Educators highlighted the use of goal setting for progressed learners in Grade 12. Academic targets were reportedly set by progressed learners and reviewed termly with the Grade Head and Principal. The goal setting forms were reportedly given to learners within normal class time although educators stated that the dissemination of forms was done discreetly so progressed learners were not labelled as such. In reviewing the goals one of the educators said, “We’d given them all these forms to write down their goals and what strategies and then they’d see that the targets they had written they had not met.” (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD). Educators noted discomfort amongst progressed learners to this initiative which they suggested stemmed from the completion of the forms in class with other learners and that they would perhaps have preferred to complete these in private. Another educator suggested that this discomfort arose from embarrassment as progressed learners were being potentially singled out as having progressed through the issuing of the goalsetting forms within the classroom setting. For example, (Mr Siya, M, HOD) noted that, “...other friends wouldn’t support them instead this would be a joke so this is something that needed to be hidden”. Whilst the goals were reviewed

each term, in a meeting with the Grade Head and Principal, no additional support measures were instituted other than to emphasise the current support measures available to learners. Educators reported that they made an effort not to single out progressed learners or label them as such in class. However, they felt that it would be far easier to provide the requisite level of support to progressed learners if they were able to engage with them individually in class, and give additional assistance. However, as the emphasis was on ensuring progressed learners were not labelled, to avoid potential stigmatisation, progressed learners were reportedly never singled out within a group or class.

4.2.2.2 Formal Department of Basic Education/District initiated support measures

The support measures referred to in the responses with reference to DBE were an extra lesson programme (Second Chance Programme) and Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO). The Department of Basic Education mandates each province to run an extra lesson programme for progressed learners in Grade 12 and details of this programme in terms of dates and location are issued in the form of a circular at the beginning of each school year. The school is required to provide this information to Grade 12 progressed learners (KZN Circular 73 of 2018, DBE).

Most of the educators who participated in this study referred to the initiative of extra lessons provided by DBE in terms of their dissemination of information to Grade 12 progressed learners. Progressed learners were apparently informed of the Second Chance programme whereby the District offers extra lessons. While discussing the DBE extra lesson programme Mrs Yolo remarked that, “We do direct them to the centres because remember the department also have centres that accommodate them” (F, HOD). Mrs Carter recounted a comment from a progressed learner that attended the DBE extra lesson programme in which she said that the learner had attended these scheduled extra lessons but the designated educator was absent and she had said, “I went there in Lamontville there was no teaching” (F, GH).

Another DBE initiated support measure referenced in participant responses is the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) for progressed learners in Grade 12, more commonly referred to in schools as ‘modularisation’. One educator referred to modularisation as a “loophole” (Mrs Carter, F, GH) that the DBE had provided to progressed learners with the result that learners only focused on the subjects they would be writing within that year and did

not make use of the resources or extra lessons for those subjects learners planned to write examinations in the following year. “When I’d ask him he already had the mind-set that he was only going to do three subjects – four exams and not do the rest.” Another educator found that progressed learners who had ‘modularised’ often did not complete matric and she cited the reason for this as the belief by learners that they should only focus on those subjects which they would be required to write exams for first. In her experience, she said that learners would cite the reason for not focusing on all subjects as, “I will do it in my next year which never happen.” (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD). Another educator expressed similar concerns with a modularised learner who did not appear to understand the stipulations of MEO requiring one to complete the tasks and assessments for all seven subjects in the first year of the programme. As a result the learner failed to comply with the stipulations, “... because he was not going to write Maths Literacy final NSC examination at the end of that year, he ended up refusing to come and write the last test.”(Mr Siya, M, HOD).

4.2.2.3 Informal school and learner initiated support measures

In addition to the formal support measures implemented through the school or the DBE a number of informal support measures were identified by participants.

Informal academic support provided by educators took the form of consultation periods and academic assistance not prescribed by the school. This support measure was not a planned initiative by the school or educators but the learners referred to this form of support frequently in their responses. One of the learner respondents said that educators would encourage learners to consult outside of designated class time and would even encourage them to consult during break and ask for assistance around aspects of curriculum they didn’t understand. For example, Siphso (M, Gr 10) said that, “...if I need help in a subject I can go to any teacher and ask them and they not like busy, they say ‘ok what’s the problem, can I help you?’. Learners felt that educators were supportive and available to discuss academic challenges learners were facing highlighted by both Siphso and Sarah. Sarah stated that, “Mrs ‘XYZ’ actually tells you look right now this is your mark, right now this is what you should aim for next term, looking at the positive parts she tells you now this is what you must do.” (F, Gr 12).

Educators also stated that they would identify suitable tutors by encouraging high achieving learners to assist progressed learners in a particular subject:

I found out that “Lungile” who was progressed in my class stays next door to “Lihle” yet the one is an A student, the other one - the same subject - battling. I said to “Lihle” if she can once in a while assist – they did it for a while but I don’t know for how long (Mr Siya, M, HOD).

Educators were, however, unable to comment on the efficacy of this support measure.

Whilst all the support measures noted took place within the school environment, not all were exclusively facilitated by educators. One of the learners referred to support from peers in the form of a mathematics group during break in which learners would communicate regarding problem areas. For example, Siphon remarked that, “... at break sometimes we got our own Maths group that we go and discuss different questions that were hard and whatever and the student who understands it explains to us this is how you do it and the method you use.” (M, Gr 10). This support measure could be labelled as peer tutoring although the facilitation thereof was informal and the tutor was reported to rotate according to content competency.

Another informal support measure included learner initiated WhatsApp groups³ reportedly used to communicate on classwork, subjects, posting of exam papers and links to useful academic resources. Learners felt the WhatsApp groups were particularly helpful from an academic standpoint. One participant suggested that the WhatsApp group assisted with preparation for examinations and access to additional academic resources:

Most of the time we used to talk on WhatsApp, post assignments, post past papers, post books we haven’t read before we’d even open like before it was even first term or before second term we were like summarising, talking about it on WhatsApp so when school opened then we knew what Mrs XYZ was talking about, what our teachers were talking about basically about the book. (Sarah, F, Gr 12)

Educators also reportedly encouraged WhatsApp groups as academic support with one learner saying, “...we should have our friends and peers to support us because she [the educator] doesn’t want anyone staying behind.” (Siphon, M, Gr 10). It is not possible to ascertain the

³ WhatsApp groups are a group chat feature set up with multiple participants on a cellular/mobile phone which allows members in the group to send messages to multiple contacts so this is essentially a text conversation (Nitza & Roman, 2016).

efficacy of this support measure in improving academic performance but the responses from learner participants suggest that this support measure was viewed positively.

4.2.3 Key role players

This section focuses on the role of educators, together with the influence of peers and family as facilitators or barriers for progressed learners in their efforts to advance academically. The responses of the progressed learners and educators have been divided into three subthemes: role of educators; role of family; *and* role of peers.

4.2.3.1 Role of educators

All learners acknowledged the positive role educators played within the educational setting. Their role was crucial in ensuring learners remained focused and motivated in their progressed year. Siphon referred to educators as influential and supportive when he said, By the way they treated me basically by their influence, the way they talk to me it's like they my mother they tell me that if you do this you can actually get what you want you know this is like the only time you ever get what you want then I would understand that this person is acting more than just a teacher, she actually wants me to achieve more than what I've achieved. (M, Grade 10)

Senzo's description mirrored that of Siphon's in relation to the support provided by educators highlighted in the quote below:

They did everything they could. It's like an ongoing process like no matter what I won't give up on the person. That's what I mean. Because if I'm honest by Grade 9 the cup should have been full. When a person says I did everything I could it was apparent in the sense that it was throughout the whole high school career. There was never a point at which I felt they have abandoned me, never. (M, Gr 12)

Educators played, what learners described as a "motherly" role. The use of the words "more than just a teacher" suggested that educators went above and beyond learner expectations whilst ensuring the classroom was a supportive and enabling environment.

One participant attributed the role of the educator in her progressed year as being the "most important role" (Sarah, F, Gr 12) whilst another recalled an educator making telephonic contact when absent and encouraging him to return to school, "They would actually make a call if I

am not at school, they would call and actually support me...” (Sam, M, Gr 12). Whilst learners described educators as supportive they acknowledged that they had to take ‘tough’ stances highlighted in the following statement, “ ... the teachers show you love even though they can be tough at times but it’s all out of love so I would say it’s a nice school to attend.” (Sarah, F, Gr 12) with another learner stating, “... she [the educator] became very upset with me because at some point she thought I wasn’t living up to the potential I had – that was her anger” (Senzo, M, Gr 12).

The role of educators as stipulated in the progression policy is to implement support measures/interventions to address learning barriers for progressed learners (DBE 2015a).

Whilst the learners’ predominant view was that educators were supportive, educators expressed frustration at progressed learners not having met promotion requirements. Educators felt that learners adopted a negative attitude to their progressed year. One educator reported that progressed learners displayed an “I don’t care attitude” (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD). If a learner had been absent the onus was on the educator to ensure the learner caught up stating that, “... when they are back you are the one that has to go and follow up and say but you are back at school today – why did you not come to me”. Another educator echoed this view indicating, “Getting to the next grade and doing nothing or little.” and “... in some cases we have had learners that are progressed who should not have been progressed but could pass on their own if they just put in the work” (Mrs Yolo, F, GH).

