

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PROGRESSION POLICY ON GRADE 12 LEARNERS'
SELF-ESTEEM IN MOTHEO EDUCATION DISTRICT**

BY

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education with specialisation in Psychology of Education
(MedPE)**

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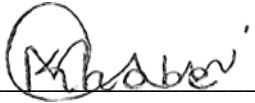
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DECLARATION

I, **Khobe Mamello Admirrow**, declare that the Master's research dissertation that I herewith submit to the University of the Free State is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it for any qualification at another institution of higher education.



Khobe Mamello Admirrow

30 June 2021

Date

DEDICATION

This study is especially dedicated to my late mother, Dikeledi Maria Khobe ('Keledi'), the first woman in my life to invoke my love for reading and education. *Ruri thuto ke lefa!*

This study is also dedicated to the school learners and teachers who participated in this study, who shared their experiences and personal insight regarding the role of School Progression Policy on progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. My account cannot even do justice to the insight I came across; thus, my interest in doing this research is entrenched in knowing that there is nothing wrong with our children. All these children need is care, support, and a little encouragement.

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LISTS OF ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NDP	National Development Plan
NSC	National Senior Certificate
SBA	School Based Assessment
SMT	School Management Team
SPP	School Progression Policy
UFS	University of the Free State

ABSTRACT

School Progression Policy (SPP) is a mitigation strategy for high dropout rates in South Africa's education system. It has social and emotional implications for progressed learners. Thus, the SPP is still a debatable policy, considering the concerns around the changes facing the progressed learners. Whereas the SPP affords learners an opportunity to advance in their school career, it also affects their self-esteem. This study aims to explain the role of SPP in affecting the Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo Education District. This study determined the nature of Grade 12 learners' self-esteem and explored how the SPP affected the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District. The study is mainly conceptualised within the Social Comparison Theory, the Labelling Theory, and the Social Identity Theory. This theory triangulation enables the researcher to explain the role of SPP in the development of Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. The study is rooted within a pragmatist research paradigm underpinned by a mixed methods research approach which combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The researcher adopted the mixed-method approach using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale questionnaire and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The scale registered a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.623. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative component and thematic analysis technique for the qualitative component of the study. For the quantitative component of the study, the researcher used purposive sampling with a sample of 50 learners (females = 29 and males = 21) recruited from five schools. From the 50 learners, the qualitative component involved 37 learners (females = 23 and males = 14) and 15 teachers and/or SMTs (females = 7 and males = 9) from four of the five selected schools in the Motheo Education District. The findings revealed that SPP adversely affected the self-esteem of the Grade 12 learners in Motheo Education District. The study recommended, among others, that schools should become centres for care and support to mitigate the effects of SPP, labelling and comparison of learners at schools. The value of this study lies in its contribution to the body of knowledge on enhancing academic performance, and it is hoped that its findings and recommendations will assist schools in shaping their interventions to intertwine the development of progressed learners' self-esteem.

Key terms: School Progression Policy (SPP); progressed learners; self-esteem; Social-Comparison Theory; Labelling Theory, Social Identity Theory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study aims at investigating the role of School Progression Policy (SPP) on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. As a point of departure, the study determines the nature of Grade 12 learners' self-esteem and then explores how SPP affects the self-esteem of the Grade 12 learners in the Motheo Education District. This chapter presents the background to the study, problem necessitating the study, motivation for the study, rationale for, and the value of the study. The chapter outlines the research questions, aims and objectives. It outlines the research design and methodology, as well as the ethical considerations upheld in this study. An exploration of School Progression Policy and the three theories around self-esteem help to clarify the aim of the study. This chapter also presents the keywords of the study and consequently outlines the layout of the dissertation.

1.2 Background to the study

School Progression Policy has an extensive history. The development of SPP commenced in the 1930s as a corrective measure for the negative effects of the practice of retention in schools. By the 1980s, this practice somewhat diminished as a result of the commencement of slipping academic performance. In 1982, many schools in New York City, United States of America put an end to the practice of progression. Due to the onslaught of problems that rose from the retention policy, the "progression policy" was implemented around the world again in 1987. In 1999, New York City once again disregarded the practice of progression, but by 2004, more than 100 000 learners were retained and the practice of progression was once again implemented (Knight, 2014).

In the late 1990s, a policy of social promotion was introduced in Brazil to combat the accumulation of students in the early grades of primary school. This large-scale experimentation with social promotion provided Brazil with a unique opportunity to study the impact of repetition policies on primary school children (Leighton *et al.*, 2016). To date, educational leaders and policymakers around the world have been experimenting with social promotion and many cannot decisively agree on a preference for either social promotion or grade retention (Hadzimichalis, 2015).

The world is consistently becoming more competitive. Parents desire that their children climb the academic ladder to high levels. The desire for children to perform to high levels of achievement exerts a lot of pressure on learners, teachers, and schools and the education system in general. The whole education system revolves around learners' academic performance (Goni & Bello, 2016). For this reason, the education system must continue to reinvent itself to mitigate any challenges threatening to undermine its utility. Furthermore, South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE) developed the School Progression Policy, known as "progression" and "social promotion", thus limiting grade repetition to once within a phase (DoE, 2013). The objective of SPP was to uphold the best interest of the learners and prevent them from dropping out of school unnecessarily, thus allowing every learner to attain an exit qualification (HRSC, 2016). In essence, School Progression Policy is a systematic intervention seeking to limit the retention of learners by restricting schools from keeping struggling learners in the school system for more than one year in any three-year phase.

School Progression Policy is rooted in moving learners through the school system, as retained learners run the risk of dropping out of their school cohort, ending up in a particular grade with much younger learners, characterised by concomitant social and emotional implications (HRSC, 2016). The logic behind this assertion is that the National Development Plan (NDP) requires an intervention designed to mitigate high dropout rates in the education system (Motshekga, 2018). What is most distressing and alarming is that over 66% of learners in South Africa drop out of school without completing Grade 12 and many of them may have, at some point, struggled academically (Beere, 2016). When it becomes apparent to these learners that they may not complete Grade 12, they often drop out. For this reason, and many others, education authorities in South Africa replaced the merit policy grading and repetition with the School Progression Policy (Kader, 2012).

The SPP envisions, apart from possibly restoring learner dignity, South Africa's achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (now called Sustainable Development Goals) of ensuring that all children complete their education despite their age (Statistics South Africa, 2013). The policy encourages school authorities to progress or condone over-aged learners who have repeated Grade 11 more than once and give them extra support to sit for Grade 12 NSC examinations (Motshekga, 2018). However, the policy still raises many theoretical and practical apprehensions in terms of learners' well-being, abilities, opportunities and logistical support during the teaching and learning process, the availability of support systems meant to expedite the coping processes for learners, and learners' subsequent performance.

The SPP, though a decent strategy that aims at ensuring access to education, maintaining a reasonable retention rate and achieving the government's goal of ensuring equity in education, is an immensely debatable policy, considering its role in influencing the learner's experiences, abilities and freedoms in the classroom (Munje & Maarman, 2016). Intentions of the SPP may as well translate differently in practical terms, as it is accompanied by unintended consequences on the learner's experience in the classroom and school surroundings. This study explores the role of School Progression Policy in determining Grade 12 learners' self-esteem, thus developing insights on how the policy translates to the learners' experience.

1.3 Motivation for the study

The researcher's interest in undertaking a study of this nature was prompted by his teaching career, which began on 1 April 2010. The SPP was put into effect while the researcher was still a Post-Level One teacher. Precisely, the researcher's interest was prompted by how the policy translated to practice, thus impacting learners' experiences at the grassroots level. Although the School Progression Policy intended to give progressed learners a lifeline in terms of exiting the education system with a qualification, it became apparent that many of the progressed learners still experience academic barriers and behavioural issues.

The researcher's teaching experience has seen many progressed learners often displaying behavioural problems, including stealing from and harassing their classmates, though others were coping with the subject matter and content gaps, which place unwarranted pressure on teachers given the performance targets set by schools and the Department of Education. Some progressed learners eventually drop out of school owing to the frustration of having failed a grade and being progressed. The impact of progression has thus become an interesting terrain of enquiry given the reality that progressed learners are still experiencing challenges concerning their self-esteem as evidenced by the behavioural problems they exhibit. As a result, many teachers are quick to scold, shame and name progressed learners without considering their needs and no one is willing to explore the cause of their behaviour and the impact of having to deal with the learners' ill-preparedness for in the new grade. The progressed learners continue to be seen as problematic in the education system.

For this reason, the study explores the underlying dynamics and issues surrounding progressed learners and the dynamics around the impact of SPP affect the self-esteem of these learners. Founded on the researcher's experience as a teacher and an educationist, this study sought to

answer set research questions and achieve the aim and objectives within the context of the role of SPP on progressed learners' self-esteem.

1.4 Rationale of the study

This study sought to explore the role of SPP in shaping Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo Education District. Precisely, the study interrogates the effect of the policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo Education District. Further, the study intended to fill the gap in the existing body of knowledge on the effect of SPP on learners. This research was bent on exploring and developing strategies that help enhance the self-esteem of progressed learners, and such strategies would be informed by learners' perceptions.

This study was also conducted to augment the little research conducted on the implications of the SPP on the basic education system, with a focus on Grade 12 learners as they occupy the system's exit point. Hopefully, this study will motivate teachers and education officials to render support to schools to effect changes that mitigate both the intended and unintended consequences of SPP. The inferences of this study are thus profound as they may contribute towards the education system, treating the progressed learners better, and truly becoming inclusive in the support for progressed learners. It is against this background that this study was conducted.

1.5 Research problem

In an era characterised by demand for high scholastic performance, educational researchers, policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders have become increasingly concerned about the effects of SPP on learners as their inability to keep up with taught material in the current grades hakes their confidence and motivation (Mawhinney, 2016). Teachers are also unskilled and unable to provide differentiated support to progressed learners and the situation is compounded by their heavy workloads (Kika & Kotze, 2019). In addition, Kumanda, Afungmeyu-Abongdia and Mafumo (2017) indicated that the implementation of SPP can affect learners' motivation, especially when they are not prepared to do schoolwork.

Similarly, being progressed could influence the level of learners' resilience in the next grade. Thus, SPP has raised concerns around the challenges faced by progressed learners as they may struggle to deal with the content being learned in a particular grade, which may lead to learners becoming despondent and frustrated (Human Science Research Council: HSRC, 2016). These

undesirable effects include behavioural problems like truancy, which hinders cooperative learning in class (Stott, Dreyer, & Venter, 2015). Beere (2016) highlighted that progressed learners also experience labelling and feel discriminated against and stigmatised at schools and must carry the label and stigma throughout their schooling years. Some learners often end up concealing their difficulties by misbehaving (Mawhinney *et al.*, 2016).

SPP affects progressed learners' self-esteem and social development, as it tends to label them, provoking feelings of discrimination and stigmatisation (Beere, 2016). Furthermore, a lack of peer acceptance and a feeling of rejection could affect learners' emotional development. Kader (2012) also contended that SPP has resulted in negative connotations as progressed learners grapple with stereotyping by educators, which may harm learners in the classroom because labelling and stereotyping could negatively affect their self-esteem.

1.5 Conceptual and theoretical framework for the study

SPP was the basic concept behind this study. This is also known as social promotion, which is a contentious issue that has beset the global education system for decades. It has become part of the educational practice in many countries and schools, but not without its fair share of criticism and contending arguments (Mawhinney *et al.*, 2016). The heated debate around SPP, which involves both “anti-progressionists” and “pro-progressionists”, is explored in the next chapter. Self-esteem, as it refers to the judgements, evaluations and attitudes individuals form about their worth and feelings associated with those judgements (Berk, 2013), was another concept explored in this study.

This study utilised three theories, which are Social Comparison Theory, Labelling Theory, and Social Identity Theory to explore the impact of SPP on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. Festinger's Social Comparison Theory suggests that individuals compare themselves to others because for many domains and attributes, there is no objective yardstick to evaluate individuals against each other, as some people tend to be highly informative than others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). This theory, which places emphasis on social comparison in the school set-up, has a profound bearing on learners' self-esteem. Individuals' ability to evaluate themselves positively depends on their choice of the right standard of comparison. On one hand, comparing oneself to someone less capable would probably make individuals feel good about themselves and present a downward social comparison. On the other hand, when people compare themselves to those that are more capable, they may not fare so well and not feel so

good, leading to an upward social comparison (Baron & Branscombe, 2014). School learners are thus likely to compare themselves in assessing their self-worth (Ulrich, 2010).

Labelling Theory is centred on the notion that people define and construct their own identities based on society's perceptions of them. Often, learners who are struggling academically face possibilities of being labelled (Sowards, 2015). Labelling has significant internal and external effects on learners. When some learners are labelled, other learners treat them accordingly, and the labelled learners are therefore likely to behave according to the label (Kramer, 2015). Such learners may be given negative and artificial labels such as “lazy”, “slow”, or “unable to learn”. When people are labelled as such, society is often judgmental. Often, people willingly accept these statements without considering evidence of their validity (Sowards, 2015).

The stereotype associated with the stigma with which labelled learners are perceived has resulted in lowered expectations of these learners. Labelled learners are not encouraged to achieve educational goals; neither are they expected to be academically successful. Thus, lowered expectations result in low self-esteem (Brown, 2010 cited in Solomon, 2015). In his study, Kader (2012:111) found that a label such as ‘progressed learners’ has negative connotations that can result in low self-esteem. Low self-esteem has been associated with feelings of inadequacy and frustration (Egan, Perry, & Kumpulainen, 1998 cited in Taylor *et al.*, 2010:192). Thus, in a school setting, self-esteem is critical because its growth fundamentally contributes to academic performance.

The third theory is Social Identity Theory, which is centred on the notion that an individual’s self-esteem is derived from their awareness of their belonging to a certain social group, together with some emotional importance and value attached to membership to this group. It creates and defines the individual’s place in social settings (Mechtel *et al.*, 2014). The theory is built on the foundation that the “self” is defined and evaluated in terms of attributes shared with other members of a self-inclusive social category (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017: 571). Even in situations in which learners have been assigned to “social” groups based on an arbitrary characteristic such as being progressed, they treat in-group members as significantly different from out-group members and they derive their self-esteem (Mechtel *et al.*, 2014). Thus, in a school setting, group settings are critical as they may have an impact on the self-esteem of the learners.

1.6 Research questions guiding the study

The main research question is:

What is the role of School Progression Policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District?

There were four secondary research questions, which are:

1. What is the nature of progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District?
2. How does School Progression Policy affect the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District?
3. How does being progressed, labelled as "progressed" and compared with other learners make Grade 12 learners in selected schools feel in Motheo Education District?
4. What are strategies can enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District?

1.7 Research aim and objectives

The study aimed to explore the role of School Progression Policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in the Motheo Education District.

The research objectives were:

1. To determine the nature of progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District.
2. To explore how School Progression Policy affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District.
3. To investigate how being progressed, labelled as "progressed" and compared make Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District feel.
4. To recommend strategies that teachers can use to enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District.

1.8 Overview of the research design and methodology

This study adopted the mixed methods approach to address different research questions and objectives concerning the role of School Progression Policy in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo Education District. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018: 216), the mixed methods approach is suitable for this type of enquiry because its strength lies in its integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, thus minimising the limitations of both methodologies. This study is rooted in a pragmatist research paradigm underpinned by mixed methods research, which will be developed further in Chapter 3. To gain an in-depth understanding of the research objectives, this study conducted using the single-phase convergent parallel design (see Section 3.3.2.3.1). In this single-phase approach, the researcher simultaneously gathered both forms of data, analysed them separately and then incorporated the information during the interpretation of the overall results of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Mixed method approach enabled the researcher to collect both numeric information through the questionnaire) and textual information through interviews to answer the study's research questions (see Section 3.4.6). A questionnaire was used to determine progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. Interview method was used to further explore the role of School Progression Policy and how it affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners, to gain insight on how learners feel about being progressed, labelled as "progressed" and being compared with other learners and to explore and recommend strategies that can be used to enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District. In the quantitative phase, the researcher used a structured questionnaire. The qualitative phase employed the semi-structured interview, thus enabling the researcher to ask supplementary questions to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Demir & Pismek, 2018).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Questionnaire was used to determine the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners whilst the interview proved to be most suited for determining the role of SPP in influencing the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners, to gain insight on how they feel about being progressed, labelled as "progressed", and compared. This exploration helps the researcher to recommend the strategies that can be used to enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners in schools in the Motheo Education District.

The progression of Grade 12 learners is determined by the results of Grade 11 examination. The researcher employed purposive sampling, focusing on specific, unique issues related to progressed learners (see Section 3.4). On the one hand, a quantitative sample comprising 50 learners selected from five schools in the Motheo Education District (School A = 10, School B = 10, School C = 3, School D = 9, and School E = 18) was used. On the other hand, a qualitative sample of 37 participants selected from the five schools (School A = 7, School B = 10, School C = 2, School D = 9, and School E = 9) was used. Further, another qualitative sample comprised 15 School Management Team members and Grade 12 teachers chosen from four schools (School A = 3, School B = 5, School C = 5, and School D = 1).

Consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2018), data analysis and interpretation in this study consisted of three phases (see Section 3.7). First, the researcher analysed the quantitative data set using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics used central measures of tendency to summarise a set of data into a visual overview or picture and/or a number that summarises the data. Secondly, the researcher analysed the qualitative data set by coding the data and collapsing the codes into broad themes. Findings from the second qualitative component were analysed using conceptual or thematic analysis. These themes represented the major findings and were used as headings in the findings sections and were shaped into a general description of the findings. Thirdly, the two data sets were integrated by merging the results from both the quantitative and qualitative components.

Moreover, the quality of the results was ensured by the four criterion stipulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These authors used an umbrella word, trustworthiness (which entails transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability). This criteria parallels the conventional criteria of inquiry of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality, presented in Section 3.7.3.

1.9 Value of the proposed research

This study is valuable to teachers, progressed learners, schools and the basic education system for several reasons. Firstly, the study sheds light on SPP and provides feedback to policymakers and those manning the SPP implementation phase particularly on the impact of the policy on its beneficiaries, progressed learners. The study explores the feelings and thoughts of progressed Grade 12 learners as the beneficiaries of SPP. Antecedent studies have focused on the views of teachers and those of policymakers excluding those of learners who were directly

affected by the policy. It is important to solicit feedback on the impact of the policy from learners as well, thus providing a comprehensive view of the effects of SPP. The study fills the gaps existing in the body of knowledge on SPP.

Furthermore, the study will highlight some of the unintended consequences of School Progression Policy on progressed Grade 12 learners. These may be from the everyday interactions between progressed learners and other learners and between progressed learners and teachers. It seeks to contribute to the knowledge base and classroom practice, which will also enhance the role of schools in influencing the well-being and self-esteem of progressed learners. It also nudges the schools and the basic education system in terms of shaping their interventions on progressed learners to intertwine the development and/or enhancement of progressed learner's self-esteem. The study will also make necessary recommendations on the identified challenges.

Moreover, the study provides feedback on the effectiveness of SPP from the voice and perspective of teachers and learners. This is important for policymakers as it bridges the gap between intended and actual results. The study provides the necessary feedback on the experiences of learners following the changes brought by the policy. It also provides feedback on the experiences of teachers who are implementing the policy.

1.10 Ethical considerations

Researchers need to be aware of important ethical considerations that provide a guideline of what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific enquiry (Babbie, 2017). As such, ethical principles were upheld to ensure adherence to the following guidelines as suggested by Cohen *et al.* (2018):

Permission from all the relevant parties: The permission to conduct the study was sought from all the relevant parties, including the ethics committee at University of the Free State, the Free State Department of Education, selected schools involved, parents, and learner participants that were involved in the study.

Sensitivity to people: Careful considerations were made to ensure that the study does not unnecessarily consume the time of participants or make them incur loss of resources and that their participation in the study does not expose them to risks.

Confidentiality and anonymity: A firm commitment was made and participants were guaranteed that the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of data that identify participants would be strictly maintained and that their identity would not be disclosed at any stage of the study.

Non-maleficence: Necessary precautions were taken to ensure that study did not cause harm to participants in particular and other people in general.

Fully informed consent to respect self-determination: Participants were made to understand that their participation was voluntary and based on informed consent and not on any direct or indirect coercion and inducement and they were adequately briefed about the details and purpose of the research.

Information on all aspects of the study and its possible consequences: Participants were informed of all the details of the study, including the research's anticipated and potential benefits and/or harm, which may be direct or indirect, immediate or long-term. Participants were also informed about their right to decline participation outright or to withdraw consent at any stage of the research.

Measures that were employed to satisfy the generally accepted ethical requirements for this research can be summarised as follows:

The researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from University's Ethics Committee to conduct the study.

The researcher sought permission from the Head of Department manning the Free State Department of Education, Motheo Education District and the participating school principals before conducting the study.

Further, the researcher obtained informed consent from progressed learners and their parents stating, inter alia, that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so.

Anonymity and confidentiality were also ensured by coding the participants, using pseudonyms.

1.11 Background of progressed learners in South Africa

According to Motshekga (2018, 2019), year 2018 recorded the largest number of progressed learners since promulgation of the School Progression Policy in 2015. The 2018 class had 128 634 registered progressed learners (compared to 107 430 in 2017; 108 742 in 2016 and 65 673 in 2015) equivalent to a 19.7% increase from learners who were progressed in 2017 and an increase of 18.3% from those who were progressed in 2016. The 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) saw the second largest number (125 691) of progressed learners registering and writing the examination.

In the 2020, 70 565 progressed learners registered for NSC examinations. Out of those, 65 499 wrote the requisite seven (n = 7) subjects during the 2020 NSC examinations and only 24 244 progressed learners passed the 2020 NSC examinations (Motshekga, 2021).

The fluctuating numbers of progressed learners are presented below:

Figure 1.1: Progressed learners (2015-2020)

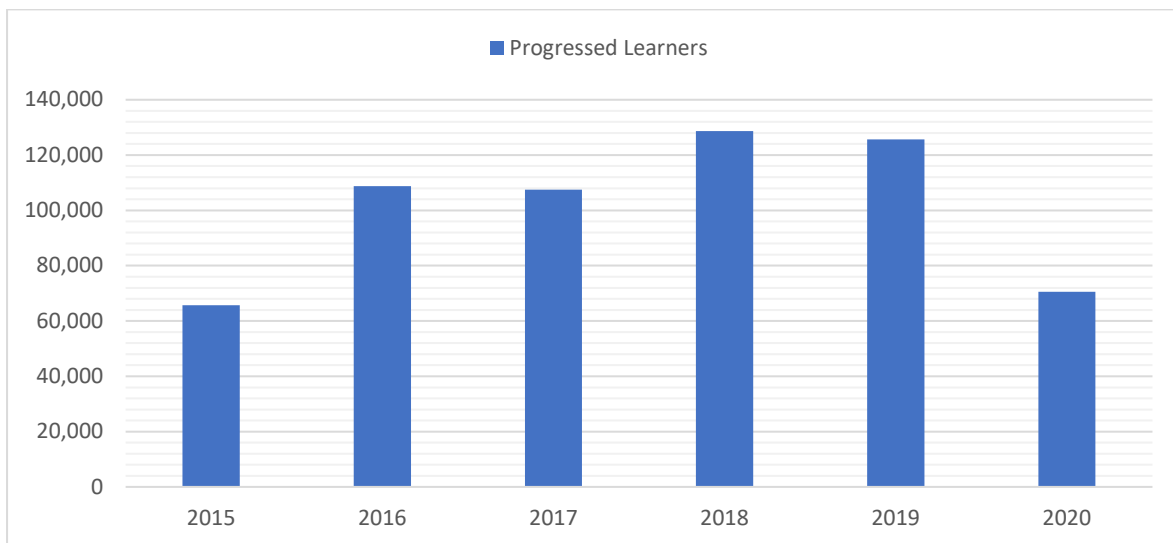
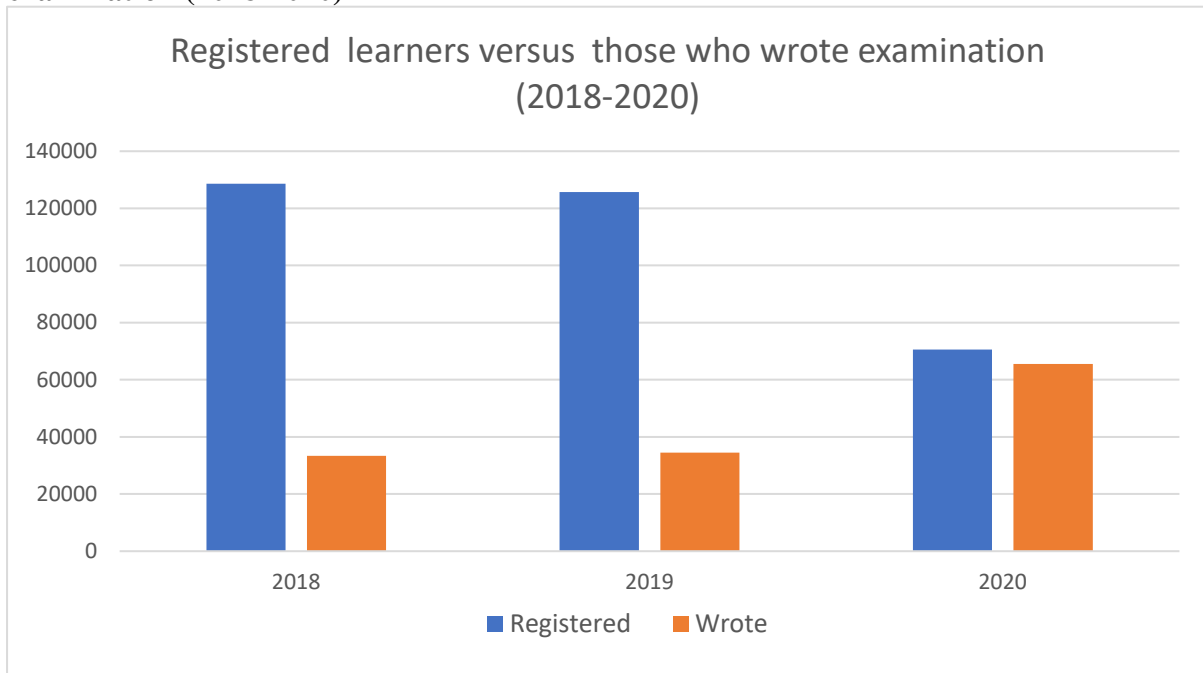


Figure 1.2: Registered progressed Grade 12 learners versus those who wrote the NSC examination (2018-2020)



The above table shows that the number of progressed learners who enrol and write NSC examinations is growing yearly. This further advances the purpose of SPP in terms of retaining the learners, who could have otherwise dropped out of the education system. On the other hand, a considerable number of progressed Grade 12 learners who were enrolled ended up not writing their final NSC examination.

Of the 33 412 progressed learners who wrote the 2018 NSC examinations, 20 122 passed (compared to 18 751 in 2017), which represents 60.2% of the progressed learners who wrote all the seven subjects in the 2018 NSC examinations; and 5% of all the learners who passed the 2018 NSC examinations (Motshekga, 2018). Of the 34 498 progressed learners who wrote the requisite seven (n = 7) subjects during the 2019 examinations, 23 485 passed, which represents 68.1% of progressed learners who wrote all the seven subjects during the 2019 examinations, and 5.7% of all the learners that passed the 2019 NSC examinations (Motshekga, 2020). Of the 65 499 progressed learners who wrote the requisite seven (n = 7) subjects during the 2020 NSC examinations, only 24 244 passed, which represents 37.0% of learners who wrote the 2020 NSC examinations (Motshekga, 2021).

1.12 Definition of keywords

This study defines the key concepts and terms. These are School Progression Policy, progressed learners, retention, self-esteem, labelling, and comparison.

(a) School Progression Policy

According to Stott, Dreyer and Venter (2015), School Progression Policy (SPP), often referred to as progression or the progression law, refers to the law in the South African education system, which limits Grade repetition to once in each of the four phases of the basic education system. The policy was adopted in 1998 by the Department of Education (DoE), now called the Department of Basic Education (DBE). In this study, SPP enacts social promotion until Grade 9 and again from Grades 10 to 12.

(b) Progressed learners

In the context of the South African education system, progression is defined as the movement or advancement of a learner from one grade to the next (excluding Grade R), despite the learner not having complied with all the promotion requirements (DBE, 2011). Learners are moved because the policy decrees that certain learners covered by certain criteria should be moved to the next grade even when they did not meet the necessary passes or academic requirements (Moagi, 2020). Progressed learners participated in this study, as they are at the receiving end of SPP, their lived experiences of the policy and its implications were worth sharing and valuable to the study.

(c) Retention

Retention refers to the practice of holding back learners in a grade until they have achieved the requisite academic skills and performance outcomes as reflected in a range of performance indicators to succeed to the next grade (Mawhinney, Irby, & Roberts, 2016). As a result, retention has thus been an accepted remedy for educational underachievement and has become prevalent at all levels of schooling worldwide (Kumanda *et al.*, 2017). In this study, retention is the act of holding back failing learners, keeping them in a particular grade for another year, and it is an alternative remedy for those opposed to the progression law.

(d) Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to a person's assessment or appraisal of their worth. It is related to notions like self-worth, self-regard and self-respect, which all encompass the individual's beliefs in himself or herself (Madsen, 2014). It is the overall emotional assessment of one's self-worth or a value judgement of oneself. High self-esteem refers to a highly favourable and comprehensive evaluation of one's competence concerning important domains, whereas low

self-esteem refers to the outcome of negative assessments and weaknesses characterising one's aptitude (Scherrer & Preckel, 2018). Self-esteem is understood as referring to the perception of the self, including self-perception and self-evaluation (Eloff & Swart, 2018). In this study, self-esteem depicts the well-being of learners and is central to reflecting the implication of the SPP.

(e) Labelling

According to Hashem (2015), labelling refers to an act of attaching a certain tag to individuals who are deemed different and their in-group understands them to violate the social norms accepted by the society, institution or group. The perceived violation of these social norms thus creates a shared perception among the in-group members and peers about the negative and problematic unconventionality of those in violation of the social norms. In this study, labelling is a consequence of SPP and is used to explain the feelings of progressed Grade 12 learners.

(f) Comparison

Comparison refers to the psychological tendency of people to match themselves to peers, relatives, friends and even distant acquaintances. This comparison may be within the context of scholastic success, life achievements, or even individuals engaging in self-reflect through comparison with others. The tendency is inevitable and occurs automatically (Lui *et al.*, 2016). In this study, comparison is a consequence of the SPP and is used to explain the feelings of progressed Grade 12 learners.

1.13 Layout of chapters

To achieve the aforementioned aims and objectives, the study was structured in the following manner:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter introduces and provides the context of the study. It outlines, inter alia, the research problem, research questions, aims and objectives, motivation, and rationale for the study. The chapter also gives an overview of the research methodology; it further explains the value of the study, ethical considerations, and the definition of the key concepts and outlines the layout of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores literature based on the School Progression Policy and self-esteem. It starts by presenting the conceptual framework and providing an explanation of the concepts that are central to this study, specifically the School Progression Policy and self-esteem. The literature captures the debate on the pros and cons of the School Progression Policy and definitions of concepts in the study. This chapter also details the theoretical framework guiding the study and focuses on the Social Comparison Theory, the Labelling Theory, and the Social Identity Theory.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter explains the research process as well as the research design and methodology followed in executing the study. It describes the mixed-methods approach embedded in the pragmatism paradigm, infused with the convergent parallel research design. The data collection mechanism is presented in this chapter, together with data analysis and interpretation techniques used in the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the collected data and the analysis thereof, together with the results of the quantitative component and findings from the qualitative component of the study. It presents demographic data, which includes age, gender and culture. The chapter further presents the results from learner participants, teachers, and SMT members' biographical data and the findings from the interviews. The use of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to present and analyse the collected data enhanced validity and reliability of study results and the trustworthiness of findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter presents the discussions and summary of the results and findings of the study, and the conclusions drawn from the study. Further, the limitations of the study and recommendations based on the findings are presented.

