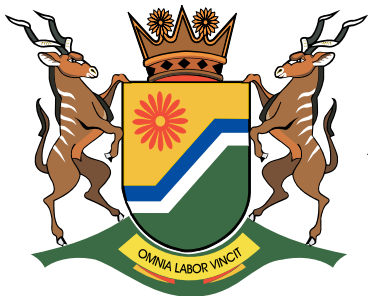


WHEN THE SUN RISES  
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***Understanding and Implementing Promotion, Progression, and  
Condonation Requirements in Mpumalanga Schools: Perspectives of  
Teachers and Principals***

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**education**

**MPUMALANGA PROVINCE  
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# Scope of the presentation

- Introduction
- Rationale and background to the research problem
- Research Methodology
- Aim and Objectives
- Research Questions
- Literature on Policy Implementation
- Theoretical framework for policy implementation
- Findings
- Recommendations

# Introduction

- SA Education system encounters several challenges such as learners' poor academic achievement; high failure rate; absenteeism and high dropout rates.
- Dropout rate between 2019-2021 was at 30% (Stats SA Report , 2023).
- Main reason is poor academic performance (Kader, 2016; Desai, Magan, 2018)
- Males usually dropped out due to poor school performance, vocational aspirations and social interactions at school.
- Females usually dropout because of family-related challenges.
- High rate of dropout has a negative influence on the education system and the economy of the country.

## Rationale of the study

- Researchers' academic interests and their duties prompted them to conduct the **baseline study** on the implementation and management of the grade progression, promotion and condonation requirements in grade 9.
- Both researchers have been teachers and subject advisors in Mpumalanga District.
- Dr Khumalo - Director for Public Examinations and Assessment.
- Dr Mkwana - Chief Education Specialist for Assessment Services.
- Their duties involve the management and coordination of the international surveys, national assessments and school-based assessment.
- Study would contribute to the improvement of progression policy and practice regarding the implementation of the special mark adjustment and condonation dispensation requirements.

## Background to the research problem

- DBE in RSA instigated the *National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements (NPPPPR)* to address dropout of learners and educational equity.
- covers issues of promotion, progression; condonation and retainment
- sets out the rules and guidelines on how and when a learner moves from one grade to another.
- Learner cannot spend more than four years in a phase.
- allows conditions for learners to be progressed and condoned
- DBE had been reviewing the progression policy on ongoing basis to prevent learners from dropping out of the schooling system.

*National Assessment Circulars No. 2 of 2024* spell out how the special mark adjustment and condonation should be implemented to grades 4-9 learners who did not meet the promotion requirements.

### Some of the Conditions for Progression :

- A mark adjustment not exceeding 5% is allowed to a maximum of any three subjects. Adjusted mark should not exceed 40%.
- Where a learner did not achieve the minimum of 30% but obtained between 25% and 29%, the mark adjustment must be applied excluding HL. A condonation in Mathematics must be applied.
- If a learner has met all the requirements in respect of promotion (Grades 7–9) but has not attained a level 3 (40%) in Mathematics. The learner must be condoned in Mathematics.
- Learners may still be progressed with support based on the professional judgement of the principal and educators at the school.

The ineffective implementation of the progression policy and poor application of the conditions for mark adjustment and condonation could defeat the education system's intention to address the high drop-out rates of learners in schools. This needs to be investigated.

# Aim and Objectives of the study

This paper reports on the of teachers and principals' experiences on the implementation of the progression policy in Ehlanzeni district of Mpumalanga. The results of the study would assist in enhancing the implementation of the promotion, progression and condonation requirements for grades 4-9.

## Objectives

- to investigate teachers and principals' **understanding and perceptions** of the progression policy
- to explore teachers and principals' **implementation** of the progression policy
- to explore **procedures** followed by the three schools when implementing the progression policy and *Special Mark Adjustment and Condonation Dispensation* Requirements



Main research question for this study is:

What are teachers and principals' experiences on the implementation of the progression policy in Ehlanzeni district of Mpumalanga province?

## Sub-questions:

- What are the teachers and principals understanding and conceptions of progression policy?
- How do teachers and principals implement the progression policy in schools?
- Which procedures do schools follow when implementing the progression policy including the *Special Mark Adjustment and Condonation Dispensation* requirements?