Educators expected progressed learners to increase their level of effort expended on schoolwork, to illustrate their commitment to academic improvement in their progressed year. One educator pointed out that progressed learners had not proceeded to the next grade on “merit” and therefore “should have to work extra harder than most kids” (Mr Siya, M, HOD). Another educator concurred with this level of expectation stating that progressed learners should “do more” but suggested that perhaps the learner’s attitude was that they “felt they didn’t need to do anything” (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). Educators felt that progressed learners needed to show initiative to engage with educators to “want to know what is it that I missed that you can help me with so I make sure that I can stay consistent in this year that I have been afforded” (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). Educators expected progressed learners “to work hard, I expect them to be at school and show effort at all times” (Mrs Carter, F, GH).

Most of the educators described their relationship with progressed learners negatively. One educator participant described their view of supporting progressed learners as “frustrating” (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD) whilst another implied a level of frustration with the perceived lack of effort. “Yes they getting weekend support but in the week that doesn’t mean you must not do the basics because if you do what every other normal child is doing you will also be very close to passing...” (Mr Siya, M, HOD). These sentiments affirm the general view of educators that the level of effort of progressed learners was sub-optimal and insufficient to achieve an adequate academic outcome at the conclusion of the progressed year.

4.2.3.2 Role of family

Family was identified as playing a crucial role in ensuring learners were successful in their progressed year. The expected role of family was seldom academic, but rather to play a supportive role and show interest in their child’s academic progress.

Learners’ experiences of family support were mixed. In two situations where learners were not living with parents – with one learner living in a tertiary student commune whilst the other was living with a religious leader - they viewed telephonic contact from parents as supportive. “My mom called me during my final exams to wake me up in the morning to make sure I go to school to write my exam” (Senzo, M, Gr 12) and “She always calls me almost every day to check up on me and see how I’m doing and if I’m able to do the work at school and on how the education is.” (Sam, M, Gr 12).

Learners did generally feel that parents could play a more substantive supportive role with study participants expressing discontent with the lack of involvement as indicated by Sarah when she commented on the poor monitoring of homework and lack of communication with the school, “The thing is, the thing that really bothers me is that they never really take time to check our homework, check this and that whether we doing good in school, they don’t actually come and visit our schools ...”(Sarah, F. Gr 12).

Learners expressed a desire for parents to communicate with the school to get an understanding of the challenges they faced but also in an effort to play a more meaningful role in assisting them throughout the year. Learners felt that their family had insufficient contact with the school

to discuss academic performance or to acquire an understanding of the current educational requirements and criteria or how they could provide support. One participant's response to family communicating with the school was "They don't at all" (Sarah, F, Gr 12). Other participants affirmed this lack of communication. "They don't really communicate often with the school only maybe if there is a problem or something is wrong with me then the school phones them" (Sipho, M, Gr 10). Learners also cited challenging family dynamics which affected them, with one learner citing the absence of his mother as a factor that adversely affected him when he said, "I don't live with my mom so ja it's very hard to live without a mom and don't have mother love and stuff like that" (Sipho, M, Gr 10).

Educators also felt that family played an integral role in assisting progressed learners but raised concern over their perceived lack of involvement. All educators suggested parental involvement was minimal. One participant characterised progressed learners having a "lack of parental support" (Mr Siya, M, HOD). Another educator described the role of family as offering "very little support". Concern was also expressed that in the absence of parental support, it could lead to progressed learners believing that no one "really cares about what's happening, already they under the pressure that they repeating and if no one's helping them they become even more despondent" (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD). Educators did acknowledge that the lack of parental support was not only confined to progressed learners, but learners in general. Educators felt that families expected schools to "do magic to make their kid pass irrespective of what the learner may need they just drop off and that's how it is" (Mrs Carter, F, GH). Two educators pointed out that in their experience to date, there had been no attempt by parents to contact the school or to track the academic performance of progressed learners, stating, "there was not a time when the parents contacted us – we were the ones that were contacting them all the time" (Mr Siya, M, HOD) and "no parent has ever come to say can I see teacher X before - to see how they are doing" (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD).

Educators expected family to support learners through greater involvement and provision of additional learning resources in the progressed year. One educator expressed that "... parents need to make sure that they do come to school and they provide the necessary material which is extra and above what the school can provide in order to help them" (Mrs Carter, F, GH). Educators did however acknowledge that parents may not be in the position to provide the support that these progressed learners required, "We must face the reality that most of these learners also have uneducated parents so they can't literally give the kids support as in helping

them with schoolwork” (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). This sentiment was held by another educator who further suggested that the parents relied solely on the school and educators to provide the requisite support to these progressed learners and said that, “parents end up being lead by the school as to what must be provided as extra, they don’t give their own extra lessons or get study guides and so forth” (Mr Siya, M, HOD).

Learners also stressed the limited role parents could play in providing academic support with one learner describing parent assistance in only one subject (isiZulu), “Basically my mom helps me with isiZulu” (Sarah, F, Gr 12). Another learner noted that while his parents were unable to assist him academically, they provided support to the learner through facilitating assistance from other family members, “ ... she tried, by all means, to make sure that my sister and brother support me because she saw they were doing well academically so she saw them as a resource to possibly fill me in or stand in the gap wherever she wasn’t able to because she wasn’t as clued up in certain areas of learning” (Sam, M, Gr 12).

4.2.3.3 Role of peers

Progressed learners’ suggested peers could play a positive role in offering support and ensuring academic improvement. Learners provided a number of examples of peers providing support. “...we would come here early in the morning just to revise and to make sure that we would pass” (Senzo, M, Gr 12).

Other learners identified the supportive role their class played in “... a class that becomes a team type situation” (Sam, M, Gr 12) and “we actually motivate each other into doing our school work and we make sure that we finish our assignments and if we need help we ask each other” (Sarah, F, Gr 12). One of the learners struggled significantly with medical issues and described how his classmates provided support during his absences by keeping him abreast on material covered in class with this level of support being both emotional and covering the practical aspects of academic content covered at school during his absence , “... they would tell me what to do at home – my schoolwork what they did that day and help me with what I’m struggling with” (Sam, M, Gr 12).

Learners did, however, identify negative peer influences and pressure that they encountered. These negative peer influences ranged from friends engaged in substance abuse and truancy to peer influences within the community. Siphon cited an example of a friend who he described as

a potential negative influence, “Some of my friends say no school, um even another boy was on drugs and stuff like that, he’s a DJ – my best friend he used to say come let’s go to the clubs” (M, Gr 10).

Learners cited further examples of negative peer influences within their communities.

I live in an environment or place where there’s drugs, crime and a lot of stuff, stealing, dropping out of school and even as I’m coming to school, every day there’s always boys sitting on the corner – they smoking, they stealing (Sipho, M, Gr 10).

Sarah affirmed the influence of peers in the community as a demotivating aspect:

The negative part about it is like a lot of my friends didn’t finish school. They stopped in like Grade 9 and Grade 10 then you know most of them are in my neighbourhood and it discouraged me knowing I am sitting with people that don’t actually view education the way I do because they left school at an early age because it wasn’t helping them (F, Gr 12).

Learner responses illustrated that whilst peers within the school environment are a potential source of support, peers within the community setting can conversely have a negative impact on their lives.

Educators held largely unfavourable views of peers as positive support mechanisms.

In this regard, educators believed that retention was preferable to progression as it allowed learners who had negative peer influences an opportunity to change their friendship group and potentially improve their academic performance as “... they continue with those same friends that they had from the year before who are also not contributing positively to their lives.” (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). Another educator concurred in saying that, “It’s only with the not promoted learners that they are left behind and now having to find new friends that I’ve seen a change...” (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD). Another educator also referred to supporting the positive impact of retention instead of progression when she said that, “It only works for the not promoted learners who end up leaving those friends because it’s hard to move from a circle of failures to a circle of achievers...” She also cited a specific example of a learner who had been retained, changed their friendship group and subsequently improved their academic performance.

So with the child who was not promoted last year she became better this year because her choice of friends was what changed and she became friends with new learners from Grade 8 who were high achievers so because of that, because they don't know her history as well, that's how she improved. (Mrs Carter, F, GH).

This was further emphasised by another educator who noted that learners tend to group themselves according to their academic performance.

And then the 50s and 60s would be their own friends and then the 70 to a 100 will also be so for that class of friends so failure is accepted so it then becomes quite negative. If you fail they will say ah next time you will do better so that's where it ends (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD).

4.2.4 Challenges in supporting progressed learners

Educator responses noted concerns around the application of the progression criteria as a systemic challenge, with support measures only targeting Grade 12 progressed learners; and a lack of viewing progressed learner needs individually. Learner responses focused on the barriers they or other progressed learners encountered during the progressed year and what they perceived as support deficits.

