

**Navigating Policy and Practice: Teachers' Views on Automatic Promotion and its
Classroom Implications in the Mukwe Circuit, Namibia**

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DECLARATION

I, MARTHA NAMENE declare that this dissertation represents my own work; that it has not previously been submitted by any other person for a degree at the University of Zambia or any other University and it does not incorporate any published work or material from another dissertation.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions, implementation challenges, and the perceived impact of the automatic promotion policy on student engagement and learning outcomes in Namibia's Mukwe Circuit. The Namibian Ministry of Education introduced the automatic promotion policy to address persistently high dropout and repetition rates in Namibian schools. Teachers' perspectives are central to the policy's success, as teachers are responsible for its classroom implementation. The study was guided three objectives, which were to examine teachers' perceptions, to identify the challenges faced by teachers in the Mukwe Circuit during the implementation of the automatic promotion policy, and lastly to explore the impact of the automatic promotion policy on student in the Mukwe Circuit. The researcher worked with teachers from all school phases and three members of management (Heads of department (HOD)) for the interviews after getting clearance from UNZA and the principals from the three schools. The type of Purposeful sampling used was criterion sampling to select teachers for a detailed examination of the policy. Participants were selected based on specific criteria that included school location, this case being schools in a rural area, the selection of schools all came from public schools in the Mukwe Circuit. An interview guide was used in the data collection, of which each interview was recorded with a recording device, and later thematically analyzed. The study has shown that all the participants were not involved in the development of the policy nor did they receive any training on the policy implementation. Teachers find it challenging to ensure that their lesson plans and instructional methods accommodate both groups of learners and finishing the syllabus on time. Analysis has shown that very few teachers are optimistic about the learning outcomes that result from the implementation of the policy and are of the opinion that the policy has negatively affected classroom engagement and has resulted in a decline in achieving expected learning outcomes. The study recommended that there is a need for teachers to revisit the learning support policy as this could help in the effective implementation of the automatic promotion policy. The ministry should consider abolishing the use of the policy at lower primary grade, as these are foundation stages. It has also been noted that the teachers feel like the policy has planned for learners to go through the mainstream, but does not have a plan on what should happen after. In conclusion Findings show that teachers understand the objectives and main goals of the policy, but they feel like the policy is doing more harm than good. Majority of the participants feel like the policy is sending too many learners into the streets after the exit grade and teachers are not happy with teaching learners that were automatically promoted, because they require a lot of attention. Teachers find it challenging to ensure that their lesson plans and instructional methods accommodate both academically inclined learners and those that are low achievers. Finally, teachers not optimistic about the learning outcomes that result from the implementation of the policy.

Keywords: *Automatic promotion, Policy implementation, Perceptions, Examination, Learner outcomes*

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late Grandmother Nathalia Abraham for her commitment in ensuring that her children went to school “From selling fruits, to producing graduates”, her hard work has not gone in vain. My mother Lydia Nghilundilua, for her unwavering support and encouragement to follow in her footsteps.

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Acronyms

EMIS-Education Management Information System

HOD- Head of department

MOEAC- Ministry of Education Arts and culture

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Education systems worldwide face persistent challenges of high dropout and repetition rates, especially within economically and socially marginalised regions. These issues are particularly pronounced in Namibia, where the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (MoEAC) has implemented various policies to address educational disparities and promote learner retention. Among these efforts is the automatic promotion policy, introduced to curb high dropout rates and minimise repetition across primary and secondary school phases. According to the *National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Primary School Phases* (2015) and the *National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Secondary School Phases* (2018), learners are only permitted to repeat twice during primary schooling and once each in junior and senior secondary schooling.

The automatic promotion policy reflects a shift away from previous practices that required learners to repeat a grade until they demonstrated mastery of its competencies. This shift was influenced by research indicating that excessive grade repetition can demotivate learners, increase dropout rates, and contribute to poor educational outcomes, particularly among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Klapproth et al., 2016). In theory, automatic promotion offers a pathway to continuous progression, aiming to retain learners in the education system and reduce feelings of academic failure. However, this approach has sparked considerable debate among educators and policymakers. While proponents argue that it prevents disengagement and reduces dropout rates, critics contend that promoting learners without mastery of core competencies risks compromising learning quality and places additional pressures on teachers (OECD, 2018).