1.14 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background and the basis of the research, the research problem, research questions; it presented the aims, objectives and motivation for the study. The research processes, as well as the research design and methodology that were followed in the study,

were also outlined. The next chapter explores the literature relevant to School Progression Policy and self-esteem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

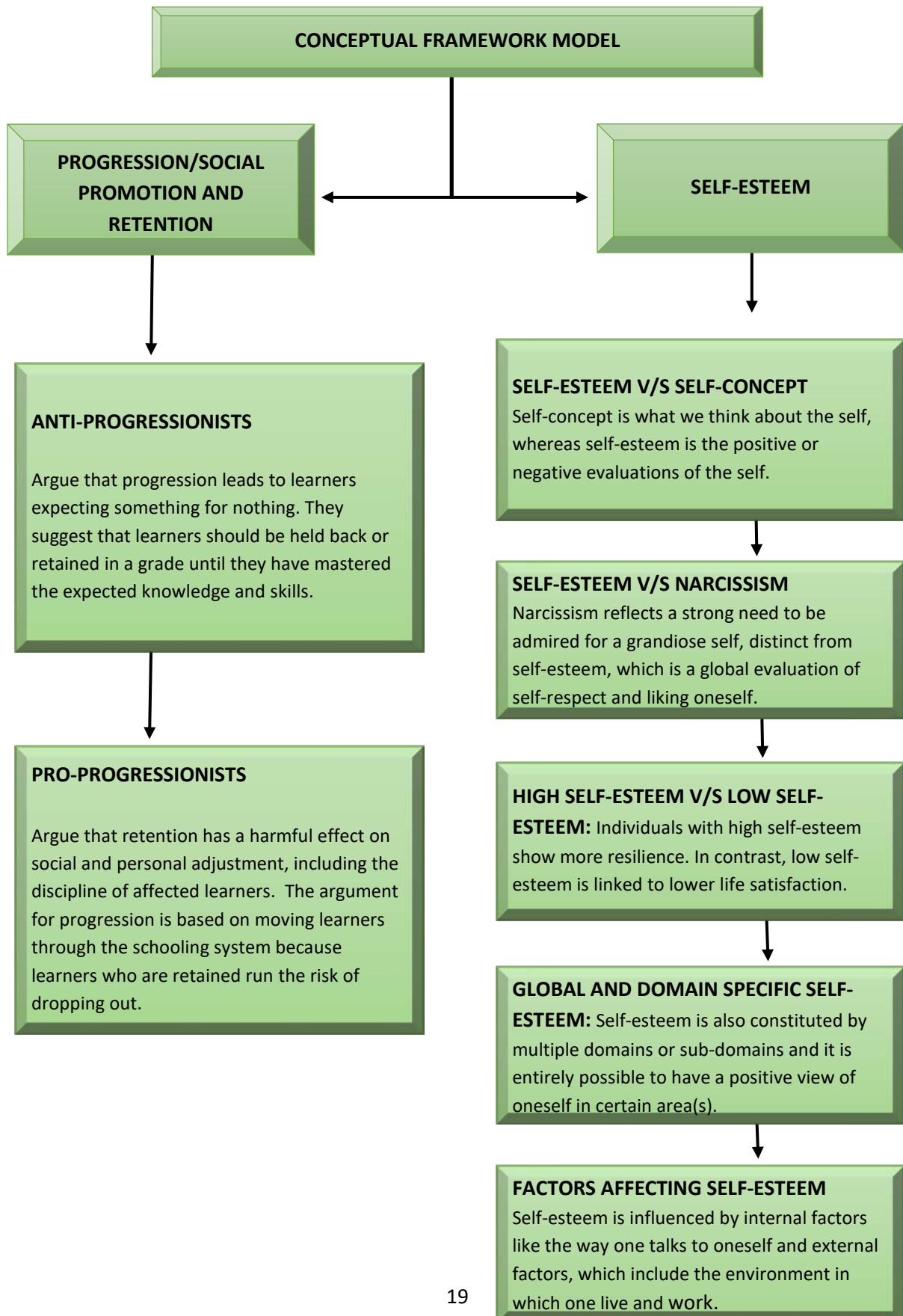
2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual framework, theoretical frameworks, and literature review. The conceptual framework encapsulates progression, retention and self-esteem and debates on progression or social promotion. The theoretical framework further presents the theories that underpin the study. Lastly, the literature review reflects on relevant literature. The conclusion sums up the chapter.

2.2 Conceptual framework: School Progression Policy and self-esteem

The conceptual framework of this study introduces two key concepts that are central to the study. These are School Progression Policy (SPP) and self-esteem. The concept of progression is defined and the debate around SPP is discussed in detail. The concept of self-esteem is also defined and explained with other concepts closely related to it, together with high and low self-esteem. Several factors influencing self-esteem are also examined.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of the study



2.2.1 Definition of progression/social promotion and retention

Progression means the advancement of a learner from one grade to the next, excluding Grade R, despite the learner not having complied with all the minimum promotion requirements (Coetzee, 2016). A learner may, therefore, only be retained once in the Further Education and Training Phase (Grade 10-12) to prevent them from being retained in this phase for longer than four years (DoE, 2003). Owing to the dearth of literature on progression, the literature on social promotion and retention is discussed to understand the dynamics surrounding progression (Kader, 2012).

Social promotion or progression means some failing learners are moved to the next grade along with their peers who passed (McMahon, 2018). In essence, it is the practice of moving learners to the next phase regardless of their low academic achievement (Mawhinney, Irby, & Roberts, 2016). Countries such as the United States of America and Canada also practice the progression of learners, which is also referred to as ‘social promotion’ (HSRC, 2016). It is termed social promotion because it is presumably intended to maintain social ties amongst age level peers regardless of academic competence at that grade level (Hoff, Peterson, & Strawhun, 2014).

According to Kumanda *et al.* (2017), progression refers to the promotion of learners to the next grade despite not having obtained the skills required for that grade. It is mainly done for social reasons because if the learner is not promoted with his or her peers, they may experience psychological or emotional implications and eventually drop out.

The alternative to progression is retention, which is the practice of holding learners in a particular grade until they have achieved the requisite academic skills that satisfy a range of performance indicators needed to proceed to the next grade level (Mawhinney *et al.*, 2016: 154). It is also known as “non-promotion”, “flunking”, “failing”, or “being held back” and refers to a learner repeating his or her current grade level in the following year (Kumanda *et al.*, 2017: 8769).

Notably, SPP encourages schools to condone over-aged learners who have repeated Grade 11 more than once and progress them to Grade 12 (Motshekga, 2019). The State’s intention in implementing SPP is to uphold the best interest of the learner and to avoid learners dropping

out of school unnecessarily, thus giving every learner a chance to achieve an exit qualification as over 66% of South African learners drop out of school without having completed Grade 12 (HSRC, 2016). The Department of Education's (2016) criteria for the implementation of progression in Grades 10-12 dictate that the learner must:

- (1) Have failed to satisfy the promotion requirements for either Grade 10 or 11, or repeated a grade, either Grade 10 or 11;
- (2) Have passed the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and any other three of the seven subjects being offered (including Life Orientation). If the home language is the LoLT, then only for the criteria, a 30% mark will be accepted;
- (3) Have attended school regularly. Absenteeism above 20 days without a valid reason, disqualifies the learner from being progressed; and
- (4) Have complied with the prescribed School-Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for that academic year.

Implementation of the SPP has created significant challenges for schools, with teachers viewing progression itself as being the problem. The alternative to progression would be keeping the learners indefinitely in a grade, which may negatively affect their social development and behaviour and this may not be appropriate (Beere, 2016). Progression is preferred within the South African context because retention is associated with learner dropout. The debate around learner progression and retention is contentious (Munje & Maarman, 2016).

2.2.2 Anti-progressionists versus Pro-progressionists

Those who are opposed to progression or “anti-progressionists” argue that the practice of progression results in learners expecting something for nothing, public perception of the weakening of the standards and opening the system up for parents to sue the Department of Education for educational malpractice because learners are not prepared for upper levels. Further, the “anti-progressionists” suggest that learners should be held back in a grade until they have mastered the expected knowledge and skills (McMahon, 2018: 500). The motivation behind holding learners back is to afford under-achieving learners an extra year to master the competencies expected of the level for the given academic year (Kumanda *et al.*, 2017). According to McMahon (2018), the contention against progression is that it changes the model of the school from (1) an emphasis on merit to an emphasis on efficiency; (2) a focus on

individual to group learning and (3) a belief in a different capacity to equal capacity. The contention is that progression can frustrate unprepared learners as it places them in a grade in which they are not prepared for the work. It also sends the message that they can proceed without working hard. Thus, it unfavourably affects the learners' aspirations and self-esteem and pushes teachers to deal with underprepared learners while simultaneously trying to teach the prepared (Kumanda *et al.*, 2017).

Further, "anti-progressionists" believe that progression frequently does enormous harm to learners academically and socio-emotionally. They argue that the inability to keep up with the material in the next grade affects the learner's self-esteem; thus, learners may lose interest in school and lack motivation due to the learning difficulties (Mawhinney *et al.*, 2016). Most learners who are progressed find their long-term academic potential being significantly undermined (Lynch, 2014). The practice of progression has also raised concerns around the struggles of progressed learners when they lack the prerequisite skills and knowledge to enable them to cope with the subject matter. Progression may lead to learners becoming despondent over being identified as progressed, frustrated and even dropping out. Furthermore, progression adds pressure on teachers who should give progressed learners extra support (HSRC, 2016). Despite affording progressed learners a chance to advance in their school career, the SPP also adversely affects their self-esteem (Beere, 2016).

The assumption is that through retention, the learner will be assisted to acquire the necessary knowledge that he or she lacks in the new grade. This raises many theoretical and practical concerns in terms of learners' well-being, the impact of progression on the learners' self-esteem, abilities, opportunities and logistical support during the teaching and learning process and the availability of support systems needed to facilitate the learners' coping process (Munje & Maarman, 2016). On the contrary, "pro-progressionists" disapprove of retention, arguing that it has harmful emotional consequences on learners. They see retention as synonymous with a traumatic experience, which lowers the school learner's confidence (Kader, 2012). According to McMahon (2018), retention, especially repetitive retention, increases the likelihood of learners dropping out of school. In addition, the process of holding the learner back to repeat a grade does not ultimately translate to a cure for the educational problems that the learner might be experiencing (Munje & Maarman, 2016).

According to Lynch (2014), retention requires that learners repeat a grade for a year or sometimes multiple times. Retention is based on a learner's inability to achieve an acceptable score, demonstrating knowledge and skill on graded standardised tests. This suggests that at least, as a possibility, the teaching approach used for the learner either in the specific year or throughout their educational career to date has been ineffective or inappropriate for that individual learner.

The “pro-progressionists” contend that retention has a deleterious effect on the affected learners' social and personal adjustment, including discipline. Retained learners are known to have increased risks of experiencing health-related problems such as stress, low social confidence, substance abuse, and violence (Lynch, 2014). In the 1960s, fears that retention hindered the social, emotional and cognitive development of under-performing learners resulted in teachers allowing learners to proceed to the next grade with their peers irrespective of their low academic achievement (Motshekga, cited in, Kamunda *et al.*, 2017). The argument for progression is based on moving learners through the schooling system because retained learners reportedly ran the risk of dropping out of their age cohort, ending up in a grade with much younger children, which has social and emotional implications (HSRC, 2016). The practice of retention, however, does not benefit learners in the end as it results in some behavioural problems associated with being over-age for a given grade. If the learner is not progressed with his peers, they may incur psychological damage such as a low sense of self-worth (Kamunda *et al.*, 2017).

Retained learners are also documented to have the potential to experience a negative bias or the disadvantage of preconceived notions among other teachers they encounter. A retained learner may influence the beliefs of teachers that the learner will encounter in his/her future educational career (Lynch, 2014). According to Van Der Berg *et al.* (2019), the advantages and disadvantages of retention could thus be summarised as follows:

Table 2.1: Advantages and disadvantages of retention

Disadvantages of retention	Advantages of retention
Impacts on government and schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher spending to accommodate repeaters • Higher teacher-pupil ratios (and larger class sizes) in early grades • Increased range of learner ages within classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential reduction in the cost of remediation at later ages • Potential reduction in the variability of learner abilities within classrooms, allowing for increased alignment between learner aptitude and grade-level curriculum
Impacts on the child	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential harmful psychological impacts (lowered self-esteem/motivation and stigmas of failure) • Higher risks of drop-out if learners repeat, where lower grade attainment reduces chances of higher employment opportunities and higher earnings after school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for mastery of concepts ('catch-up'). • The threat of being held back may induce more effort on the part of learners
Impacts on society	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exclusion of the poorest learners from higher grades as they are more likely to repeat than wealthier learners (equity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves the signalling of school qualifications in the labour market if grade promotion is more closely tied to mastery of concepts

The SPP thus recognises that retention hardly ever results in better learning success and often has the contrary effect (Kamunda *et al.*, 2017). Martorell and Mariano (2018) claim that grade retention is also very controversial for reasons other than its monetary costs. Thus, grade retention is punitive, and that being a year behind one's peers may result in disengagement with school. Stressful life events are correlated with behavioural problems and learners see grade retention as one of the most stressful life events that can befall them. For this reason, South Africa's educational authorities abandoned a system of passing learners to the next grade based only on achieving minimum requirements and repetition by adopting the SPP (Kader,

2012). The interest of this study thus lies in exploring the role of SPP in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem.

2.2.3 Definition of self-esteem

According to Pilarska (2016 cited in Eloff & Swart, 2018), self-esteem is an evaluative or subjective perception of a person about himself or herself. Self-esteem is a measure of self-worth based on perceived success and achievements, as well as how the person is valued by peers and the family (Saenz, 2011 cited in Weiten & Hassim, 2016). It is a judgement of oneself and one's attitude towards the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs such as, "I am competent," "I am worthy" and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame (Hewitt, 2009 cited in Shafi *et al.*, 2016).

According to Branden (1987 cited in Shafi *et al.*, 2016), self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence (a feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). It is based on the implicit judgement that every person can face life's challenges, understand and solve problems, and have the right to attain happiness and self-respect. Self-esteem forms the foundation of one's existence. It is the idea that one has about themselves; how valuable and important one thinks they are and how they respect themselves. It affects one's thinking, emotions, desires, values and goals. It is a judgement of oneself, and one's attitude towards the self (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018).

According to Minev (2018), synonyms of the term 'self-esteem' are 1) self-importance; 2) self-respect; 3) self-love, which may contain elements of pride; and 4) self-completeness. Self-esteem, however, differs from self-confidence and self-efficacy, which include a conviction in terms of personal qualities and future performance. Self-esteem is the affective evaluation of self-concept, a general attitude about the self (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Self-esteem is essentially an attitude towards the self and is related to personal beliefs about one's skills, abilities, social relationships and future outcomes. It is important to distinguish self-esteem from self-concept, which is a more general term because the two terms are used interchangeably (Heatherton & Wyland, 2016).

2.2.3.1 Self-esteem versus self-concept

According to Baumeister (1998 cited in Heatherton & Wyland, 2016), self-esteem is the evaluative aspect of self-concept that corresponds to the overall view of the self as worthy or unworthy. It is the emotional response that individuals experience as they contemplate and evaluate different parameters about themselves (Heatherton & Wyland, 2016). Self-concept is essentially what one thinks about the self, whereas self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in one's feelings about the self (Smith & Mackle, 2007 cited in Bhatt & Bahudar, 2018). Self-concept refers to the totality of cognition, beliefs one holds about the self; it is everything that is known about the self, and includes things such as name, race, likes, dislikes, beliefs, values and description of physical appearance such as height, weight and so forth (Heatherton & Wyland, 2016). It is also important to distinguish self-esteem from narcissism, as both constructs involve positive evaluations (Orth, Erol, & Luciano, 2018).

2.2.3.2 Self-esteem versus narcissism

Self-esteem includes feelings of self-acceptance and a positive attitude towards the self but does not necessarily imply that the individual feels superior to others. In contrast, narcissism is characterised by feelings of grandiosity and superiority, self-centredness, a sense of entitlement, willingness to exploit others and a lack of empathy (Rosenburg, 1965; Akerman *et al.*, 2011; Bosson *et al.*, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001 cited in Orth *et al.*, 2018). Narcissism is a personality trait that reflects a strong need to be admired for a grandiose self. It is a multidimensional construct that includes adaptive components (for instance, confidence in one's abilities), and maladaptive aspects (for instance, exploitative tendencies and exhibitionism). Narcissism is abstractly different from self-esteem, which is a global assessment of self-respect and a fondness for oneself (Menon, Moyes, & Bradley, 2018). Contrary, narcissism is unswervingly linked to positive-agentic qualities (for instance, being clever or determined) but not to positive communal traits (for example, being cooperative or kind). In contrast, self-esteem is related to both positive-agentic and positive-communal traits (James & Brunell, 2014 in Jones, Norville & Wright, 2017). Thus, narcissism is related to antisocial behaviour and a negative view of others, whereas high self-esteem is comparable with a prosocial and positive attitude towards others (Orth *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.3.3 High self-esteem versus low self-esteem

Generally, there are many benefits regarding having a positive view of the self. Those who have high self-esteem are presumed to be psychologically happy and healthy, whereas those with low self-esteem are believed to be psychologically distressed (Heatherton & Wyland, 2016). High self-esteem is linked to academic success, a positive body image and peer group satisfaction in adolescents. Individuals with high self-esteem show more persistence and resilience than those with low self-esteem. In contrast, low self-esteem is linked to lower life satisfaction (Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005; DuBois *et al.*, 2002; in Nkyi, 2018). High self-esteem has been identified as being facilitative. It has been associated with positive emotional and academic outcomes for students across the board (Lew & Harklau, 2018). In contrast, low self-esteem is associated with low self-confidence, indecision and uncertainty (Minev, 2018). According to Searcy (2007 cited in Nkyi, 2018), adolescents whose low self-esteem is experienced in a school setting are more likely to avoid daily reinforcement of their inadequacy. As such, when individuals describe their worth, they describe their self-esteem.

2.2.3.4 Global versus domain-specific self-esteem

Global self-esteem is generally conceptualised as the individual's general attitude toward the self, or evaluation thereof, and it reflects people's beliefs about how worthy they are as individual persons and if they merit respect. It is seen as the central evaluative component of the self and a fundamental psychological construct (Von Soest, Wichstorm, & Kvaem, 2015). Self-esteem is also constituted by multiple domains or sub-domains and it is entirely possible to have a positive view of oneself in one area, for example, physical appearance, but a negative one in another, for example, in academic circles. Some domains contribute more to overall self-esteem than others among adolescents and young adults. These domains include, inter alia, scholastic competence, social acceptance, physical appearance and romantic appeal (Jozefiak, 2017). The hierarchical and multifaceted conception of self-esteem posits that global self-esteem is particularly influenced by self-esteem domains that are considered important. The correlations between global self-esteem and domain-specific self-esteem are particularly high for domains that are highly valued even in society (Von Soest *et al.*, 2015).

2.2.3.5 Factors influencing self-esteem

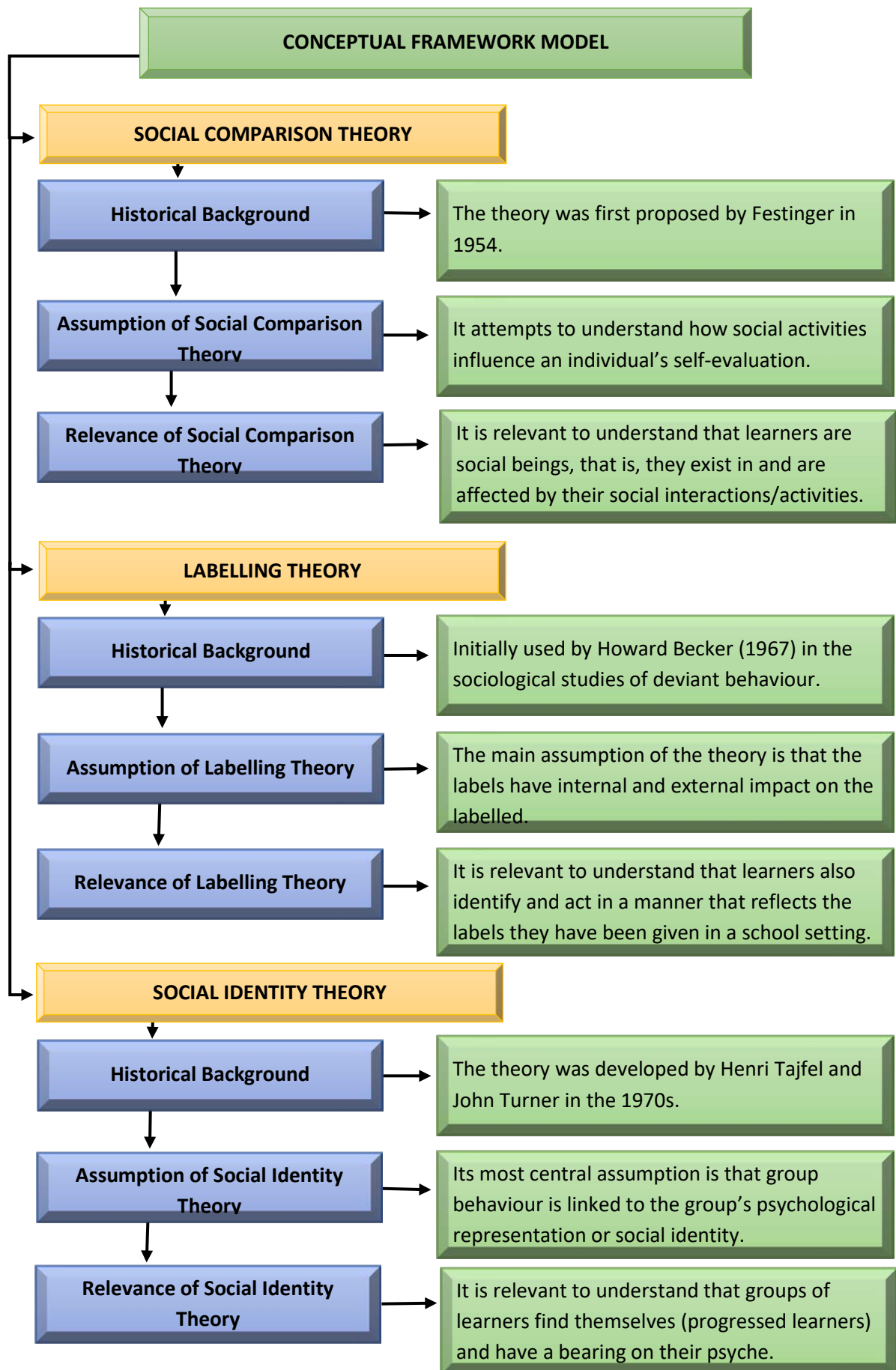
Self-esteem is influenced by internal factors such as the way one talks to oneself, the way one thinks and the things in which one believes. External factors influencing self-esteem include the environment in which one lives and works. The things that make an individual feel special and worthwhile enhance their self-esteem and the things that make the individual feel bad lowers their self-esteem (Bhatt & Bahadur, 2018). Individuals live and work in groups or societies, so they look forward to collective self-esteem. From this perspective, people also perceive themselves to the way they are viewed by significant others as worthy, such as friends, classmates, family members, and so on. Cultural and societal norms and values also influence individuals' self-esteem (Nkyi, 2018).

Gender also affects adolescents' self-esteem. When compared to boys, girls seem particularly more vulnerable about the level of their overall self-esteem. Generally, girls have more negative attitudes towards themselves than boys. This, however, does not mean that boys do not have negative feelings, worries or doubts (Minev, 2018). Studies focusing on particular vulnerabilities of rural youth indicate that this group tends to be more isolated and have fewer educational, recreational or other public health resources than their urban counterparts. This in turn may lead to lower self-esteem and fewer opportunities for success (Nkyi, 2018). Children and adolescents attending schools or living in neighbourhoods where their socioeconomic status and ethnic group are well represented feel a stronger sense of belonging and have relatively high self-esteem (Gray-little & Carels, 1977 cited in Nkyi, 2018). Researchers have also found other determinants of self-esteem that include peer influence, family relationships and media influence (Minev *et al.*, 2018).

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study adopted three theories to explore the role of SPP in influencing Grade12 learners' self-esteem and to clearly articulate the impact of the policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. These are the Social Comparison Theory, the Labelling Theory, and the Social Identity Theory.

Figure 2.2: Theoretical framework of the study



2.3.1 Social Comparison Theory

(a) Background of the theory

The Social Comparison Theory was first proposed by Festinger in 1954 as an attempt to understand how social activities influence an individual's self-evaluation. He argued that people are motivated to evaluate themselves to reduce insecurity and doubt. In the absence of an objective criterion, people tend to compare themselves with other people (comparison target). If other people generally perform better or exhibit a positive attitude (for example academic performance), the individual (comparer) tends to feel worse; and when others are worse off than the self, the individual feels better (Liu, 2016). According to Gerber, Wheeler and Suls (2017), social comparison can be defined as the process of thinking about one or more other people in relation to the self. The theory posits that people learn about their attitudes, beliefs and abilities by comparing themselves to other people around them. People would not necessarily compare themselves with someone significantly different from them. Precisely, people do not often compare themselves to those significantly better than them (Oppenheimer, 2015).

Social comparison has significant consequences for negative and positive affect. Negative affect is the degree to which the learner experiences aversive emotions such as hostility or fear. Positive affect, on the other hand, is the degree to which the learner feels enthusiastic, active and alert (Dian *et al.*, 2018). The extent to which a learner engages in social comparison correlates with despondency, depression, and social anxiety (Weber & Hagmayer; 2018). Comparison of the self with others can affect one's self-esteem even in a group. If the group is more successful than the learner, the learner develops low self-esteem. However, it works the other way as well whereas if the learner is better than the group, the learner can develop high self-esteem (Oppenheimer, 2015). The learner in a group may go as far as distancing themselves from others who are better in a certain domain, for instance, academic performance (Weber & Hagmayer; 2018). Where there are no objective standards, people judge and evaluate their behaviours through comparisons with others and social comparison occurs at either group or individual level. Thus, the similarity hypothesis is the central notion of social comparison, which predicts that learners select others who are similar to themselves for comparison (Gentina *et al.*, 2018).

(c) Objectives and assumptions of the theory

The main assumption of social comparison is that learners use social experiences and actuality to judge the appropriateness of their behaviour or opinions, especially when the physical reality does not offer enough standards to do so (Van Rooy, Wood, & Tran, 2014). Thus, human beings are instinctively driven to compare themselves, their abilities and their worth. This comparison helps learners reduce uncertainty and create meaning (Goldenberg, Andres, & Resteigne, 2016).

The baseline of self-evaluation is attained from the pre-measure in which the learner is not exposed either to upward or downward comparison (Gerber *et al.*, 2017). Upward comparison occurs when a learner compares himself or herself to someone better off than them, thus making them feel positive. On the other hand, a downward comparison occurs when a learner compares himself or herself to an individual who is worse off than them, thus making them feel negative (Goldenberg *et al.*, 2016). In the case of assimilation, the learner's self-evaluation moves toward the comparison standard; hence, the learner becomes more positive after an upward comparison, and more negative after a downward comparison (Gerber *et al.*, 2017).

(c) Relevancy to the study

The Social Comparison Theory is relevant to this study as it fosters an understanding of the notion that learners are social beings that exist in, and are affected by the social environment in which they find themselves and as such, their daily social interactions impact their assessment of their self-worth. It is also relevant to understand that to assert themselves, the learners are inclined to assess themselves, their abilities and worth, and the simplest form of this assessment is to compare themselves with other learners. The degree of this comparison can either have a negative or positive effect on the learner, thus affecting their intrinsic evaluation of themselves. Furthermore, it is useful to come to an understanding that progressed learners as well are intuitively bound to compare themselves with other progressed and non-progressed learners to evaluate their self-worth in a school setting and create meaning thereof. Thus, social interactions and activities in a school setting have a direct bearing on the learners' self-esteem. This theory will be used in the discussion to bring clarity to the findings of the study.

2.3.2 The Labelling Theory

(a) Background of the theory

The Labelling Theory was initially used by Howard Becker (1967) in the sociological studies of deviant behaviour. The theory maintains that individuals tend to act in ways that reflect how others label them (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2018). The Labelling Theory has filled in significant gaps by facilitating a focus on societal reaction to labels, examining the process of labelling and how labels are attached to individuals, and describing the potentially potent impact of labels on individuals (Shoenberger *et al.*, 2014). Labelling can be defined from a communicative approach, as a communication tool of control and domination, wherein the labelled are frequently exposed to various negative actions and have a hard time defending themselves against those labelling them (Hashem, 2015).

In the school environment, advertently or inadvertently, teachers and school authorities often label learners. This, according to labelling theorists, tends to make students respond either positively or negatively to the labels that have been attached to them (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2018). Although literature partly focuses on the damaging consequences of labelling, almost none of the studies places blame on governmental institutions which seem to demand the right to use labels without accepting the blame for the consequences of that labelling (Hashem, 2015).

Even if learners are labelled solely for educational purposes, it is impossible to change or remove the label at a later point, as the labels remain attached to learners outside their school environment. Labelling could also affect learners' attempts to be part of social groups (Algraigray & Boyle, 2017). While labels help to provide educational support to learners who are struggling academically, emotionally or socially, labels also have negative connotations and unintended consequences (Sowards, 2015). Labelling learners can also create a state where learners come to believe that they are unable to control or change the situation, so they do not try to change the labels which may make them feel that since they are labelled, they cannot do well and this may result in low self-esteem (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2018). Some of the negative treatment comes from peers through teasing, mocking, spreading false rumours, ignoring their presence and excluding them from group activities (Hashem, 2015).

(b) Objectives and assumptions of the theory

The main conviction of the theory is that the impact labels have on the labelled can be understood through the conceptualisation of primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance refers to, and describes individuals engaging in labelled actions but still managing to hold on to conventional statuses and roles. Secondary deviance refers to the labelled people who have organised their lives and identities around their label and have become enmeshed in the label (Shoenberger *et al.*, 2014). On the positive side, labelling enables the classification of learners, which implies that the teacher can manage different learners according to their abilities. Labelled learners are also able to receive special and specific help to remedy any problem they may be experiencing (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2018). Labelling and classification are believed to help create opportunities as well as extra resources and support, and it is argued that learners may be overlooked if they are not labelled (Algraigray & Boyle, 2017).

Labelling has significant internal and external effects. When individuals are labelled, other people treat them per the label, and labelled individuals are therefore likely to behave following their label (Kramer, 2015). Most labels associated with any learning difficulties are used in demeaning ways, thus damaging self-esteem and the motivation to learn, and this often results in other learners, teachers and peers, viewing them differently (Thomson, 2012). According to Algraigray and Boyle (2017), labels are possibly given more credibility because they are given by professionals and people in power, affording them the legitimacy and currency to operate within the system. Teachers and parents hold significantly lower educational expectations for adolescents labelled with particular learning difficulties (Kramer, 2015).

(c) Relevance to the study

The theory is relevant to the study as it fosters an understanding of the notion that like any other people, learners also identify with the label and act following the labels they have been given in a school setting. Thus, in one way or another, teachers and learners find themselves labelling progressed learners, and inadvertently, the progressed learners react negatively or positively to the labels attached to them. Furthermore, it is relevant to understand that whether or not learners are labelled “progressed” for educational purposes, there are unintended consequences and connotations attached to the labelling of learners. Moreover, these labels and

their undertones are given trustworthiness because they are initially coined by teachers who hold power and influence in a school setting. This theory will further be used in the discussion to bring clarity to the findings of the study.

2.3.3 The Social Identity Theory

(a) Background of the theory

The Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. Its most fundamental assumption is that group behaviour is linked to the group's psychological representation or social identity. Hence, the Social Identity Theory focuses less on how individuals operate within social groups, but more on how social groups operate within the minds of individuals (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). In other words, it is expected that the more strongly an individual identifies with a group that advocates a particular behaviour, the more the individual possesses a higher level of self-esteem following what the group advocates (Guan & So, 2016). As such, identity describes who an individual is and it is influenced by different aspects. From a social perspective, the formation of an identity is part of a social construction process and it is in this formation that social groups play an important role (Schoeman, 2015). Identity is thus defined as how individuals perceive themselves, how they are perceived by others and the factors that contribute to these perceptions (Vandeyar, Vandeyar, & Elufisan, 2014). According to Guan and So (2016), individuals define a sense of the self in terms of social categories. The social aspects of people's lives not only shape who individual people are but also guide how people think and what they do.

Learners aspire to attain self-esteem, positive self-esteem for that matter, and this aspiration motivates them to behave in ways that create and protect the positivity of their social identity (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Thus, the learner's identity is partly composed of their membership in a variety of social groups; there is a need to feel good about their group and to maintain their self-esteem by adopting strategies that protect the value of the group membership thus showing favouritism and leniency towards other in-group members, despite their transactions (Hawley, Hosch, & Bovaird, 2014).

When two groups (for example, progressed and non-progressed learners) compete on an important dimension (such as academic performance) for the losing group, especially those

who have high levels of collective self-esteem, the negative comparison outcome (that is, not performing academically) will deviate from their positive view of the in-group (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). In essence, once individuals have categorised themselves as part of a group and have identified with that group, they then tend to compare their group with other groups. To maintain their self-esteem their group needs to compare favourably with other groups (Vandeyar, Vandeyar, & Elufisan, 2014). When learners identify with a particular group, they value and emulate the attributes of the group. In other words, it is expected that the more strongly the learner identifies with a group that exhibits a particular behaviour, the learner will possess a higher level of self-esteem following what the group advocates (Guan & So, 2016).

(b) Objectives and assumptions of the theory

The Social Identity Theory proposes that the need for self-esteem motivates group members to protect and enhance the positivity of their group (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). It assumes that learners are motivated to positively evaluate their own and sometimes out-value them over other groups to maintain and enhance their self-identity (Ayorinde, Nnajioto, & Anyakoha, 2016). It can be regarded as part of the learner's self-image and stems from belonging to a particular group (Schoeman, 2015).

The Social Identity Theory pays attention to the group in the individual and assumes that an individual's self-esteem is defined by their belonging to the social groups as groups give individuals a sense of belonging to the social world. The world is divided into "them" and "us"; "progressed" and "not progressed". Individuals see the group to which they belong (in-group) as being different from the other (out-group) (Vandeyar, Vandeyar, & Elufisan, 2014). It further states that as people categorise others into these groups, they also develop varied attitudes towards them. More often, learners will have a negative attitude towards other learners that are categorised into out-group, seeing them as inferior outsiders (Ayorinde *et al.*, 2016). The Social Identity Theory has three facets: cognitive (recognition of belonging to a group), evaluative (the value attached to belonging to a group), and emotional (attitudes towards insiders and outsiders) (Schoeman, 2015).