4.2.4.1 Systemic challenge - progression policy

Educators raised concerns regarding the application of progression criteria that meant learners were able to take advantage of the system resulting in inadequate commitment or effort expended - safe in the knowledge that progression was a predetermined outcome. The educators viewed this as a flaw in the system with one participant saying that, "they know if they don't make it this year then automatically the next year you will be progressed to the next grade" (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). Another educator concurred by saying, "they know the rules, also start not working as hard as they should be because they know that we push them through eventually" (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD).

Another educator affirmed this view suggesting that knowledge of the progression policy resulted in learners placing less emphasis on schoolwork even when learners are academically capable.

I also think, for progressed learners, especially because of the knowledge that they have in Grade 10 and 11 that once they've repeated more than once they have to be progressed to the next grade and so forth they tend not to have such a high interest in

their schoolwork and in some cases we have had learners that are progressed who should not have been progressed but could pass on their own if they just put in the work (Mr Siya, M, HOD).

One participant referred to the progression criteria as a “loophole” for learners provided by the DBE. As referenced above the knowledge of the application of progression criteria is described as having a major influence on the academic performance of progressed learners and Mrs Yolo attributed the lack of effort expended on work by progressed learners saying, “If they [DBE] want so many loopholes then we won’t have quality work that they will know what effect progressing learners has but because of the loopholes learners are not working to that potential” (F, HOD).

4.2.4.2 Systemic challenge - homogenous application of progression criteria

The progression policy criteria are applied methodically in determining whether a learner is progressed to the next grade or retained in their current grade. Criteria are thus expected to be applied in a homogenous manner based on the specificity of stipulated criteria to determine candidates for progression. According to educators the progression policy has as a result also influenced the support measures provided to progressed learners without consideration of the specific individual needs or factors

Educators suggested that personal problems and individualised approaches need to be considered in ensuring effective support for progressed learners. Educators acknowledged that due to the fact that progressed learners’ individual circumstances and factors were not taken into account, when determining eligibility for progression, adequate or appropriate support structures were not provided to progressed learners, an educator cited a specific instance when it was found that a learner had failed and was progressed due to factors other than academic competence but in spite of this knowledge there was no support provided to assist in this regard, “I think often we find out that the learner was progressed or repeated because of the home environment but we don’t do anything like involve social workers in terms of making that environment change” (M, HOD).

Most of the educators cited instances in which particular incidents or circumstances had led to progression which were not addressed. One educator spoke about a learner writing a letter about domestic circumstances which had impacted his academic performance.

...so he actually wrote a letter and he said that the reason that he couldn't do his work properly was because his father had left them last year so he said that he was very angry and that's why he couldn't concentrate on school work... (Mrs Carter, F, GH). A learner also highlighted an instance in which circumstances lead to his progression. In this particular instance, the death of a family member resulted in absenteeism and truancy.

I never even had time to study because my gran passed away and there were the funeral arrangements. I never used to come to school more often and even if I don't come to school sometimes I just bunk, sometimes I stay at home and stuff like that (Sipho, M, Gr 10).

The need to determine the circumstances that lead to progression was further emphasised by another educator who illustrated the failure to determine individual academic needs of progressed learners.

Yes especially the learners from special schools – we are just expecting that if they move on to the next grade they must cope but we are not looking at the source of the problem that this learner was moved from a special school to a mainstream school at a time when they were not ready – and the thing is our kids are tired, it's hard for us to then find another way to find some sort of assistance from that special school to assist this child with the specific need they have (Mrs Carter, F, GH).

Another educator suggested that undiagnosed learning difficulties potentially impacted on a progressed learners academic performance. The educator noted that,

Her [the learner's] problem was not that she didn't do the work because even though she did come there was a mental factor because if there was a point in time that we could see that we have progressed this learner so much it's just that we need that learner to be tested – is there an alternative institution that we can send the learner to because the academic side – this academic thing is not going to work – this is a good child, she comes to school, she does the work (Mrs Yolo, F, HOD).

This participant also discussed a learner that had been placed in a mainstream school after coming from a special needs school. She remarked that the mainstream environment was not conducive to assist the learner academically and as a result he [the learner] failed repeatedly and had to be progressed.

We [the school] realised that he's not ready for mainstream schooling and that's why they've been progressed throughout high school and the parent even though they've given the child extra lessons, it's clear the child is in the wrong type of school and we end up having to progress the child after he's repeated so many times.

The educator also noted that the parent too acknowledged the difficulties her child faced academically. However, due to financial constraints and lack of access to additional resources and assistance she had no other option but to place her child in a mainstream school,

...he's just got too many problems and she feels he's in the wrong school but because of the system she cannot afford to take him herself to a special school and the special school granted him ready for mainstream schooling so there was nothing she could do."

(Mrs Yolo, F, HOD)

One of the learners highlighted the need for educators to interact with progressed learners one-on-one to develop an understanding of individual needs academically and personally. "A personal session with a teacher would help the learner to say what is really troubling the learner and would be able to say which sections he can't do and what problems he has."(Sam, M, Gr 12).

Other educators affirmed the need to determine the individual factors impacting on progressed learners' academic performance suggesting,

... that counselling aspect needs to be strengthened especially with social workers. I think that it's a situation where we say it's a must if you have failed, if you have been progressed you must be referred for special sessions with a counsellor so that the underlying situation not just the academic aspects can be picked up (Mr Siya, M, HOD).

4.2.5 Additional suggested support measures

4.2.5.1 Formalisation of support measures

One of the concerns raised by educators was that support measures were targeted at Grade 12 progressed learners with only sporadic application to progressed learners in other grades. One educator suggested progressed learners in other grades were under the "radar" (Mr Benjamin, M, HOD). Educators accepted that they needed to formalise support measures for all progressed learners through remedial lessons and exercises being more structured and targeting

specific learner needs, with another educator suggesting that all progressed learners should be more closely monitored.

I think to add on overall maybe that tracking system should also be introduced for Grade 10s and 11s. Because we focus a lot on Grade 12s and at some point I think this should be at other levels too (Mr Siya, M, HOD).

A number of suggestions were made by learners with regards to potential additional support measures for progressed learners. One participant referred to access to a study environment after hours. “I think more schools should be open to learners so that they can come and study.” and an increased understanding of examination components and questioning levels as indicated by, “I only understood how exams worked in matric. I didn’t understand how the exams were marked, how these questions were upper level, middle and lower I didn’t understand that, I only knew that there’s hard questions and easy questions” (Sarah, F, Gr 12).

4.2.5.2 Alternative pedagogical approaches

Pedagogical approaches in schools vary, with some strategies more effective and appropriate than others. Learner participants made reference to individual needs or circumstances affecting their academic performance, which could be addressed through the use of alternative pedagogical approaches.

One of the participants spoke about concentration difficulties. “What I think I would have liked to understand from an early age, how I wish I had understood this in Grade 1 is that it is clear that I have an attention disorder” and that his preferred method of learning was not addressed or accommodated in the learning environment. He identified his preferred learning style, which he said was not accommodated by saying, “If every day I was taught in a classroom that everything was just put in audio”. He also expressed frustration that the school did not adopt varied pedagogical approaches when he stated, “I don’t understand how we can neglect something like this because you teach us because you can’t expect learners to sit in a classroom and learn in one way” (Senzo, M, Gr 12).

Another participant referred to the role of educators in providing varied approaches to teaching subject content.

People should come up with fun ways of teaching so we could actually embrace it because just learning notes is too tiring because sometimes we don’t understand things

the way other people understand things, some people see it in one view and other people see it in another view and sometimes I think we need the teacher to show us that this is not the only way (Sarah, F, Gr 12).

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the findings arising from the analysis of the data. The focus of the research was to examine the experiences of progressed, FET learners and perceptions of educators tasked with supporting them. The identified themes were guided by the two research questions namely, support measures implemented in the year of progression at the school selected for this study, the role of various key players in relation to their impact and influence on academic performance within the progressed year, and finally identifying challenges or perceived support deficits from the perspective of both the progressed learner and educator. The findings presented in Chapter 4 will be explained and discussed in Chapter 5 with close reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter discusses the results with links to relevant South African and international literature. Bandura's (1986) SCT, outlined in Chapter 2, influenced the design of the study and the findings will be framed using the theory and within the parameters of the two research questions.

The first section of Chapter 5 will focus on the theoretical approach to this study as it was used to identify and understand the contexts that impact on progressed learners and the perceived level of support provided by support measures implemented within their progressed year. Bandura's (1986) theory posits an interplay of personal, behavioural and environmental influences that impact on behaviour, and that a person both shapes, and is shaped, by his/her actions and environment. Bandura refers to this bi-directional influence as triadic reciprocity (Bandura, 1977a, 1986). With reference to SCT this study highlights the behavioural and personal processes which underpinned the approaches educators used in supporting progressed learners, as well as the key environmental processes that influence the learners' receptiveness to these support measures, thereby positively or negatively influencing learners' engagement with and perceived efficacy of support measures on improved academic performance. The extent to which these contexts impact the experience of support measures for progressed learners will be determined through engagement with the findings from Chapter 4 and with reference to relevant literature. The research findings present varied perspectives of the support measures provided in the progressed year and it is evident that the experiences of learners and educators are impacted on by personal, environmental and behavioural influences.