This study examines the perspectives of teachers within Namibia's Mukwe Circuit, Kavango East Region, regarding the automatic promotion policy. Teacher perspectives are central to the policy's success, as teachers are responsible for its classroom implementation. Research suggests that teachers' beliefs and attitudes significantly impact their willingness to implement new policies, influencing the fidelity and effectiveness of policy outcomes (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). By exploring teachers' views, challenges, and observed impacts of automatic promotion, this study aims to generate insights that could inform policy adjustments and enhance its implementation, particularly in high-need regions like the Mukwe Circuit.

1.1 Background

The automatic promotion policy in Namibia emerged from a broader educational reform movement aimed at improving access, equity, and quality within the nation's schooling system. This movement is rooted in the *National Plan of Action 2002–2015*, which prioritised goals of accessibility, equity, quality, and democracy in education. Inspired by global educational initiatives like UNESCO's "Education for All" framework (UNESCO, 2015), Namibia's Ministry of Education developed policies designed to address educational inequalities and reduce barriers that prevent learners from advancing through the system (MoEAC, 2020).

Prior to the introduction of automatic promotion, Namibian schools followed a traditional repetition policy, which allowed learners to repeat grades until they demonstrated sufficient mastery of required competencies. However, research across various educational contexts found that this approach had unintended consequences, particularly for vulnerable students. Klapproth et al. (2016) highlighted that repeated learners are often socially stigmatised, leading to issues like discrimination, reduced motivation, and eventual disengagement from school. Similar findings in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond have indicated that repetition increases the likelihood of dropout, particularly in contexts with limited support resources for struggling learners (OECD, 2018).

In response to these concerns, Namibia initially adopted a semi-automatic promotion policy in 1996, which allowed some flexibility in learner progression while still permitting grade repetition under certain conditions (MoEAC, 2013). This policy was designed to address the social and economic barriers that impact academic performance, such as poverty and limited access to educational resources, especially in rural and marginalised communities. The current automatic promotion policy, introduced in 2015 and extended to secondary phases in 2018, represents a further shift towards reducing retention and promoting continuous progression.

Under this policy, teachers play a crucial role in identifying academically struggling learners through continuous assessments and providing targeted instructional support. According to the *National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Secondary School Phases* (2018), teachers are expected to support learners by offering additional resources and remedial instruction, helping them catch up on essential competencies without the need for grade repetition. However, the challenges faced by teachers in implementing this policy, particularly in resource-constrained environments like the Mukwe Circuit, remain underexplored in existing literature.

In regions like the Mukwe Circuit, where dropout and repetition rates remain significantly higher than national averages (MoEAC, 2020), understanding teachers' perspectives on the automatic promotion policy is critical. Teachers in these areas face unique challenges, including large class sizes, limited teaching resources, and high levels of learner absenteeism. These conditions can complicate the effective implementation of automatic promotion, potentially diminishing its intended benefits and exacerbating the very issues it aims to resolve. By examining teachers' perceptions and experiences, this study seeks to uncover the practical implications of automatic promotion and contribute to the evidence base necessary for informed policy adaptation.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Ministry of Education introduced the automatic promotion policy to address persistently high dropout and repetition rates in Namibian schools. Under this policy, learners progress to the next grade even without mastering required competencies, provided they have already repeated a grade once in junior secondary and once in grade 10. Despite these efforts, dropout and repetition rates remain alarmingly high, with 51,648 learners dropping out and 105,022 repeating grades in 2021 alone (EMIS, 2022). While the policy targets these quantitative issues, it is also expected to enhance broader educational outcomes by ensuring students remain engaged in learning and continue to progress equitably through the school system.