(c) Relevance to the study

This theory will be used in the discussion chapter to clarify the findings of the study. The theory is relevant to the current study because it fosters an understanding of the notion that the groups in which learners find themselves (for instance, progressed learners) have an impression and bearing on the psyche of the learners. That is, if a learner identifies with a group that believes in, and promotes a certain behaviour (for example, non-participation in class and excluding oneself because of being progressed), the learners will attain high self-esteem concerning the advocacy of the group. Furthermore, it is relevant to understand the learners' identity as constructed by social processes, that is how they distinguish themselves, how they are observed and distinguished by other learners and teachers, and that learners inadvertently define themselves according to the social categories (thus, progressed learners, slow learners, non-performers) they find themselves in, which guides their thinking and actions.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the relevant literature on social progression. It also covered the conceptual and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. The key concepts of progression/social promotion, retention and self-esteem, as opposed to other related concepts, were defined. This chapter also discussed the contentious debate between anti-progressionists and pro-progressionists that has gone on for years in many education systems around the world. The theoretical framework has also provided the basis for an in-depth understanding of self-esteem as informed by the Social Comparison Theory, the Labelling Theory, and the Social Identity Theory concerning the SPP.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review, which included the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the study. The conceptual framework encapsulated debates on School Progression Policy (SPP). The theoretical framework embodied the theories which influenced self-esteem among progressed Grade 12 learners. This chapter details the research methodology and design. The study adopted the mixed methods approach, which combined quantitative and qualitative approaches executed through the convergent parallel design. The chapter describes the data collection methods and procedures, the study population, sampling technique, and sampling size. Data analysis techniques and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Research methodology

The research methods employed to collect data for a research project may include interviewing or collecting textual data. It is generally accepted that a tight fit is ensured between the purpose of the study or the research question and the method used (Maree, 2019). To ensure this tight fit, a mixed methods approach was used to collect data for this study.

3.2.1 Mixed methods approach

The world has become rather much more multifaceted than simplistic. Thus, knowledge about this world can be effectively traversed and built using multiple approaches drawing on multiple forms of data. This helps to extend the knowledge base and ensures that real-world issues and problems are accurately understood. While quantitative and qualitative research approaches provide a foundation for the generation of new knowledge, complex research issues may best be comprehended through a combination of methods, thus maximising the researcher's ability to generate evidence about the phenomenon under investigation (Maree, 2019). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the mixed methods approach represents research that combines various elements of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches; this includes the perspectives, data collection analysis techniques, together with the nature of the interpretations made from the study in question.

3.2.1.1 Research approach

This study adopted a mixed methods approach. From both methods and the philosophical orientation, the rationale is that combined use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the same study provides a better understanding of a research problem, which enhances the achievement of research aims and objectives. By mixing quantitative and qualitative research methods, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the research problem. According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), a mixed methods approach is characterised by the amalgamation of at least one quantitative and qualitative research constituent. This type of research enables the researcher to combine elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches for the comprehensive purposes of breadth and depth of understanding the phenomenon under research, and corroboration of the findings. The overall goal of mixed methods research is to:

- (a) expand and strengthen the study's conclusions;
- (b) seek convergence corroboration and correspondence of results from different methods;
- (c) seek elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method; and
- (d) Use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

A mixed methods approach was thus chosen because each of the qualitative and quantitative approaches inadequately understands a research problem and the combination of the strengths and results of both methods can provide the best understanding (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

The distinctive features of the qualitative and quantitative methods are discussed briefly below.

a) Quantitative

According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2017), quantitative research refers to applying systematic steps of the scientific method, while using numeric systems to examine the relationships between, or effects of, definite variables. Measurement is a serious component of quantitative research, as it demonstrates the relationships between quantitatively resultant variables. Research in quantitative methods is naturally a deductive and interactive process. Quantitative research focuses on carefully determining and measuring a set of variables to respond to theory-guided research questions. It gives an account of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population. Its designs help researchers

answer three types of questions (a) descriptive questions, (b) questions about the relationship between variables, and (c) questions about predictive relationships between variables over time (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). In essence, quantitative research is a systematic and objective procedure in its use of numerical data from only a carefully chosen subgroup of a world population to generalise the findings to the world that is being studied (Maree, 2019). Through the use of a quantitative approach, the researcher provided a numerical picture of learners' lived experiences of SPP.

b) Qualitative

According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2017), qualitative research is a probing phenomenon, and principally solicits data in the form of words. It is used to explore the 'how' and the 'why' of systems and human behaviour, thus governing these behaviours. Qualitative researchers usually take a naturalistic approach to the world, while constructing reality through comprehending phenomena through participants' voices. The central intent of qualitative research is to comprehend particular social phenomena, situations, events, roles, groups, or interactions. Qualitative research is largely an investigative process where the researcher progressively interprets a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing, and classifying the study object (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). The distinguishing feature of qualitative research is reliance on linguistic rather than numerical data and employing meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis. It also focuses on ordinary settings where interaction occurs, viewing social life in terms of processes that occur rather than in fixed terms (Maree, 2019). By using the qualitative approach, an in-depth understanding of the learners' experiences was sought.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data enabled a complete understanding of the research problem as the two data sets complemented each other (Maree, 2019). Furthermore, this kind of inquiry assumes that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields supplementary understanding beyond the information provided by either quantitative or qualitative data alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this mixed methods study, numerical and textual data were collected and analysed to address different facets of the same general research problem, thus providing a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Maree, 2016). As such, the study began with a questionnaire to obtain a broad view of the population and then used open-ended qualitative interviews to collect detailed views from the participants to help explain the initial quantitative questionnaire (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study used the mixed methods approach to address different components of the research questions and objectives within the context of SPP, its role and effect on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in selected schools in Motheo Education District. Cohen *et al.* (2018) suggest that mixed methods research typifies research undertaken to combine various elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Cohen *et al.* (2018) further set out four different realms of mixed methods research which address what is being mixed: (a) methods (quantitative and qualitative methods for the research and data types); (b) methodologies (mixed methods as a distinct methodology that integrates world views, research questions, methods, inferences and conclusions); (c) paradigms (philosophical foundations and world views underpinning mixed methods research); and (d) practice (mixed methods procedures in research). Mixed methods research operates at all stages and facets of research.

As stated in Creswell and Creswell (2018), the reason for choosing a mixed methods approach was that its strength draws on both quantitative and qualitative research; hence, it minimises the limitations of both approaches. At a practical level, the mixed methods approach provided a sophisticated and complex approach for the research to appeal to those at the forefront of new research procedures. It also enabled the researcher to have access to both quantitative and qualitative data. It proved to be a useful strategy because it allowed the researcher to have a more complete understanding of the research problem and questions at a procedural level. It enabled the comparison of different perspectives drawn from quantitative and qualitative data. It enabled the researcher to further explain quantitative results using qualitative data collection and analysis. Furthermore, it enabled the evaluation of the role and effect of SPP on decisions and processes.

Another reason for choosing a mixed methods approach is that both methods are compatible; both approaches have enough similarities in their fundamental values, thus allowing their combination and complementarity within a single study (Maree, 2016).

3.2.2.2 Research paradigm

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a research paradigm characterises a particular worldview that defines what is acceptable to research and how this should be done for researchers holding that view. As a result, working within a certain paradigm determines choices in the following domains: (a) the kind of questions that are supposed to be asked; (b)

what can be observed and probed; (c) how data is collected, and (d) how study outcomes are interpreted.

Among the various paradigms in social research is the pragmatism. This study is thus rooted in a pragmatism research paradigm infused with a mixed methods research methodology. From this view, Creswell and Creswell (2018) aver that the pragmatist paradigm arises from the actions, situations, and consequences of a particular phenomenon, focusing on the research question and problem and the use of all approaches to understand and/or bring solutions to the problem. Pragmatism is not committed to one system of reality, which implies the mixed-methods research in which the inquiry freely draws from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. As such, this study was instigated by the consequences of SPP on the self-esteem of Grade 12 learners. A major argument for pragmatism is that the researcher centres the inquiry on the notion that collecting varied data provides a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than solely focusing on qualitative or quantitative data as separate entities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Parvaiz *et al.* (2016) argue that pragmatism is not new to social sciences. The term pragmatic connotes the searching for feasible and workable solutions to complex human problems. Hence, pragmatism is defined as relieving and benefiting Man's condition and thus making humankind happier by permitting them to cope more successfully with the physical surroundings and with each other. For pragmatists, the research question or problem is the principal focus. They believe that there is a real-world out there, but individuals have their interpretations of the world. Pragmatism has been hailed as the foundation of mixed methods. The data collection methods (interviews, and questionnaires) and the analysis (descriptive, and thematic) adopted for this study are deemed the most effective in providing an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Thus, pragmatism explicitly hails the foundations for mixed methods research.

The mixed methods approach is philosophical and practically synthesised based on a combination of deductive and inductive approaches that develop research to an outcome in the best possible manner (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell, 2014 as cited in Duncan, 2018). The reason for using pragmatic epistemology is that it is a commonly used principal paradigm for mixed methods research. It focuses on what works and the truth even from the voice of the participants, in this case, progressed learners rather than the concepts of truth and reality alone. Pragmatism is not committed to one philosophical system and reality, but it is open to several

methods, worldviews, assumptions, and different forms of data collection and analysis. Hence, it is best suited for mixed methods research.

In line with the submissions by several scholars such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), Teddie and Tashakkori (2019), and Patton (2014 as cited in Maree, 2019), the researcher constructed knowledge about SPP based on the pragmatist philosophy that stresses the need to find responses to research questions than on the method used, which allowed for practical use of multiple methods and flexibility in articulating the purpose of the study.

3.3.2.3 Research design

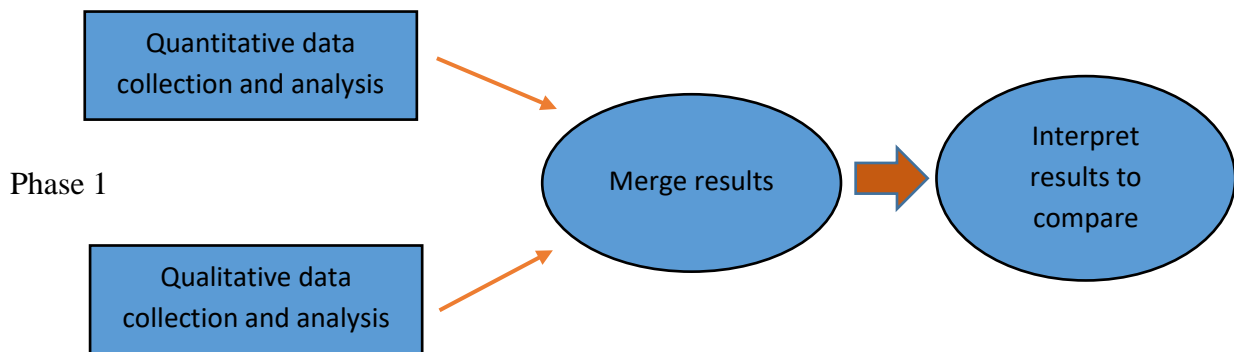
Based on the purpose of the study, a mixed methods approach was used to develop a broader and in-depth understanding of the role of SPP in influencing the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners. The study employed a convergent parallel design.

3.3.2.3.1 Convergent parallel design

This study used the convergent parallel design that embodies a mixed methods approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a mixed methods approach is useful when qualitative and quantitative approaches have, each by itself, fallen short of understanding a research problem; thus, the combined strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, and their data, can offer the best understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It was envisioned to gain an in-depth understanding of SPP's effect on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem using the convergent parallel design grounded on the purpose of the study.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the research objectives, this study was conducted using the convergent parallel design. The research can be characterised as quantitative-cum-qualitative (QUAN+QUAL) (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, cited in Demir & Pismek, 2018). This design was chosen because it allows for the merging of quantitative and qualitative data to offer a comprehensive analysis of data that is relevant to the study. Moreover, this design allowed the researcher to collect both forms of data in a single phase, analyse them separately, and then combine the information during the interpretation of the overall results of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The convergent parallel design can be graphically represented as follows:

Figure 3.1: Convergent parallel design (single-phase design)



Source: Maree (2019)

The researcher used the convergent parallel design to first implement both quantitative and qualitative methods as entities independent from each other (QUAN + QUAL), and then merged the two sets of results. It is important to understand this design's independent and convergent aspects, as shown in the diagram. Some of the common terms for the convergent design in mixed methods literature are “triangulation design” and “concurrent design” (Maree, 2019: 338).

Denscombe (2014, as cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2018) suggested that the mixed methods approach is appropriate insofar as it diminishes bias in the research and provides a practical, problem-driven approach to research. According to Maree (2016), the convergent parallel mixed methods design demonstrated the fittest as the researcher wanted to simultaneously collect both types of data about the role of SPP in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem and merge the different results. It was also most advantageous to the researcher in that it took less time to complete than its counterpart, the sequential design. It also seemed most reasonable to combine the two types of data to study the research problem. This enabled the researcher to statistically analyse survey data to determine learner participants' self-esteem.

3.4 Mechanism for the selection of participants

The mechanism used to select participants for this study involved the identification of the population, sampling, and determining the sample size.

3.4.1 Population

To execute the research appropriately, the researcher indicated the study population from which the study would be conducted to select the sample size. This started with the identification, and definition of the research population. A study population is the aggregation of the elements from which the sample is selected; usually, this implies a group of people from which conclusions can be drawn (Babbie, 2017). The population involved teachers, School Management Teams (SMTs) (Principals, Departmental Heads) and progressed Grade 12 learners selected from five selected schools in the Motheo Education District, Free State Province, South Africa. There are 85 secondary schools in the Motheo Education District. Based on the researcher's knowledge of the schools in the district, five schools were selected. The selection comprised one combined school, one agricultural school, one secondary school with Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT), one comprehensive secondary school and one ordinary secondary school in the location¹. From this anonymous population, the researcher then picked a sample size from the selected schools.

3.4.2 Description of schools

The sample for this study was selected from the five selected schools in the Motheo Education District, Free State Province, South Africa. The five schools had the following characteristics:

3.4.2.1 School A

School A was in Bloemfontein under the Mangaung Municipality. The school enrolls learners from neighbouring farms. It has brick and mortar classrooms, offices and a hostel. A few mobile classrooms have also been erected to mitigate the growing number of learners at the school. The school had approximately 34 teachers and 1022 learners at the time of the study. The school was fairly resourced, with proper sanitation facilities, running water and a Wi-Fi connectivity. The LoLT at the school was English. The school attained a 100% pass rate in 2017, 95.8% in 2018, 96.6% in 2019, and 91.5% in 2020.

3.4.2.2 School B

School B was classified as an ordinary secondary school. It had brick and mortar classrooms, a school hall and offices. A few mobile classrooms were erected to mitigate the growing

¹ A township setting in an urban area. Townships are a legacy of the apartheid era, built on the outskirts of major cities for non-white residents (Blacks and Coloureds)

number of learners at the school. The school had approximately 52 teachers and 1706 learners at the time of the research. The school was resourced with proper sanitation facilities and running water. The school's LoLT was English and it registered the following pass rates: 72.6% in 2017, 79.6% in 2018, 79.3% in 2019, and 80.9% in 2020.

3.4.2.3 School C

School C was classified as an agricultural secondary school. It had brick and mortar classrooms, a school hall, a hostel and offices. The school had approximately 29 teachers and 662 learners at the time of the research. The school was resourced with proper sanitation facilities and running water. The LoLT was English and the school obtained the following pass rates: 90.9% in 2017, 94.4% in 2018, 76.5% in 2019, and 96.7% in 2020.

3.4.2.4 School D

School D had brick and mortar classrooms, a school hall, hostels, and offices. It had approximately 43 teachers and 1331 learners at the time of the study. The school was resourced with proper sanitation facilities and running water. The school's LoLT was Afrikaans. It obtained the following pass rates: 97.9% in 2017, 99.1% in 2018, 100% in 2019, and 91.9% in 2020.

3.4.2.5 School E

School E was a comprehensive secondary school. It had brick and mortar classroom blocks, a school hall and offices. The school had approximately 59 teachers and 1906 learners at the time of the study. The school is resourced with proper sanitation facilities and running water and its Language of Learning and Teaching in English. Its performance is reflected in the following pass rates: 74.2% in 2017, 91.4% in 2018, 85.2% in 2019, and 85.0% in 2020.

3.4.3 Sampling techniques

The definition and acknowledgement of the data collection units are important choices in the research process. This choice includes selecting or sampling several participants to be included in the study. Following the nature of this study, this task related to the units at both the broader and narrower levels (Yin, 2016). As such, the sampling techniques used in this study comprised non-probability sampling involving both quantitative and qualitative components.

3.4.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative samplings

It is natural for mixed methods to use different kinds of samples and sample sizes within the same research piece (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The sampling techniques included non-probability sampling used in a convergent parallel mixed method sampling, which included both quantitative and qualitative components. The non-probability sampling techniques comprised convenience and purposeful strategies to select participants for the study. Maree (2019) states that these sampling techniques have the following advantages: (a) time-efficient, (b) saving financial resources, and (c) ease of access to the research population.

a) Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is the most useful type of non-probability sampling (Wagner *et al.*, 2012). This sampling method is used in situations where the sampling is undertaken with a specific purpose in mind. Situations in which the researcher may consider this sampling method include; (a) where there are time constraints, (b) where there is a limitation on financial resources, and (c) where the population is accessible (Maree, 2019). Purposive sampling was undertaken for several reasons including to encapsulate issues that existed in the population. It is sometimes appropriate to select a sample based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements and the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2017).

Purposive sampling means that the researcher made choices regarding the group to include in the sample. In this case, progressed learners were a specifically targeted group as they could give a true account of how they felt about being progressed, and School Management Teams (SMTs) and/or Grade 12 teachers as administrators of SPP (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). As the name suggests, purposive sampling was chosen for a specific purpose; (1) a group of progressed Grade 12 learners in selected because they would be able to indicate distinctly the effect of SPP on their self-esteem; and (2) a group of SMT (Principals, Deputy Principals and Departmental Heads) members and/or Grade 12 teachers is chosen because they administer SPP schools. Purposive sampling technique was inevitably chosen to access participants with in-depth knowledge and experience on the role and effects of SPP (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The researcher used purposive sampling to focus on specific issues unique to progressed learners.

b) Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling involves the selection of readily available individuals to serve as respondents. The researcher chooses the sample from those obtainable (Cohen, Manion, &

Morrison, 2018). Thus, learners and teachers were selected based on availability at the time of data collection for both quantitative and qualitative data. It is usually quick and economic (Maree, 2019). Progressed Grade 12 learners and educators were preparing for examinations at the time of data collection, and the researcher relied on the available respondents within the purposefully selected sample.

3.4.4 Criteria for the selection of the participants

The selection of participants was based on the criteria outlined below.

Inclusion criteria

- South African citizens.
- Residing in the Free State Province, South Africa.

The researcher invited progressed Grade 12 learners from five schools in Motheo Education District to participate in the study. The criteria for the selection of the learners were predetermined as follows:

- Learners have enrolled at schools in the Motheo Education District.
- Learners doing Grade 12 at the time of the study.
- Learners progressed to Grade 12 from Grade 11.

The researcher invited teachers and/or SMTs from four schools in the Motheo Education District to participate in the study. Selection criteria were predetermined as follows:

- Teachers teaching Grade 12 learners, and/or
- Teachers that were School Management Team (SMT) members teaching Grade 12 learners.

Information sessions were conducted with all progressed Grade 12 learners, SMT members and/or Grade 12 teachers at their respective schools. Thereafter, the purpose and details of the study were explained and an invitation to participate in the study was extended. Interested participants, both teachers and progressed Grade 12 learners then indicated to the principals of the respective schools who then arranged with the researcher to conduct face-to-face surveys at the schools.

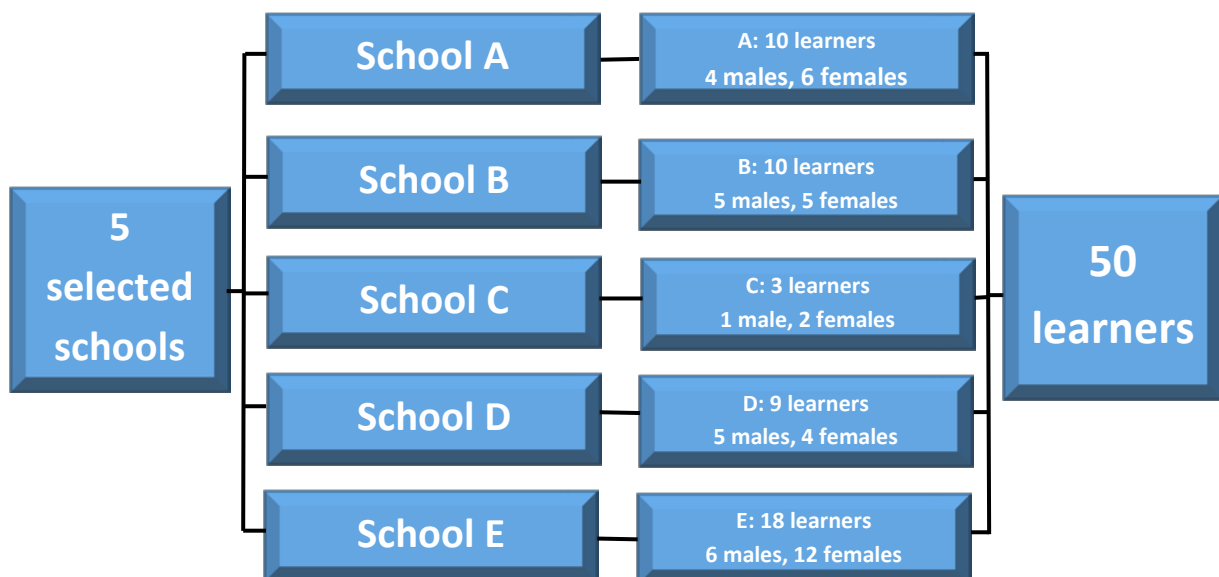
3.4.5 Sample size

The sample size for this study comprised 65 participants in total, 50 learners for the quantitative component, of which 37 were also part of the qualitative sample. In addition, 15 teachers and/or SMT members were also part of the qualitative sample. Moreover, in homogenous populations, where members are similar in terms of traits that are important to the study, the smaller sample size may represent the population (Maree, 2019). Unquestionably, the sample size for the qualitative component of the study would be smaller than that for the quantitative strand. However, mixed methods researchers do not consider unequal sample sizes to be a problem. This is because the intent of qualitative and quantitative research differs; one seeks to gain an in-depth perspective and the other, to generalise the research on a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.4.5.1 Quantitative sample

The quantitative sample comprised 50 learners (29 females and 21 males) from five selected schools in Motheo Education District. The sample for the learners can be represented as follows:

Figure 3.2: Learners in Motheo Education District (quantitative sample)

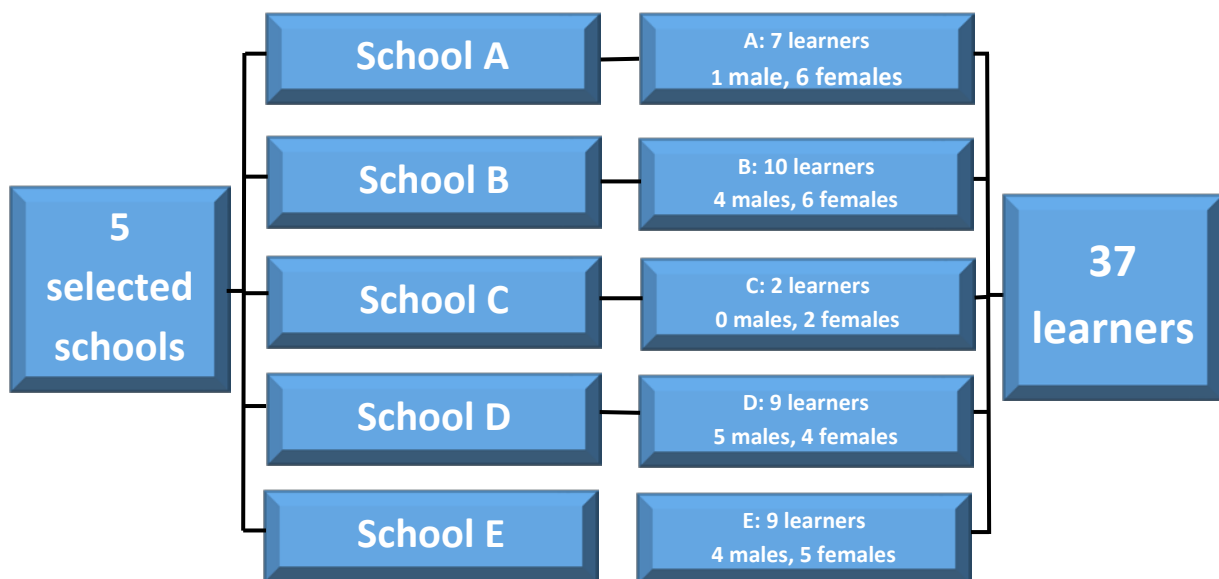


The sample size was drawn for both quantitative and qualitative phases and the number of learners who participated from each school in the study differed according to response rate per school, with regard to the qualitative and quantitative population. In the first phase, the sample consisted of fifty learners (n=50) selected from five schools in Motheo Education District. School A comprised 10 learners, School B = 10, School C = 3, School D = 9, and School E = 18 learners. These participants constituted progressed Grade 12 learners as determined by their Grade 11 examination results.

3.4.5.2 Qualitative sample

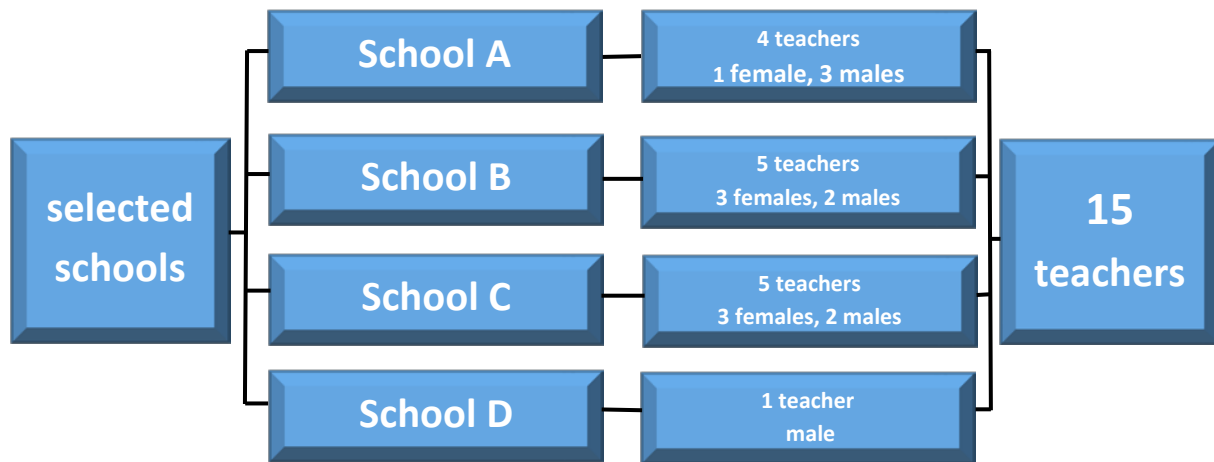
The quantitative sample comprised 37 learners (23 females and 14 males) from five selected schools in Motheo Education District. The sample for the learners is represented as follows:

Figure 3.3: Learners in Motheo Education District (qualitative sample)



In the second phase, the sample consisted of thirty-seven learners (n = 37) selected from five schools (School A = 7, School B = 10, School C = 2, School D = 9, and School E = 9). Participation also differed depending on the response rate per school. In the second phase, the sample consisted of fifteen teachers and SMT members (n =15) selected from four of the five selected schools (School A = 4, School B = 5, School C = 5, and School D = 1) from the latter with SMT members and/or Grade 12 teachers per school, which also differed according to school response rate. The sample for SMT members and/or Grade 12 teachers is presented as follows:

Figure 3.4: SMT members and/or Grade 12 teachers in Motheo Education District



3.4.6 Data collection instruments

The key issue in this design was to collect both forms of data using the same or parallel constructs. Quantitative data were solicited through a questionnaire, while qualitative data were elicited using an interview guide. The researcher used this design to explain statistical data with certain themes using different forms of data collected from the quantitative and qualitative strands (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this mixed methods approach, the researcher used a questionnaire to establish and determine the self-esteem of participants and then in-depth interviews were conducted to solicit learner participants' perspectives regarding their self-esteem. Thus, data were collected at a particular time to describe the nature of the existing effect of SPP on progressed learners' self-esteem. The survey method enabled the researcher to collect data at once, which has proved to be unequivocally economic (Maree, 2019). Moreover, surveys generated quantitative as well as qualitative data and enabled the respondents to express their views (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

In the quantitative phase, the researcher collected data using a structured questionnaire; whereas in the qualitative phase, the researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews, which enabled the researcher to ask additional questions for an in-depth understanding (Demir & Pismek, 2018). In essence, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview survey with participants and this involved a questionnaire and semi-structured

questions that were intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The mixing of two types of data can occur at different stages in the research process, including the data collection phase. The mixing of data collection processes involved the use of a questionnaire and interviews on the same survey instrument (Maree, 2019).

3.4.6.1 Quantitative

This study employed a questionnaire as a quantitative instrument to determine the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners in Motheo Education District. The questionnaire was also used to provide descriptions of the attitudes of a population as itemised in the questionnaire.

a) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Questionnaire

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), a questionnaire is a set of structured questions extensively used for collecting survey information, providing structured and often numerical data and it is capable of being administered even without the company of the researcher. Comparatively, such data are straightforward to analyse. Questionnaires offer the benefits of standardised responses to a range of topics from a constituted sample. They can be affordable, reliable, valid, quick, and easy to complete.

The researcher used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale questionnaire (Likert scale), which was useful in that it provided an ordinal measurement of the respondents' attitudes, thoughts and opinions. The Likert scale was a convenient instrument in this case, where the researcher wanted to measure a construct of self-esteem. This was accomplished by asking a series of Likert scale-based questions and then calculating the total score of each respondent in the analysis phase (Maree, 2019). The scale consists of 10 items, which are rated as follows: 'Very Much Disagree' = 1, 'Disagree' = 2, 'Neutral' = 3, and 'Agree' = 4, and "Very Much Agree" = 5. The scale ranges from 10 to 50, with 50 representing the highest score possible and it has high reliability as assessed by test-retest correlations and Cronbach's alpha of 0,623.

Surveys gather data at a particular point in time to describe the nature of existing conditions. A survey has several characteristics and several claimed attractions. It is typically used to explore a wide field of issues as it seeks to measure or describe phenomena. It is useful in that, (a) it gathers data on a one-shot basis; hence, it is economic and efficient, (b) provides descriptive information, (c) captures data from multiple-choice, closed questions, and gathers data that can be processed statistically (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

Face-to-face interview survey was also conducted; hence, the study had fewer difficulties because such a survey is supervised, unlike the postal survey, which is self-administered. The researcher visited the respondents, asked them questions, and recorded their responses. Advantages of the questionnaire in a face-to-face survey is that (a) it has the highest response rate, (2) short and long questionnaires can be used, (c) the interviewer can assist simplify questions that may not be clear to the respondent, and (d) respondents do not necessarily need to be literate (Maree, 2019). With the face-to-face interview survey, there is a greater opportunity to control the environment surrounding the survey, particularly in respect of privacy, noise, and external distractions. The potential for trust, rapport and cooperation between the interviewer and the respondent is strong in face-to-face encounters (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview survey employing a questionnaire using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Questionnaire, which is most suitable for the determination of the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners and the nature of influence SPP had on their self-esteem.

3.4.6.2 Qualitative

This study used semi-structured interviews as a data collection method to determine the role of SPP and how it affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners. It was employed to gain insight on how learners felt about being progressed, labelled as “progressed” and compared, and to explore the strategies that can enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District.

a) Semi-structured interviews

Researchers commonly use semi-structured interviews to corroborate data emerging from other sources. There are open questions that are asked and followed by further probing and clarification. Thus, the researcher ought to be attentive to the participants’ responses to identify emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being explored. In the semi-structured interview, the interview questions are treated in a standardised and straightforward manner. Thus, all the participants received the same set of questions, asked the same questions in the same order or sequence, by the same interviewer. Permission was also sought from the participants before the researcher started audio-recording the interviews (Maree, 2019).

Face-to-face interviews normally have a high response rate as participants tend to respond to the interviewer next to them (Babbie, 2017). The interview was a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asked the participants questions that solicited relevant data. Qualitative interviews aim to see the world through the eyes of the participants, who can be valuable sources of information. The aim is to obtain descriptive data that help the researcher to comprehend the participants' knowledge and social realities (Maree, 2019). The reasons for using a semi-structured interview are that it fosters (a) a relatively natural flow of talk, (b) freedom for the participant to explore unpredicted avenues of thought, and (c) flexibility of the interviewer in selected aspects of the discourse to be followed up (Coolican, 2014).

According to Babbie (2017), the presence of an interviewer decreases the probability of participants simply responding with "I don't know" to the questions. Maree (2016) further avers that face-to-face surveys or interviews are advantageous as they have the highest response rate. The interviewer can clarify vague issues to the participant and participants do not necessarily need to be literate. In one sense, face-to-face surveys are flexible. They allow the interlocutors to ask one another many questions even though a request for an elaboration on responses on a given topic, allowing for considerable flexibility in analysis (Babbie, 2017).

3.7 Data analysis in mixed methods research

Data analysis in this convergent parallel design consisted of three phases. First, the researcher analysed the quantitative data set in terms of statistical results. Second, the researcher analysed the qualitative data set by coding the data and collapsing the codes into broad themes. Third, the two data sets were integrated by merging the results from both the quantitative and qualitative components (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), integration of results is essentially the merging of results from both the quantitative and qualitative components. A comparison of the results was made. The researcher first reported the quantitative statistical results and then discussed the qualitative findings to confirm and/or disconfirm the statistical results. In this research study, the mixing of both the quantitative and qualitative methods in a convergent manner allowed for exploration and a deeper understanding of the research questions and objectives. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected in a single phase, analysed separately and then merged to see if the findings confirmed each other.