5.2 Discussion of Main Themes According to Research Questions

5.2.1 Identified support measures targeting progressed learners and perceptions of participants

The responses from educators suggest that support measures, provided by both the school and the DBE have had a limited positive impact. Educators were critical of the quality of the interventions provided by them and the DBE, suggesting little effect on improving the academic performance of progressed learners. These sentiments were affirmed by learners stating that these formal support measures were ineffective, not largely due to the content of

the intervention, but rather due to problems with the way these interventions had been implemented. The progression policy articulates that learners should have access to support measures but fails to provide guidance on the way these interventions should be designed and delivered. These formal support measures created frustration for both the educator and the learner.

One of the examples referred to in the progression policy as a support measure is the provision of extra lessons. However, the policy does not provide detail regarding the form or focus this intervention should take (DBE, 2012). The study site provided extra lessons for progressed learners, yet the educators raised problems with regards to learner receptivity to this support measure whilst learners failed to identify extra lessons as offering any sort of measurable assistance. Literature suggests that extra lessons could be effective provided the purpose emphasises remedial intervention and strengthens achievement (Cooper et al, 2000 in Jimerson et al, 2006). Jimerson et al (2006) further caution that an absence of a strong remedial component could result in a lack of effectiveness of such a support measure. The lack of support for the extra lesson programme from progressed learners seems to indicate that they see little value in this intervention in its current format. With learners seeing little value in extra lessons, commitment to this intervention is likely to be poor, with educators affirming that learner attendance rates were low.

The DBE also offered extra lessons throughout the District as a support measure for progressed learners and for Grade 12 candidates who had failed the previous year. In this study, the only information provided to the school on support measures is the Second Chance programme of the DBE, which consisted of face-to-face lessons on specified subjects at varied locations within the district (KZN Circular 73 of 2018, DBE). Although a number of support measures by DBE are referenced in Chapter 2, the school was only informed of the extra lesson programme for progressed learners in Grade 12. Whilst the DBE 'Second Chance' Programme refers to a number of additional support measures in the form of websites, electronic resources, radio, and television broadcasts details of these were not provided to the school nor did any of the learners reference any DBE initiated measures as providing support. The extra lessons provided by the District as part of the 'Second Chance' programme were also largely reported to be ineffective. All progressed learners were reported to have been informed of the availability of extra lessons with only one learner attending only to report that the educator was

not on site to deliver instruction. As referred to in the Guideline 2015 Policy document, the core concepts of the curriculum in each subject area to be determined and support should focus on these aspects of the curriculum in remediation for progressed learners (DBE, 2015b). Educators should, however, take into consideration varied learning styles and the needs of learners and apply alternative pedagogical approaches to address this. The effectiveness of pedagogy takes into account the subject matter, the diverse needs of learners, classroom context, and the surrounding context (UNESCO, 2017). It should be considered that whilst lessons are being provided the learners may not be receptive to the pedagogical approach in these lessons and therefore alternative teaching forms should be explored.

It is also likely that the identification of barriers to learning, and the application of effective remedial / support measures is not in the existing skillset of many educators. Therefore, intensive training on intervention and prevention programmes for poor-performing learners will need to be a priority of the DBE and schools if this is to be addressed adequately (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012). Training is an integral part of effective support measures and the approach with educators should not be that they are expected to submit to training, which is the researcher's general experience of educator attitudes to workshops, but rather that such training is going to assist them in addressing needs and therefore improve academic performance and reduce academic difficulties in the classroom. Training is something that is being done for them – not to them.

The MEO is another support measure implemented by the DBE. However, this support measure was met with much criticism by educators. The MEO is largely viewed as a strategy by the DBE to increase the matric pass rate by reducing the number of progressed learners writing the final examinations, suggesting the MEO is a mechanism to manipulate the pass rate of a school (Kika & Kotze, 2018). Schafer (2019) also points out that the final results of MEO candidates have not been released since its implementation in 2017 with certain media outlets implying that the DBE is withholding this information, making it difficult to ascertain whether this support measure for progressed learners results in their eventual attainment of a matric pass. The findings from this study indicate that educators found that learners who have registered for the MEO, thus choosing to modularise, do not return in June to complete their remaining examinations. Whilst the intention of the MEO was to relieve academic pressure on progressed learners and allow additional time for remediation, high failure rates and low levels of learners

returning to complete their examinations suggest this support measure has proven unsuccessful.

This support measure is expected to be discontinued by the DBE in 2020.

Circular no. 44 of 2018 provided a suggested approach to schools in implementing the progression policy. The circular detailed responsibilities of schools in determining which learners should be progressed, the form and frequency of communication with learners and parents, and the procedure to be undertaken in implementing progression. (DBE, 2018) This was not a directive but a suggested approach and whilst it raised a number of relevant areas to consider in applying the policy it does not provide clear, substantiated, evidence-based practice to assist schools in effective application. This is another area, which could be considered in assisting schools with the implementation of policy in line with its intentions.

The school in this study had implemented goal setting as a support measure. Appelbaum and Hare (1996) support the use of goal setting as impacting positively on improved academic performance. Goal setting, as a means of working towards achievable goals and the achievement of set goals, could potentially result in an increase in an individual's self-efficacy and subsequent academic performance (Davids, 2015). However, the findings suggest that although the support measure may have been successful elsewhere, learners and educators in this study propagate the intervention as achieving sub-optimal results, potentially due to the fidelity of implementation. The educators in the study stated that learners were required to set goals and suggest their own strategies to attain these goals independently, with these goals seldom met. The setting of targets in itself was an opportunity to provide individualised support for progressed learners. However, with the targets individualised and the support measures homogenous there is a lack of alignment between the two. There is thus a mismatch between what learners require and request, and what the school is willing, or able, to provide.

The responses from learners centred largely on informal support measures in contrast to the educators who focused on those formal support measures administered by the school. One such informal support mechanism was peer mentoring, which learners found useful. Evaluative research into the benefits of peer mentoring within schools is still relatively limited and is mainly drawn from the US and UK. In the South African context peer mentoring has been researched at tertiary level with positive results (Du Preez, Steenkamp & Baard, 2013). Van der Meer and Scott (2009) stated that academic peer mentoring programmes could assist a

student's comprehension of difficult academic concepts in an informal and supportive environment. In this study, a progressed learner was assigned a peer mentor in a particular subject. This was an informal arrangement facilitated by an educator. Whilst the research referred to above suggests such programmes are potentially beneficial in improving academic performance it is difficult to determine the impact of this support measure from the limited information provided in this study. Further research is required to determine the most suitable structure of such an arrangement in order to maximise the value for the progressed learners, or more broadly, any learner struggling in a particular subject.

WhatsApp groups were also identified as a support mechanism by a number of learners. Cetinkaya (2017) highlighted that appropriate use of technology could have the potential to improve academic results through ease of access to academic resources and assistance, whilst group interaction on a particular subject or project could support weaker learners within a group dynamic. Smit (2012) affirmed that these applications have the potential to improve learning outcomes. Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education implemented a cellphone application (the funda app) in June 2018 for all Grades with learning resources freely available on all android devices. However, the selected resources, the number of learners that have accessed the app, and the efficacy thereof are yet to be determined. Further research is again needed to determine how schools could optimally harness available technology. The appropriate and effective use of technology would need to be ascertained with an awareness of how to limit the unintended effects including distraction and the promotion of negative social behaviour.

A number of informal support measures were raised in the interviews and focus group. These support measures could potentially be considered to be used for other learners as support measures. A review of these could be valuable in strategic planning of interventions in the study site context in the future.

5.2.2 Commitments and expectations of key role players

The roles of educators, peers, and family are significantly influential on the academic performance of progressed learners. Learners were largely positive on the role of their educators and peers in their progressed year whilst the responses relating to parents and guardians suggested that support was lacking within this group. Educators, however, presented an incongruent view of progressed learners that was predominantly negative.

Educators further felt that peers played a negative and even destructive role. Educators did also highlight the lack of support from family. The mixed responses on the support provided by the key role players may have been impacted by the expectations learners and educators had of these respective role players.

Learners provided numerous examples of the supportive, enabling environment created by educators. Stefa (2018) refers to educator support as a learner's belief that educators care about them, value them and establish personal relationships with them, and the subsequent influence on greater expectancies for success. Turner, Chandler and Heffer (2009) suggest that a possible reason for the link between academic improvement and positive educator-learner relationships is based on motivation. The role of motivation in such relationships is supported by a number of motivational theorists (Bandura, 1997; Wentzel, 2003; Zimmerman, Bandura, & MartinezPons, 1992) and the motivation to learn is impacted positively through caring and supportive relationships with educators (Stefa, 2018).