- Baseline Qualitative approach and case study design of 3 schools.
- Purposive and convenient sampling of 15 participants consisting of three grade 9 teachers: three principals; and three circuit managers of the participating schools.
- Semi-structured interviews and document analysis
- Mark sheets and the mark schedules for four terms were analysed

## Included:

- Policy Implementation
- Factors affecting the policy implementation
- Implementation of Progression Policy worldwide
- Implementation of Progression Policy in SA
- Challenges in the implementation of progression policy
- Requirements for promotion; progression and retention

# Requirements for Promotion in Grade 9

**Promotion** - movement of a learner from one grade to the next when that learner meets the minimum required level of achievement per subject in a particular grade, as well as complying with the promotion requirements of that grade as contemplated in the National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the NCS Grades R-12.

Learners should be promoted when they have completed all SBA in 9 subjects contemplated in NPPPR document. Obtain the following:

- Adequate Achievement (Level 4) (50%-59%) in one language at HL level;
- Moderate Achievement (Level 3) (40%-49%) in the second required official language at FAL level;
- Moderate Achievement (Level 3) (40%-49%) in Mathematics;
- Moderate Achievement (Level 3) (40%-49%) in any 3 of the other required subjects; and
- At least an Elementary Achievement (Level 2) (30%- 39%) in any 2 of the other required subjects

**Progression** - advancement of a learner from one grade to the next grade despite that the learner did not meet all promotional requirements. Progression should happen in time and in manageable ways to allow teachers to understand where a learner needs to improve.

- Progressed learners must receive support to learn, this may include support in the classroom with the curriculum, as well as support with assessments.
- Professional judgement of the teacher in terms of the readiness of the learner to progress to the next grade is important in making a progression decision. The judgement of the teacher should always be based on the evidence of learning (DBE, 2023).
- **Condonation** - Act of forgiving and overlooking. DBE through NPPPPR allows teachers to overlook the promotion and progression requirements to address educational equity

# Example

Subject	Original	Adjusted Condoned	Adjustment/ Condonation	Comment
Afrikaans FAL	37	40%	3%	In this case, four subjects are below 40%, including Maths. The learner's marks in three of the subjects will be adjusted. Learner's mark in Mathematics will be condoned.
Social Science	35	40%	5%	
Technology	39	40%	1%	
Mathematics	25% ©	25%	Condoned	

- Keeping of the learners in the same grade because they have not mastered the skills necessary to progress to the next grade.
- Main idea behind grade retention is that it will offer learners more time for learning.
- A learner may be retained once in the Phase to prevent the learner being retained in this phase for longer than four years.
- Learners repeating a grade must be offered adequate additional support to achieve an appropriate level of competence as contemplated in sub-regulation to progress to the next grade.
- According to Dlamini (2020), retention has a negative effect on learner achievement, attitude toward schools, school attendance, and learner dropout rates. He claimed that learners who repeat a grade fail at a higher rate than kids who are socially promoted. In fact, they often learn less than socially promoted learners within the next year.

Four themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

- Limited understanding of the progression policy
- Diverse practices on the implementation of the progression policy
- Lack of uniformity on the procedures followed by schools on management of progression
- Teachers' opinions about the progression policy



## Limited understanding of the progression policy

Participants were asked to share their understanding of the progression policy and explain some of the key aspects of the progression policy which includes promotion, progression and retention.

- All participants were aware of NPPPR as a policy that guides the promotion and progression of the learners in the SA education system.
- They also displayed reasonable understanding of the term promotion and retainment. They were also able to mention the requirements for promotion.
- However, six out of 9 teachers found it difficult to provide reasonable understanding of the term progression and condonation. Some would fail to make distinction between promotion and progression ( Refer to examples on the next slide )
- It was clear that teachers are not certain about the requirements for progression and condonation of the learners.

### Examples

*“Learners are progressed and promoted if have they have met the required minimum knowledge and skills of the grade, pass all the SBA formal tasks and did well in the informal tasks and oral work. It is also allowed that the learner be condoned if requirements of the subject are not met”.*

*“In the mark schedule, learners are progressed if they get level three in Mathematics; level four in Home language, by the way home language is Siswati in our case; and level three in additional language. We add five percent if they are running shot of few marks and if the teacher feel that those learners have potential”.*

The following were found :

- Data from SA-SAMS consisted of learners who are above 16 years of age in grade 9; some learners spend more than four years in a phase
- Schools do not have promotional committees comprised of school principal, departmental head, and class or subject teachers. Instead only SMT (principals and the departmental heads) were responsible to make decisions about progression without teachers providing professional judgment
- There was no evidence of the intervention plan to support the progressed learners