This approach allowed the researcher to collect both numeric information (from the questionnaire) and text information (from interviews) to answer the study's research questions. On the one hand, a questionnaire was used to quantify progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. On the other hand, interviews were used to further explore the role of SPP and how it affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners, to gain insight on how they felt about being progressed and labelled as "progressed" and to explore the strategies that can be used to enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District.

3.7.1 Quantitative results

The results of the first quantitative half of the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics (Pierre, 2016). Data in the form of descriptive statistics were measured using central measures of tendency (mean). Such statistics summarise a set of data into a visual overview or picture. Thus, descriptive statistics are vital in interpreting the results of quantitative data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

Descriptive statistics are explicit, as they summarily describe and present data in the form of frequencies and percentages. No attempt is made to infer or predict population parameters, and they are concerned simply with enumeration and organisation. Descriptive statistics make neither predictions nor inferences; as such, they report what has been found in a variety of ways (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Thus descriptive statistics were used because they represented the descriptive data and also showed the percentages. Microsoft Excel was used to organise data in variables, enabling the data to be represented graphically through percentages and the tendency of distribution (Maree, 2019).

3.7.2 Qualitative findings

Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse data from the qualitative strand. According to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), thematic analysis is an analysis process in which codes are used to generate a description of the setting or people and categories or themes for analysis. These themes are formed into a general explanation of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The codes obtained at the coding stage were categorised according to similarities and differences, and the categories were compared. Meaningful and holistic categories were combined to form themes. The themes are also organised under different sub-headings in the

findings and interpretations (Demir & Pismek, 2018). In short, data were organised and prepared by transcribing the interviews and typing field notes. All the data were then coded, and this involved taking text data into categories and labelling the categories with a code. The coding process was used to generate a description of themes for analysis. These themes appear as findings in this study. Narrative passages were then used to convey the findings of the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.7.3 Triangulation of findings

Quality of the results was ensured in line with the criteria stipulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The four criteria of trustworthiness were constructed to parallel the conventional criteria of inquiry, which are internal and external validity, reliability, and neutrality. Thus, the results conformed to credibility (confidence in the truth of the research findings); applicability (the degree to which the findings would apply in other settings or with other respondents); dependability (the stability of findings over time), and confirmability (the degree to which the results can be confirmed by other researchers).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) further postulated that because there is no validity without reliability, the satisfaction of validity is sufficient to establish reliability. To satisfy reliability and validity in the study, the researcher had to employ the following procedure(s) as stipulated by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The triangulation of different data sources helped by examining evidence from different sources and using it to build a coherent justification of themes. When the themes are established by merging data from different sources, the process can be claimed to add to the validity and reliability of results. Denscombe 2014 (as cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2018) reiterated the suitability of a mixed methods approach. It increases the accuracy and reliability of data as its multiple collections of data on the same phenomenon triangulates the data, which can be confirmed or disconfirmed during the merging stage.

Data triangulation clarifies the bias the researcher brings to the study. This self-reflection (how the reflection may be shaped by the researchers' background, gender, culture, and socio-economic origin) brings an open and honest narrative that will resonate with the reader. The researcher was transparent in Chapter 1 on the motivation for conducting the research and thus clarifying the position being brought into the research. Rich and thick descriptions were used

to convey the findings. This kind of description may give the reader a sense of shared experience, which adds to the validity and reliability of the findings.

According to Maree (2018), the use of a multi-method approach encapsulates triangulation. This process of collecting and analysing data from numerous sources is an effective way of addressing the trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation is arguably one of the most important ways of enhancing the trustworthiness of research findings. The purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to collect corroborative data, but rather a thorough process whereby enough material is collected for holistic interpretation. Triangulation as a strategy fulfils confirmability as the findings are shaped by participants and not the researcher (Maree, 2019). The combination of quantitative and qualitative data offered greater reliability and validity of the research and the inferences drawn from it. Triangulation can be methodological, occurring in-between methods, which enabled the researcher to study the impact of SPP on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District from a variety of perspectives using dissimilar methods (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

To ensure credibility, frequent debriefing sessions were conducted between the researcher and the study supervisor, with the researcher's reflective notes and transcripts being made available. The researcher ensured dependability by keeping a journal of the decisions made during the research process, especially during the data collection and analysis processes. The study ensured transferability through thick descriptions, which provide the reader with a full and purposeful account of the context, participants, and research design so that readers can make their own decisions regarding transferability (Maree, 2019).

Validity and reliability are in most cases identified as the shortcoming of the qualitative phase of the study. Considering the close relationship between the researcher and the schools in Motheo Education District since the researcher works at the Motheo Education District offices; this may potentially have influenced the objectivity of the findings of the study. In line with Maree's (2019) recommendations, the analysis process was documented, together with the decisions that were made regarding how the researcher went about analysing and interpreting data. The following precautionary measures were thus undertaken to ensure objectivity and prevent subjective interpretations; the transcribed discussions were availed to the study supervisor and following the analysis, the findings were sent to the study supervisor to test for accuracy of interpretation.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues in research call for increased attention today. The ethical considerations that need to be anticipated are extensive and apply to all stages of the research process. As such, it is worthwhile to address them as they relate to the different stages of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Cohen *et al.* (2011) assert that the researcher's responsibility in terms of upholding the ethical principles is to adhere to a set of guidelines that protect the institutions they hail from, themselves and the participants in the study. The researcher adhered to the guidelines that ensured that no one was placed at risk by this study. Permission to conduct the study was sought from all the relevant parties, including University of the Free State's Ethics Committee, Free State Department of Education, the selected schools involved, parents and learners, and School Management Team (SMT) members, and Grade12 teachers that were involved in the study.

Careful considerations were made to ensure that research would not unnecessarily consume participants' time or make them incur loss of resources and that it would not expose them to risk arising from their participation in the study. As such, data were collected at schools at the time that was convenient to the schools. The researcher made a firm commitment to ensure that participants' anonymity was guaranteed and that privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of data identifying participants would be strictly maintained at any stage of the research process.

Due diligence was taken to ensure that the participants understood that consent for participation was voluntary, and the researcher informed the participants that participation would not be based on any direct or indirect coercion and inducement. All the participants were informed of all the details of the study, including the possible and potential benefits and/or immediate or long-term harm, which may be directly or indirectly linked to the research and their participation in it. Participants were also informed about their right to decline participation outright or to withdraw consent at any stage of the research process.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design and methodology. The chapter presented the mixed methods approach and its conceptualisation, the research paradigm encapsulated in the mixed methods approach, the data collection methods and instrument, the population and the criteria for selecting participants, data analysis, validation of the research and the ethical issues were

outlined. Chapter 4 presents the collected data and its analysis together with the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology as well as the research approach and design, procedures of data collection, mechanisms of data analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter presents both quantitative and qualitative results drawing from the study. The chapter ends with a conclusion summarising the findings.

4.2 Objectives of the study

The study aimed to explore the role of School Progression Policy (SPP) in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District. Thus, the quantitative component of the study addressed the following research objective.

- To determine the nature of progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District.

4.3 Quantitative results

4.3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the 50 respondents are exhibited in Table 4.1. In terms of sex, the results show that there were more females (58.0%) than males (42.0%). The results of the descriptive statistics indicate that the mean of male respondents is 67.81 with the SD = 9.816 and the mean of female respondents is 69.79 with SD = 10.516 (see Table 4.2). Concerning the age variable, demographic data suggest that the minimum age of the learners was 18 and the maximum age of the respondents was 25 years. The results of the descriptive statistics demonstrate that the mean age is 20.10 with the SD = 1.68 (see Table 4.3).

With regard to the school variable, the data displayed in Table 4.1 indicate that ten respondents were from School A (10 = 20%), nine were from School B (9 = 18%); eighteen were from School C (18 = 36%); ten were from School D (10 = 20%) and three were from School E (3 = 6%). Concerning the culture variable, the data suggest that twenty-three participants were Basotho (23 = 46%); twelve were Xhosa (12 = 24%); seven were Coloured (7 = 14%); seven

were Tswana (7 = 14%), and one was Swati (1 = 2%). The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean of the Sesotho culture is 67.57 with SD = 11.297; the mean for the IsiXhosa culture is 71.17 with SD = 7.259; the mean for the Coloured culture is 63.43 with SD = 9.502; the mean for the Setswana culture is 75.14 with SD = 9.856 and the mean for the SiSwati culture is 70.00. The total mean for the culture variable is 68.96 with SD = 10.200 (see Table 4.4).

Concerning the ethnicity variable, the data displayed in Table 4.1 suggest that forty-four respondents were African Blacks (44 = 88%) and six respondents were Coloured (6 = 12%). The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean of African Blacks was 69.91 with the SD = 10.014 and the mean for the Coloured was 62.00 with the SD = 9.550 (see Table 4.5).

Data on the residential area variable suggest that thirty-three participants lived in urban areas (33 = 66.0%) and seventeen participants were from a rural setting (17 = 34.0%). The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean of the urban area is 67.88 with SD = 10.629 and the mean of the rural area is 71.06 with SD = 9.250 (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.1 Demographic results of respondents

Group	Subgroup	N	Marginal Percentage
School	A	10	20.0%
	B	9	18.0%
	C	18	36.0%
	D	10	20.0%
	E	3	6.0%
Gender	Male	21	42.0%
	Female	29	58.0%
Ethnicity	African	44	88.0%
	Coloured	6	12.0%
Residential Area	Urban	33	66.0%
	Rural	17	34.0%
Culture	Sotho	23	46.0%
	Xhosa	12	24.0%
	Coloured	7	14.0%
	Tswana	7	14.0%
	Swati	1	2.0%
Total		50	100

Table 4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation results of respondents' sex

Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	67,81	9,816	2,142
Female	69,79	10,561	1,961

Table 4.3 Mean and Standard Deviation results of respondents' age

Age	Age	Percentage of the total score
Number	50	50
Mean	20,10	68,96
Median	20,00	70,00
Std. Deviation	1,68	10,20
Minimum	18	46
Maximum	25	92

Table 4.4 Mean and Standard Deviation results of respondents' culture

Culture	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Sotho	23	67,57	11,297	2,356	46	90
Xhosa	12	71,17	7,259	2,096	58	84
Coloured	7	63,43	9,502	3,591	48	74
Tswana	7	75,14	9,856	3,725	60	92
Swati	1	70,00			70	70
Total	50	68,96	10,200	1,442	46	92

Table 4.5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Deviation of respondents' ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Percentage of the total score	African	44	69,91	10,014
	Coloured	6	62,00	9,550

Table 4.6 Mean and Standard Deviation results of participants' residential areas

Residential Areas	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Percentage of the total score	Urban	33	67,88	10,629
	Rural	17	71,06	9,250

4.3.2 Reliability results of the Self-esteem scale questionnaire

Questionnaire results that were obtained using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Questionnaire administered to 50 respondents are exhibited in Table 4.7. The scale ranges from 10 to 50, with 50 representing the highest possible score. The scale has 10 items that were administered to 50 respondents. The respondents' responses were broken down as follows; 1 = Very much disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree, and 5 = Very much agree. The scale registered a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.623. The results from Table 4.8 depict the self-esteem of the participants as per item.

Table 4.7 Internal consistency of self-esteem questionnaire

Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
10	0,623

4.3.3 Respondents' self-esteem results

Table 4.8: Respondents' self-esteem results

Items	label	Very much disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Very much agree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	N	3	15	9	13	10
	%	6,0%	30,0%	18,0%	26,0%	20,0%
At times I think I am not good at all	N	2	12	13	20	3
	%	4,0%	24,0%	26,0%	40,0%	6,0%
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	N	2	5	9	24	10
	%	4,0%	10,0%	18,0%	48,0%	20,0%
I am able to do things as well as most other people	N	2	14	5	17	12
	%	4,0%	28,0%	10,0%	34,0%	24,0%
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	N	5	8	7	22	8
	%	10,0%	16,0%	14,0%	44,0%	16,0%
I certainly feel useless at times	N	8	8	8	20	6
	%	16,0%	16,0%	16,0%	40,0%	12,0%
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	N	1	8	10	21	10
	%	2,0%	16,0%	20,0%	42,0%	20,0%
I wish I could have more respect for myself	N	2	7	5	16	20
	%	4,0%	14,0%	10,0%	32,0%	40,0%

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	N	8	15	13	12	2
	%	16,0%	30,0%	26,0%	24,0%	4,0%
I take a positive attitude towards myself	N	1	4	8	13	24
	%	2,0%	8,0%	16,0%	26,0%	48,0%

The descriptive results displayed in Table 4.7 show that most respondents (13 = 26%; 10 = 20%) agreed that, they were satisfied with themselves as progressed learners, while some participants (3 = 6%; 15 = 30%) disagreed with being satisfied with themselves and only a few respondents (9 = 18.0%) remained neutral on the matter. Concerning the item, “At times I think I am not good at all”, most respondents (20 = 40.0%; 3 = 6%) agreed that they thought that they were not good at all as progressed learners. The remaining respondents (12 = 24%; 2 = 4%) disagreed with being not good at all. Finally, thirteen respondents (13 = 26%) declared being neutral.

The descriptive results suggest that the most (24 = 48.0%; 10 = 20%) agreed that they felt like they had a number of good qualities; nine respondents (18.0 %) remained neutral while some respondents (5 = 10.0%; 2, 4%) disagreed with feeling like they had a number of good qualities as progressed learners. Concerning the item, “I am able to do things as well as most other people”. Most respondents (12 = 24.0%; 17 = 34%) agreed with the statement; while some of the respondents (14 = 28.0%; 2 = 4%) disagreed and only a few respondents (5 = 18.0%) remained neutral.

About the item, “I feel I do not have much to be proud of”, most respondents (8 = 16%; 22 = 44%) agreed with the statement while some of the respondents (8 = 16%; 5 = 10%) disagreed and only a few respondents (7 = 14%) were neutral. The descriptive results suggest that most respondents (6 = 12%; 20 = 40%) agreed that they certainly felt useless at times as progressed learners. Some of the respondents (8 = 16%; 8 = 16%) disagreed with the feeling of being useless at times and a few respondents (8 = 16%) declared being neutral.

Concerning item 7, “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others”, the bulk of the respondents (10 = 20.0%; 21 = 42%) agreed with the statement, whereas a few respondents (8 = 16%; 1 = 2%) disagreed and some respondents (10 = 20.0%) remained neutral. The results of the descriptive statistics revealed that most learners (20 = 40%; 16 = 32%) agreed that they wished they could have more respect for themselves as progressed learners while

some respondents (7 = 14%; 2 = 4%) disagreed and a few respondents (5 = 10%) remained neutral.

The descriptive results suggest that the bulk of the respondents, 15 respondents, (15 = 30%; 8 = 16%) disagreed with that all in all, they were inclined to feel like they were failures as progressed learners. Some of the respondents (2 = 4%; 12 = 24%) agreed with the statement while the remaining respondents (13 = 26.0%) remained neutral. Concerning the item, “I take a positive attitude towards myself”, most respondents (24 = 48%; 13 = 26%) agreed with the statement. Very few respondents (4 = 8%; 1 = 2%) disagreed with taking a positive attitude towards themselves as progressed learners while the remaining respondents (8 = 16%) declared neutral.

4.4 Qualitative findings

4.4.1 Participants’ biographic data

Learner participants

The study further collected information from the 37 learners, 14 males and 23 females from five selected high schools in Motheo Education District. The participants were excited about partaking in the study and sharing their lived experiences in the context of SPP. The qualitative findings are presented below.

Table 4.9: Qualitative findings from interviews with learners

Participant	School	Sex	Age	Grade	Residential Area
Learner 1	School A	F	19	12	Rural
Learner 2	School A	M	18	12	Urban
Learner 3	School A	F	18	12	Urban
Learner 4	School A	F	20	12	Rural
Learner 5	School A	F	20	12	Rural
Learner 6	School A	F	21	12	Rural
Learner 7	School A	F	21	12	Rural
Learner 8	School B	F	18	12	Urban
Learner 9	School B	F	19	12	Urban
Learner 10	School B	F	23	12	Urban
Learner 11	School B	F	21	12	Urban

Learner 12	School B	F	21	12	Urban
Learner 13	School B	F	19	12	Urban
Learner 14	School B	M	21	12	Urban
Learner 15	School B	M	25	12	Urban
Learner 16	School B	M	23	12	Urban
Learner 17	School B	M	21	12	Urban
Learner 18	School C	F	20	12	Rural
Learner 19	School C	F	19	12	Rural
Learner 20	School D	M	20	12	Urban
Learner 21	School D	F	20	12	Urban
Learner 22	School D	F	19	12	Urban
Learner 23	School D	F	19	12	Urban
Learner 24	School D	M	20	12	Urban
Learner 25	School D	M	22	12	Urban
Learner 26	School D	M	18	12	Urban
Learner 27	School D	F	18	12	Rural
Learner 28	School D	M	19	12	Rural
Learner 29	School E	M	21	12	Urban
Learner 30	School E	F	18	12	Urban
Learner 31	School E	F	18	12	Urban
Learner 32	School E	F	19	12	Urban
Learner 33	School E	F	23	12	Urban
Learner 34	School E	M	20	12	Urban
Learner 35	School E	F	21	12	Urban
Learner 36	School E	M	20	12	Urban
Learner 37	School E	M	19	12	Urban

Learner 1

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She resided in a rural area. She was adopted and therefore did not live with her biological parents whom she reported as sometimes very supportive. She mentioned that she was no longer attending church. She further cited that she had felt like she was not enough or maybe she was not supposed to be with her parents.

Learner 2

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He lived with both parents and he indicated that he liked drawing. He was from a location called Bergman Square in Bloemfontein, which was in an urban area.

Learner 3

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who lived at the school hostel. She mentioned that all they were doing at the hostel was studying. She also mentioned that she did not have any hobbies as they were always busy with academic work. She resided in a rural area.

Learner 4

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She lived in a rural area.

Learner 5

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She was from Tweespruit, which is located in a rural area. She mentioned that she was very kind, shy and sometimes very talkative. She loved playing basketball. She further mentioned that when she was in the company of other people, she did not like talking. She reportedly felt like being alone.

Learner 6

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who lived with both of her parents at a farm in a rural area. She mentioned that she liked making new friends and meeting new people. She arrived at the school in 2016 when she was doing Grade 10. She was progressed to Grade 11, which she failed but was then progressed to Grade 12. She mentioned that she was passionate about going to church. She further cited that she was the kind of person who liked overcoming any challenges that she could come across.

Learner 7

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She lived near her school in a rural area. She mentioned that they were struggling at home. She mentioned that she wanted to change the situation at home but she did not know what was going on because she was always failing.

Learner 8

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She lived in Bloemfontein in an urban area and was brought to Botshabelo by her parents to attend school. She mentioned that she only liked playing soccer and that she did not have any other hobbies.

Learner 9

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She mentioned that she wanted to go to university when she has completed her schooling and that she wanted to become a firefighter. She said that she wanted to help her mother at home, to work for herself, to achieve more, and to help other people. Learner 9 lived in an urban area.

Learner 10

The participant was a 23-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who resided in an urban area. She mentioned that she loved people and that when she had problems, she always told the people close to her.

Learner 11

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She mentioned that at home there was no peace as they were always fighting. She also cited that her culture was Sotho and that they were very strict people. She said that they could not conduct important rituals because there were no longer elderly people there. She resided in an urban area.

Learner 12

The participant was a 21-year-old female learner. She said that she loved going out and being among other people. She mentioned that she was of Xhosa culture and that there were few problems at her urban home.

Learner 13

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner and lived in an urban area. She lived with her mother whom she mentioned as the one encouraging her to go to school. She expressed profound love for education. She indicated that she had a chance to study both at home and school.

Learner 14

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner who lived with his grandmother and three brothers. He mentioned that his mother had passed away and that they were living on a social grant. He mentioned that he was of a Sotho culture and that his love for soccer had caused him to fail because when he came back from soccer training he was tired and there was no way he could have studied. He lived in an urban area.

Learner 15

The participant was a 25-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner who resided in an urban area. He mentioned that he was too shy to even raise his hand in class even when he did not understand the concepts. He also mentioned that he was of a Sotho culture and that he was able to do a lot of things for himself. He indicated that he was able to study all by himself.

Learner 16

The participant was a 23-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He resided in an urban area with his brother, sister and her two children in a two-roomed house with inadequate space for studying and other things. He was able to study at night after 22:00hrs when they were done with watching television. He further cited that he often wrote homeworks in the morning at school and in the afternoon during the study period.

Learner 17

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He lived in Botshabelo in an urban area and belonged to the Sotho culture. He indicated that he had struggled with History and Geography, but had improve in History. He said that he liked fixing mobile phones.

Learner 18

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who lived in a rural area. She mentioned that she was from a poor background and lived with her single mother, who broke up with her father. She said that she could sing. She said that although she was trying academically, she was not getting the marks that she wanted.

Learner 19

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She said that she thought of herself as a failure because when she failed anything, she would give up. She also wished she could achieve all her dreams but did not know-how. Moreover, she felt like she

could talk to someone who could help, guide and encourage her to do the right things. She lived in a rural area.

Learner 20

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner who lived in an urban area. He mentioned that he was of Swati culture and he liked playing soccer and video games. He also mentioned that he could read anything but he struggled a bit with schoolwork.

Learner 21

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who resided in an urban area. She liked Revelation Church. She said that she liked sitting at home and watching television.

Learner 22

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She mentioned that she never had many friends; so, she always tried to befriend other learners at school. She mentioned that when she failed Grade 11, things started opening up for her. She spoke to a few teachers who told her that they saw potential in her and that she should separate herself from her old friends and look for new ones. She resided in an urban area.

Learner 23

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She mentioned that she liked reading books and that she would rather listen to or watch comedy. She further mentioned that she enrolled at the school since Grade 8. She resided in an urban area.

Learner 24

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner who lived in an urban area. He mentioned that he liked being with his friends, playing and laughing. He said that he sometimes became too reluctant to do things but after being motivated, he would then feel enthusiastic to do anything, even reading.

Learner 25

The participant was a 22-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He mentioned that he was the first to do Grade 12 in his family. He felt obliged to complete Grade 12 since his brother

had quitted school. He believed that he loved people. He said that he wanted to work for his parents, make them happy and make a difference in his family. He resided in an urban area.

Learner 26

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He mentioned that he loved rugby, music and dance. He also loved academic work and he was studying every day. He mentioned that he studied at least two subjects each day. He said that if he did not understand a concept, he would go through it until he understood. He lived in an urban area.

Learner 27

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She highlighted that she stayed in a rural area where most people were uneducated. She mentioned that she liked reading books and spending time with family and friends at home. She said that she spent most of her time with little children, educating them.

Learner 28

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He lived with his mother. He highlighted that he hailed from Thaba Patchoa in a rural area where there was very little to do. He mentioned that he liked riding horses and hanging out with friends. There was no secondary school in his location, so he migrated to Bloemfontein to further his studies.

Learner 29

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner living in an urban area. He mentioned that they were not satisfied because they did not have a lot of things at home and that he lived with his unemployed mother.

Learner 30

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who lived in an urban area. She said that she had lost her mother in 2016, which disturbed her, mentally. She lived with her grandmother. She said that she had tried all her means to do well in her academic work after she had failed Grade 10 and got progressed to Grades 11 and 12 but she reported that it was hard for her. She indicated that she could hardly concentrate in class because she was always thinking of her mother, which sometimes made her feel depressed.

Learner 31

The participant was an 18-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She lived in an urban area with both parents and three siblings. She mentioned that she was friendly, loving and caring. She highlighted that she liked helping people, though she could not help herself.

Learner 32

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner living in an urban area with her mother and occasionally with her father. She said that she was not studying much and that she liked watching television.

Learner 33

The participant was a 23-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner who lived in an urban area. She said that she liked trying out new things.

Learner 34

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner and lived in an urban area. He mentioned that things were tough for him at school and home when he was in Grade 11 because he did not get along with his parents and had decided to live alone. He indicated that he did things his way and that became a challenge for him.

Learner 35

The participant was a 21-year-old progressed Grade 12 female learner. She mentioned that she loved people and that sometimes she talked a lot. She further indicated that she was passionate about playing chess. She said that there were times when her schooling was fine, though it was tough at other times. She lived in an urban area.

Learner 36

The participant was a 20-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He mentioned that he loved playing soccer and watching television. He said that he belittled himself. He also reported that he allotted time to his studies but it exhausted him. He resided in an urban area.

Learner 37

The participant was a 19-year-old progressed Grade 12 male learner. He was raised by a single mother since his father left in 2017. He highlighted that his father's departure adversely

affected his studies. He said that he liked sporting and reading most of the time. He resided in an urban area.

Teacher participants

The researcher collected information from 15 educators and members of School Management Teams (SMTs) and/or Grade 12 teachers (n=15, 8 males, and 7 females) from four of the five selected high schools (School A, School B, School C, and School D) in Motheo Education District, Free State Province, South Africa. Most of them were of the Basotho culture and they spoke Sesotho as their vernacular language. The participants were enthusiastic about participating in the study and sharing their lived experiences in the context of SPP. The qualitative findings of the interviews are presented below.

Table 4.10: Qualitative findings from the interviews with teachers

Participants	Schools	Gender	Age	Qualification	Residential Areas	Teaching subject	Grade level	Teaching experience
Teacher 1	School A	Male	63	Masters in Agriculture	Urban	Life Sciences - Natural Sciences	12	10 Years
Teacher 2	School A	Female	30s	-	Urban	LO - Creative Arts - Natural Sciences	8-12	1 Year
Teacher 3	School A	Male	-	Marketing Management – PGCE	Urban	Mathlit	12	-
Teacher 4	School B	Male	-	-	Urban	Mathslit	10-12	-
Teacher 5	School B	Female	-	-	Urban	-	12	-
Teacher 6	School C	Female	-	Agriculture – PGCE	Rural	Agricultural Management	10-12	-
Teacher 7	School C	Male	-	Senior Primary Teaching Diploma - ACE -	Rural	Maths – Mathslit	12	16

				Honours (Maths)				
Teacher 8	School C	Female	-	B.Ed Commerce and Computer typing	Rural	Commerce	12	-
Teacher 9	School D	Male	-	B.Ed – Honours in Policy Studies and Governance	Urban	English	8-12	6

Table 4.11: Qualitative results from SMTs' Interview

Participants	Schools	Gender	Age	Qualification	Residential Areas	Teaching subject	Grade level	Teaching experience
Principal 1	School A	Male	-	-	Urban	-	-	-
Departmental Head 1	School B	Female	-	-	Urban	Afrikaans - Life Science	10-12	-
Principal 2	School B	Male	-	B. Tech Business Administrati on – B.Ed Honours	Urban	-	12	-
Departmental Head 2	School B	Female	-	-	Urban	English	12	32
Departmental Head 3	School C	Male	-	-	Rural	English	12	26
Departmental Head 4	School C	Female	-	Secondary Teachers Diploma – ACE – Honours in Management	Rural	Commerc e	12	12

Teacher 1

The participant was a male teacher specialising in Life Sciences and Natural Sciences in Grade 12 at School A. He lived in an urban area. His highest qualification was a Master's Degree in

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. He was 63 years old and originated from Ghana. His teaching experience in South Africa was 10 years. Furthermore, he reported that he had been occupying a temporary teaching post for many years.

Teacher 2

The participant was a female Grade, 12 educator, at School A. She was teaching several subjects, including Afrikaans, Natural Sciences, Life Orientation, and Creative Arts. Her teaching experience spanned 12 months. She was a mother of three children. She said that it was a privilege to work at her school and that there was a lot of teamwork. She hailed the existence of team spirit at the school. She resided in an urban area.

Teacher 3

The participant was a male teacher responsible for teaching Mathematical Literacy in Grade 12 at School A. He has specialised in Marketing Management since 2016 and was about to complete his Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). He lived in an urban area. He reportedly enjoyed working with children because he spent almost 24 hours with them. He said that he was always there with them and helping them. He further mentioned that he was like a father to them and assisted them where he could.

Teacher 4

The participant was a male Grade 12 educator teaching at School B. He was responsible for teaching Mathematical Literacy in Grades 10, 11 and 12. He started teaching Grade 10 learners and later taught Grades 11 and 12 due to the expansion of classes as a result of COVID-19. He resided in an urban area.

Teacher 5

The participant was a female Grade 12 educator teaching at School B. She mentioned that she came from a very poor but stable family and she was taught about Christianity from an early age. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a businessman who hardly got enough profit to cater to the family's financial needs. Her mother was the one who maintained the house during her upbringing. She further cited that they had a loving father who tried to please and make them happy. Even though they had little material possessions, he gave them love. She resided in an urban area.

Teacher 6

The participant was a female educator teaching at School C. She taught Agricultural Management Practices in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Her highest qualification was a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). She had studied Agricultural Management and applied for a teaching job immediately after completion of her studies. She resided in a rural area.

Teacher 7

The participant was a male educator teaching at School C. He resided in a rural area. He taught Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy at Grade 12 level and his highest qualification was an Honours Degree in Mathematics. He held a Senior Primary Teaching Diploma and an Accelerated Certificate in Education before then. He had 16 years of teaching experience.

Teacher 8

The participant was a female educator teaching at School C. She resided in a rural area. She was teaching Business Studies in Grade 12. Her highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Degree with specialisation in Commerce and Computer Typing.

Teacher 9

The participant was a male Grade 12 educator teaching at School D. He taught English First Additional Language and his highest qualification was an Honours Degree with specialisation in Policy Studies and Governance. He resided in an urban area and had attended school at the school where he was teaching. He mentioned that he firmly believed in discipline so that when learners exit the schooling system, they would become active participants in society and that discipline is instilled in learners for them to be able to abide by the country's rules and laws.

School Management Team participants**Principal 1**

The participant was a male principal stationed at School A. He mentioned that he prioritised learner performance, motivating learners and teachers and giving them a chance to express themselves and showcase their talents. He pointed out that he was very passionate about his work and that he strived for perfection even when things were difficult. He resided in an urban area.

Departmental Head 1

The participant was a female Departmental Head for Life Sciences and Natural Sciences at School B. She resided in an urban area and was responsible for teaching Afrikaans and Life Sciences at Grade 10, 11 and 12 levels. She started by teaching Afrikaans before moving to Life Sciences. She also started by working as an Acting Departmental Head before she got appointed two years later.

Principal 2

The participant was a male principal at School B. He mentioned that he was passionate about education and his highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Honours Degree. He mentioned that he was very passionate about education and had also tried to ensure that he equipped himself with the necessary management knowledge and skills demanded by his current managerial post. He further indicated that his objective was to attain greater professional growth. He resided in an urban area.

Departmental Head 2

The participant was a female Departmental Head for English First Additional Language at School B. She taught English First Additional Language at Grade 12 level and had been teaching for the past 32 years. She resided in an urban area. She joined the school in 1990 and had been teaching English since then. She got promoted to become the Departmental Head in 2011. She cited that the English Department covered the whole school and the workload was overwhelming. She was being assisted with management and administration by a senior teacher at the school.

Departmental Head 3

The participant was a male Departmental Head at School C and he resided in a rural area. He was responsible for the languages at the school. He had graduated from Vista University in 1995 and taught English First Additional Language at Grade 12 level. He had been to several schools before he got to School C in 2008. He had been working as Acting Departmental Head before being appointed to the current post. He was also the secretary for the School Governing Body (SGB) at the School C.

Departmental Head 4

The participant was a female Departmental Head for Commercial subjects at School C. She resided in a rural area. Her highest qualification was an Honours Degree in Management. She started teaching at the school in 2008 and she was married with three children. She mentioned that she was very strict especially when it came to her department. She added that she was highly committed with a teaching experience of 12 years.

4.4.2 Aim and objectives of the study

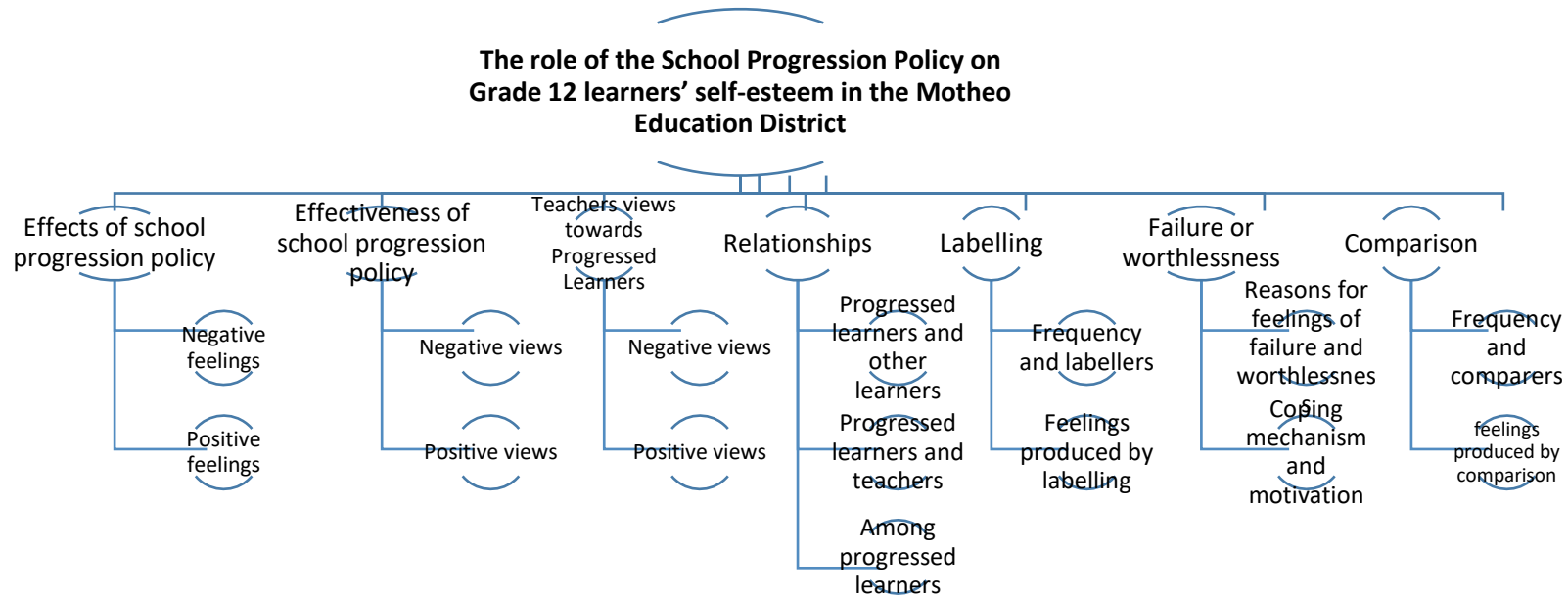
The study aimed to explore the role of SPP in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District. In light of this aim, the qualitative component of the research addressed the following research objectives:

1. To explore how School Progression Policy affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District.
2. To investigate how being progressed and labelled as “progressed” and compared influence how Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District feel.