The extent of the support parents or guardians provided to progressed learners was of concern. Parental involvement is defined as a combination of a parent's attitude toward education and school, as well as a parent's willingness to assist in creating a home atmosphere that is conducive to scholastic endeavour (Fan & Chen, 2001). Parental involvement has been consistently linked to greater success amongst students in studies (Fan & Chen, 1999). The findings suggest an expectation of greater support from parents for progressed learners from both the learner and educator. Learners wanted parents to communicate with the school in an effort to acquire an understanding of the status of the learner as having progressed under the progression policy, in the hope of both managing expectations but also to be better placed to provide appropriate support. Educators also felt that parents could play a more supportive role. Whilst educators acknowledged lack of parental involvement could be considered a general malaise of the current educational context, they also conceded that education levels of some parents proved prohibitive in enabling to provide meaningful academic support to their children. Some studies attribute less involvement in learner schooling to low-income families, not knowing how to become involved, and a lack of understanding of the education system (Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999). Fan and Chen (2001) encourage parental involvement, even if only in the form of ensuring homework is completed and attending parentteacher meetings, as even this level of involvement directly impacts on learner outcomes.

Bandura (1989) emphasises the influence of support to contend with conflicting sources of influence. Good social support decreases vulnerability to negative experiences. Academic performance is impacted positively by parental involvement and within the context of Bandura's SCT the environmental and personal influences provided by parental involvement directly impact academic outcomes.

Learners felt that peers in the school context played a supportive role, specifically in relation to academic support. Hymel and Ford (2003) conducted a review of 55 studies and found that positive peer relationships improved academic performance. Peers were also found to be a source of potential influence for school engagement and motivation. Learners did, however, acknowledge that negative peer role models existed within their community setting. Holloway (2004) argues that there is a strong association between community characteristics and student academic achievement and therefore academic improvement initiatives must be holistic in nature to include the community and not just the school. He further cautions against making assumptions that disadvantaged communities adversely affect the academic achievement of school children, as supportive neighbourhoods exist in poor areas as well and have the potential to provide learners with a foundation for academic achievement (Holloway, 2004). As peers influence the development and validation of self-efficacy, poor peer relationships can adversely affect the growth of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Community engagement should be considered in designing support measures both at a school level and for policymakers. In contrast to the learners' views of peers in the school context as largely supportive, educators cited numerous examples of the negative influence and lack of support of peers. They did, however, agree that peers were highly influential in academic performance. A number of educator responses revolved around improved academic performance of learners who were retained, instead of being progressed, and thus changed 'friendship groups' with a resulting positive impact on their results.

5.2.3 Challenges in implementation of the progression policy and support measures

Gale and Densmore (2000) strongly advocate for well-designed interventions that view learners as diverse individuals rather than a group who are deficient. Planning support measures with this in mind recognises that learners are active participants in the learning process. There are a number of barriers impacting on the support measures implemented for

progressed learners. Whilst the participant responses during this study did include some suggestions regarding potential additional support measures, their responses predominantly focused on the systemic challenges and the unintended consequences of the application of the progression policy in schools.

Whilst the intention of the progression policy is to reduce learner drop-out, a number of unintended consequences were identified. One primary concern expressed by the educators was that learners who had already repeated and who were knowledgeable on the application of the progression policy, made little effort to obtain passing grades, safe in the knowledge that they will be progressed the following year. Opponents to social promotion state that “placing students in Grades where they cannot do the work sends the message to all students they can get by without working hard” (Picklo & Christenson, 2005, p. 262). Knight (2014) also raises the concern that learners being progressed due to policy rather than academic competence leads to learners developing a limited mind-set that is accepting of under-achievement. She also highlights that this often results in other learners exhibiting the same type of behaviour without insight into the fact that minimal effort produces minimal results nor that the lack of content knowledge in a grade impacts on competency and academic performance in the following grade. In this study therefore, such judgements may affect progressed learners experiences and beliefs about their capabilities of achieving similar levels of performance. Bandura (1989) argues SCT shows that an individual’s actions and behaviour are guided by observed consequences and as such observed outcomes exert their influence. Bandura (1998) emphasised that learners are not likely to expend effort on an activity that is viewed as devalued. It could thus be argued that a likely consequence of automatic promotion is that learners view of academic effort is devalued.

Many of the educators advocated for grade repetition over progression. They based this on their experiences of progressed learners’ lack of academic improvement, lack of effort and lack of responsiveness to the support measures provided. Educators cited examples of retained learners that engaged in more prosocial peer groups resulting in improved academic performance, and of learners that may have needed longer to grasp the content in that particular year. Whilst neither progression or retention are favoured, it does promote the need to address the underlying issues leading to poor academic performance (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Sylvester, 2014). There are also numerous studies referred to in the seminal findings

of the Ministerial report on grade repetition, which have found that grade repetition is not beneficial in the long term and is linked to high learner drop-out rates (DOE, 2007).

Another concern raised by educators is that progressed learners, particularly in other Grades, are under the ‘radar’. Knight (2014) refers to this concept in social promotion as blending in. The consequence of progressed learners not being a recognisable group within the learner population is that the attention and/or academic assistance they require is not provided. This concern is further affirmed by educators who expressed concern that support measures were often not provided to learners earlier in their school life – resulting in learners continuously struggling with the increasing academic demands as they progress. Learners who are struggling academically, therefore, need to be identified early in order to maximise the effect of remedial programmes. If progressed learners are not identified, and an understanding of their individual needs for support acquired, educators are not in a position to provide the appropriate support. Individual centred support is crucial with the ‘*one size fits all*’ approach not having the desired effect in terms of meeting the specific requirements of the learners and ultimately resulting in sub-optimal academic performances.

The identification of progressed learners in order to provide remediation in class is, however, further complicated by the potential to stigmatise learners. Whilst it is imperative that the specific educational needs of underperforming learners are identified and addressed, in doing so there is the possibility that this could lead to labelling learners. Educators reported ensuring progressed learners were never singled out in class as progressed learners for educational interventions, with the exception of completion of goal setting forms. The educator accounts of progressed learners’ reluctance to complete goal setting forms in class lead educators to the conclusion that progressed learners were concerned about being identified as such and being subjected to negative peer views of their status. The labelling of progressed learners also has an impact on educators underestimating the potential of progressed learners as illustrated by Woodcock and Moore’s (2018) study, which found educators focused on ascribed labels rather than actual student abilities. Their study determined that the tendency was that educators were likely to evaluate the learner according to the learning difficulty and not according to individual potential. Sarrazin (2006) also argued that educators encourage the performance they expect to see showing the limitations labels can result in within the classroom context. Research has shown that providing a label, in this research study ‘progressed learner’, may create a glass

ceiling where learners work to their label and do not exceed it (Hattie, 2009). The metaanalyses conducted by Hattie (2009) resulted in the finding that adults impact significantly on the learning of students and as such it is necessary for educators to have high expectations and avoid a language of labels, ability, and low expectations. According to Hattie (2009) educators should also seek evidence of student responses to their interventions, engage with learners about what success in content is expected, treat errors as learning opportunities, be open to feedback about their impact on learners, and develop a narrative about effort and learning. This issue is something for the DBE and schools to consider in relation to progressed learners in determining if labelling and identifying learners as progressed could potentially result in a lack of commitment to schoolwork and underperformance as alluded to by educators in the research.

A number of educators raised concern over the individual factors that lead to repetition or progression not being taken into account with planned support measures. However, it could be argued that the resources available to educators, and the necessary skills required to make such an evaluation, could be lacking. Educators may be unable to determine the cause of academic struggle and do not have the knowledge of specific interventions and support measures that should be implemented in relation to the identified learner needs. Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) encourage access to school psychologists and other support staff to assist schools in assessing learners and to provide relevant, individual interventions, as well as provide training and guidance to educators and parents. This they argue is the only way schools can make a more informed decision between social promotion or Grade repetition, and also to focus on early intervention with targeted support measures. It is essential to identify and discard support measures that have proven ineffective and focus resources on effective interventions appropriate for the individual learner (American Institutes for Research, 2000; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001 in Jimerson, 2012).

Munje and Maarman (2016) acknowledged that the progression policy was an attempt to maintain a reasonable retention rate and a means of the government achieving its goal of equity and quality education. However, due to the lack of directives in the implementation of strategies the progression policy seems to be currently failing to achieve these goals. The support mentioned in the progression policy does not consider the learner as an individual in relation to their needs and the challenges they face. Munje and Maarman (2016) furthermore draw attention to the fact that the policy's focus is solely on the number of learners proceeding

to the next Grade rather than the means of acquiring content knowledge to equip the learner in the Grade they are progressed into. Stott, Dreyer and Venter (2015) advocated for future research to focus on teaching practice and intervention strategies implemented in lower grades in order to reduce the need for progression policies to be applied at all. This implies that if adequate early intervention is provided in the initial years in the education system, there would be no need to implement a policy like this at all. Teaching practice in the form of alternative pedagogies and appropriate support strategies could potentially circumvent the need for a progression policy.

Anderson, Case and Lam (2001) cite specific factors in the current South African context that contribute to learner underperformance namely, poverty, teacher quality and content knowledge, parental lack of education, and poor management skills of school principals. The progression policy aims to improve the academic performance of underperforming learners by progressing them to the next Grade and then providing sufficient support to address their learning barriers. However, if the specific structural factors cited by Anderson, Case and Lam (2001) are not addressed then the efficacy of support and its subsequent impact on reducing learner Grade repetition is unlikely to be achieved. A policy dictating that support measures be implemented for underperforming learners without changing the environmental conditions is not given an adequate base to succeed.