Yet, the policy's effectiveness is uncertain, particularly regarding teachers' acceptance and attitudes—factors shown to be critical for successful policy implementation (Datnow, 2020; Spillane, 2012). Teachers express mixed views about promoting learners who lack basic competencies, potentially challenging the policy's aims and impacting classroom dynamics, instructional pacing, and student motivation. While there are studies such as those by Adonis(2021) in South Africa that showed that the implementation of a similar policy is only applied in grade, while a study by Mwila(2022) was on the policy implementation in grade 9, looking only at the transition from Senior Primary phase to Junior Secondary phase, there is limited research that exists on the teachers perspectives from Junior primary phase and Senior Secondary phase, and especially on how teachers in the Mukwe Circuit perceive this policy and its effects on their instructional practices and student outcomes. This gap in understanding teacher perspectives and experiences across all phases presents a critical barrier to evaluating the policy's effectiveness, a barrier that this study aims to address by investigating teachers'

perceptions and the practical impact of the automatic promotion policy on their professional practices and on learners in the region.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions, implementation challenges, and the perceived impact of the automatic promotion policy on student engagement and learning outcomes in Namibia's Mukwe Circuit.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To examine teachers' perceptions of the automatic promotion policy in the Mukwe Circuit.
2. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in the Mukwe Circuit during the implementation of the automatic promotion policy.
3. To explore the impact of the automatic promotion policy on student in the Mukwe Circuit.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. How do teachers in the Mukwe Circuit perceive the automatic promotion policy?
- ii. What challenges do teachers in the Mukwe Circuit face when implementing the automatic promotion policy?
- iii. How do teachers in the Mukwe Circuit perceive the impact of the automatic promotion policy on students?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study holds significant implications for educational policy, teacher practice, and learner outcomes in Namibia, particularly in regions struggling with high dropout and repetition rates. First, by examining teachers' perceptions of the automatic promotion policy in the Mukwe Circuit, this research contributes valuable insights into how educational policies are received and interpreted by those tasked with implementing them. Since teachers' attitudes and beliefs greatly influence their instructional practices, understanding their perspectives on automatic promotion is essential for policymakers. Insights from this study could guide policymakers in

refining the policy to align better with classroom realities, ensuring that it is both practically feasible and effective in meeting its objectives. Additionally, the study's findings may inform professional development programs, enabling the Ministry of Education to provide targeted support that addresses teachers' challenges in implementing the policy.

Moreover, this study has implications for broader educational outcomes, especially concerning student engagement and learning continuity. By focusing on the Mukwe Circuit—a region where dropout and repetition rates are particularly high—the study provides context-specific insights that could be used to design interventions tailored to the unique challenges of disadvantaged areas. Addressing the underlying challenges teachers face in implementing automatic promotion may contribute to reduced dropout rates and improved learner retention. Consequently, the study supports Namibia's goals of achieving equitable access to quality education, as outlined in the *National Plan of Action* and aligned with UNESCO's "Education for All" framework.

The findings of this study will also be valuable for educators and school administrators by highlighting the specific classroom dynamics and instructional adjustments needed to accommodate learners progressing under the automatic promotion policy. Teachers may find that their insights are not only validated but also valued within policy discussions, fostering a sense of empowerment and agency. Understanding the practical challenges and successes related to automatic promotion can encourage more collaborative approaches among educators, where shared experiences and strategies are used to enhance teaching practices in similar contexts.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study focuses on examining the automatic promotion policy's implementation within the Mukwe Circuit of Namibia's Kavango East Region, specifically exploring teachers' perceptions, challenges, and the policy's impact on classroom practices and student outcomes. The scope is limited to teachers in the junior and senior primary as well as junior and senior secondary phases, where the policy mandates progression to the next grade after a single repetition, if required. The study will involve a select sample of schools within the Mukwe Circuit, which has been chosen due to its historically high dropout and repetition rates, providing a relevant context for assessing the policy's effectiveness. While the study emphasises teachers' perspectives and experiences, it does not extend to an analysis of student outcomes from a quantitative perspective, nor does it cover regions outside the Mukwe Circuit.

This focused scope allows for an in-depth understanding of the specific factors influencing the policy's reception and implementation within a high-need area, providing insights that may be applicable to similar educational contexts within Namibia.

1.8 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations that may affect the generalisability and scope of its findings. First, the research is geographically limited to the Mukwe Circuit within the Kavango East Region of Namibia. As such, the findings may not fully capture the experiences or perceptions of teachers in other circuits or regions where educational challenges, resources, and implementation dynamics may differ. Second, the study primarily relies on teachers' self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be subject to response bias. Teachers might withhold critical views or amplify certain opinions based on social desirability or concerns about how their responses could be perceived by educational authorities.