The next section presents and interprets the qualitative analysis of the study.

4.4.3 Thematic results of the study

Figure 4.1: Identified themes and subthemes of the study



The thematic results of the study present identified themes such as the effects of SPP, the effectiveness of SPP, teachers' views towards progressed learners, relationships, labelling, failure or worthlessness and comparison.

4.4.4 Effects of School Progression Policy on progressed learners

This study found that the School Progression Policy (SPP) could negatively and positively affect the well-being and feelings of progressed learners at schools in the Motheo Education District.

4.4.4.1 Negative effects

This study suggests the negative effects of SPP among progressed learners at schools. These feelings included stupidity, dumbness, inadequacy, sadness, down, failure, disappointment, and shame, enabling to move forward, struggling, laziness, and making ineligible learners.

4.4.4.1.1 Stupidity or dumbness

The analysis of learners' interviews revealed that feelings of stupidity could negatively affect learners' progress in schools. Most learners reckoned that they felt like they could not learn; they hardly understood the concepts and were short of the reasoning capacity resonating with being a Grade 12 learner. They mentioned that this made them feel different from their counterparts who often laughed at them for being progressed and not participating in class activities, e.g., giving correct answers to questions. The following extracts from three of the participating learners illustrate this:

“I do not even like school because I feel like I am an idiot. Some of the learners are happy sometimes, but I feel like leaving school immediately” (Learner 4).

“I sometimes feel bad for having been progressed. When we are in class, some other teachers often say that I am progressed. I feel like an idiot” (Learner 5).

“It makes me feel out and stupid. I feel different from other children” (Learner 24).

“It makes me feel dumb and ignorant. When I get into class and a teacher asks who were progressed, I feel ashamed. I do not raise my hand because I feel others would laugh at me” (Learner 30).

Some participants revealed that progressed learners felt different from other learners. They felt like they did not know anything. They felt like leaving school because being progressed made them feel like idiots.

4.4.4.1.2 Inadequacy

The analysis of learners’ interviews revealed that feelings of inadequacy adversely affected progressed learners at schools. They reckoned they could not adapt to the social, emotional, and intellectual demands of Grade 12. They declared that they felt inadequate in some way regarding the requirements of being a Grade 12 learner. Moreover, they declared that they felt deficient or inferior to their counterparts. They felt they were inferior human beings, especially when exposed to things they do not know or could not do. The following extracts from two learners demonstrate this feeling:

“It makes me feel like less of a person because I just couldn’t do whatever I wanted to do” (Learner 18).

“It makes me feel less of a human being. Being progressed makes me feel like less of a human being because there are things we do not know when we are progressed” (Learner 37).

4.4.4.1.3 Sadness

The analysis of learners’ interviews revealed that a feeling of sadness could affect progressed learners at schools. The learners mentioned that they felt disadvantaged, helpless, and disappointed. They reported that they were disappointed at being progressed, as other learners seemed to be passing when they were not progressed. These learners alluded to the point that they even thought of quitting school because they felt down as a result of being progressed. Moreover, they felt sad when they thought of the opinions people or their counterparts held about their progression to Grade 12. The following extracts from two learners demonstrate this notion:

“I thought of quitting school. I thought about what people would say about me because I am an extrovert and I have even been progressed. I was hurt; I thought I should quit school” (Learner 11).

“I feel sad about being progressed because other learners are passing without being progressed” (Learner 29).

The above extracts revealed that these learners felt sad due to being progressed. The learners alluded to the point that other learners seemed to have done better than them without being progressed.

4.4.4.1.4 Feeling moody

The responses from participants’ transcripts indicated that feeling moody could affect progressed learners at schools. They explained that they experienced down and low moods, felt a bit crappy, fed up, and teary due to being progressed. They mentioned that they did not expect to be progressed and fitted the profile of learners to be progressed significantly at the apex of their basic schooling career. Moreover, they mentioned that they were not comfortable with being scolded by the teachers for minor mistakes. The following extracts demonstrate this view:

“Being progressed made me feel down because I did not think I was the kind of a person who would get progressed. I did not think that I would be progressed the year that I went for matriculation” (Learner 8).

“They laugh at us, and when we make mistakes, some teachers scold us. They tell us that this is how we were progressed and that does not go down well with us” (Learner 9).

These extracts reveal that these learners felt down due to being progressed. Being progressed took a knock on how they perceived themselves as they never thought they would be progressed.

4.4.4.1.5 Failure

Responses from learners’ transcripts show that the feeling of failure affected progressed learners at schools. These indicated that they felt they could not measure up to the requirements, standards, and goals set for them by the schooling system. The participants highlighted that learners felt that they were unable to perform certain essential tasks, which

made them not worthy as they could not accomplish tasks independently. The participants further underlined that this feeling of being a failure was exacerbated by the negative comments they heard about being progressed. The following extracts from the three learner participants authenticate this finding:

“I feel like a failure. I feel like giving up in life. People sometimes give me negative words and stuff” (Learner 21).

“It makes me feel like a failure, and it was my first time to be progressed. It makes me feel like I am not worth it. I cannot do anything” (Learner 31).

“I feel like I am not a good learner. I am a failure. I cannot do things by myself” (Learner 33).

These extracts reveal that these learners felt as if they were failures due to being progressed. The learners said that they felt as though they were not good, less important, and wanted to give up.

4.4.4.1.6 Disappointment

The responses from learners’ transcripts demonstrated that feelings of disappointment could negatively affect progressed learners at schools. The learners reckoned that they were experiencing dissatisfaction following failure to attain their goals and measure up to the expectations of Grade 11. They mentioned that they did not expect to be progressed to Grade 12, which created a feeling of disappointment when they thought they had passed their examinations. The following extracts from two learners make this view evident:

“I was feeling so disappointed because I did not think I would be progressed” (Learner 10).

“When I got my report, I was not happy. I knew I had passed from the way I wrote in December, but when the report came, I was not happy” (Learner 13).

The above extracts reveal that these learners felt disappointed due to being progressed. They indicated that they felt this way because it came as a surprise, as they did not expect to be being progressed.

4.4.4.1.7 Shame

The responses from learners' transcripts show that the feeling of being ashamed negatively affected progressed learners at schools. This was confirmed only by learners. They indicated that they felt distressed, embarrassed and overcome by feelings of foolishness, or disgrace especially when the teachers publicly mentioned those who were progressed in class. The extracts below demonstrate this finding:

"I feel ashamed especially when I am in class and the teacher comes and points at those who were progressed" (Learner 19).

"It makes me feel like I am dumb, and I know nothing. When I get to class and a teacher asks who is progressed, I would feel ashamed. I do not raise my hand" (Learner 30).

The above extracts reveal that some learners were overcome by shame due to being progressed. This was exacerbated by the teachers pointing at them in class.

4.4.4.8 Difficulties in moving forward

In-depth interviews with the participants revealed that SPP could bar progressed learners from moving forward at schools. These learners mentioned that they were unable to learn as effectively as they would do in Grade 12 in the face of having failed some subjects in Grade 11 and thus progressed to Grade 12. They mentioned that they struggled further and had more difficulties grasping concepts in Grade 12 than in Grade 11. The following extracts from three of the learner participants illustrate this finding:

"It is not a good thing because it often negatively affects the learners. Learners find themselves unable to move forward, as others drop out of school because being labelled progressed embarrasses them" (Learner 11).

"I see it as something that is not good. At times some learners struggle if they are progressed from one grade to the next. Then, they struggle far more than they used to do when they were in the previous grade" (Learner 12).

"It's not right because you will progress a learner who does not understand anything and they get stuck going forward" (Learner 35).

Participants believed that the progression policy is not working and they referred to it as retrogressive.

4.4.4.9 Struggling

Corroborating the above findings, other participants mentioned that the implementation of SPP made the learners to struggle as they seemed to lack knowledge of the content. The following extracts from two of the participating teachers illustrate this notion:

“When they get to Grade 12, they get very much frustrated and they lack the listening skills, they do not have the stamina to do Grade 12 work” (Teacher 9).

“I do not like the policy because we are just pushing these learners through the system, whereas they do not even have any knowledge of the content or whatsoever. We are struggling with these progressed learners” (Teacher 10).

These extracts illustrate that some teachers view the progression policy as further exacerbating the challenges facing learners who struggle with content gaps and some comprehension aspects. Teacher 9 also mentioned that the policy is ineffective because the progressed learners do not have the mental fortitude for Grade 12.

4.4.4.10 SPP as promoting laziness

The participants’ responses revealed that laziness could be an effect of SPP. They revealed that some of the learners were inclined towards being unwilling to work hard and exert themselves despite having the ability to do so. They further mentioned that some learners did not exert themselves and simply thought that there was a chance that they could be progressed once again. The following extracts from three learners illustrate this view:

“There are learners who think that if they have been progressed to another grade, they just have to pull back anticipating that they will be progressed to the next grade. Somehow, progressing learners is not a good thing because they will relax” (Learner 6).

“I do not think it’s a good thing because when one is progressed, they think of being progressed again. We do not go all out with our studies” (Learner 7).

“It is also not good because you get to Grade 12 and there is no effort because they pushed you, you did not do it yourself” (Learner 33).

These learners believed that the policy is not a good thing and revealed that it creates a sense of laziness and some kind of entitlement. They mentioned that it makes the learners not go all in and exert themselves in their studies.

From the above-mentioned views, it emerged that some participants corroborated the feeling that the policy made the learners lazy and limited their potential. These teachers revealed that it made the learners reluctant to be seriously engaged in their studies. The following extracts from some teachers illustrate this observation:

“I do not like it because it limits other learners. If you know that you did not perform well and you repeat, it is better because at least you are developing and you are learning something. Progression is not nice because the learner is carried over without foundation. The problem is that most of the learners exploit the advantage of being progressed despite poor performance” (Teacher 8).

“I am not in favour of SPP. I have seen learners not being engaged and not being serious about their responsibilities. So, we find teachers sweating far greater than the learners themselves. Learners are just given things without having to put more effort in their education as they feel that they will progress in the following year” (Teacher 9).

These extracts illustrate the notion that teachers viewed the policy as creating some form of laissez-faire among the learners. Teacher 9 mentioned that the learners seemed not to be engaged and put little or no effort into their education.

4.4.4.2 The positive effects of SPP

The study demonstrated the positive effects of SPP on progressed learners. These included opportunity, second chance and motivation.

4.4.4.2.1 Giving an opportunity to learners

The responses of the participants showed that providing an opportunity could be a positive feeling for progressed learners at schools. The participants highlighted that they felt like they were at a favourable moment or situation that afforded them an opportunity for improvement in their academic careers. They also felt that the circumstances were favourable, showing that they were worth being in Grade 12 and to prove their worth. The following extracts from two learners make this view more evident:

“It makes me feel like I failed myself sometimes, but it also allows me to prove myself that I am also worthy of being in Grade 12” (Learner 20).

“At the beginning, it was not nice for me but as time went on it felt like an opportunity for me to grab because I had been allowed to make a difference” (Learner 26).

The above extracts reveal that learners did not initially experience the positive feelings arising from being progressed. However, they later felt like they had been allowed to prove their worth and make a difference.

4.4.4.2.2 The positivity of being given a second chance

Participants’ transcripts suggested that being given a second chance could be a positive feeling for progressed learners at schools. The participants explained that they felt being progressed was tantamount to being given another chance to re-direct their energies towards academic achievement and prove themselves in terms of achieving their academic goals after underachieving in Grade 11 and being progressed to Grade 12. They further mentioned that this encouraged them to work hard utilising this manifesting second chance. The following extracts from two learners illustrate this:

“First of all, it makes me work hard because the system gives me a chance to prove myself that I can be a better person and I just have to work hard. So, it encourages me” (Learner 1).

“For me, it was just another level to improve myself, you see” (Learner 23).

These extracts revealed that learners experienced positive feelings about being progressed. They felt like they had been given another chance to prove and improve themselves. Learner 1 mentioned that they were propelled to work hard because they were progressed.

4.4.4.2.3 A source of motivation

The responses in participants' transcripts indicate that motivation could be a positive feeling for progressed learners at schools. The participants said that they felt that they were at a point where they could initiate the necessary goal-orientated activities and behaviours that enable them to meet their academic needs and goals. They indicated that although they were not motivated initially, they transitioned and started feeling motivated. These learners mentioned that being progressed indicated that they had some potential and were encouraged to perform and work harder. In the following extracts, four learners confirm this finding:

“Being progressed makes me feel like a failure sometimes. However, it now motivates me to put more effort and study harder going forward. When you fail, you are not a failure. It is just that you have missed something that you should have grasped” (Learner 6).

“It made me lose confidence, but then I realised that my progression shows that I have potential” (Learner 17).

“It teaches me to be a better person and to do better. I tell myself that I am at the same level as the others” (Learner 25).

“At first, I thought I was very stupid, but it changed when I started seeing that I deserved to be matriculating when I started performing in term one. Thus, I started performing very well” (Participant 34).

The extracts above show that some learners did not initially experience positive feelings about being progressed. Nonetheless, they later felt motivated and propelled to work harder. The extracts cited above clearly show the spectrum of the feelings that the participants experienced. While the majority experienced negative emotions instigated by being progressed, a few of them later experienced positive emotions emanating from being progressed.

4.4.5 Effectiveness of the School Progression Policy

This study reveals the negative and positive views regarding the effectiveness of SPP as it is implemented at selected schools in Motheo Education District. The next section explains these negative and positive views.

4.4.5.1 Negative views

The study shows the negative views regarding the effectiveness of SPP on progressed learners. These include being perceived as failures, and further struggling after having been progressed to the next grade.

4.4.5.1.1 Being perceived as failures

The responses solicited during learners' interviews indicated that SPP was perceived as being ineffective due its failures. This was confirmed only by learners. They mentioned that, in essence, being progressed meant that they had failed and did not meet their academic goals in the previous grade; it was only that they met certain conditions that allowed them to be progressed. Moreover, many learners still perceived being progressed as tantamount to having failed. The following extracts from two learners make this view more pronounced:

“In my view, SPP is not a good thing. If you fail, it should just be like that, and when you have passed, it should just be like that. I see it as the same as having failed” (Learner 8).

“I think learners should not be progressed because they did not achieve what they were supposed to achieve” (Learner 37).

The extracts revealed that the policy of progression was viewed as a failure, thus its effectiveness was viewed in a negative light.

4.4.5.1.2 Further struggling

The responses from participants' interviews reveal that the SPP was not effective as it made the progressed learners to struggle further with subject content. These learners complained that the policy was not effective in that when a learner struggled to cope with the workload in a grade and was progressed to the next grade, then they would continue to struggle with the

workload and concepts in the next grade. They mentioned that progressed learners might struggle even further as they did not understand the previous grade's baseline work. The following extracts from two learners illustrate this point:

“I see it as something that is not good. At times others become unable if they are made to progress from one grade to the next. Then they struggle far more than they did in the previous grade” (Learner 12).

“It is not right because you would progress learners who hardly understand anything and they get stuck going forward” (Learner 35).

These learners believed that the policy was not effective as learners may struggle far more than they were doing before they were progressed.

Teachers' responses during the interviews corroborated the learners' negative view of the policy in that it was not effective as it made the learners struggle further as they lacked understanding of baseline concepts. The following extracts from some teachers illustrate this aspect:

“I do not like it because it limits other learners. If you know that you did not perform and repeat, it is better because at least you are developing and learning something. Progression is not effective because the learner is carried over without an adequate foundation” (Teacher 8).

“I am not in favour of it. I have seen learners not being engaged and serious about their responsibilities. When they get to Grade 12, they are frustrated and they do not listen, falling far short of the way we want them to work in Grade 12” (Teacher 9).

“SPP is not helping because we are stuck with the problem. If a person can fail Mathematics from Grade 8 and all the levels, that means that person would not be able to pass at higher levels” (Teacher 11).

These extracts reveal that participants viewed the SPP as ineffective because it perpetuated further struggles in progressed learners.

4.4.5.2 Positive views on School Progression Policy

The study showed positive views regarding the effectiveness of SPP at schools because it fulfilled its purpose, retained learners at schools, and fostered an awareness of their mistakes.

4.4.5.2.1 Fulfilment of the policy's purposes

The responses from interviews with participants revealed that the SPP was effective as it fulfilled its purposes. These learners revealed that the policy gave them a lifeline and a chance to finish schooling. They mentioned that many of them could have been retained in Grade 11 because they had failed. As such, the SPP afforded them a chance to complete their schooling, leaving them with a qualification at least. The following extracts from two learners illustrate this notion:

“I haven't heard complaints about other people not being progressed because of their age and all that stuff. They just accommodated everyone and just saw their potential” (Learner 1).

“I think it helps because it gives us a chance. In my case, I wanted to do my Matric, and I managed. If it was not for the progression, I would still be in Grade 11. I was so happy, at least, even though they progressed me, as long as I'm in Matric, I will finish” (Learner 24).

These learners believed that the policy was working effectively. Learner 1 mentioned that the policy accommodated most learners, while Learner 24 emphasised that the policy afforded them a chance to finish schooling.

The analysis of some of the teachers' views on the other side corroborated learners' positive view of the policy. It was effective as it fulfilled its intended purpose. The following extracts from some teachers illustrate this finding:

“Experience has taught me that this policy works because there are those who did not perform well in Grade 11 as a result of psychosocial circumstances. Once they are taken to Grade 12 through progression, they tend to perform well. As we speak now, I've got learners who are now studying at universities who were regarded as progressed learners but they did well in Grade 12” (Teacher 3).

“I see it as an initiative by the department to give some learners a second chance at life because with a little push, some of them do pass” (Teacher 5).

“I think it’s a noble act because I have seen them when they get to Grade 12, coming from Grade 11, having been progressed. Thus, they surprise us. They do even better than some of the learners who came through normal entry” (Teacher 12).

“I think it’s fair. It’s quite straightforward. It’s working in the sense that learners deserve it and learners who can improve get an opportunity for progression. When there is progression towards the next grade, these learners know that you are given an opportunity and most of the learners grab it with both hands” (Teacher 15).

The extracts reveal that teachers saw the policy as effective because it gave learners a chance to progress in life despite the circumstances they find themselves in. The teachers also revealed that progressed learners tend to do better when they are supported. Moreover, they mentioned that it allowed the learners to improve.

4.4.5.2.2 Retaining learners at schools

Participants indicated that SPP was effective for progressed learners as it helped retain learners who could have otherwise dropped out of schools. They mentioned that many have been discouraged, had to quit school, and joined gangs. However, the SPP was effective in that it helped keep the learners at schools where they had a chance in life. The following extract from one learner illustrate this view:

“I think that it helps other children because if they have failed again, they will leave school. They feel useless and join gangs” (Learner 25).

The participants believed that the policy is effective in retaining the learners in the school system. The learner participant above revealed that the risk of learners repeating a grade includes dropping out of school, joining gangsters, and feeling useless.

Contributions from the interviews with some of the teachers substantiated learners’ view of the policy as effective in that it retained learners in the school. The following extract from Teacher 7 illustrates this notion:

“I think the progression policy has an overall positive impact on society. When we look at the number of dropouts in the community, we find that some of them came from something that was not being identified early at the school level. And as a result, progression has assisted most of the learners who might have dropped out of school” (Teacher 7).

The extract reveals that teachers saw the policy as effective in retaining learners at school. This teacher also revealed that the challenge of learner dropouts has been curbed using SPP.

4.4.5.2.3 Awareness of their mistakes

The responses from interviews with participants revealed that the School Progression Policy was effective for progressed learners as it made them aware of their mistakes and areas of improvement at the schools. They mentioned that due to being progressed, they were knowledgeable about, and mindful of the factors that made them fail in the previous grade. They saw this policy as enabling them to fix their mistakes and improving their academic performance. Two of the learners explained:

“I think it is good because most learners are not passing. Thus, progressing the learners helps them be aware that they are not putting in maximum effort. So, in the following year, in the new grade, they must put more effort so that they can pass by themselves” (Learner 2).

“I think they can see that I have the potential, and if they progress me, then I will fix whatever I was unable to do for me to pass” (Learner 13).

The above extracts show that progressed learners saw the policy as a means that enables them to redeem themselves from their mistakes. It also made them aware of areas where they need to exert more effort to pass.

The results from some of the interviews with the teachers resonated with the learners’ view of the policy as effective in that it made the learners aware of their mistakes and what their priorities should be. The following extract from teacher 1 illustrates this view:

“Progression is a good thing because quite often, students who used to play from the onset change as soon as they get to Grade 12. They realize that it’s time to shape their destiny. Many of the learners that are progressed to Grade 12 finally do well” (Teacher 1).

The above extract shows that some teachers viewed the policy as enabling learners to realise their mistakes and effect the appropriate changes. The teacher also explained that progressed learners tend to change and succeed in their academic pursuits when they get to Grade 12.

4.4.6 Teachers' views regarding progressed learners

The study found both positive and negative views expressed by teachers towards progressed learners at schools.

4.4.6.1 Negative views

The results indicated that teachers had negative views towards progressed learners at schools. They regarded progressed learners as lazy, not serious about their studies, and a burden posing a challenge to the schools.

4.4.6.1.1 Perceptions of progressed learners as lazy

Participants demonstrated that progressed learners were considered to be lazy by their teachers. The teachers explained that progressed learners were ignorant, unwilling to work hard or exert themselves in their studies despite having the ability to do so. They mentioned that they were even working harder than the learners themselves who were not doing enough of what was expected of them. One of the teachers reported thus:

“It’s so hurting to find yourself doing your work, while the learners simply take advantage of that situation. Progressed learners are not doing enough. They tend to become lazier, feigning ignorance as if they are not there” (Teacher 8).

The above extract shows that the teacher viewed progressed learners as lazy. The teacher also revealed that the progressed learners' efforts were inadequate, that they tended to ignore the things they are supposed to be responsible for, taking advantage of the teachers' efforts.

4.4.6.1.2 Lack of seriousness among progressed learners

Participants' views demonstrated that some of the teachers viewed progressed learners as not serious at all. They mentioned that the learners were not acting sincerely. progressed learners

were reportedly not showing any commitment to their studies. Teacher participants further mentioned that progressed learners were not fully exploiting the opportunity afforded to them through SPP. The following extract from one teacher illustrates this observation:

“I do not know if they see the opportunity they are given to progress when they have not passed. Some of them are not serious at all. They do not take their work seriously because they probably know they will be progressed to the next grade, anyhow” (Teacher 6).

This extract shows that this teacher viewed progressed learners as not serious with their academic work. The teacher further revealed that progressed learners do not take their work seriously as they feel they will be progressed, yet there is not progression beyond Grade 12.

4.4.6.1.3 Progressed learners as a burden and challenge

Most teachers viewed progressed learners as a burden and a challenging group to teach. They mentioned that progressed learners were like a duty or responsibility imposed on them. They further mentioned that they were difficult to teach as they often had to go back and close the content gaps that the learners experienced, which was somewhat time-consuming. The following extracts from three of the teachers illustrate this:

“Some of them come into the next class unprepared because there’s a gap between the content between the previous class and the current one. The teachers face the most difficulty in the next level, as they try to bridge the content gaps because they must work with the current syllabus simultaneously bridging the gaps they find. I think that’s why some teachers feel it is really difficult for them” (Teacher 5).

“My view is that their educational background, from foundation phase, primary up until here, shows that no justice was done to those learners” (Teacher 10).

“I am struggling with the learners, always having to go back a little bit with them. It’s like wasting my time” (Teacher 14).

The above extracts suggest that teachers were somewhat frustrated by progressed learners. They saw them as a burden in that they exhibited content gaps, owing to a poor educational foundation.

4.4.6.2 Positive views

The results indicate that most teachers had positive views towards progressed learners. They indicated that they needed support, care, and required understanding, and empathy.

4.4.6.2.1 Support and care for progressed learners

The results from the interviews with the participants revealed that most of the teachers viewed progressed learners as being in need of support and care. They reckoned that progressed learners needed practical, academic and emotional support; they needed extra help to better manage aspects of their lives, which will enable them to become independent. They indicated that progressed learners were not imprudent but in need of constant support and attention. Teacher participants indicated that progressed learners also needed to be given time and to be taught at a pace that suits their learning styles. The following extracts from three teachers illustrate this point:

“They always need support. They are not dull; they might have received the necessary support at some other level. Given this support, progressed learners can be able to succeed” (Teacher 7).

“My view of progressed learners is that they need to be given time, they need to be given a chance. The teacher needs to be going with them at a pace and rate appropriate to them. If you show that kind of understanding, these learners always go an extra mile and surprise you” (Teacher 12).

“If you assist the learner in progressing to the next grade, that learner has an opportunity, you know, to fulfil his dreams. In other words, to become an active member of society. If the learner receives the necessary support, they may succeed” (Teacher 15).

The above extracts show that these teachers viewed progressed learners as people in need of care and support. They indicated that progressed learners must be given a chance, time and the constant support they may have missed at some milestone of their academic development, and above all, continual support.

4.4.6.2.2 Required understanding and empathy

Interview data revealed that most of the participating teachers viewed progressed learners as being in need of understanding and empathy. They mentioned that the learners had challenges and that there are factors that may have caused their underperformance in class. They further indicated that for progressed learners to overcome their learning barriers, teachers should be able to share and become aware of their feelings; they ought to be tolerant and forgiving and be cognisant of the learners' limitations, backgrounds and circumstances. The following extracts from three of the teachers illustrate this view:

“Progressed learners are not all that weak. They have the potential to learn and pass. The problem is their background. Sometimes they are involved in all sorts of activities which let them down” (Teacher 1).

“They have challenges. Some of them have certain things that distract them from focusing or concentrating on schoolwork. Some of their parents will be in the process of divorcing or separating. They are victims of rape cases or they are poverty-stricken, sometimes they sleep on empty stomachs, that’s why they are taking all stall” (Teacher 2).

“We must not stigmatise them. We must always be there for them. We must remember that some of these learners come from broken families, where they do not get care and love. If we show them care and love, they tend to do well in their studies” (Teacher 3).

The above extracts show that teachers viewed progressed learners as people that are in need of support from their teachers who should show empathy, and strive to understand the learners' circumstances. They indicated that as teachers, they ought to understand the background of progressed learners. Moreover, the teachers mentioned that progressed learners did not need to be stigmatised but loved and supported.

4.4.7 Relationships of progressed learners

This study revealed the relationships between progressed learners and other learners, between teachers and progressed learners, and among progressed learners themselves.

4.4.7.1 Relationship between progressed learners and other learners

This study shows the negative and positive relationships between progressed learners and other learners at schools.

4.4.7.1.1 Negative views

The results indicate that the negative relationships between progressed learners and other learners were characterised by feelings of being left out, being called out, and being stigmatised.

4.4.7.1.1.1 Feeling of being left out

The responses from participants revealed that feelings of being left out characterised the relationship between progressed learners and other learners. Progressed learners mentioned that they felt as though they were not part of the Grade 12 cohort because they could not do what non-progressed learners could do. They asserted that the relationship made them feel that they could not even be with their non-progressed friends. Two of the learners shared the following:

“Progressed learners feel like being left out...When you see the person, you are in the same class with while you are progressed, you feel down. You tend to ask yourself how possible it is that they can do what you cannot do. When you are progressed, a lot of people see you as a failure in life. That’s the thing that makes them feel left out” (Learner 1).

These extracts show that these learners’ interaction with the other learners who were not progressed was strained. Learner 1 mentioned that they ended up questioning their abilities in comparison with their non-progressed counterparts. They further attributed their feeling of being left out to the fact that other people viewed them as failures.

4.4.7.1.1.2 Feeling of being called-out

The responses from interviews with the participants indicated that the feeling of being called-out characterised the relationship between progressed learners and other learners. They mentioned that often inappropriate or embarrassing questions and statements would be made in front of a large group of people, including friends or family members. Fellow learners and

teachers brought this characterisation. They alluded to the idea that the relationship makes them feel down due to being called-out and constantly being stigmatised and being called-out that they were progressed. Two of the learners affirmed this notion, thus:

“Around the school, it is not okay because you will always be reminded that you are progressed” (Learner 18).

“As progressed learners, we are being criticised, you know, and that makes me they feel like leaving school” (Learner 37).

The above extracts show that these learners felt stigmatised as they are constantly reminded of being progressed.

4.4.7.1.1.3 Feeling of being stigmatised

Participants described that the feeling of being stigmatised characterised the relationship between progressed learners and other learners. They mentioned that other learners unfairly regarded them as being and unable to learn like them. Moreover, the label of progressed learners was constantly being highlighted, which affected them emotionally. The following extracts from Teachers 5 and 15 illustrate this feeling:

“These learners are stigmatised. Hence, they get emotionally and psychologically affected. Resultantly, they may change and end up exhibiting behavioural problems” (Teacher 5).

“The problem arises when we constantly highlight the fact that they are progressed learners, which stigmatises them. Other learners may then bully them and look down upon them. This also creates social problems around the school” (Teacher 15).

These extracts from teacher participants highlight the extent of the potential problems created by the learners being called-out and stigmatised. They mentioned that the learners may be psychologically affected, as other learners may bully them, leading to other social ills at school.

4.4.7.1.2 Positive views

This study indicates that there was a positive relationship between progressed learners and other learners. This relationship was characterised by feelings of equality, better treatment, working together, and understanding.

4.4.7.1.2.1 Feeling of equality

Participants explained that other learners treated progressed learners as equals. The learners reckoned that they enjoyed the same rights, opportunities, and responsibilities as their counterparts who were not progressed. They mentioned that it was easier to feel equal, especially when the issue of being progressed or not is made public knowledge. It makes them feel that they are integrated. This characterisation was confirmed by both learners and teachers. They indicated that they see each other as equals. Four of the learners affirmed this feeling in the following utterances:

“The relationship is good because we do not know who is progressed and who is not. So, we treat each other as equals” (Learner 2).

“I haven’t seen them being isolated in any way. So, we just treat each other in the same way” (Learner 3).

“When we are in class, we are all the same. When I do not understand a concept as a progressed learner, I can go to the one who passed” (Learner 9).

“They are treating us the same, we do not even realise that we are progressed learners. We are fine with each other” (Learner 28).

The above extracts show that progressed learners felt that they were on an equal plane with their non-progressed counterparts. They mentioned that they were not isolated in any way and were able to ask for help from their fellow classmates.

The findings from the interviews with most of the teachers corroborated these learners’ view that the relationship between progressed learners and other learners was characterised by equality. The following extracts from Teachers 5 and 15 illustrate this finding:

“As a school, we decided to stop calling progressed learners as such; rather, we are calling them learners who need support, learners who are at risk. They are welcoming that. I’ve never realised any rift suggesting that they are feeling not worth it like others” (Teacher 7).

“There is no difference. They do not treat each other as progressed or not progressed. They do not draw a line suggesting that some of them are better than others. They work together, assisting one another” (Teacher 9).

These extracts from two teacher participants confirm the view of most learners. The teachers mentioned that learners felt equal when they were not labelled as progressed or otherwise and they worked together.

4.4.7.1.2.2 Better treatment

Responses from the participants showed that progressed learners were given better treatment by other learners at the selected schools. They mentioned that other learners treated them well because they appreciated their effort in the classroom and made them feel as though they are not progressed. This characterisation was echoed by learners who indicated that the learners treated each other well. The following extracts from two of the learners affirmed the finding:

“Other learners treat me well. I do not feel like I am progressed” (Learner 12).

“In my class, progressed learners are not so many and other learners treat us well because they know of our class participation (Learner 13).

The above extracts show that progressed learners were treated well by their classmates. They explained that they did not even feel like they are progressed. The findings from interviews with most teachers, on the other side, corroborated these learners’ view that the relationship between progressed learners and other learners was cordial, and progressed learners received good treatment. The following extracts from some teacher participants reflected on this cordial relationship:

“The relationship is positive because they assist one another. We can pair them or organise them into groups to ensure that they assist one another and that they understand each other as peers. Their peers can explain to them at their level” (Teacher 2).

“The relationship is good because we have a strategy of pairing or grouping them. You’ll find that we’ve got these star learners who are usually prepared to assist their struggling peers” (Teacher 3).

The above extracts corroborate the view of the learners. The teachers mentioned that learners treated each other well in that they were able to assist each other especially when they were paired or grouped.

4.4.7.1.2.3 Working together

Participants indicated that progressed learners worked together with other learners. They mentioned that other learners were part of their support system, that they understood them, treated them as normal, helped them with difficult concepts in class and did all of these things together with them in class. This characterisation was confirmed by both learners and teachers. They indicated that the learners were able to do things together in class and that created normalcy. The following extracts asserted this finding:

“We feel normal. They do not go around telling us that we are progressed, we do things together as a class” (Learner 17).