5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the main findings of the study with reference to relevant literature and the theoretical framework. The research findings support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory in that experiences and the efficacy of support measures are embedded in the realities and contexts with which the progressed learner engages. It is evident that the progression policy has resulted in a number of unintended consequences, which have been unpacked in this chapter. The impact of the varied contexts on the efficacy of the current support measures in this school, and the receptiveness of progressed learners to these was discussed. A number of barriers in implementation of the progression policy were identified.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides an overview of the findings of the research study with reference to the research objectives, summarising the findings of the case study and offers concluding remarks based on the findings. The chapter also presents the limitations of the study, and then concludes with some recommendations for practice and further research.

This research aimed to develop further understanding of progression within the FET phase in relation to the support measures offered to learners and their perceived effectiveness. The specific research objectives were, within the context of the progression policy, to:

- 1). To explore progressed learners' and educators' views of the support measures Implemented within the progressed year and their perceived effectiveness.
- 2). To identify the influence of role players in supporting and impacting on progressed learners' academic performance.
- 3). To gain insight regarding the perceived barriers or challenges to the implementation of the support measures in the progressed year.
- 4). To explore additional possible support measures for progressed learners

This chapter articulates the contribution of this research study to the broader understanding of the impact of progression on both the learner and educator. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented as to how to further advance this research area.

6.2 Purpose and Significance

The consequence of implementing the progression policy was noble in its intention of assisting underperforming learners and reducing learner drop-out. However, whilst the policy itself may have had good intentions, a number of unintended consequences have arisen as a result of its implementation in schools. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests that neither grade repetition or progression (social promotion) is an effective remedy for addressing the individual needs of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning.

This research study aimed to understand the experiences of high school progressed learners and the educators tasked with supporting these learners. More specifically, the study aimed to determine what support measures are available and their perceived effectiveness. The increasing number of progressed learners indicates a need for research to determine what

interventions and strategies are effective in assisting progressed learners in the FET phase in improving their academic performance (Ngoepe, 2016)). The findings in this research thus provide greater insight into the perceived efficacy of support measures for progressed learners within the FET phase. Whilst the efficacy of support measures cannot be determined from this study knowledge of current support measures offered is presented.

The research findings have been presented to the research site in order to reflect and improve on those support measures available to their progressed learners. The research has thus provided the school with synthesised information on what support measures are offered to progressed learners and how these have been received by learners and educators. Qualitative methodologies were used to elicit narratives from progressed learners and educators regarding their experience of progression in relation to the support measures implemented within the progressed year, the influence of varied contexts on academic performance and perceived support deficits. Whilst the progression policy, as it is applied in the FET phase, is relatively new some research has been undertaken in South Africa on the progression policy and the implications thereof. However, no study has specifically focused on progressed learners' experiences and educator views on specific support measures implemented within the South African school context. The existing research in South Africa does not make reference to the support measures provided nor does it consider progressed learners' and educators' experiences and views of the barriers and facilitators impacting on their academic performance.

Progressed learners and educators, within the FET phase, were identified through purposive sampling procedure. Learners were selected based on their having been progressed into and within the FET phase, whilst educators were selected based on their management roles within the FET phase and their supervisory roles in implementing support measures for progressed learners. Semi-structured interview schedules were used to interview progressed learners and a semi-structured focus group discussion schedule was used for the educators. Bandura's SCT was used to theoretically explain the impact of the progression policy on progressed learners because its principles are embedded within the circumstances and contexts the progressed learner interacts in and with. The personal, behavioural and environmental factors underpinning the efficacy of support measures targeting progressed learners were applied to the findings. The previous chapter provided an analysis of the selected theoretical framework showing the congruence of this theory in relation to the research findings.

6.3 Summary of Findings

Considering the research as a whole, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- The progressed learner responses emphasised the support, encouragement and availability of educators but did not identify the formal school support measures initiated as supportive to their academic performance. Informal support measures and peers were viewed by learners as supportive in improving academic performance. Educator responses, however, emphasised the consequences of the progression policy as dissuading progressed learners from expending effort to improve academic results and furthermore made them less receptive to support measures offered.
- Although schools are instructed to provide and implement support to progressed learners the nature of this support is not articulated nor is guidance provided to schools (DBE, 2012). Schools also have to navigate varied contextual environments in an effort to support progressed learners, taking available resources and their own context factors into account (Hartley, 2006). Whilst principals (in communication with the HODs) are tasked with monitoring the support measures provided to progressed learners (Hartley, 2006), there was little evidence of this taking place. Similar findings were found in a study by Munje and Maarman (2016) indicating that the progression policy, within the schools surveyed, was either incorrectly interpreted or ignored with schools implementing support measures in varied and contradictory ways. Kika and Kotze (2018) also argued that different interpretations of the progression policy across the system has resulted in varied implementation in schools. This policy further tasks Districts and Provincial education officials to monitor support measures implemented in schools (DBE, 2012).
- Whilst DBE officials may be tasked to confirm that support measures are being implemented at the school level, it remains unclear as to what guidance or oversight these officials provide schools to ensure that those support measures provided are effective. Although it may be argued that the policy was purposely non-prescriptive in relation to support measures, with schools expected to take their own contexts and realities into account, the absence of empirically supported effective interventions targeted at specific identified learners appears to be resulting in generic, homogenous approaches which are proving largely ineffective in addressing the needs of the progressed learners.

6.4 Study Limitations

Given the contrast in learners' perceived relationships with educators, the researcher had to consider selection bias as a potential limitation in this study. Purposive sampling was used and all progressed learners within the FET phase were invited to participate in the study (Bock, 2018). However, most of the participants who volunteered may have been more open to avail themselves to the researcher for this study due to a positive educator/learner relationship in the past. It is, therefore, possible that the learners who agreed to participate, whilst meeting the study criteria explicitly as progressed learners, may have been engaged in more positive relationships with educators compared with their fellow progressed learners. Educators, on the other hand, may have focused their responses during the focus group discussion on those progressed learners with whom they found it more difficult to support describing them as 'frustrating' and 'non-responsive'. This could account for the incongruence between learner and educator responses.

Contrasting views were provided by educators and learners on support measures with blame apportionment ascribed to the other party by participants. It is therefore difficult to determine the impact of both educators and learners on the support provided by interventions at the research site. Commitment may wane both if the educators are not committed to the provided support measures and the recipient (learner) commitment may also diminish based on the perceived commitment from the educators

A further identified limitation of this research study is that only one school was included in the study. Whilst the specified school consists of participants from various demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds the overview of support measures, the responsiveness of progressed learners to these, and the perceived efficacy of support measures cannot be applied to other schools.

The conclusions drawn need to be viewed with specific reference to the presented literature and the case study. As such the conclusions may be limited in their generalisability and may not be assumed to be a representation of all high schools with progressed learners in the FET phase. However, this research may be considered relatable as an understanding of individual experiences of support measures after being progressed within the FET phase and provide an understanding of the environmental contexts to consider in designing effective support

measures for progressed learners. The findings could also potentially encourage educators and schools to adopt an individualised approach in the design and implementation of support measures.

6.5 Recommendations for support measures

Whilst early intervention and prevention are the first lines of defence in addressing barriers to the learning, the progression policy is being implemented in the final phase of secondary schooling and as such neither early intervention nor prevention is an option. The only alternative is to implement effective support measures to target specific learning barriers. As such, it is necessary to determine what type of support measures are effective for specified barriers and adopt evaluated and effective support measures to this end. Generic approaches to support will not be likely to impact positively on academic performance. Training on the identification of learning barriers will need to be a priority of the DBE and schools if these barriers are to be addressed adequately by educators. Approaches to training in order to obtain the buy-in of educators to perceive the training as a means of improving academic performance and reducing academic difficulties will need to be understood.

There remains little documented evidence on the type of support measures offered to progressed learners within the South African context. This study provides insights into the perceptions of both formal and informal support measures currently implemented and utilised within a school setting. According to Picklo and Christenson (2005) there is no need to provide an argument for or against social promotion, rather the focus should be on preventing academic failure before failure occurs. Intervention strategies structured around social, academic, and behavioural needs are well documented in numerous studies. The key is to identify vulnerable learners and begin an immediate course of intervention targeted at the specific learning barrier. Jimerson et al (2002) emphasises that schools need to be provided with knowledge of empirically proven intervention strategies in order to devise and implement effective support measures for individuals and groups. It is therefore imperative that support measures are evaluated in order for schools to adopt appropriate interventions whilst accounting for their own cultural and contextual conditions. The findings from this study illustrate the interventions provided for progressed learners in one context only, with support focused only on the academic curriculum. Ideally, support measures should be multi-tiered and structured to the specific needs of the individual learners across the classroom, home, and community setting.

The recommendations discussed below provide suggestions of support measures within the school, home and community contexts.