Another limitation lies in the qualitative nature of the data collection methods, such as interviews and focus groups, which, while providing rich insights, may not offer the statistical generalisability of a large-scale quantitative study. Consequently, while the findings will offer in-depth, contextualised understanding, they may not be broadly applicable to all educational settings within Namibia or beyond. Additionally, the study does not extend to an empirical analysis of student outcomes, limiting its capacity to assess the direct impact of the automatic promotion policy on academic performance or dropout rates. Finally, logistical and time constraints may restrict the sample size or the diversity of schools included, potentially narrowing the range of experiences represented in the study. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide valuable insights into teacher perspectives on automatic promotion in a high-need area, which may serve as a foundation for further research and policy refinement.

1.8 Definitions of key terms

1. Automatic Promotion Policy

An educational policy that allows learner to advance to the next grade level even if they have not met the traditional academic requirements for promotion, with the aim of keeping them within their age groups.

2. Dropout Rate

The percentage of learners who leave school before completing a given educational phase or grade level.

3. Repetition Rate

The percentage of learners who are required to repeat a grade because they did not meet the necessary academic standards to advance.

4. Retention

The act of holding back learners who are not keeping up with their or those who do not meet expectations of the predefined level in which they are, instead of promoting them to the following grade.

5. Mukwe Circuit

A specific administrative area within the Kavango East Region of Namibia, encompassing several primary and secondary schools.

6. Perceptions

Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and views regarding the automatic promotion policy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter consists of a reviewed literature on automatic promotion policies from different parts of the world. It also comprises of critical analysis of how literature is related to this study. The sections then is followed with theoretical framework of the study and the conceptual framework of the study.

2.2 Conceptual analysis of Automatic Promotion Policy

The automatic promotion policy, which advances students to the next grade level regardless of their academic performance, has generated significant discourse within the educational community. Automatic promotion policies have been widely implemented in various educational systems with the aim of enhancing student retention and reducing dropout rates. The policy has therefore sparked considerable debate regarding its impact on student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

While these policies have the potential to positively impact student outcomes their effectiveness hinges on the perceptions and experiences of those tasked with their implementation, this case being the Teachers. Teachers being on the front lines of educational delivery, provide valuable insights into how automatic promotion affects classroom dynamics, instructional practices, and student outcomes. Below is a breakdown of similar studies which the researcher reviewed in relation to the perceptions that teachers have on the automatic promotion policy.

2.2.2 Teachers perception on the implementation of the automatic promotion policy in Africa and beyond

Data analysis by Adonis (2022) in a secondary school in South Africa, showed that teachers viewed that the policy complicated their teaching strategies because they spend more time re-teaching the syllabus that was meant for the previous grade, this is because learners that were automatically promoted often struggle to grasp the content of the grade they have been promoted to making it difficult to address diverse learning needs effectively. The author's finding further showed that teachers complained about not receiving training on how to assists struggling learners, especially those who are transitioning from one phase to another.

Though referred to as Social promotion the United States of Namibia, a study by Connor (2018) found that teachers felt the policy undermined academic standards. Teachers reported that their professional integrity was compromised as they were pressured to pass students who did not meet the necessary criteria, leading to frustration and burnout. Connor's study also recognizes both the policy's potential benefits for struggling students and the challenges it created, including decreased motivation and increased workload for teachers.

In a study by Chohan and Quadir (2011), the data analysis on teachers' perceptions showed that the policy has significantly helped in the reduction of the dropout rates in Pakistan as it saves learners from dropping out of education system because teachers believed that retention of learners increases the chances of their dropout. The authors further stated in his findings that teachers thought that the policy helps learners spend more time in the educational environment under teachers' supervision, additionally they teachers also stated that regardless of the situation, a learner will still learn something therefore retaining the quality of education they are receiving. In a similar study by Mukosi (202) on primary schools in Uganda resonates with findings by Chohan and Quadir. Mukosi found that, despite the policy's contribution in the reduction of dropout rates, teachers perceptions revolved around the fact that the policy saves resources because the Government pays for the learners in schools, therefore the longer a learner is retained, the more the government spends. Mukosi's finding further noted that retaining learners in the same grade prevents other learners from benefiting from the Universalization of primary schools as spaces are occupied by learners who are retained.