“In my class, we get the support we need. The support structure there is very strong. We help each other, and we do things together” (Learner 18).

“I have a good relationship with everyone; we understand each other and some of them even help me where I struggle with some work” (Learner 20).

“There is no difference between the promoted and progressed because we are all trying to do well in our academic pursuits and promoted learners are trying, by all means, to help the progressed learners to pass” (Learner 30).

The above extracts show that these progressed learners and the promoted learners worked together and helped each other with schoolwork. They mentioned that they constituted each other’s support structure; they understood each other and no difference existed between them. The findings from some of the interviews with teachers, on the other side, corroborated these

learners' view that the relationship between progressed learners and other learners is characterised by working together. The following extracts confirm this aspect:

“The relationship is good because you will never find any situation whereby they will say this learner is progressed. They are supporting each other” (Teacher 13).

“They are trying to help them because I am pairing them with those that I know do very well. The ones that grasp concepts quickly are paired with the progressed ones that are struggling” (Teacher 14).

The above extracts corroborate the view of the learners. The teachers mentioned that promoted learners were always willing to assist their progressed counterparts when they were paired and they supported each other.

4.4.7.2 Relationships between progressed learners and teachers

This study's findings reflect on negative, positive, and conditional relationships between progressed learners and their teachers at the selected schools.

4.4.7.2.1 Negative relationships

The results indicate that the negative relationship between progressed learners and teachers at the selected schools were characterised by being reminded of being progressed, unequal treatment, being separated and feeling left-out and disrespected.

4.4.7.2.1.1 Being reminded of being progressed

The participants' views revealed that some of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by a constant reminder that they were progressed. They mentioned that they were reminded of being progressed in a demeaning manner, especially in situations where they had done wrong, had not completed some schoolwork, or where they were struggling with certain concepts. This characterisation was only confirmed by the learners. The following extracts from two of the learners illustrated this point:

“If the progressed learner doesn’t do their work, teachers just remind them that they were progressed” (Learner 1).

“The teachers have some words that do not reach us in the same way. We feel like we do not want school because every time we do wrong things, teachers always want to remind us of where we are and how we arrived in Grade 12” (Learner 4).

These extracts reveal that some progressed learners did not like being constantly reminded that they were progressed, especially when this was brought up when they were questioned or did not perform. They mentioned that this made them dislike school.

4.4.7.2.1.2 Unequal treatment

Participants indicated that some of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by not being treated the same, not getting the same attention as other learners, and somewhat being separated. They mentioned that they were often scolded, pointed at, and singled out for being progressed. This characterisation was only responded to by the learners. The extracts from some learner participants demonstrate this notion:

“We do not have a close relationship with them. They do not give us the attention they give to others” (Learner 5).

“The teachers always tell us that we do not read. When we are in class and when they take out the results, they take those of us who were progressed; they take us in the other side then they talk to us, they point at us” (Learner 7).

“The teachers do not treat us the way as they treat the other learners. They tell us the way we dropped the marks of the school and call us by names” (Learner 10).

These extracts reveal that some progressed learners feel separated and not treated equally as other learners due to being pointed at and being blamed for pulling down the school’s pass rate.

4.4.7.2.1.3 Feeling left out

The participants' revealed that some of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by feelings of being left out. They mentioned that the teachers subject them to mockery and ridicule in front of the class, and they (teachers) seem to enjoy that. Learner participants indicated that this made them feel excluded from the rest of the class. This characterisation was only responded to by the learners. The extract from one of the learners illustrated this finding:

“Teachers are not the same. However, others will ensure that they mock you. At that time there is nothing that you can do but to keep quiet” (Learner 12).

“Some teachers support us a lot whereas others do not. They tell us that in essence, we had failed, and it is just because of mercy that we got to this grade. They make you feel left out and a laughing stock in class. It is nice for them, we have become their joke. Just like today, a teacher made fun of us and the whole class laughed at us. That’s why we feel out” (Learner 13).

These extracts reveal that this learner felt left out and did not feel any care and support from the teacher who made fun of them in class. The learner mentioned that they had become a joke to other learners and the teacher and that is what made them feel excluded.

4.4.7.2.1.4 Disrespect

Learner participants viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by disrespect. They mentioned that some learners lacked special regard and respect for authority figures and teachers at school, and teachers often point out this to them. This characterisation was only confirmed by learner participants. The following extracts from learners illustrate this view:

“Among those who are progressed, there are those who disrespect their teachers. Teachers end up telling them that they are silly, progressed and disrespectful” (Learner 9).

“Sometimes the teachers can speak well to the progressed learners. This is until the learners become disruptive to the teachers” (Learner 10).

The extracts above demonstrate that learners' disrespectfulness strained their relationship with teachers. Learner participants mentioned that it is because of learners' disrespect that teachers tell the learners that they are progressed.

4.4.7.2.2 Positive relationships

The results indicate that there was a positive relationship between progressed learners and teachers at schools and these were characterised by equal treatment, motivation, and support.

4.4.7.2.2.1 Equal treatment

Findings from the qualitative interviews indicated that most learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by equal treatment. They mentioned that teachers did not discriminate between the learners and that they did not single out progressed learners from those who were not. This characterisation was expressed by both learners and teachers. Those learners that were progressed indicated that they were treated as equals with the learners who were not progressed and made sure that they saw each other as equals. The following extracts from three learners attest to this finding:

“The teachers also treat us equally. They do not discriminate against those who are progressed. The relationship is good” (Learner 2).

“Some of them use positive strategies to make us feel like other learners. They love us like any other member of the class” (Learner 14).

“We are equal in class; they do not point out who is progressed and who is not; they treat us equally” (Learner 29).

These extracts reveal that these progressed learners were treated as being equal to their counterparts. They mentioned that some teachers showed them the same love they expressed towards every other learner.

Findings from the interviews with a few teachers corroborated these learners' view that the relationship between progressed learners and teachers was characterised by equal treatment. The following extracts from Teachers 1 and 10 illustrate this view:

“Where we realise that some of them are very weak, we advise them. I do not bother to check whether a learner is progressed or not. We treat them in the same way. We do not differentiate them” (Teacher 1).

“I treat them equally. I do not try to maybe isolate them in any way” (Teacher 10).

The above extracts from the two teachers corroborate the view of some learners. Some teachers mentioned that they treated progressed learners in the same way as they treated promoted learners.

4.4.7.2.2 Motivation

Many learner participants viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by motivation. They mentioned that teachers helped them have a positive view and regard for themselves, encouraged them to study and held them in high esteem. This characterisation was only responded to by the learners. The learners further indicated that teachers gave them a chance to succeed and saw potential in them. The following extracts from four of the learners asserted this view:

“Sometimes when you are progressed you see yourself as unable to do what others do. However, some teachers see us as though we can achieve” (Learner 8).

“The teachers motivate us, they tell us to study” (Learner 15).

“The teachers motivate us to do better and they believe in us” (Learner 23).

“They always motivate us to learn because we can pass. So, they always encourage us to study hard so that we can pass” (Learner 32).

These extracts show that the relationship between progressed learners and their teachers is characterised by motivation. They mentioned that the teachers motivated them and they saw their ability, believed in them, and encouraged them to study.

4.4.7.2.2.3 Support and help

Findings from the interviews conducted with participants indicated that most learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as characterised by support and help. Participants mentioned that teachers showed concern for the learners and that they believed in and accepted them. This characterisation was confirmed by both learners and teachers. Moreover, they loved and encouraged progressed learners. The learners further indicated that they felt supported and helped by the teachers in their daily interactions at the selected schools. The following extracts from four learners reiterate this finding:

“They help us in many ways. They offer to help us in many ways; they attend to us. They see how things are going with us. I go to them and they give me the chance to succeed” (Learner 16).

“The teachers work hard with us; they sometimes make us feel special” (Learner 21).

“The teachers are doing the best to look after us. After school, they conduct classes for the learner who may not have understood certain subjects or concepts taught in class” (Learner 22).

“The teachers do not negatively criticise us; they help those who are progressed the way they help the ones who passed” (Learner 31).

The above extracts show that progressed learners felt that the teachers supported them and made effort to help them. They mentioned that some teachers made them feel special and gave them a chance to redirect their academic endeavours.

Findings from interviews with most teachers, on the other side, corroborated learners’ view that the relationship between progressed learners and teachers was characterised by support and help. The following extracts from four teachers illustrate this finding:

“If you care, you give them love and ensure that you are passionate about what you are doing. So, it’s a mixture of love, care, and hard work between learners and their teachers. It’s quite good because results have proven that at our school if you mix all those ingredients, the learners can do well” (Teacher 3).

“We respect the progressed learners to prevent them from getting discouraged. So, we must always support them, and give them a lot of work” (Teacher 4).

“The relationship is very strong because most of the times they are the ones that we want to help more than those who are achieving, academically” (Teacher 11).

“I think it is good because teachers are found, especially during the camp, having one-on-one sessions with those progressed learners” (Teacher 13).

Through these extracts, teachers corroborate the view of the learners. The teachers mentioned that they motivate progressed learners and offer them the most help. Teacher 3 also mentioned the care and support that he practised at the school.

4.4.7.2.3 Conditional relationships

The results indicated that some of the learners and many of the teachers viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers at schools as determined by the learners’ behaviour and teachers’ character.

4.4.7.2.3.1 The role of learners’ behaviours

Participants revealed that most learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as dependent on the learner’s behaviour. They reckoned that when they showed a lack of high regard and respect for authority figures at school, they received strong negative reactions from the teachers. This characterisation was confirmed by both learners and teachers. Progressed learners further indicated that they were treated based on their behaviour in class. One learner asserted that:

“Unless you are disrespectful to the teacher that is when they will tell you that you are progressed. They will make you feel what you are trying to make them feel” (Learner 11).

The above extract shows that the relationship between learners and their teachers largely depended on the former’s behaviour towards the latter.

The findings from an interview with one of the teachers, on the other side, corroborated learners' view that the relationship between progressed learners and teachers was dependent on the learners' behaviour. The following extract from Teacher 7 illustrates this finding:

“One thing I noticed is that some of the educators lose hope especially when progressed learners are not attending the school and that in itself brings the challenge” (Teacher 7).

The above extract from Teacher 7 corroborates the view of some learners. The teachers mentioned that some of them end up losing hope because of learners' non-attendance to school, which then posed a challenge to teachers.

4.4.7.2.3.2 Depending on the teachers' characters

The findings from the interviews showed that a few of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners and teachers as dependent on the teachers' characters. They reckoned that the relationships depended on the teachers' moral and distinguishing qualities. This characterisation was echoed by both learners and teachers. They indicated that teachers approached the learners and understood their circumstances and backgrounds differently. The following extract asserts the same finding:

“Teachers are not the same, you know. Some will expose you, while others understand that you were playful, but you are now coping in this grade” (Learner 12).

The above extract shows that progressed learners were treated according to each teachers' approach to the learners and the learners' attitudes.

Most of the teachers' views corroborated with learners' views. The teachers emphasised that they were not the same and did not have the same rapport with learners. The following extracts illustrated this view:

“Well, it depends on the attitudes of teachers. I think the personality of a teacher because we do differ. Sometimes there is that animosity between teachers and progressed learners because we do label them” (Teacher 5).

“I would say that as educators, we are different. If you deal with them without realising that they are progressed learners and you deal with them on a particular task, they will always surprise you” (Teacher 12).

“Some teachers become negative towards those learners, and they do not motivate them. However, other teachers try all they can do to motivate them” (Teacher 14).

“I think it varies from teacher to teacher. It differs because you will find that a specific teacher has sympathy. Some teachers easily forget the purpose of SPP. They get frustrated, become irritated towards the learner, and then the relationship between the educator and the learner becomes strained” (Teacher 15).

These extracts from some of the teachers corroborate the view of the learners; thus, the teachers mentioned that they were different and they treated progressed learners differently.

4.4.7.3 Relationships amongst progressed learners

An analysis of the interviews with learners and teachers showed both negative and positive views regarding the relationship among progressed learners.

4.4.7.3.1 Negative relationships

The results indicate that very few learners and none of the teachers had a negative view of the relationship among progressed learners. The learners indicated that the relationship was characterised by conflict and lack of communication.

4.4.7.3.1.1 Conflict among progressed learners

The findings indicated that few of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners as cordial. Instead, it was characterised by conflict. They reckoned that they had clashes of interests, always disagreeing or arguing. This characterisation was only reported by the learners. They indicated that the progressed learners lacked the ability or willingness to stand the existence of opinions or behaviours that they disliked or disagreed and did not listen to each other. The following extracts confirm this finding:

“There is just conflict and intolerance. They do not listen to each other. Each one wants to get their point across. It just doesn’t make sense” (Learner 11).

“Sometimes we never communicate or work with each other” (Learner 21)

The above extracts demonstrate that progressed learners had no working relations. They mentioned that they could not tolerate each other, neither did they communicate nor listen to each other. They were always trying to assert their points of view.

4.4.7.3.1.2 Lack of communication among progressed learners

The interviews indicated that a few of the learners viewed the relationship between progressed learners as characterised by lack of communication. There was no impartation or exchange of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium between progressed learners. This characterisation was only responded to by the learners who indicated that they hardly communicated; thus, they were devoid of any connection or working relationship. The following extracts confirm this finding:

“They never relate to each other in a meaningful way. Sometimes we never communicate with each other and we rarely work with each other” (Learner 21).

“Honestly, I do not relate much with other progressed learners” (Learner 29).

The extracts are evidence that progressed learners showed a lack of communication and thus could not relate to each other. They mentioned that they hardly communicated or worked with each other.

4.4.7.3.2 Positive relationships

The results also indicated that most of the learners and all the teachers positively viewed the relationship among progressed learners. They indicated that the relationships were characterised by working together, helping each other, motivation and guidance and understanding.

4.4.7.3.2.1 Collaboration

Findings from the interviews with participants revealed that many of the progressed learners viewed their relationship as characterised by collaboration. They declared that they spent time

together, understood each other, ate and studied together and helped each other at the friendship level to achieve their academic goals. This characterisation was confirmed by both learners and teachers. They indicated that they did a lot of things together as progressed learners. The following extracts attest to this finding:

“They are friends, they work together. They hang around together. They eat together. They study together. They just do well because they strive to improve” (Learner 1).

“They work as a team to reach that goal the others have reached. They help each other. They understand each other. So, having a group of progressed learners who work together is very nice” (Learner 5).

“We can talk to each other you know, we can do things together” (Learner 18).

These extracts show that progressed learners could spend time together, eat together, help each other, and have a sense of togetherness based on the commonality that they are progressed.

Most teachers expressed views that corroborated with those of learners. The teachers emphasised that they saw each other as operating at the same level. The following extracts illustrate this point:

“They take themselves as being at the same level. They converse the same. They learn and work together. There hasn’t been any discrimination which can depress their spirit” (Teacher 1).

“Often, those progressed learners are always working closely. Some of them do not want to emulate other kids who are doing better. They think they will judge them or make fun of them” (Teacher 4).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborate the view of most learners. The teachers mentioned that the learners see each other as being at the same level; thus, they do things together. Teacher 4 mentioned that for other learners, being with their kind is due to fear of their promoted counterparts.

4.4.7.3.2.2 Helping each other

An analysis of the interviews conducted with the participants revealed that many of the learners viewed the relationship among progressed learners as characterised by helping each other. They declared that they could make it easier or possible for other learners to do their schoolwork by offering their services and resources. This characterisation was only confirmed by the learners who indicated that they were able to help each other because they understood each other. The following extracts echo the same view:

“When we are given a project, we often help each other, go together, and see to it that we are right. We often advise each other and treat each other well” (Learner 13).

“We are helping each other where we are struggling” (Learner 23).

These extracts reveal that progressed learners could help each other in their school activities; they treat each other well and do things together.

4.4.7.3.2.3 Motivation and guidance

An analysis of the participants’ views revealed that many of the learners viewed the relationship among progressed learners as characterised by motivation and guidance. They indicated that they could stimulate each other to exert themselves in their schoolwork and find solutions to their challenges. This characterisation was only shared by the learners who indicated that they were able to encourage, advise and guide each other. The following extracts emphasise this result:

“We talk to each other, and we tell each other what we are going to do, and then we get a solution” (Learner 10).

“We were able to push ourselves and we saw that we were playful in the previous grade” (Learner 12).

“We motivate each other to work hard because we have the opportunity to make a difference in our lives” (Learner 26).

These extracts show that the relationship among progressed learners was characterised by looking out for each other, pushing each other and motivating each other to work hard.

4.4.7.3.2.4 Mutual understanding

Responses from learner participants indicated that many of the learners viewed the relationship among progressed learners as characterised by mutual understanding. They declared that their shared experience of being progressed put them on a common scale of understanding, making them relate more meaningfully towards each other in that they helped one another and treated each other in a good way. This characterisation was reported by both learners and teachers. They indicated that they related well and understood each other. The following extracts illustrate this fact:

“We relate because both of us are progressed, we can understand each other. When we do not know certain concepts, we help each other” (Learner 15).

“We speak politely and we understand each other” (Learner 24).

“Progressed learners react very positively towards each other because they can talk about being progressed” (Learner 27).

These extracts demonstrate that progressed learners related well and they understood each other because they are on an equal footing.

Most teachers’ views corroborated the learners’ views. The teachers emphasised that progressed learners were comfortable with each other because they came from a place of understanding each other’s pain. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“When we grouped the progressed learners, we found that they were a very harmonious group and a very positive relationship existed among all of them. They understood each other’s weaknesses and tried to assist one another” (Teacher 7).

“There is a good relationship because they regard themselves as learners. They are also related with each other” (Teacher 13).

The above extracts from interviews with teachers corroborate the view of most learners. The teachers mentioned that the relationship among progressed learners was harmonious and that they understood each other's weaknesses, hence they related well.

4.4.8 Labelling

This study has highlighted the frequency of labelling with which the learners were labelled at schools, the labellers and the learners' feelings of being labelled.

4.4.8.1 Frequency of labelling

This study suggests that the labelling of learners as progressed at schools takes place all the time, based on a certain situation and that other learners were not being labelled.

4.4.8.1.1 Labelling as a regular occurrence

The responses of the learners demonstrated that most progressed learners were always labelled as progressed. They indicated that they were labelled almost in every situation when they seemed not to try to exert themselves in their schoolwork, when they were playing and not bringing the necessary resources to school, when they did not understand concepts in class, and when they had not done their work. This was only shared by learner participants. They indicated that they were labelled all the time, especially when they had done something wrong at their schools. The following extracts illustrate this notion:

“Labelling occurs all the time, especially when you do not literally try to prove yourself and when you are always playing and not bringing your textbooks, or not doing your schoolwork. Doing these things will make the teacher just remind you that you are progressed” (Learner 1).

“It happens around the school, even inside the classroom when you do not understand the subject, the way the teacher or the strategy they use in teaching or when they reprimand you, then they will remind you to know that you are progressed, which becomes painful to you. Thus, some of the learners drop out of school because they won't feel good when they are always called “progressed”. Yes, you know you are progressed but there is no need for the teacher to keep on reminding you of that reality” (Learner 14).

“Labelling occurs a lot of times. It is done by most of the teachers, maybe because the learners are talking a lot in class and things like that” (Learner 24).

The above extracts show that learners were always labelled at schools. They mentioned that labelling occurred every time the teachers were reprimanding them. Learner 14 also mentioned that there was no need for the teacher to keep on reminding them that they were progressed as they already possessed that knowledge.

4.4.8.1.2 Labelling as based on different situations

Responses from the participants showed that a few learners were labelled based on certain situations existing at their schools. They mentioned that the teachers only used the label 'progressed' when they were angry, especially when they were fed up with the learners, and at the beginning of the year when the learners were being identified. This aspect was shared by both learners and teachers. They indicated that the learners were labelled when the teachers had lost control of their emotions. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

"The labelling does not happen every day. The teachers often label us when they are angry" (Learner 17).

"It's only the teachers that call us out. It doesn't happen often; it just happens at certain times" (Learner 25).

These extracts show that the learners were labelled based on a particular situation at the studied schools. They mentioned that they were not labelled all the time but at certain times and when the teachers were angry.

Findings from the interviews with most of the teachers, on the other side, corroborated the view that learners were labelled based on certain situations. The teachers emphasised that they labelled the learners when they were angry with them. The following extracts illustrated this view:

"They are labelled; I can't say that we are angels. When teachers are fed up, they tend to label the learners. However, progressed learners themselves do label each other. So, it comes from all directions. However, I would say we teachers do label learners when we are fed up. Once one is tired, then they would say something they are not supposed to say" (Teacher 8).

"We label the learners at the beginning of the year when we are identifying them. We start to identify them when classifying them as progressed or promoted learners" (Teacher 9).

"I would say it would be by the time when we analyze their results because we got to be analysing their results. Labelling occurs during preliminaries" (Teacher 12).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborate the experience of learners. The teachers mentioned that they labelled learners as progressed in situations where they were fed up with them. Thus, they identify them at the beginning of the year, when they are doing the analysis of the results.

4.4.8.1.3 Not labelled

Responses from the participants revealed that some learners were not labelled at schools. They mentioned that no one labelled the learners, that no one has ever called them using the label ‘progressed learners’, and that they were not different from other learners. This was shared by both learners and teachers. The learners indicated that they were never even labelled by the teachers. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“Nobody labels me as a progressed learner” (Learner 8).

“I have never heard anyone call me out like that, we are all treated the same” (Learner 13).

“I have never been called like that. Nobody has ever called me that way; no learner or teacher has ever called me as such” (Learner 26).

The above extracts are testimony that learners were not labelled at schools. They mentioned that they were not labelled at all; neither by fellow learners nor by their teachers.

The responses from some of the teachers’ interviews on the other side corroborated the view that the learners were not being labelled at schools. The teachers emphasised that they never labelled learners because they understood the impact labelling had on them. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

“No, we do not label them as progressed learners because we do not want them to think that they are progressed. They are all achievers, for the reason that they have managed to get to Grade 12. It shows that they’ve worked hard to get there. Whether they are progressed, we still want them to pass. We do not label them and say this one is progressed and that one is not” (Teacher 2).

“No, we never label them as progressed” (Teacher 11).

The extracts above corroborate the experiences of learners. The teachers mentioned that they never labelled learners as progressed. They mentioned that the aim was to make all of them pass and that is why they never labelled them.

4.4.8.2 Labellers

The study indicated that learners were labelled by their teachers, friends and other learners, themselves and family members.

4.4.8.2.1 Teachers

Responses from the participants revealed that most of the learners were labelled by their teachers at schools. They indicated that they were labelled by the same school authority figures that were supposed to protect, teach, guide, support and care for them. This was shared by the learners and the teachers. Learners indicated that they were mostly labelled by their teachers than any other category of people. The following extracts illustrate this notion:

“Teachers do label the learners. When you do something they dislike, for example, always going outside or coming back without consulting a teacher, then the teacher will just say label you” (Learner 4).

“Labelling is mostly done by our teachers. Well, sometimes they would just call all the progressed learners to the side and ask us some questions” (Learner 20).

The extracts above show that these learners were being labelled by their teachers. They mentioned that the teachers labelled them when they did wrong things and would sometimes call them and separate them from other learners.

Responses from the teachers, on the other side, corroborated the view that the learners were being labelled by their teachers. Teachers emphasised that the labelling of learners was also dependent on the personality of the teacher. The following extracts from four teachers demonstrate this finding:

“I do not hear or see much from the learners but sometimes from the teachers. It depends on the teacher’s personality or character that makes them say unpleasant things to the learners” (Teacher 5).

“Most of the teachers are the ones who can tell progressed learners directly, and I always try to discourage that habit. I have never seen learners naming each other ‘progressed’. But from the side of the teachers, I have heard a lot where they are indicating even in my presence that so and so is progressed” (Teacher 7).

“They are progressed because if their reports come from Grade 11 indicating that they are progressed automatically, they are going to be labelled. Some teachers will automatically tell

them that they are progressed and continuously, they will tell them that they are not supposed to be in that class” (Teacher 14).

“When the school mentions the progressed learners to the educators, it happens, it happens frequently as well I would say. At least once a week or once every second week, these learners are constantly reminded of their having been progressed in front of other learners. When we scold them, you are a progressed learner and when we call them, we refer to them as can the progressed learners come. At the school itself, teachers frequently mention that these are progressed learners” (Teacher 15).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborate the experience of learner participants. The teachers mentioned that they labelled progressed learners. They mentioned that the labelling starts with the report to Grade 12 and they carry it as part of the systemic language. Moreover, they mentioned that it also depends on the teacher and that the learners are also constantly labelled in front of other learners.

4.4.8.2.2 Friends and other learners

Learner participants revealed that some of the learners were labelled by friends and other learners at schools. They reckoned that they were labelled by the same people, with whom they shared a mutual bond of affection, learning experiences and space at schools. This was responded to solely by the learners. The learners indicated that their friends and other learners labelled them when they did not know what was happening in class and when they received help from others. The following extracts from four learners demonstrate this finding:

“When I do not understand some concepts in class, my friends and other learners come to help me” (Learner 15).

“I do not know what is happening; it is usually the school learners in the class. This happens especially during presentations” (Learner 16).

“When the other learner is performing in class, he will be called progressed, and I feel ashamed because I do not know what is wrong with him” (Learner 19).

“In our class, those children that have passed just see down on us, like you’re progressed” (Learner 22).

The above extracts show that these learners were being labelled by friends and other learners at school. They mentioned that the other learners would label them even in class during lessons or when they see them receiving help from other learners.

4.4.8.3 Feelings of being labelled

Findings from qualitative interviews with the participants identified the negative and positive feelings associated with being labelled. The next section explains these negative and positive feelings.

4.4.8.3.1 Negative feelings

Findings from the interviews suggested that there were negative feelings associated with being labelled as progressed at schools. These included feeling sad, feeling left out, demotivated and upset or angry.

4.4.8.3.1.1 Sadness

Findings suggested that learners who were labelled as progressed experienced sadness due to labelling. The learners reckoned that they experienced feelings of sorrow and unhappiness and showed sorrow over being labelled. This was shared by both learners and teachers. The learners mentioned that they became emotional due to being labelled as progressed. The following extracts from two of the learner participants illustrate this notion:

“It is sad because one should not say that I am progressed around other people, I mean just take me on aside and talk to me” (Learner 1).

“It would make me feel quite sad and I would be very emotional because now other learners would be looking at me like the progressed learner” (Learner 27).

The above extracts show that progressed learners were feeling quite sad about being labelled as progressed. They did not like being called progressed, especially in front of other learners. Learner 4 further mentioned that they would rather prefer to be called to the side and being talked to individually instead of being labelled in front of other learners.

Findings from the interviews with some of the teachers, on the other side, corroborate learners’ feelings of sadness due to being labelled. They mentioned that in their observation the learners did not like being labelled at all. The following extracts from two teacher participants illustrate this finding:

“Labelling makes them feel down because some of them, after a long time when you’ve got some cases with parents, will even indicate in front of the parent that so and so tells me that I am progressed. So, that tells me that they do not like it. So they feel down about being progressed” (Teacher 7).

“I think it kills them. They feel bad and it discourages them. Sometimes you’ll find that they even drop out of school because of being labelled. You cannot always remind them that they are progressed” (Teacher 13).

The above extracts illustrate that teachers observed feelings of sadness from the learners being labelled. They mentioned that the learners felt bad and down, that they did not like being labelled and sometimes labelling compelled learners to drop out of school.

4.4.8.3.1.2 Left out

Responses from the learners indicated that learners who were labelled as progressed felt left out due to being labelled. This was shared by learners only. Learners reckoned that being labelled made them feel like they were somewhat being discriminated against, excluded from the learning community, different from other learners, and it was painful because they did not intend to be progressed. The following extracts from three learner participants illustrate this aspect:

“It makes me feel out, and it is a bit painful when I think that it was not intentional, that it was not by my doing. I was not progressed voluntarily. It’s painful, it hurts” (Learner 11).

“It feels like you are being discriminated, it does not feel good” (Learner 13).

“Labelling makes me feel different from other children who pass” (Learner 20).

The above extracts show that these learners felt somewhat different, discriminated and out as a result of being labelled as progressed. Learner 4 further mentioned that what hurts the most was that they did not decide on being progressed and they had no choice in the matter, yet they bear the brunt of labelling.

4.4.8.3.1.3 Demotivating

Teachers explained that learners felt demotivated due to being labelled. They mentioned that labelling the learners made them feel discouraged, and less enthusiastic to exert themselves in their studies. Moreover, they observed that progressed learners felt useless, belittled and as though there was no need to study. The following extracts from three teacher participants illustrate this reality:

“It leads to low self-esteem. The learners do not believe in themselves. Then you find that intrinsically they are not motivated because they are already labelled. After all, how progression was interpreted was associated with negativity” (Teacher 3).

“It discourages them much. They feel useless. There is no need for them to study anymore” (Teacher 4).

“They feel a little belittled by that. It’s like they are stupid. They do not want to be called progressed” (Teacher 6).

The above extracts illustrate that some teachers observed the feelings of being discouraged, belittled, and ultimately demotivated emanating from being labelled. They mentioned that labelling led to low self-esteem and learners felt stupid and useless.

4.4.8.3.1.4 Angry

Findings indicated that learners felt angry or upset due to being labelled. They mentioned that they felt and showed their anger, displeasure, and hostility. Moreover, they mentioned that labelling made them to appear as if they were not hardworking and ready to quit school. This was only shared by learner participants. They mentioned that it made them feel angry and hateful towards the labellers. The following extracts from three learners illustrate this notion:

“It makes me feel angry because it makes me appear less hard-working; thus, I am not working hard enough to achieve the good grades” (Learner 2).

“It feels like I hate the teachers and the subject or leaving the school immediately” (Learner 4).

“It makes me feel less of a person. I sometimes get angry and wish to just change the whole thing. I keep on pushing only because I got progressed” (Learner 18).

The above extracts show that learners felt angry due to being labelled. Learner 4 further mentioned that progressed learners were even felt hateful towards the teacher and their subject because of being labelled.

4.4.8.3.2 Positive feelings

Findings from the interviews suggested that there were positive feelings associated with being labelled as progressed at schools. These included feeling motivated.

4.4.8.3.2.1 Motivation

Responses from interview transcripts indicated that few learners felt motivated by being labelled. They reckoned that they felt ready and eager to pursue their designated goal of passing Grade 12, implying the determination to attain their educational goals. This was responded to

only by learner participants. They mentioned that being labelled as progressed made them work harder and do better in their schoolwork. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

“I feel motivated to learn hard and working with teachers and studying very hard” (Learner 21).

“It motivates me to do better” (Learner 22).

The above extracts demonstrate that learners felt somewhat motivated by being labelled as progressed. They felt that labelling pushed them to take positive action towards attaining their educational goals.

4.4.9 Failure or worthlessness

Interview data indicated that there were present and absent feelings of failure and worthlessness associated with being progressed.

4.4.9.1 Reasons for the presence of feelings of failure or worthlessness

Interview data demonstrated that there were several reasons for the presence of feelings of failure and worthlessness. This included pressure, the experience of failing, people’s opinions and expectations, and being progressed.

4.4.9.1.1 Pressure

Responses from the learners indicated that most progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness because of the pressure they experienced. They mentioned that they felt the burden of the mental distress associated with the work in Grade 12. Moreover, this was prevalent when they were writing many tests on a particular day and when they had failed certain tasks. Learner participants mentioned that they felt pressured when they could hardly handle the pressure associated with their schoolwork, thus they felt as if they were failures or worthless people. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“I do feel the pressure sometimes when subjects become difficult and I feel like there is a lot of pressure. For example, writing two subjects in one day exerts considerable pressure. I sometimes feel like quitting because I now have to compromise and forego sleep” (Learner 3).

“I feel like a failure when the work overwhelms me. People also give me negative words and I feel I will never make it in life” (Learner 21).

“Yes because people put you under pressure and when you look at the report you find that you did not fail a lot of the things; however, they make it appear as if you’ve completely failed, that’s what amazes me” (Learner 23).

The above extracts show that these learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness due to pressure from people, the difficulty of the schoolwork and not being able to handle the amount of work being learned.

4.4.9.1.2 Experience of failing

Interview data suggested that some of the progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness because of their previous experience of failing. They reckoned that they felt this way because of their practical contact with and observation of not being able to meet their desired objective of passing. This was responded to only by learner participants. They mentioned that their experience of failing tormented them. The following extracts illustrate this point:

“I feel like a failure because I did not make it to the next class. So, they progressed us” (Learner 5).

“It feels like I am a failure because I am supposed to be at the university right now. I failed Grade 10. So, I just felt like everything I wanted to achieve in life, I do not know they are not, it’s like they do not want to happen” (Learner 18).

The extracts above show that progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness due to the previous experience of failing. This made Learner 18 take a critical look at themselves in terms of their life trajectory.

4.4.9.1.3 People’s opinions and expectations

Findings indicated that some progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness because of people’s opinions or expectations. They reckoned that they had this feeling because of views, beliefs or judgements formed about them and being progressed, which may not necessarily be based on facts. Both learners and teachers made this contribution. Learner participants mentioned that they felt like this when they were being picked on, and importantly, being blamed. Moreover, the feelings emanated from the opinions and expectations of people around the learners. The following extract illustrates this point:

“I do because I saw that being progressed hurts me. My mom doesn’t like it that much and it hurts seeing my mom being like that because she expects a lot from me and I should make her proud, I should achieve what I want” (Learner 36).

“I do feel like a failure and worthless sometimes, because at home my grandmother is always picking on me. Like, for everything that happens in the house, she always blames me. Sometimes I feel like dying or something” (Learner 29).

The above extracts show that progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness due to the expectations of significant other, and the fact that they were progressed to Grade 12, which the mother didn’t like much.