6.5.1 School Support Measures

Strategies addressing underperformance of learners involves improving professional development for educators. Training of educators should focus on methods to teach learners with varied needs, make organizational changes to support intensive learning, plan targeted support, and provide access to services for vulnerable learners (Picklo & Christenson, 2005). Schools should aim to provide a safe and positive environment, one that is caring, with a supportive ethos espoused by educators. Of major importance is that learners who underperform academically be identified early, supported and progress-monitored. Schoolbased Support Teams are tasked with the responsibility to identify these learners, assess and evaluate the barriers and provide support but the difficulties in fulfilling this task have been discussed in Chapter 2. The screening/assessment of learners needs to identify problem areas then goals/objectives need to be set, interventions implemented and progress monitored. Additional classes could be provided for remediation purposes but the format requires review with the possible adoption of alternative pedagogies making learners more receptive to the lesson content. Mentor programmes are also notably effective and these could be considered with peers or as a cross-grade initiative with learners from older grades assigned as mentors for academic and social support.

Support measures in the classroom need to have a focus on individualised instruction (using varied approaches to content), positive behaviour and discipline in the classroom, and progress monitoring. Another effective support measure is goal setting and learners must be adequately trained in order for goal setting to be realistic, practical and meaningful.

Access to technology and reliance on technology is increasing. As it is a largely accessible platform, it is a beneficial means of implementing support measures for learners. These could be in the form of learning apps, access to digital resources that enhance learning, lectures, and podcasts on academic content.

In order to provide appropriate support measures, it is also important to determine if learners have potentially undiagnosed learning disabilities (Barnett, Clarizio & Payette, 1996). Ideally,

schools should have psychologists and other relevant therapists to assist in identifying learning needs and developing support measures. However, in the absence of this level of support, schools should collaborate with remedial schools and psychologists, to ensure educators receive guidance on providing appropriate support. Training should focus on alternative teaching methods, identification of learning and other difficulties, remedial measures to address these and where to access further support if necessary. Intervention and prevention measures should emphasise both academic and socio-emotional development.

The conclusion in the guideline document (DBE, 2015b) dictates that schools must have “clearly enunciated intervention strategies that include an early identification of low achievers or learners at-risk” (p. 6) in order that the schools, district and province can address these “learning deficits” (p. 6). However, from the discussion in this section, it is imperative that schools be capacitated to carry out the functions being stipulated in the policy if effective support is to be provided to vulnerable learners.

6.5.2 Home and Community Support Measures

Family involvement needs to be developed and encouraged to support learning. Support initiatives addressing this could focus on developing good educator/guardian relationships, assisting with access to services, and promoting understanding of how to assist their children academically at home. Communication between school and home should focus on learner activities, goals, and progress.

6.6 Areas for future research

It is imperative that a further evaluation of the support measures offered to learners be conducted, followed by an evidence based strategy to guide schools in the development and delivery of support mechanisms aligned to the contexts in which they operate. An analysis of the support measures currently being implemented for progressed learners and its correlation to the subsequent academic results could be an area of research that could assist in identifying effective support measures within the South African context. Supportive measures should be evidence-based – with an adequate review of these approaches to determine which are effective. Once this is determined the DBE can provide educators with a range of effective interventions to make use of.

6.7 Chapter Summary

In light of the theoretical framework employed in this case study, it is evident that the key role players and the contexts that impact on progressed learners are influential in determining the receptiveness of learners to support measures and its potential to improve academic outcomes. The purpose and significance of the study were provided to understand the reasons for implementation of the progression policy and the intended and unintended consequences thereof. Recommendations for support measures and areas for future research have also been provided.

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Appendices

Appendix A: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education Gatekeeper's Permission



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:24/8/1509

Mrs J.L. George

15 Melesina Avenue
Glenmore
Durban 4001

Dear Mrs George

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAILURE AND SUCCESS: BARRIES AND FACILITATORS IMPACTING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS WITHIN THE FET PHASE"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 21 April 2018 to 09 July 2020.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Brettonwood High School

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 21 April 2018

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE... Twitter: @DBE_KZN... Instagram: kzn_education... Youtube: kzndoe

...Celebrating Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

Appendix B: Information Sheet (Educators and Parents)

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH



INFORMED CONSENT

Information Sheet

Date: _____

Research Project: The difference between failure and success: barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase.

Dear Educator/ Parent or Guardian:

My name is Janet George from University of KwaZulu-Natal (Applied Human Sciences) in Pietermaritzburg. I am enrolled in the Masters Programme as a Student Psychologist. Any queries regarding the proposed study may be addressed using the following contact details:

Email: dbnedu@gmail.com

Phone: 079 300 1509

You are being invited to consider participating in this research study to help us understand, from your perspective, the concept of support as a progressed learner in the FET phase and to understand the challenges you may have experienced that impact on your academic achievement. The aim and purpose of this research is to try and identify what interventions are helpful in supporting progressed learners in order to result in improved academic performance. The study is expected to enroll 5 - 10 learners and 3 - 5 educators in total from [REDACTED] High School on the school premises. It will involve conducting an interview of approximately one hour for each participant.

The study may involve the risk and/or discomfort arising from discussion of incidents, events that may have contributed to underperformance by learners and discussion of

contextual factors that may have contributed to difficulties experienced in curriculum delivery for educators. This study is minimal risk to participants in this regard but in the event that the participant experiences emotional distress the School Counsellor will be available on site for counselling.

I hope that the study will create the benefits of guiding researchers, NGOs and government departments in knowing *where* we should be intervening in adolescents' lives to effect the greatest change for their academic success and wellbeing. The findings of this study will be shared with the participating school as well as with the KZN Department of Basic Education.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number [HSS/0521/018M](#)).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in the interview is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. You can also decide not to answer certain questions that might make you feel uncomfortable. You will not be disadvantaged or penalised should you not want to participate in the study.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study as the interviews will be conducted on site.

If you participate in the study, you will be allowed to participate on an anonymous basis. This means you will not give us your name or any identifying details. We will not share any information you provide us to any third party. The research reports and publications from this study will not reveal any identifying characteristics of those who participated in the study, as, again, we will not collect identifiers such as your name. The recordings from the interviews will be stored in a secure location and only the study researcher will be allowed access to them. After the findings have been included in the dissertation the recordings will be incinerated.

Appendix C: Consent to Participate in Research (Educators)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled “*The difference between failure and success: barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase*” by Janet George.

- I understand the purpose and procedures of the study in conducting of interviews.
- I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.
- I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.
- If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at _____ or on 0793001509.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable I

hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Appendix D: Consent of Parent/Guardian for Child to Participate in Research

CONSENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled “*The difference between failure and success: barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase*” by Janet George.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study in conducting of interviews.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my child/ward’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that he/she is usually entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at _____ or on 0793001509.

If I have any questions or concerns about my child/ward’s rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my child/ward’s interview: YES / NO

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix E: Participant Information Leaflet and Assent Form

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

The difference between failure and success: barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase.

The aim and purpose of this research is to try and find out how schools and the Department of Education can help in supporting progressed learners in order to help them improve their academic performance.

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): JANET GEORGE

CONTACT NUMBER: 079 300 1509

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work.

We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick.

What is this research project all about?

You are being invited to participate in this research study to help us understand, from your own point of view, your understanding of support as a progressed learner in the FET phase and to understand the difficulties you may have experienced that affect your academic results. The aim and purpose of this research is to try and find out how schools and the Department of Education can help in supporting progressed learners in order to help them improve their academic performance.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You have been invited to participate in this research project because you have been progressed into the FET phase. It is important that I am able to speak to progressed learners so that I can understand their experiences in relation to this topic.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Janet George from University of KwaZulu-Natal (Applied Human Sciences) in Pietermaritzburg. I am enrolled in the Masters Programme as a Student Psychologist. I have to complete a dissertation as part of the Masters Programme.

What will happen to me in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study I will need to interview you individually and ask you questions for about an hour.

Can anything bad happen to me?

The study might result in you feeling uncomfortable if you are discussing difficulties or challenges that you have faced that resulted in poor academic performance. However if you do

experience any discomfort or emotions please let your parent/guardian know and the School Counsellor will be available on site for counselling.

Can anything good happen to me?

I hope that the study will create the benefits of guiding your school, researchers, NGOs and government departments in knowing *where* we should be intervening in adolescents' lives to effect the greatest change for their academic success and wellbeing.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Only the Principal and researcher will know your identity. Your participation will be kept confidential and your name will not be published in the dissertation. You will also be interviewed individually so no other participants will be aware of your involvement which further adds to the confidential nature.

Who can I talk to about the study?



In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (0793001509) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows: **Tel: 27 31 2604557**

What if I do not want to do this?

Participation in the interview is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage. You can also decide not to answer certain questions that might make you feel uncomfortable. You will not be disadvantaged or penalised should you not want to participate in the study.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

 YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

 YES NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

 YES NO

I hereby consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded.