## Lack of uniformity on the procedures followed by schools on management of progression

- For successful implementation of the progression policy, it is crucial that schools and circuits adopt a uniform approach to avoid inconsistencies and discrepancies. However, it was found that schools have different procedures for the progression of the learners ( Refer to the following )

# Lack of uniformity on the procedures followed by schools on management of progression ( Cont.)

## School A

After teachers have marked the formal assessment tasks , they print the recording sheets from the SA-SAMS and enter the learners' marks manually; they then submit all the scripts to the departmental head who will randomly sample 10% which is normally three scripts. The scripts should be accompanied by question paper, marking guideline and handwritten marksheet. Departmental head conduct the remarking of the scripts and enter the marks per sections and overall totals to the marksheet using a green pen. If there are discrepancies of marks in the three scripts, the departmental head will add another three scripts for moderation. If he still finds discrepancies, he will take the whole batch back to the teacher for remarking. If the departmental head is satisfied, he will then give a go ahead to the teacher to enter marks to SA-SAMS. When all marks of the subject are entered on the system, the administration clerk will print the grade mark schedule. The marks schedules are then submitted to the SMT to analyse the number of learners promoted, adjust the marks for learners who meet the requirements and make recommendations for the learners who should be condoned. After the discussion between the SMT and the circuit managers amendments are done for learners who should be condoned. Then, the circuit managers provide a go ahead for preparing and issuing of the report cards.

# Lack of uniformity on the procedures followed by schools on management of progression ( Cont.)

## School B

Teachers mark and submit scripts and the handwritten marksheets to the Departmental Head who compares the ticks for the correct answer and crosses for the wrong answers in the learner script against the marking guideline. He also verifies whether the total marks on the handwritten mark sheets are the same as the marks on the learner scripts using a green pen. He will add more scripts for verification if he finds discrepancies in the first three scripts. If there are still discrepancies the teachers must do recalculation of the whole batch. Departmental Head will do a second round of the verification of marks from the script and marksheets and check totals. If satisfied, he will then give a go ahead to the teacher to enter marks to SA-SAMS. When all marks of the subject are entered on the system, the administration clerk will print the grade mark schedule. The marks schedules are then submitted to the SMT and SMT will write a summary with a number of learners to be promoted, and number of learners eligible to be progressed. The circuit manager with his Circuit Assessment Team will then decide on the learners that need to be progressed guided by the progression promotions and guidelines for mark adjustment. The Circuit Assessment Team is comprised of eight principals from different schools in the circuit. The circuit manager provides a go ahead for the preparation and issuing of the report cards discussion after he is satisfied about the process.

# Lack of uniformity on the procedures followed by schools on management of progression ( Cont.)

## School C

After marking, each subject teacher submit the whole batch of scripts, question paper and marking guidelines to the Departmental Head. He samples 10% which is usually three scripts to check whether marking was done according to the marking guidelines. He will add more scripts if he discovers discrepancies in the three scripts. Once satisfied, Departmental Head will provide the teacher with USB which has a list of learners for the teacher to capture the marks electronically. Thereafter, teachers will submit the USB with marks and the script to the departmental head who will compare the total marks from the electronic marksheets and the scripts. In case of discrepancies the teachers must do recalculation of the whole batch. The departmental head will check how many learners have passed the subject, if they are less than 70 %, the teacher should provide another formal assessment tasks which comprise of low and moderate questions. Then the teacher should mark and give new marks to those who failed the first assessment. Thereafter, new marks should be recorded. Departmental Head will do a second round of the verification and provide permission for the marks to be captured on SA-SAMS. Marks are captured to SA-SAMS by the administration clerks. Thereafter, schedules are submitted to circuit manager for final processes.

Diverse concerns were raised about the progression policy :

- Main concern was that it compromise quality of education since learners are moved to the next grade without acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge for the grade .
- It leads to poor performance in the National Senior Certificate.
- It is in favour of the problematic learners and the learners take advantage of it.
- It promotes bad behaviour among the learners and absenteeism.
- It accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning



# Recommendations

- MDE should capacitate teachers and principals and mediate the progression policy to pave a way for the effective implementation (workshops, formal programmes & constant support).
- MDE should strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure a sound understanding and uniform implementation of the policy.
- District and circuit officials should support and monitor the implementation of the progression policy schools.
- SMT should play an active and oversight role to ensure that all tools and processes for implementation are followed a school level
- Schools should involve parents and inform them about the purpose of the progression policy.
- Since this was a baseline study, the findings should guide the province and support the implementation of the progression policy in schools. Thus, this may offer opportunities for further investigation and action research.

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