Further, teachers’ interviews corroborated the view that learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness due to people’s opinions or expectations. Teachers emphasised that the presence of these feelings was due to the opinions and expectations of those around the learners. The following extracts from two teachers demonstrate this view:

“I think it is because of different opinions. When they are alone, they think that they are, some of their peers say this, others say that to them. Some even talk negative things. There is always that person who is always negative, who always discourages you, not talking good things” (Teacher 4).

“They can feel like that if we keep on reminding them of how progressed they are. When a person is weak in some area and you keep on reminding them of their weaknesses you demoralise them” (Teacher 9).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborate the experiences of the learners. The teachers mentioned that learners presented these feelings because of teachers’ opinions in that they were not supposed to be in Grade 12 and the expectations around them.

4.4.9.1.4 Being progressed

The responses from interviews with learner participants indicated that some progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness because they were progressed. They reckoned that being progressed connotes failure and the experience of having been progressed made them feel this way. This contribution was made by learner participants. They mentioned that being progressed on its own made them feel like failures or worthless. The following extracts from two learner participants illustrate this:

“Sometimes I feel like a failure because I’ve never been progressed before, as it was my first time” (Learner 17).

“Yes, sometimes I feel like a failure because I have been progressed since Grade 9” (Learner 28).

The extracts above show that these learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness because they were progressed. To them, being progressed was equivalent to failure.

4.4.9.2 Reasons for absent feelings of failure or worthlessness

Interview data indicated that there were several reasons for absent feelings of failure and worthlessness. These included doing well and motivation.

4.4.9.2.1 Doing well

Responses from learner participants indicated that some progressed learners did not present feelings of failure or worthlessness because they did well in their scholastic endeavours. They reckoned that when they did well in class or in their schoolwork, then, that encouraged them. This contribution was made by learners only. They mentioned that because they passed during their academic year, they did not feel like failures or worthless people. The following extracts from two learner participants illustrate this point:

“In January, I felt like a failure because of my report that took me to Matriculation. However, my report in Term 1 motivated me to pass like other learners as well and move forward” (Learner 8).

“I felt like that when I first got my report, but then when I got my report in March, I saw that I had the potential because I had passed well, that’s when I got encouraged” (Learner 13).

The above extracts indicate that progressed learners presented feelings of failure or worthlessness at first but no longer presented them due to better academic achievement.

4.4.9.2.2 Motivation

Interview data indicated that most progressed learners did not present feelings of failure or worthlessness because they were motivated. Learner participants mentioned that being progressed propelled them to exert themselves and take the necessary actions towards achieving their goals; thus, they did not present these feelings of failure and worthlessness. This contribution was made by learner participants only. They mentioned that they did not

regard themselves as failures and they were determined to pass. The following extracts from two learner participants illustrate this finding:

“I do not regard myself as a failure. I am still going to pass, and I am still going to achieve my goals in life” (Learner 9).

“I encourage myself to study, I must pass my Matric. I should not give up because I was progressed to Grade 12” (Learner 11).

“No, I do not feel like a failure because my marks weren’t so low when I received my report last year” (Learner 25).

The above extracts indicate that learners did not present feelings of failure or worthlessness because they were intrinsically motivated. They believed that they would still pass, and to them, being progressed was not an issue at all.

4.4.9.3 Coping mechanisms to ameliorate feelings of failure or worthlessness

Participants indicated that there were several coping mechanisms to reduce feelings of failure and worthlessness. These included withdrawal and vigorous other coping mechanisms.

4.4.9.3.1 Withdrawal coping mechanisms

Findings from the interviews conducted with participants revealed that learners would often withdraw themselves in coping with feelings of failure and worthlessness. These withdrawal coping mechanisms included praying, sitting alone or at home and stopping school attendance.

4.4.9.3.1.1 Praying

Learners indicated that some progressed learners prayed to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They relied on an act invocation or an act that seeks to establish rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication. Relevant contributions were made by learner participants only. They mentioned that they would just put all to God in pursuit of comfort and guidance. The following extracts from three of the learner participants illustrate this view:

“Well, I pray about that. I just ask God to give me strength and guidance and to lead me” (Learner 1).

“I pray. I was taught that when times get tough, you just get down on your knees and tell God what you are going through” (Learner 3).

“Most of the time I just pray. I pray and I download motivational videos, which I watch and listen to” (Learner 6).

The above extracts show that learners withdrew themselves and prayed to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. Some used this mechanism as they sought strength and guidance.

4.4.9.3.1.2 Sitting alone or staying at home

Responses from interviews with learner participants indicated that some progressed learners sat alone, and sometimes they stayed at home to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They indicated that they sat in solitude, apart from others and asked themselves questions. Contributions were received from learners only. They mentioned that they would just sit alone, think about being progressed, compared themselves with others and cried to deal with their feelings. The following extracts from three learners illustrate this view:

“I sometimes sit alone and think about it and cry” (Learner 7).

“You feel like giving up on school, that’s the first thing. You sit at home, and when your mother asks you why you are not going to school, you tell her that they are calling you names at school” (Learner 9).

“I often sit alone and ask myself why I was progressed” (Learner 15).

The above extracts indicate that learners sat alone to cry and ask themselves questions to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. Learner 9 further mentioned that they sat alone at home and even felt like giving up on school.

4.4.9.3.1.3 Stopping school attendance

Responses from interviews with teachers indicated that in their observation, the learners stopped coming to school as a coping mechanism meant to deal with feelings of failure and worthlessness. They mentioned that learners often made excuses for not coming to class or school. Even when they were in class, they were often withdrawn from the lesson totally or they would simply shy away from participating in class. The following extracts from three teacher participants illustrate this view:

“Some of them want to drop out of school. In fact, most of them want to drop out of school” (Teacher 4).

“They make excuses to come to class or do schoolwork” (Teacher 11).

“Some learners withdraw from class. Some now shy away and they feel that they want to be on their own. Some learners may opt-out. The biggest problem is that some learners quit school. That is the biggest problem I saw” (Teacher 15).

The above extracts illustrate that teachers observed progressed learners dropping out of school as a mechanism to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They mentioned that the learners start by making excuses for not coming to class and doing their schoolwork.

4.4.9.3.2 Vigorous coping mechanisms

The participants’ responses revealed that learners found vigorous mechanisms for coping with feelings of failure and worthlessness. These included self-talk, studying, talking to someone else and becoming rebellious.

4.4.9.3.2.1 Self-talk

Findings from interviews with learner participants indicated that some progressed learners encouraged themselves to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They reported that they engaged in an internal dialogue as influenced by their subconscious mind. Responses to this aspect were elicited from learners only. They mentioned that they somewhat used the principle of self-talk. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

“Well, I pray about that. I just ask God to give me strength and guidance and to lead me” (Learner 31).

“I pray. I was taught that when times get tough, I just have to get down on my knees and tell God who knows what I am going through” (Learner 32).

The above extracts demonstrate that these learners withdrew themselves and prayed to cope with the feelings of failure or worthlessness. Some learners used this mechanism in pursuit of strength and guidance.

4.4.9.3.2.2 Studying

Findings from interviews with learners indicated that some progressed learners studied to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They mentioned that they devoted time and attention to gaining knowledge on the academic subjects and concepts taught at schools. Learners mentioned that these feelings of failure and worthlessness propelled them to pursue information, change the way they had been doing things and not only study at schools but at home as well and ensure that they had a study timetable. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“I am studying harder. I try to find some information” (Learner 5).

“I changed the way I have been doing things. I was only studying at school but now I can draw a timetable so that I can study when I get home. I ensure that I get hold of my books and study” (Learner 13).

“I try to work hard and I make some study timetable to use for my studies” (Learner 19).

The above extracts show that progressed learners took action and were propelled to study and work hard to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness.

4.4.9.3.2.3 Talking to someone as a coping mechanism

Findings from interviews with learners indicated that some progressed learners preferred to talk to someone else they trusted to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They indicated that they spoke to people with whom they had feelings of mutual affection and respect as their parents and friends. Their parents and friends managed to motivate and make them feel better. Only learners' responses were elicited and they mentioned that talking to someone made them feel better. The following extracts from learner participants illustrate this finding:

“I talk to my parents when I am not happy about something. For instance, when this COVID-19 pandemic started, I told my parents that I did not want to go to school but they motivated me to continue with schoolwork and to finish this year” (Learner 25).

“When I feel down, I listen to music or visit my friends, we talk about how we feel and that makes me feel better” (Learner 28).

The above extracts demonstrate that progressed learners sought encouragement from the people they trusted, they spoke to someone to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness.

4.4.9.3.2.4 Rebellion

Interviews with teacher participants indicated that progressed learners misbehaved and became rebellious as a coping mechanism to ameliorate feelings of failure and worthlessness. They indicated an inclination towards engaging in accepted behaviours; for instance, they reported that the learners did not do their schoolwork, became absent from school, resist authority or exhibited some other forms of indiscipline. This was responded to only by the teachers who mentioned that progressed learners often became resistant and reactionary at school. The following extracts illuminate this finding:

“They misbehave; they become delinquent and that’s when they do not do their work, they do not submit their work, they become absent in school, and the rate of absenteeism becomes high” (Teacher 5).

“They feel worthless and they resist everything. They resist coming to school. They even become stubborn” (Teacher 7).

“Some will react in a rebellious way” (Teacher 8).

“They retaliate if I repeat and I continuously repeat. They come to my level and we finally argue at the same level” (Teacher 9).

The above extracts illustrate that teachers observed that progressed learners becoming resistant, stubborn, negligent, delinquent, misbehaving and rebellious as a mechanism to cope with feelings of failure or worthlessness. They mentioned that these learners would even go to the level of arguing with teachers.

4.4.9 Comparison

This study has reflected on the frequency of comparison, comparers, and feelings of being compared.

4.4.10.1 Frequency of comparison

This study has demonstrated that comparison always takes place at schools , based on a certain situation although other learners reported not being compared.

4.4.10.1.1 Constant comparison

Findings from participants' transcripts indicated that few of the learners were always compared, either at school, and/at home. They indicated that they were being compared with their friends and other learners almost daily. Views were elicited from both learners and teachers. Moreover, the learners indicated that they were compared almost daily by their parents and teachers at schools and home. The following extracts illustrated this finding:

“Almost every day, my parents say that my friends are better than me, things like that” (Learner 2).

“Sometimes my mom compares me with other learners and some teachers will be comparing me with other learners. Things are like that each day” (Learner 6).

The above extracts show that learners were compared every time at schools and home. The participants mentioned that they were compared with their peers almost every day.

Further, a few teachers corroborated the view that some learners were being compared. The teachers emphasised that they too compared learners. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

“It's also us, most of the time teachers. The others compare them whereas others do not, but when I come closer to those learners and try to help them, I do not see it much” (Teacher 5).

“Comparison takes place regularly, each week, or almost every second day. Progressed learners are compared; firstly, with normal learners who perform well and they are also compared to normal learners who do not perform well” (Teacher 15).

The above extracts from teachers corroborated the frequency with which learners said that they were being compared. The teachers mentioned that they compared learners regularly.

4.4.10.1.2 Comparison based on a certain situation

Responses from interviews with learners indicated that most of the learners were compared based on certain situations. They indicated that they were labelled particularly when the teachers found them outside the classroom during teaching and learning time, when progress reports were released and during lesson time. This was confirmed by both learners and teachers. Learner participants indicated that they were compared at certain particular times. The following extracts illustrate this point:

“It happens when we are in class. Teachers are always the ones making comparisons” (Learner 7).

“It happens when the teacher finds us outside the classroom” (Learner 12).

“It just happens when we get our reports because there’s one child in our street that passed and it’s me that is progressed” (Learner 14).

The above extracts indicate that progressed learners were compared based on certain situations like when the teacher found them outside the classroom and when school reports were given to learners.

The responses from most interviews with teachers corroborated the finding that learners were being compared based on certain situations. The teachers emphasised the point that comparison only took place at definite instances. The following extracts illustrated this notion:

“When we are analysing the results, we start to label the learners again saying, progressed learners this side, and promoted learners that side. This is where labelling comes from” (Teacher 8).

“Like I said before, comparing starts at the beginning of the year when we move learners to their new grades and classes” (Teacher 12).

The above extracts from interviews with teachers corroborated the frequency with which learners said that they were being compared. Further, they compared the learners at the beginning of the year and when they were analysing scholastic performance results.

4.4.10.1.3 Absence of comparison between progressed and promoted learners

Responses from participants indicated that most learners were not compared. They indicated that they were not compared with other learners and that they were treated as equals at schools. Responses were elicited from both learners and the teachers. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“I’ve never been compared to other children” (Learner 17).

“I am not being compared to other learners” (Learner 22).

“Nobody compares me with other learners. Nobody, we are all equal” (Learner 27).

“They are not inclined to comparing us, not all” (Learner 28).

“I am not being compared” (Learner 31).

“Nobody compares me” (Learner 35).

The above extracts indicate that these learners were not compared either at school or home.

The responses from teachers’ interviews corroborated that learners were not being compared. The teachers emphasised that they did not compare learners. They indicated that comparison was not a normal occurrence at schools. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“We do not compare them” (Teacher 1).

“Normally, we do not compare them” (Teacher 6).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborated the frequency of what the learners said in that they were not being compared.

4.4.10.2 Comparers

This study indicated that progressed learners were compared by teachers and family members.

4.4.10.2.1 Teachers

Responses from the participants’ interviews indicated that learners were compared by their teachers at schools. They indicated that they were compared by the person who was bestowed with the responsibility to help learners acquire knowledge, and enhance competence or virtue at schools. The responses were elicited from learners and teachers. Learners indicated that they were sometimes compared by the teachers and this prevented them from enjoying school. The following extracts illustrated this finding:

“It’s teachers. I feel down the whole day. Even when they come to class you no longer enjoy their subject” (Learner 14).

“It was my class teacher. My marks were very low then I was told to pull up my socks” (Learner 15).

“Teachers compare me to another learner in terms of levels” (Learner 16).

The above extracts indicate that progressed learners were being compared by their teachers, especially when their marks were low. They mentioned that this made them feel down to a point where they no longer enjoyed the subject.

The responses from interviews with teachers corroborated that progressed learners were being compared with other learners by the teachers. The teachers admitted that they indeed compared the learners for various reasons. The following extracts from three teachers demonstrate this finding:

“I think it’s also by their educators. It happens quite often because when we’ve got challenges with the progressed learners we always see that coming in especially when the learners are absent and when the learners are not performing well” (Teacher 7).

“Let’s say we’ll be discussing results. We will be saying okay, the progressed learners have got this much percentage in the test the other the promoted one. When we do results analysis, and that is the only time” (Teacher 10).

The above extracts from teachers corroborated what the learners said in that they were being labelled by their teachers. The teachers mentioned that they compared learners when they were analysing results, when progressed learners are absent from school and are not performing.

4.4.10.2.2 Family

Interview data indicated that most learners were compared by family members at home. They indicated that they were compared by the same people they were related to by blood or ancestry. This contribution was made by learner participants. Progressed learners indicated that they were compared with other learners, their family members, and mostly to other learners for not passing as they did. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“Sometimes my mother will compare me to other learners” (Learner 6).

“It comes from home; our parents will be comparing us with other learners in that why are we not able to do what they do. Why are we not able to pass like other learners, you were not like this, it is things like that” (Learner 8).

“My parents compared me with learners that have passed. It just happens when we get our reports because there is one child in our street that passed and I am progressed” (Learner 26).

“My grandmother compares me with my little sister. She appears to be doing better. Comparing me with my little sister is somewhat awkward, she is too little for that task” (Learner 30).

The above extracts indicate that progressed learners were being compared by their family members, particularly, their parents and grandparents. They mentioned that they compared them to other learners around.

4.4.10.3 Feelings of being compared

This study shows that there were negative and positive feelings associated with being compared, which are explained in the next section.

4.4.10.3.1 Negative feelings

This study revealed that negative feelings were deriving from being compared to other learners either at school or home. These included feeling down, sad, left out, demotivated, and angry.

4.4.10.3.1.1 Feeling down

The responses from participants indicated that some of the learners felt down due to being compared to others. Progressed learners indicated that being compared made them experience low moods, feel fed up, tired, sad, teary, and worry a lot. Both learners and teachers made contribution to this aspect. The learners indicated that they felt like their spirits were being pulled down when they were being compared, and they thought of having little chance of succeeding academically. The following extracts illustrate this view:

“I then felt down. It feel like these people were pulling down my spirit” (Learner 6).

“It makes me feel down, seeing yourself as an underdog and one who won’t be able, it makes you feel bad” (Learner 8).

The above extracts indicate that progressed learners were being compared by their family members, in particular, their parents, and grandparents. They mentioned they compared them to other learners around where they stay and their siblings.

The responses from the teachers’ interviews corroborated the view that some learners felt down by being compared to others in that even at the mention of the word progressed while comparing them, it comes across as negative. The following extracts illustrate this:

“What I have seen is that to them, mention of this word is negative to them. They do not want to even consider the reasons. They would just take it in a negative light” (Teacher 12).

“It makes them sad. It feels like they do not deserve anything” (Teacher 14).

The above extracts from teacher participants corroborated the fact that privileged learners felt sad by being compared. The teachers mentioned that learners took the comparison and especially the mention that they were progressed in a negative light. They mentioned that it made them feel down.

4.4.10.3.1.2 Bad

Interview data indicated that some of the learners felt bad due to being compared to others. They asserted that they experienced feelings of unpleasantness or undesirable to their comparers. These feelings were further exacerbated when people laughed at them. This contribution was made learner participants only. The following extracts illustrated this:

“I feel so bad” (Learner 5).

“I feel bad” (Learner 10).

“It makes me feel bad. I remember the first day here at school this year. We were on the other side as progressed learners and we then got promoted and then all of the people were laughing at us” (Learner 18).

“It makes me feel bad” (Learner 36).

The above extracts show that progressed learners felt bad due to being compared to others. They mentioned that they felt bad due to being compared as progressed learners and promoted learners.

4.4.10.3.1.3 Angry

Responses from learners showed that some of the learners felt angry when compared with others. They indicated that they felt strong annoyance, displeasure, or hostility. They further indicated that being compared cannot make them become like other people as they have their sense of individuality. This contribution was made by learner participants. The following extracts illustrate this point:

“It would make anger because I would be angry that day and I will be hating people” (Learner 25).

“It makes me feel angry. I do not like to be compared with other people. I am me and I can never be the other person” (Learner 30).

“It makes me feel angry” (Learner 37).

These extracts demonstrate that progressed learners felt angry due to being compared to others. They mentioned that they did not like being compared to others as they were unique.

4.4.10.3.2 Positive feelings

This study has shown that there were positive feelings associated with being labelled as progressed at schools. Learner participants mentioned that they felt motivated by being compared.

4.4.10.3.2.1 Motivated

Responses from interviews with participants indicated that most learners felt motivated by being compared to others. They mentioned that they felt a strong desire to succeed academically, especially when they were compared and likened to those who did well academically. The responses were elicited from learners and teachers who mentioned that they also liked to be compared in situations where they had fared better than others. The following extracts illustrated this view:

“It made me realise that if I am being compared to another person who is doing good at school, it means I can still do good” (Learner 1).

“I feel happy because one teacher would be comparing me to another person and that would be because I have done better than them” (Learner 16).

The extracts above indicate that progressed learners felt motivated by being compared to others. They mentioned that they liked being compared to people that excel academically.

The responses by the teacher participants corroborated the view that many learners felt motivated by being compared to others in that it served as a form of encouragement for them to work hard. The following extracts illustrate this finding:

“It encourages them; it just boosts their spirit” (Teacher 1).

“Sometimes that can act as an encouragement to learners so that they can end up working hard” (Teacher 6).

“It makes them feel better and if you can congratulate them, they get so encouraged in the process” (Teacher 13).

The above extracts from the teachers corroborated the fact that progressed learners felt motivated by being compared. Teacher participants mentioned that progressed learners felt better and encouraged and that it boosted their spirit to a point where they ended up working harder at school.

4.5 Reliability and validity of qualitative data

In this study, extensive data analysis was done by safeguarding reliability and validity as key procedures underpinning the study. The themes and subthemes that emerged in the study were checked against the research questions, aims and objectives to ascertain whether the study achieved its intended goals. Consistent with qualitative data, reliability and validity in qualitative data were ensured through enhancing trustworthiness.

4.5.1 Trustworthiness of the data

The four pronged criteria stipulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) served as the yardstick to measure trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness was achieved through credibility, transferability, dependency, and confirmability.

4.5.2 Credibility of the findings

According to Maree (2019), credibility is enhanced by the early familiarity with the participants and the participating institution and through well-defined purposive sampling, detailed data collection, and triangulation. The researcher's relationship with the schools as an official in the Department of Education, prior meeting with school officials and participants in getting informed consent and a clearly defined sample were useful in this regard.

4.5.3 Transferability of the findings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated that transferability does not involve generalised claims but invites readers of the research to make connections between the elements of the study and the context of the study. Built on this background, the findings of this study can thus be transferred to other situations using the same singularity that was studied, the progressed learners.

4.5.4 Dependability of the findings

Typically, the research design was methodically implemented and the data gathering was comprehensive to ensure dependability. Furthermore, the analysis of data was documented to allow other people to appreciate how the interpretation and analysis procedures were followed in the study.

4.5.5 Confirmability of the findings

The findings of the study were shaped by the participants' responses and not the interests of the researcher. Complete adherence to standard data collection procedures also ensured validity, thus enhancing the confirmability of the study.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed the results of the study. Quantitative and qualitative results were analysed and presented. Participants' biographical information was also presented. Progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem was determined and presented through descriptive statistics which showed the significant items through which the self-esteem of progressed learners was affected by the SPP. Furthermore, the chapter presented the results on how SPP affects the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District. It also thematically analysed and presented the results on how being progressed and labelled as "progressed" and being compared made learners feel. The thematic analysis also provided the positive and negative aspects of the themes concerning the research topic.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the results of the study. It summarises the answers to the research questions and objectives. The chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study. It also provides recommendations on strategies that enhance the self-esteem of the progressed Grade 12 learners. Moreover, it presents the limitations of the study.

5.2 Aims and objectives of the study

The study envisioned the need to explore the role and of the School Progression Policy (SPP) on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at schools in Motheo Education District. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore how the School Progression Policy affected the self-esteem of the progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District.
2. To determine the nature of the progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District.
3. To investigate how being progressed and labelled as "progressed" and compared make the Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District feel.
4. To determine and recommend strategies that teachers can use to enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District.

To explore the above objectives, the study used the Social Comparison Theory, the Labelling Theory, and the Social Identity Theory, which formed the framework that helped to explain the role of SPP in influencing Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. Applying methodology propagated by Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), the study was embedded in pragmatism as a research paradigm. A mixed methods research approach was adopted, which is most appropriate to studies that integrate quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The researcher employed the convergent parallel mixed methods design with a face-to-face survey using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale or questionnaire and interviews to maximise the participation of 50 learners and 15 teachers and/or SMT members from purposefully chosen schools. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative component and thematic analysis for the qualitative component. Thereafter, the main findings from the study are presented as follows:

5.2.1 Main findings of the study

The main findings of the study were fused within the data presentation and interpretation chapter. A summary of these findings is thus presented in a manner that addresses the research questions.

5.2.1.1 The nature of progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District

The results of the self-esteem of 50 participants in the study indicated the 10 items of self-esteem.

On item 1, the descriptive results indicate that most respondents (13 = 26%; 10 = 20%) agreed that they were satisfied with themselves as progressed learners, some respondents (3 = 6%; 15 = 30%) disagreed of being satisfied with themselves and only a few respondents (9 = 18%) remained neutral on the matter. This meant that most respondents felt comfortable with who and where they were and were satisfied with being progressed. However, concerning the item, "At times I think I am not good at all", most respondents (20 = 40%; 3 = 6%) agreed that they thought that they were not good at all as progressed learners, while some respondents (12 = 24%; 2 = 4%) disagreed with being not good at all and some participants (13 = 26%) remained neutral. This meant that most learners thought of themselves as not good enough as progressed learners.

On item 3, the results suggested that most respondents (24 = 48. %; 10 = 20%) agreed that they felt like they had several good qualities; nine respondents (18.0%) remained neutral, while some respondents (5 - 10%; 2 = 4%) disagreed with the feeling that they had several good qualities as progressed learners. This meant that most progressed learners saw themselves as good people in general. With regard to the item, "I am able to do things as well as most other people", most of the respondents (12 = 24 %; 17 = 34%) agreed with the statement; while some of the respondents (14 = 28%; 2 = 4%) disagreed and only a few respondents (5 = 18%) remained neutral. This meant that most progressed learners saw themselves as having the ability to do exactly what other learners could do.

Concerning the item, "I feel I do not have much to be proud of", most respondents (8 = 16%; 22 = 44%) agreed with the statement while some of the respondents (8 = 16%; 5 = 10%)

disagreed and only a few respondents (7 = 14%) remained neutral. This meant that most progressed learners were not proud of themselves and felt that they neither achieved much nor made any strides in their scholastic endeavours. The descriptive results further suggest that a sizeable majority of the respondents (6 = 12%; 20 = 40%) agreed that they certainly felt useless at times as progressed learners. Some of the respondents (8 = 16%; 8 = 16%) disagreed with feeling useless at times and a few other respondents (8 = 16%) declared that they were neutral. This meant that a sizeable majority of the progressed learners felt that they had no ability or skill in the scholastic arena. They felt that they could not achieve the expected outcomes. These results are further emphasised by Guan and So (2016), in that learners define a sense of the self in terms of social categories. The social aspects of people's lives like their abilities not only shape who individual people are but also guide how people think and what they do.

Concerning item, "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others", the bulk of the participants (10 = 20%; 21 = 42%) agreed with the statement whereas a few respondents (8 = 16%; 1 = 2%) disagreed and some respondents (10 = 20%) remained neutral. This meant that the significant majority of learners felt useful and had a sense of self-value like their counterparts. The descriptive results revealed that a substantial majority of the learners (20 = 40%; 16 = 32%) agreed that they wished they could have more respect for themselves as progressed learners, while some respondents (7 = 14%; 2 = 4%) disagreed and a few respondents (5 = 10%) remained neutral. This means that most progressed learners expressed a strong desire and hope to accept their strengths and weaknesses, as well as what they stood for and what their values were.

The descriptive results suggested that most respondents, 15 respondents (15 = 30%; 8 = 16%) disagreed with the view that all in all, they are inclined to feel like they are failures as progressed learners. Some of the respondents (2 = 4%; 12 = 24%) agreed with the statement, while the remaining participants (13 = 26%) remained neutral. Concerning the item, "I take a positive attitude towards myself", most of the 24 respondents (24 = 48%; 13 = 26%) agreed with the statement. A few respondents (4 = 8%; 1 = 2%) disagreed with taking a positive attitude towards themselves as progressed learners, while the remaining respondents (8, 16%) declared that they were neutral.

From the above synthesis, it can be concluded that the SPP significantly affected the self-esteem of the progressed Grade 12 learners in three aspects. Firstly, the progressed learners felt that at times they were not good at all. From time to time, they doubted and did not believe in

their self-worth and abilities. Secondly, they felt that they did not have much to be proud of, as they were non-achievers in any front and they were not proud of being progressed. Thirdly, they wished they could have more respect for themselves as progressed learners. Significantly, they wished they could be able to accept their strengths, weaknesses, what they stood for and their values. This meant that the SPP harmed the progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem and this impact needed to be mitigated at schools.

5.2.1.2 The effects of School Progression Policy on progressed Grade 12 learners

The findings of this study indicate that SPP affected progressed learners at selected schools in Motheo Education District both negatively and positively (see Section 4.4.4).

Most of the progressed learners at the participating schools were affected negatively by the SPP, which made them feel stupid, dumb, sad, down, a sense of failure and disappointment. Most of these learners suggested that being progressed made them feel inadequate and a lack the ability to learn, understand concepts, and a short of the reasoning capacity required for the grade to which they have been progressed. They felt as if they did not belong with their classmates who would even laugh at them for being progressed, not answering questions in class and that they could not adapt to the social, emotional, and intellectual demands placed on them by Grade 12 content. They were reportedly sad and disappointed at the reality of being progressed and even the thought of quitting school as a result. This was so because they were unable to measure up to the standards and goals set by themselves and the schooling system. According to Dian *et al.* (2018), these are negative effects as they explain the degree to which the learner experiences aversive emotions such as hostility or fear.

Be that as it may, some of the learners were positively affected by the SPP as it was applied at schools. According to Dian *et al.* (2018), any positive effect, on the other hand, is the degree to which the learner feels enthusiastic, active and alert. For instance, they saw educational progression as providing an opportunity, a second chance and the motivation to do well. The learners highlighted that, because of being progressed, they felt like having been afforded a favourable position that provided them with an opportunity for improvement in their schooling career. They felt that being progressed was like being given another chance to redirect their academic effort towards achievement, thus proving themselves that they are capable of attaining their educational goals after having failed in Grade 11 and being progressed to Grade 12.

Based on this synthesis, it can be concluded that SPP comes with disappointments to most learners. The learners end up questioning their learning, understanding and reasoning abilities. The negative feelings associated with being progressed also bring frustration to most learners. As Kumanda, Afungmeyu Abongdia, and Mafumo (2017) phrase it, progression can frustrate learners as it places them in grades whose concepts they are not capable of grasping, which adversely affects the learners' aspirations and self-esteem. The policy compels teachers to deal with underprepared learners, while simultaneously trying to teach the prepared. Consequently, this undermines the positive perception progressed learners may be holding about themselves and their abilities.

5.2.1.3 Effectiveness of the School Progression Policy

As evident in the findings, this study further revealed the negative and positive views regarding the effectiveness of SPP at selected schools in Motheo Education District (see Section 4.4.5). There were negative views regarding the effectiveness of the SPP. For instance, despite being placed in the next grade under the SPP, progressed learners were still considered failures in their school communities. Thus, the SPP was ineffective in changing the perceptions of school communities in this regard. Moreover, when a learner struggled to cope with the workload of the previous grade and was progressed to the next grade, then this migration would further exacerbate learners' struggle with the workload and concepts of the grade they would have been progressed to.

Most positive views regarding the effectiveness of the SPP suggested that the policy fulfilled its purpose in that it gave learners who could have possibly dropped out a lifeline and a chance to finish schooling and to attain the National Senior Certificate (NSC), a qualification at the very least. SPP made progressed learners aware of their mistakes and areas of improvement in their academic work as they became conscious of where they did not do well in the previous grade and had to improve on such areas.

Based on this synthesis, it can be concluded that while the SPP fulfilled its intended purpose and gave learners a chance to finish schooling with a qualification, it was not without its own share of challenges. As suggested by Lynch (2014), SPP mitigated against retention with its injurious effect on the affected learners' social and personal adjustment, including discipline. On the contrary, it failed to positively influence the perceptions of school communities, which

militated against progressed learners' self-esteem. Thus, there is a gap at schools in terms of managing the perceptions of learners and the entire school community regarding the policy. Significantly, the perceptions of the school community on progressed learners matter because they influence how these learners are treated in their daily interactions.

5.2.1.4 Teachers' views regarding progressed learners

As evident from the findings, this study revealed that teachers had positive and negative views towards progressed learners at the studied schools (see Section 4.4.6).

Some teachers viewed the progressed learners as lazy, not serious about their studies, a burden and challenge to teach. They further viewed them as ignorant, unenthusiastic towards hard work despite having the ability to do so. These teachers also emphasised that they lacked any sort of training on how to handle progressed learners, especially in light of having to close the content gaps and learning barriers that the learners had from the previous grades. On the contrary, most teachers had positive views towards progressed learners. They saw progressed learners as being in need of teachers' understanding, empathy, care and support. They highlighted that there was nothing wrong with progressed learners; hence, all they need is academic and emotional support to enable them to better handle facets of their lives, which will enable them to become self-governing learners.

From this synthesis, it can be concluded that most teachers saw progressed learners in loco parentis. They understood their legal responsibility to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent when dealing with the learners entrusted with them. These teachers particularly emphasised that the learners needed constant care and support even though they faced challenges related to a lack of training to teach the progressed learners.

5.2.1.5 Relationships of progressed learners

This study demonstrated that the SPP had both positive and negative effects on the relationships between progressed learners and other learners, between teachers and progressed learners, and amongst the progressed learners themselves.

The negative relationships between progressed learners and other learners were mainly characterised by stigma. The progressed learners felt excluded and unable to perform like their

counterparts because of inapt or humiliating questions or statements often made about them. Moreover, they were considered unable to learn. While this is true, most positive relationships between progressed learners and other learners were characterised by feelings of equality and mutual understanding. Other learners made them feel as though they were not progressed and became their immediate support system socially and academically. From this synthesis, it can be concluded that the relationships between progressed learners and other learners were largely positive. In these relationships, progressed learners were generally understood and treated as normal. They particularly emphasised that other learners also helped them to grasp difficult concepts in class. This is located in Social Identity Theory as postulated by Guan and So (2016) in that when learners identify with other learners for any reason, they emulate the attributes they share. In other words, it is expected that the more strongly the learner identifies with other learners that exhibits a particular behaviour, the learner will possess a higher level of self-esteem following what the group advocates.

As evident in the findings, there were negative and positive relationships among progressed learners themselves. Some negative relationships among progressed learners were characterised by differences, clashes and a lack of communication. Contrary to this notion, the positive relationships among progressed learners were characterised by reciprocal assistance, motivation and mutual understanding. They understood each other even at a social level to achieve their educational goals and this made it easier for them to do their schoolwork by helping each other. From this synthesis, it can be concluded that familiarity breeds understanding among progressed learners. It is that understanding that propelled them to look after and even help each other.