Signature of Child

Date

Appendix F: Progressed Learner Interview Schedule

Interview schedule guide for learners - (estimate about 1 hour)

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	
INTERVIEW NO.	
DATE (dd/mm/yy)	

Grade: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Intro/icebreaker

Hello, my name is Janet George. I am an interviewer on the barriers and facilitators for progressed learners. In other words what helps progressed learners perform better academically. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. If it is okay with you, the interview will be voice-recorded. This interview is informal and conversational. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am interested in your thoughts, feelings, and experiences in your own words. Everything we talk about will be kept strictly confidential. We will not mention your name on the tape and it is not written anywhere on my form. You can stop the interview at any time and you may skip questions if you do not want to answer them. Do you have any questions before we begin?

So just before we get started can you tell me what grade you are in?

How are you finding grade ___?

Can you describe your general views or feelings about your school.

Thank you for sharing that.

Question Guide

Environment: social and physical environments (family, friends, educators)	
Primary question	Follow up questions (probes/prompts)
1. What role does your family play in your education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How does your family view your academic performance? b) How important is education to your family? c) What is your family's expectations of you academically? i. d) How does your family support your learning? e) How often does your family/family member contact or communicate with the school? f) What was your family's response to you failing a grade? g) Have your parents/guardians ever been obstructive/stopped/prevented you receiving support or participating in support programme for learners? (reasons?)
2. What role do your friends play in your education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do your friends view your academic performance? b) How important is education to your friends? c) Do your friends have any expectations of you academically? d) How do your friends support your learning? e) Would you consider your friends a positive or negative influence on your academic results? Why? f) How did your friends respond when your failed a grade?

3. What role do your educators/teachers play in your education?	a) How would you describe your relationship with your educators? b) How do you think your teachers view your academic performance? c) How important is education to your teachers? d) What do your teachers expect of you academically? How do they communicate these expectations to you?
	e) How does your school support your learning? f) How often does your school contact or communicate with your family? g) Does the school communicate with or inform your parents/guardians about the type of support that will be provided? h) How often does your school/teachers/teacher discuss your academic performance with you?
4. Are there any aspects in your social environment and school that assist/prevent you from meeting promotion requirements?	a) Family/Friends/School/Community
5. What further support or assistance do you want to receive to help improve your academic results?	a) Family/Friends/School/Community/DBE
6. What further support or assistance do you want to receive to help improve the progressed learner support?	a) Family/Friends/School/Community/DBE
Personal (P): Seeking the cause of human behaviours in dispositional sources in the form of instincts, drives, traits, wisdom, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, self-perception, goals, intentions and other motivational forces within the individual	
Primary question	Follow up questions (probes/prompts)

1. What is your main source of motivation to succeed academically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do you think you are self-motivated? b) Is there a particular person you look up to or aspire to be like? c) Do you rely more on yourself or others to succeed at school?
2. How would you describe yourself in terms of your academic performance at school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What words would you use to describe yourself? b) How do you feel about your academic results/subjects?
3. What goals have you set for yourself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Have you set goals for this year? Explain/describe. b) Can you predict your academic performance this year? c) What type of study/career do you see yourself pursuing in the future? d) How do you feel about the future?
4. In your view what is the reason/obstacles/challenges you have faced as an individual that has resulted in you meeting/not meeting promotion requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Learners who met promotion requirements b) Learners who didn't meet promotion requirements
5. In your view what is the reason for other progressed learners meeting/not meeting promotion requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Focus on other learners
Behavioural (B): Knowledge and skill to perform a given behavior(s)	
Primary question	Follow up questions (probes/prompts)

<p>1. Do you know and understand the assessments, examination requirements and sections of the curriculum for each subject?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pass requirements b) Details/requirements of assignments c) How the term mark/year mark is worked out for each subject d) Do you understand why you didn't meet the promotion requirements when you repeated the year? Explain. e) Main source of support in meeting promotion requirements f) Knowledge of school interventions g) Knowledge/naming other available interventions. h) Do you think you have the necessary knowledge and skill this year to pass or do you think you will be progressed to the next grade?
---	--

This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing all this with me. Some of the questions were quite personal and I appreciate you taking part in this research project that will help us understand how to assist progressed learners like yourself. Do you have any questions at this stage?

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Focus Group Discussion Guide for HODs/Grade Heads/Educators

(estimate about 1 hour)

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	
INTERVIEW NO.	
DATE (dd/mm/yy)	

Intro/icebreaker

Hello, my name is Janet George. I am an interviewer on the barriers and facilitators for progressed learners. In other words what helps progressed learners perform better academically. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. If it is okay with you, the interview will be voice-recorded. This interview is informal and conversational. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am interested in your thoughts, feelings, and experiences in your own words. Everything we talk about will be kept strictly confidential. We will not mention your names on the tape and it is not written anywhere on my form. You can stop the interview at any time and you may skip questions if you do not want to answer them. Do you have any questions before we begin?

So just before we get started can you tell me what grades you teach?

What is your subject/learning area?

How many progressed learners are in the FET Phase?

Thank you.

Question Guide

Environment: social and physical environments (family, friends, educators)

Primary question

1. What role do you think family plays in education for progressed learners?

Follow up questions (probes/prompts)

a) How does family view their academic performance?

b) In your opinion what are generally family expectations of progressed learners academically? c)

How does family support their learning?

d) How often does the family/family members of progressed learners contact or communicate with the school?

e) Have parents/guardians ever been obstructive/stopped/prevented progressed learners from receiving support or participating in support programme for learners? (reasons?)

2. What role do friends play in education for progressed learners?

a) How do you think friends of progressed learners view academic performance?

b) How important does education seem in the progressed learners friendship circle?

3. What role do educators/teachers play in the education of progressed learners?

f) In your experience how do friends respond when a learner fails a grade?

c) Do you think friends have any expectations of progressed learners academically?

a) How would you describe your relationship with progressed learners?

b) How do you view their academic performance?

d) Do you think/know of any instances in which friends have supported learning of progressed learners?

c) How important do you think is education to progressed learners?

d) What do you expect of progressed learners academically? How do you communicate these expectations to them?

e) In general would you consider friends a positive or negative influence on the academic results of progressed learners? Why?

e) How does your school support learning of progressed learners?

f) How often does your school contact or communicate with your family?

g) Does the school communicate with or inform parents/guardians about the type of support that will be provided?

h) How often do you discuss individual academic performance with progressed learners?

4. Are there any aspects in the social environment and school that assist/prevent progressed learners from meeting promotion requirements?
a) Family/Friends/School/Community

7. What further support or assistance do you want to receive to help improve their academic results?
a) Family/Friends/School/Community/DBE

b) What further support or assistance do you want to receive to help improve the progressed learner support?
a) Family/Friends/School/Community/DBE

Personal (P): Seeking the cause of human behaviours in dispositional sources in the form of instincts, drives, traits, wisdom, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, self-perception, goals, intentions and other motivational forces within the individual

Primary question

Follow up questions (probes/prompts)

1. What do you think is the main source of motivation for progressed learners to succeed academically?

- a) Do you think they are self-motivated?
- b) Is there a particular person/persons they look up to or aspire to be like?
- c) Do they seem to rely more on themselves or others to succeed at school?

2. How would you describe progressed learners in terms of their academic performance at school?

- a) What words do you think/do you know progressed learners use to describe themselves?
- b) How do progressed learners seem to feel about their academic results/subjects?

3. Are you aware of progressed learners setting goals or educators setting goals for progressed learners?

- a) Have you set goals for progressed learners this year? Explain/describe.
- b) Can you predict academic performance of progressed learners this year?
- c) How do you feel about the future for progressed learners?

4. In your view what is the reason/obstacles/challenges learners have faced as individuals that have resulted in them meeting/not meeting promotion requirements?
- a) Learners who met promotion requirements
 - b) Learners who progressed
 - c) Learners who didn't meet promotion requirements

Behavioural (B): Knowledge and skill to perform a given behaviour(s)

Primary question

1. In your experience do progressed learners in general know and understand the assessments, examination requirements and sections of the curriculum for each subject?

Follow up questions (probes/prompts)

- a) Pass requirements
- b) Details/requirements of assignments
- c) How the term mark/year mark is worked out for each subject
- d) Do they understand why they didn't meet the promotion requirements when they repeated the year? Explain.
- e) Main source of support in meeting promotion requirements
- f) Knowledge of school interventions
- g) Knowledge/naming other available interventions.
- h) Do you think progressed learners have the necessary knowledge and skill this year to pass or do you think you will be progressed to the next grade?

This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing all this with me. Some of the questions were quite personal and I appreciate you taking part in this research project that will help us understand how to assist progressed learners like yourself. Do you have any questions at this stage?

Appendix H: HSSREC Ethical Clearance Certificate



20 June 2018

Mrs Janet Lamont George (971156504)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs George,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0521/018M

Project Title: The difference between failure and success: Barriers and facilitators impacting on academic performance of progressed learners within the FET Phase of a school in KwaZulu-Natal

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 05 June 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

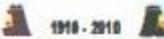
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Cc Supervisor: Mr Nicholas Munro
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Maud Mthembu
Cc School Administrator: Ms Priya Konan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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 1918 - 2018
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Faculties/Colleges:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

Appendix I: Turnitin Originality Report

Final dissertation 12 Dec 2019

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