The findings of the study attest to the negative, positive and conditional relationships existing between progressed learners and their teachers at schools. The negative relationship between progressed learners and teachers at the chosen schools was characterised by uneasiness as learners were constantly being disrespected and reminded of their having been progressed. In particular, the learners were verbally abused, pointed at, and singled out by their teachers for being progressed. They were often subjected to sarcasm, ridicule and fun in front of the class. In contrast, there was a positive relationship between progressed learners and their teachers and these were characterised by motivation and support. Some teachers helped the learners to have a positive view of themselves by encouraging them to study. The relationships between progressed learners and teachers at schools were sometimes conditional and subject to the learners' behaviour and the teachers' character. The learners received some strong negative

reactions from teachers when learners showed a lack of respect. From this synthesis, it can be concluded that the relationship between progressed learners and their teachers was largely negative.

Teachers' inability to foster a positive relationship with progressed learners speaks to the teachers' neglect of their responsibility of becoming active agents for inclusive education at schools. As such, identity describes who an individual is and it is influenced by different aspects. These relationships matter because the formation of the learners' identity is part of a social construction process and it is in this formation that social settings play an important role (Schoeman, 2015). According to Vandeyar, Vandeyar and Elufisan (2014), how learners are perceived by their teachers and counterparts contribute to the formation of their identity. Significantly, the negative relationship between progressed learners and their teachers overshadowed the negative relationship between progressed learners and other learners and amongst themselves as progressed learners.

5.2.1.6 Labelling

This study reveals the frequency of labelling with which the learners are subjected at schools, the labellers, and the feelings of being labelled (see Section 4.4.8).

Firstly, the learners were labelled as progressed all the time at the selected schools. They were labelled mostly when they seemed reluctant to exert themselves in their schoolwork, when they did not understand concepts in class and when they had not done their work. Teachers sometimes used the label "progressed" when they were angry with progressed and at the beginning of the year when the learners were being identified. Only a few learners indicated that they were not being labelled at schools. Thus, it can be concluded that many of the teachers could not control their emotions and ended up labelling the learners, frequently and constantly reminding them of being progressed. Secondly, most of the learners were labelled by the teachers at schools; thus, school authorities were supposed to protect, teach, guide, support, and care for progressed learners. Moreover, some of the learners were labelled by friends, family members and other learners at schools, the people they shared mutual bond of affection, learning experiences and space with. Therefore, it can be concluded that the predicament that progressed learners faced is that these labels appeared to be valid for they were being given by the people who were in their support system. Under Labelling Theory as rightly emphasised by Algraigay and Boyle (2017), labels are possibly given more credibility because they are

given by professionals and people in power, giving them legitimacy and a currency to operate within the system.

Thirdly, as evident in the findings, there were negative and positive feelings associated with being labelled as progressed at schools. The negative feelings included feeling sad, demotivated, upset and angry. Most learners experienced unhappiness and distress over being labelled. It made them feel excluded from the learning community at schools and different from other learners. This is confirmed under Labelling Theory as postulated by Algraigray and Boyle (2017) that labelling negatively affects learners' attempts to be part of social groups. The authors felt discouraged, less enthusiastic to exert themselves in their studies as being labelled made them seem not hardworking enough. This is further emphasised by Obarisiagbon and Akintoye (2018), who maintain that labelling learners can create a sense of learned helplessness. Labelling may make learners feel that they cannot do well and this may lower their self-esteem.

While the above is true, positive feelings of being labelled as progressed learners included feeling motivated. Some progressed learners indicated that being labelled as progressed made them work harder and do better academically. As highlighted in Obarisiagbon and Akintoye (2018), there can be a positive side to labelling, which enables the classification of learners and that enables teachers to manage different learners according to their abilities. From this synthesis, it can be concluded that teachers validate the labels as they are in authority. Although labels may be used for identification purposes at schools, they may still have a long-lasting negative impact on the learners, especially when they come with negative connotations.

Fourthly, as evident in the findings, the reasons for feelings of failure and worthlessness associated with being progressed and labelled included pressure, the experience of failing, people's opinions and expectations and simply being progressed. Most learners felt the burden of mental distress associated with the work in Grade 12, which was prevalent when they were writing many tests on a particular day and when they had failed a certain task. To the learners, being progressed on its own meant that one was a failure. On the contrary, some learners presented no feelings of failure and worthlessness because when they did well in class or on their schoolwork, they felt encouraged and propelled to exert themselves and were determined to pass. This means that most progressed learners ended up feeling like failures because of being constantly labelled as progressed, especially because being progressed on its own was perceived as being a failure. This is further postulated by Kramer (2015) that when learners are labelled, other people treat them following the label, and are therefore likely to behave per their

label. To exacerbate the matter, most labels associated with any learning difficulties are used in demeaning ways, thus damaging self-esteem and the motivation to learn, and this often results in other learners, teachers and peers, viewing them differently (Thomson, 2012).

Fifthly, the findings indicate that progressed learners found several coping mechanisms towards feelings of failure and worthlessness and this included withdrawal coping mechanism. Most progressed learners withdrew themselves in coping with feelings of failure and worthlessness caused by being labelled. These included simply praying, sitting alone or simply withdrawing from participating in class. On the other hand, some of the learners found vigorous mechanisms for coping with the feelings of failure and worthlessness; these included self-talk, studying, talking to someone else and becoming rebellious. They showed an inclination towards conducting themselves contrary to acceptable behaviour. For instance, they did not do their schoolwork, absent themselves from school, and resist authority or some form of convention. This shows the extent to which being labelled has negatively affected progressed learners and such behaviour presents itself as a cry for attention and help.

5.2.1.7 Comparison

As evident in the findings, the study revealed the frequency with which progressed learners were compared, the comparers, and the feelings of being compared (see Section 4.4.10).

Firstly, some of the progressed learners were always being compared at the schools, based on a certain situation, whilst others reported not being compared at all. A few of the learners were compared both at school and at home. Most learners were compared based on a certain situation when the teachers found them outside the class during teaching and learning time, when the progress reports were released and during the class lessons. On the contrary, other learners were not compared and were treated as equals at schools. This meant that many of the teachers were not comparing learners in a positive spirit, especially when they were agitated, which made the learners experience aggression for the teachers. This presents itself to be true and confirms the assumptions of the Social Comparison Theory as Dian *et al.* (2018) avers that comparison has significant negative consequences when the learner experiences aversive emotions such as hostility or fear.

Secondly, the findings of the study indicate that progressed learners were compared by the teachers and family members, persons bestowed with the responsibility to help learners acquire knowledge, competence or virtue at schools. Under Social Comparison Theory, this meant that the legitimacy of the standard of comparison was held the progressed learners because of where they came from, their teachers and their families. Negative feelings manifest when learners are

compared to people significantly better than them, as postulated in Oppenheimer (2015), and people do not even compare themselves to someone significantly better than them.

Thirdly, as evident in the findings, there were negative and positive feelings associated with being compared. The negative feelings deriving from being compared to other learners at schools or home included feeling sad, left out, demotivated and angry. Being compared made progressed learners experience low moods, feel fed up, teary, worried and even unpleasant towards their comparers. While this is true, a few progressed learners felt motivated by being compared. They felt a strong desire to succeed academically, especially when they were compared and likened to those who did well academically. Thus, it can be concluded that if the comparison is not done correctly, without a good standard of comparison and to a high extent, then it has the potential to have long-lasting negative effects on progressed learners. This confirms aspects of Social Comparison Theory emphasised by Weber and Hagemayer (2018) that the extent to which a learner engages in social comparison is correlated with despondency, depression, and social anxiety.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This study, like any other, has its limitations. These limitations border on the researcher's role as a researcher and the generalisation of findings.

5.3.1 The researcher's role

The researcher had an experience of teaching progressed Grade 12 learners in his teaching career and was an official in the Free State Department of Education, Motheo Education District. As such, the researcher knew the participating schools and they were at ease with the researcher. As such, the researcher brought his own potential bias into the study. However, the potential bias was mitigated through recording the interviews with the participants, transcribing the interviews and making them available to the supervisor.

5.3.2 Generalisation of the findings

This study was approached from a quantitative and qualitative approach and it employed convenience sampling, which involved choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents from those who were available because it was quick and economic. Purposive sampling was also employed to encapsulate issues that existed in the population. As such, the researcher cannot generalise the findings because the scope is limited. Grade 12 learners' self-esteem was

used with a small sample, further research with a much larger sample may be conducted to generalise these findings. This will also have to be conducted over a certain period to determine any changes regarding the construct of self-esteem in the context of Grade 12 learners. The intent was not to generalise the findings but to develop a deeper understanding of the role of SPP on self-esteem using a small sample.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the progressed Grade 12 learners were being progressed, compared and labelled as “progressed” and SPP had a critical role to play on Grade 12 learners’ self-esteem at selected schools in Motheo Education District. This study makes the following recommendations, which can be used in the basic education system to mitigate the adverse findings of the study, and thus enhance the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners at selected schools in the Motheo Education District:

5.4.1 Empowerment and motivation for learners

As evident in the findings, this study shows the need for constant empowerment and motivation for progressed Grade 12 learners. Schools should see learners as role players in their education and that they should be empowered to take responsibility for some of the aspects of their learning at schools. Learners should be empowered to express themselves about the issues affecting their everyday lives and this could be used to eke out solutions to the issues impacting their lives. Moreover, learners should be seen as partners in their education, hence they should be empowered with the necessary skills that would enable them to navigate learning processes. The focus, in this regard, should be on empowering learners with the necessary study skills to bridge the gap between progressed learners and their non-progressed counterparts. This includes skills hinging upon organisational abilities, time management, appreciating the various learning styles, reading for specific purposes and comprehension, active listening, note-taking, anxiety management, and examination skills.

Learners’ motivation is paramount as it affects every aspect of progressed learners’ school life. Striving to promote the greatest learner motivation is extremely important for teaching and learning at schools, especially in the current climate where schools are always under pressure to improve scholastic performance. Constant motivational engagement with the learners allows learners to perceive themselves as being in control of their learning, which helps improve their

self-esteem. This prevents learners from perceiving themselves as passive partners in the learning process. Motivational talks allow for children to reflect on their lives, make the necessary choices, and feel driven by intrinsic factors, which make them take control of their learning environment. As such, they are not only internally motivated to work but also experience feelings of self-worth in the process. Motivational talks may not only be in a group setting but can also be a “one-on-one” encounter where learners are taught goal setting, with each learner setting his or her own goals. This type of setting also allows for an individualised conference time with each learner and conversation ought to encompass other issues which may hinder learners from realising their full potential.

5.4.2 Teacher development and capacitation

What became clear from the findings of the study is that teachers were role players in the negative effects of labelling and comparison of progressed Grade 12 learners at schools. This shows that there is a dire need for teachers to be developed and capacitated to recognise that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are natural and part of our human experience. The focus should be on fostering an understanding that all learners have different learning shortcomings as a result of poverty, language, learning gaps, disabilities or gender stereotyping. Such barriers to learning may persist if the teaching and learning environment, including the classroom, is not appropriately modified. Teachers should be capacitated to become agents of inclusive education, which will enable educational structures, systems and learning methodologies to address the needs of all learners, progressed or not.

Capacitating teachers enables them to understand (a) who their learners are and what is important to them, their cultures, backgrounds and barriers to learning, (b) the teaching and learning process as key to the designing of interesting, accommodative and effective lessons that apply to different learning situations. Moreover, lack of knowledge about inclusive education within the education system and the perception of inclusivity, as a matter of specialists only, ought to be changed. The beliefs and attitudes of educators and school leaders need to be changed for them to embrace change and acquire attitudes and actions that create a school culture that embodies inclusion.

5.4.3 Schools as care and support centres

The results of this study showed deficiency in terms of schools showing sensitivity to the needs of learners. Therefore, there is a need for schools to operate as care and support centres. This means that schools should start to develop and implement a range of approaches to teaching and learning that can enable them to respond to the diverse needs of learners. Schools, as centres of care and support, should essentially, (a) identify and assess learners to ensure that their basic survival needs, which could otherwise become barriers to their continued stay in schools, are met, (b) build capacity in teachers and learners to cope with, and respond effectively to, a range of challenges, (c) promote community and stakeholder participation and partnerships that will assist and strengthen schools, and above all, (d) create learning environments that are inclusive, safe and free from stigma, discrimination, and abuse.

The results of this study showed the negative feelings instigated by labelling and comparison as experienced by progressed learners due to the impact of SPP on their psychosocial being. This, in turn, impacts their educational participation and achievement. When schools can operate as care and support centres, they will be in a position to mitigate the effects of labelling and comparison of learners at schools. District education personnel and schools should provide constant psychosocial support to learners, which is more likely to reduce any negative effects of labelling and comparison of learners in schools.

5.4.4 Use of alternative terminology for “progressed learners”

As evident in the findings of this study, as soon as learners are labelled “progressed”, this label will regulate the behaviours that are considered acceptable. The learner is therefore stigmatised and learns to live with the label, despite it not having been earned or even be close to the truth. As such, there is a need for schools to use more positive alternative labels (i.e STAR learners = STudents At Risk; supported learners) in place of “progressed learners”. The intention is to use labels that minimise stigma and negative connotations around the term “progressed learners”.

5.4.5 Parent training programmes

The results of this study show that parents are also role players in the labelling and comparison of progressed Grade 12 learners. As such, parents also need to be trained on how to support their children who are progressed to avoid exacerbating the effects of labelling and comparison.

Therefore, parents must be trained and be equipped with some skills that would capacitate them to support these learners. The focus of such training programmes should be on (a) educating parents to teach children to share, cooperate and get along with peers and adults, (b) teaching parents emotional communication skills, which teaches parents to help children recognise their feelings, identify emotions and appropriately express and deal with emotions, and (c) teaching parents positive parent-child interaction skills, which includes teaching parents to interact with their children in non-discriminatory situations and show parents how to demonstrate enthusiasm and provide positive attention for appropriate child behaviour and choices. Imparting these skills to parents fosters relationship building, and hopefully, this improves the parent-child relationship. Parents who learn these skills can help mitigate the effects of labelling and comparison at schools, thus developing their children's self-esteem.

5.4.6 Differentiated teaching and learning

What became clear from the findings of the study is that many teachers felt that teaching progressed Grade 12 learners was a burden as they were not trained on how to teach them. It became apparent that schools be sensitised about differentiated teaching and learning. This meant bringing the entire school to the understanding that no two learners are the same. Teachers need to appreciate that for effective teaching and learning to take place, learners need to have numerous options of encoding and decoding information. This means going to the extent of changing the pace, the level and even the approach to the lesson to meet the learners' needs, learning styles and interests. Teachers that successfully differentiate teaching and learning know their learners and organise their classrooms effectively. They know their learners' needs and interests, their preferred learning styles and their level of knowledge. They organise the physical environment in the classroom to meet the needs of the learners; they allow for flexible grouping of learners and they have agreed on systems in place to enable and foster independent learning.

5.5 Reflections on the study

The value of this study is encapsulated in its ability to develop insights on the role of SPP and its effects on the progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem. The major contribution of this study is to foster an understanding of how progressed learners feel about being labelled and compared at schools. Thus, they feel sad, demotivated, upset, angry and distressed over being labelled and compared. This study has revealed the contribution of role players in exacerbating the effects of SPP on progressed Grade 12 learners. It is thus important to not only look at the

effects of SPP but to examine the role who the role players to these effects are. This study acknowledged the positive and negative effects of SPP and made the necessary recommendations to mitigate its negative effects. This study also revealed that SPP comes with disappointments to most learners due to being labelled and compared to their counterparts, to an extent that the learners end up questioning their learning, understanding and reasoning abilities, which bring frustration to most learners. It is important to acknowledge the negative effects of the policy while considering the recommendations to the findings revealed by the study.

5.6 Recommendations for further study

Recommendations for future research are made in light of the findings and conclusions are drawn from this study. This study was conducted on a small scale as it focused on only five schools in Motheo Education District. Further studies could explore the role of SPP in influencing the self-esteem of progressed learners in other districts in the Free State Province. Moreover, the study drew only progressed Grade 12 learners. Though this was a group that was purposefully sampled, the study left out school learners from other grades as well as teachers from other grades whose experiences could have added significant insights into the discussion. As such, future research could include progressed learners and teachers from other grades.

5.7 Conclusion

This study has explored the role of SPP on progressed Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in selected schools in Motheo Education District. Concerning the effects of SPP, the study found that SPP came with disappointment for most learners as it adversely affected the perception of the self. On a positive note, the study found that SPP was effective in that it fulfilled its purpose of giving learners a chance to exit schooling at least with a qualification. Concerning the teachers' views towards progressed learners, the study found that most teachers saw learners in their care within the jurisdiction of their responsibility. Concerning the relationships between progressed learners and teachers and fellow learners, the study found that they were generally positive and characterised by mutual understanding and equal treatment. Relationships among progressed learners were positive and characterised by understanding. On the contrary, the relationships between progressed learners and their teachers were generally negative and characterised by learners being constantly compared, labelled and reminded that they were progressed.

Concerning self-esteem, the study found that SPP affected the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners significantly in three aspects. Firstly, the progressed learners felt that at times they were not good at all. Secondly, they felt that they did not have much to be proud of and thirdly, they wished they could have more respect for themselves.

Concerning labelling, this study found that learners were always labelled as progressed at schools and most of the labelling was done by teachers. Most learners felt unhappy and distressed over being labelled. They ended up feeling like failures because of being constantly labelled. Moreover, they withdrew themselves in trying to cope with feelings of failure and worthlessness caused by labelling. Concerning comparison, the study found that most learners were compared based on certain situations, when teachers found them outside during teaching and learning time, for example, and they were compared mostly by their teachers and family members. Most learners experienced the negative feelings of being compared; thus, they felt sad, left out, demotivated, and angry.

This chapter discussed the findings of the study following the presentation and interpretation of data. The research questions and the research objectives were responded to. The limitations of the study were also outlined. Recommendations were proffered to develop some strategies for enhancing the self-esteem of progressed Grade 12 learners.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

29-Jul-2020

Dear Mr Khobe, Mamello MA

Amendment Approved

Research Project Title:

The role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2018/1585/0807

We are pleased to inform you that your amendment application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for notifying the ethics committee of the changes/amendments that have been made to your study; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Adri du Plessis

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Appendix B: Gatekeepers' Letter

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Notification of research: MA Khohe
Tel: 051 404 925/9 9207/082 537 2664
Email: MZ.Thango@freestate.gov.za



District Director
Motho District

Dear Mr. Molo

NOTIFICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT BY MA KHOBE

The above mentioned candidate was granted permission to conduct research in your district as follows:

Topic: The role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in Motheo education district.

1. List of schools involved: Bainsvlei, Heatherdale, Kagisho, Unicom Agricultural and Seemahale Secondary Schools.

Target Population: Fifty progressed grade 12 learners and twenty five SMT/grade 12 teachers at the selected Secondary Schools.

2. Period of research: From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2020. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools

3. Research benefits: The proposed research will be valuable to the teachers, progressed school learners, schools and those involved with schoolchildren, as it will contribute to the knowledge base and classroom practices, which will also enhance the role of the schools in influencing the well-being and self-esteem of the progressed learners. It is also hoped that the proposed research will assist the schools and the department of education as a whole in shaping their interventions on progressed learners to intertwine the development and/or enhancement of progressed learner's self-esteem.

4. Logistical procedures were met, in particular ethical considerations for conducting research in the Free State Department of Education.

5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the district.

Yours sincerely


DR JEM SEKOLANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 13/08/2020

RESEARCH NOTIFICATION, MA KHOBE 11 AUGUST 2020, MOTHEO DISTRICT
Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag 20266, Bloemfontein, 9000 - Old DNA Building, Room 318, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Hume Street, Bloemfontein.
Tel: (051) 404 925/9207

www.fed.gov.za

Enquiries: MZ Thengo
Ref: Research Permission: MA Khobe
Tel: 051 404 9257/ 9207 / 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thengo@education.gov.za



429 Bains Game Reserve
Bainsvlei
Bloemfontein
9301

Dear Mr. M.A. Khobe

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

Topic: The role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in Mtheo education district.

1. **List of schools involved:** Bainsvlei, Heatherdale, Kagisho, Unicorn Agricultural and Seemahale Secondary Schools.
2. **Target Population:** Fifty progressed grade 12 learners and twenty five SMT/grade 12 teachers at the selected Secondary Schools.
3. **Period of research:** From date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2020. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document or a CD, should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely


DR JEM SEKOLANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 13/08/2020

RESEARCH APPLICATION BY MA KHOBÉ, PERMISSION LETTER 11 AUGUST 2020, MTHEO DISTRICT

Strategy Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag 22995, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Old CNA Building, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein

Tel: (051) 404 9257/9207

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2018/1585

WHY ARE YOUR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Your school has been identified to be part of this study because you could potentially give a true account of the school progression policy. The 10 learners at your school will be part of the 30 progressed grade 12 learners in Matheo education district identified to participate in this study. The 3 School Management Team (SMT) members and/or grade 12 teachers at your school as administrators of the school progression policy will be part of the 25 School Management Team (SMT) members and/or grade 12 teachers in Matheo education district identified to participate in this study. The responses to the questions asked in the study will help the researcher to determine the role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Matheo education district. The responses will also help the researcher to determine the strategies that could be used to enhance the grade 12 learners' self-esteem, even from the view of a learner.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The role of the participants in the study is to answer the questions as honestly as possible and to the best of their ability. The study involves audio taping, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The participants will be asked closed questions with pre-determined responses and open-ended questions which allow you to express yourself freely. The expected time to complete the questionnaire and the interview is approximately 45 minutes. Participation in the study is confidential and anonymous as the researcher will make use of a coding system and not your actual name on the survey/questionnaire. As such, there are no expected risks to the participants. Should you feel any pain, embarrassed or scared during the course of the study, they must tell the researcher, the teacher and their parents. The research will be conducted at your school after school hours on 25, 26 and 27 August 2020 in arrangement with yourself as the school principal. It would also be appreciated if you could avail yourself or any other delegated teacher for the duration of the interviews to ensure the safety of the learners.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no material incentives for participation in the study and participation in the study will be kept confidential. The participants' responses in the study will help the researcher in explaining the role of the School Progression Policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Matheo education district. The study will be valuable to the teachers, progressed school learners, schools and those involved with schoolchildren, as it will contribute to the knowledge base and classroom practices, which will also enhance the role of the schools in influencing the well-being and self-esteem of the progressed learners. It is hoped that the proposed research will assist the schools in shaping their interventions on progressed learners to intertwine the development of progressed learner's self-esteem.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The are no reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the event that this research activity results in emotional distress, the participants may contact FAMSA on 051 525 2395, SADAG helpline on 0800 367 367 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14

WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of information will be maintained; the participants' names will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect them to the answers they give. The answers will be given a fictitious code number and they will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. I, Khobe Mamello (the researcher) and the study-leader (Dr F Khanare) will have access to the data and we will maintain confidentiality. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the study-leader and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. The participants' anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report(s). The participants can refuse to take part even if their parents have agreed to their participation. They can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of the participants answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in his home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic information will be deleted after the specified time of storage. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is also no foreseen risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research. The researcher will not be liable for any emotional distress that may be attributed to the study.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reward offered for your participation in the study, financial or otherwise. No costs will be incurred by the participant. There are no possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the

event that this research activity results in emotional distress, the participants may contact FAMSA on 051 525 2385, SADAG helpline on 0800 567 567 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14.

HOW WILL THE INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Kananga Robert Mukuna 0587183343, or 081 045 1473 or MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying their participation in the research.

Yours Sincerely



Mr. Khobe Mamello

Student Number: 2008059343
Cell: 082 829 2987
Email: m.khobe@gmail.com



HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2018/1585

WHY ARE YOUR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Your school has been identified to be part of this study because you could potentially give a true account of the school progression policy. The 10 learners at your school will be part of the 50 progressed grade 12 learners in Motheo education district identified to participate in this study. The 5 School Management Team (SMT) members and/or grade 12 teachers at your school as administrators of the school progression policy will be part of the 25 School Management Team (SMT) members and/or grade 12 teachers in Motheo education district identified to participate in this study. The responses to the questions asked in the study will help the researcher to determine the role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district. The responses will also help the researcher to determine the strategies that could be used to enhance the grade 12 learners' self-esteem, even from the view of a learner.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The role of the participants in the study is to answer the questions as honestly as possible and to the best of their ability. The study involves audio taping, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The participants will be asked closed questions with pre-determined responses and open-ended questions which allow you to express yourself freely. The expected time to complete the questionnaire and the interview is approximately 45 minutes. Participation in the study is confidential and anonymous as the researcher will make use of a coding system and not your actual name on the survey/questionnaire. As such, there are no expected risks to the participants. Should you feel any pain, embarrassed or scared during the course of the study, they must tell the researcher, the teacher and their parents. The research will be conducted at your school after school hours on 20, 21 and 24 August 2020 in arrangement with yourself as the school principal. It would also be appreciated if you could avail yourself or any other delegated teacher for the duration of the interviews to ensure the safety of the learners.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no material incentives for participation in the study and participation in the study will be kept confidential. The participants' responses in the study will help the researcher in explaining the role of the School Progression Policy on Grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district. The study will be valuable to the teachers, progressed school learners, schools and those involved with schoolchildren, as it will contribute to the knowledge base and classroom practices, which will also enhance the role of the schools in influencing the well-being and self-esteem of the progressed learners. It is hoped that the proposed research will assist the schools in shaping their interventions on progressed learners to intertwine the development of progressed learner's self-esteem.



WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The are no reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the event that this research activity results in emotional distress, the participants may contact FAMSA on 051 525 2395, SADAG helpline on 0800 367 367 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14

WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of information will be maintained; the participants' names will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect them to the answers they give. The answers will be given a fictitious code number and they will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. I, Khabe Mamello (the researcher) and the study-leader (Dr F Khanare) will have access to the data and we will maintain confidentiality. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the study-leader and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. The participants' anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report(s). The participants can refuse to take part even if their parents have agreed to their participation. They can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of the participants answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in his home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic information will be deleted after the specified time of storage. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is also no foreseen risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research. The researcher will not be liable for any emotional distress that may be attributed to the study.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reward offered for your participation in the study, financial or otherwise. No costs will be incurred by the participant. There are no possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the

event that this research activity results in emotional distress, the participants may contact FAMSA on 051 525 2395, SADAG helpline on 0800 567 567 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14.

HOW WILL THE INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Kananga Robert Mukuna 0587185343, or 081 045 1473 or MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying their participation in the research.

Yours Sincerely



Mr. Khobe Mamello

Student Number: 2008059343
Cell: 082 829 2987
Email: m.khobe@gmail.com

Appendices D: Learners Consent Form



RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

21/08/2020

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in Motheo education district

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Khobe, Mamello 2008059343 082 829 2887

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

*Faculty of education
Department of Psychology of Education*

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

*Dr. Kananga Robert Mukuna
0587185343, or 081 043 1473*

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to explain the role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district. This study will measure the level of grade 12 learners' self-esteem and explore, from the learner's perspective, the strategies teachers may use to enhance progressed learners' self-esteem.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I, Khobe Mamello will be conducting the research. I am working for the Motheo education district as a Deputy Chief Education Specialist: Office Manager: Office of the Director. I am also a student at the University of Free State, Bloemfontein campus with the student number 2008059343. This study should be conducted as a requirement for my studies in Masters in Psychology of Education.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *UFS-HSD2018/1583*



WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You have been identified to be part of this study because you could potentially give a true account of the school progression policy and as the School Management Team (SMT) and/or grade 12 teachers as you are administrators of the school progression policy. Your information was obtained from the school. You will be part of the 25 School Management Team (SMT) and/or grade 12 teachers in Motheo education district identified to participate in this study. You were chosen because your responses to the questions asked in the study will help the researcher to determine the role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district. Your responses will also help the researcher to determine the strategies that could be used to enhance the grade 12 learners' self-esteem, from your point of view as a learner.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Your role in the study is to answer the questions as honestly as possible and to the best of your ability. The study involves audio taping, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. You will be asked closed questions with pre-determined responses and open-ended questions which allow you to express yourself freely. The expected time to complete the questionnaire and the interview is approximately 45 minutes. Your participation in the study is confidential and anonymous as the researcher will make use of a coding system and not your actual name on the survey/questionnaire. As such, there are no expected risks to you. Should you feel any pain, embarrassed or scared during the course of the study, you must tell the researcher, teacher or your parents.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no material incentives for participating in the study and your participation in the study will be kept confidential. Your responses in the study will help the researcher in explaining the role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem in the Motheo education district. The study will be valuable to the teachers, progressed school learners, schools and those involved with schoolchildren, as it will contribute to the knowledge base and classroom practices, which will also enhance the role of the schools in influencing the well-being and self-esteem of the progressed learners. It is hoped that the proposed research will assist the schools in shaping their interventions on progressed learners to intertwine the development of progressed learner's self-esteem.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The are no reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the event that this research activity results in emotional distress, please contact FAMSA on 051 525 2395, SADAG helpline on 0800 567 567 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The confidentiality of information you share with the researcher will be highly maintained. Your name will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as journals, articles, conference proceedings and other purposes. I, Khobe Mamello (the researcher) and the study-leader (Dr Kananga Robert Mukuna) will have access to the data and we will maintain confidentiality. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the study-leader and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. You can refuse to take part even if your parents have agreed to your participation. You can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in his home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic information will be deleted after the specified time of storage. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reward offered for your participation in the study, financial or otherwise. No costs will be incurred by the participant. There are no possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research. The risk for participating in the study will be minimal. The potential risk may be emotional distress due to discussing sensitive matter of self-esteem. In the event that this research activity results in emotional distress, please contact FAMSA on 051 525 2395, SADAG helpline on 0800 567 567 or suicide helpline 0800 12 13 14

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Khobe Mamello on 082 829 2987 or m.khobe@gmail.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Kananga Robert Mukuna 0387183343, or 081 043 1473 or MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants. There is no risk that may come from others identifying your participation in the research.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.



Appendices E: Teacher Consent Form



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Khobe Mamello Admirrow

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____





Questionnaire on the grade 12 learners' self-esteem

Fictional code number: _____

Date: _____ / _____ / 2020

Demographic questions

School: _____

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Race/Ethnicity: African White

Asian Coloured

Residential Area: Urban Rural

Culture: _____

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Instruction: Please read each item or question, and rate how often each statement is understandable and adequate for you. The scale starts from 1 to 5. Likert scale (5=Very much agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Very much disagree).

Please tick beside one of the numbers below:

Example:

My parent helps with homework at home.

Very much agree	5	Agree	4	3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	2	Very much disagree	1
-----------------	---	-------	---	---------------------------------------	----------	---	--------------------	---

Items	Likert Scales				
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4	5
2. At times I think I am not good at all.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I take a positive attitude towards myself.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendices H: Learner Interview questions

Interview questions: Progressed grade 12 learners

A Biographic information

Tell me more about yourself and your background

(Age, gender, grade level, culture, residential area, school career pathway, hobby, academic progress, family structure, living arrangements: living with grandmother, mother, with both father and mother, mothers' careers, fathers' careers). *Please do not mention any names.*

B Role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem

2 How does being progressed make you feel?

2.1 What are your views towards the school progression policy?

2.2 Explain the relationship between progressed learners and other learners at school?

2.3 Explain the relationship between progressed learners and the teachers at school?

2.4 In your observation, how do the progressed learners relate with each other?

3. How often are you labelled as "*progressed*" and by whom?

3.1 How does being labelled make you feel?

3.2 What do you think could be done to remedy labelling of learners 'progressed'?

4. Do you ever feel like a failure or worthless? Why?

4.1 What do you do when you feel like a failure or worthless?

4.2 What motivates you when you are feeling down?

5. How often are you compared to others and by whom?

5.1 How does being compared to others make you feel?

5.2 How often do you compare yourself to others?

5.3 Do you compare yourself to those who do better or less than you? And how does that make you feel?

6. What do you think should be done to enhance progressed learners'?

6.1 Who should be responsible for carrying out these changes and why?

6.2 What are the strategies that enhance the progressed of grade 12 learners self-esteem?

7. What are the challenges that you encounter to progress your academic performance?

7.1 What recommendations would you give to remedy these challenges?

Thank you for taking time



Appendices I: Teacher Interview Questions

Interview questions: School Management Team (SMT) members and/or grade 12 teachers

A Biographic information

Please tell me more about yourself and your background.

(Age, gender, culture, residential area, career pathway, hobby, academic progress, family structure, role at the school). *Please do not mention any names.*

B Role of the school progression policy on grade 12 learners' self-esteem

What are your views towards the school progression policy?

2.1 What are your views towards progressed learners?

2.2 Explain the relationship between progressed learners and other learners at school?

2.3 Explain the relationship between progressed learners and the teachers at school?

2.4 In your observation, how do the progressed learners relate with each other?

3. How often are the grade 12 learners labelled as “*progressed*” and by whom?

3.2 In your observation, how does being labelled make the progressed grade 12 learners feel?

3.2 What do you think could be done to remedy labelling of learners as “*progressed*”?

4 In your observation, do progressed learners' ever feel like a failure or worthless? Why?

4.1 What do you they do when they feel like a failure or worthless?

4.2 What do you think motivates the progressed grade 12 learners?

5. How often are the progressed grade 12 learners compared to others and by whom?

5.1 In your observation, how does being compared to others make the progressed grade 12 feel?

5.2 How often do you compare progressed grade 12 learners to others?

5.3 Do you compare progressed learners to those who do better or less than them? And in your observation, how does that make them feel?

6. What do you think should be done to enhance progressed learners?

6.1 Who should be responsible for carrying out these changes and why?

6.2 What are the strategies that enhance the progressed grade 12 learners' self-esteem?

7. What are the challenges that the progressed grade 12 learners encounter to progress their academic performance?

7.1 What recommendations would you give to remedy these challenges?

Thank you for taking time