2.2.3 Teachers perception on the implementation of the automatic promotion policy in Namibia

In study by Mbudhi(2022) that Looked at 3 Schools in the Erongo Region, the author found that teachers in school B felt that they were not consulted on the policy implementation, but it was rather just imposed on them. Because the policy allowed learners to be promoted without progressing, the policy burdened teachers as they had to accommodate learners who were automatically promoted. Findings by Mbudhi showed shared sentiments with finding by Chohan and Quadir and that of Mukosi on the reduction of dropout rates. Additionally, Mbudhi found that teachers in school C believed that the policy is a means to accommodate challenges of such as overcrowded classrooms.

A study carried out the Zambezi Region by Chataa and Nkengbeza (2019), the authors discuss the challenges faced by primary school teachers in implementing this policy. The authors found that the teachers expressed issues such as an increase in workload on teachers, which hinders them from effectively implementing the policy. Summarily to Adonis (2022) this study also found that teachers raised issues of inadequate training and insufficient resources. The duo highlighted that teachers felt that the policy can undermine educational quality, as teachers feel pressured to pass students without adequate assessment. They further noted that Teachers feel that the policy diminishes accountability and inadvertently create a culture of complacency among students, as the pressure to advance them can conflict with the goal of developing independent learners.

In a study by Ama (2003), which investigated factors affecting quality education from teachers' perspectives in Windhoek, found that teachers feel inadequately consulted in policy development and implementation. Ama (2003) notes that teachers perceive a disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities. Both studies by Ama (2003) as well as those by Chataa and Nkengbeza (2019) show that teachers often feel overwhelmed by policies that do not align with their instructional practices which can hinder the quality of education. The study further revealed that policies like the Automatic Promotion Policy may inadvertently lead to decreased educational quality. Teachers express concern that such policies prioritize retention over rigorous academic standards, resulting in a lack of accountability and diminished student outcomes.

2.2.4 Teacher's suggestions based on their perceptions of the implementation of the automatic promotion policy

A variety of suggestions from teachers regarding the implementation of the automatic promotion policy have been identified by different authors world-wide. Teachers in a study by Navola (2016) suggested that, the policy was introduced as a package that includes remedial teaching, individualized instruction and the competency-based approach. The study further revealed that these elements were not being implemented in schools, which could lead to a potential loss of the quality of the policy. He therefore recommended that schools put these elements into consideration for the successful implementation of the policy.

According to Aipinge *et al* (2021), teachers expressed that there is a need for professional training and workshops that will help enable teachers to fully assist and support learners that

are not academically inclined. The teachers in this study further stressed that continuous engagement between schools and the policy officials was needed to assess the implementation of the policy and monitor if it is effectively being implemented. Finally, teachers also suggested that such policies need to be taught to student teachers at university learners to assist novice teachers when they are recruited into the education industry.

In conclusion, while the policy aims to promote retention, it often compromises educational quality and undermines teachers' efforts to foster meaningful learning experiences. Addressing these challenges through enhanced professional development and support systems is essential for the successful implementation of educational policies that benefit both teachers and students.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of any study provides a foundation upon which the research is built. In the context of this study, two primary theoretical perspectives will be utilized to frame the analysis: Social Promotion Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory. These frameworks will guide the examination of teachers' perceptions of automatic promotion policies and the ways these policies impact classroom practices, learner outcomes, and the educational system at large.

2.3.1 *Social Promotion Theory*

Social promotion theory advocates for the advancement of learners to the next grade level, even when they have not met the traditional academic requirements. The rationale behind this theory is primarily to keep learners with their age peers, thereby preventing social stigmatization and other negative consequences of grade repetition, such as low self-esteem, peer rejection, and increased dropout rates (UNESCO, 2021). Social promotion is particularly important in educational systems where learners may face socio-economic challenges that hinder their academic performance, such as poverty, limited access to resources, and familial responsibilities (UNICEF, 2019).

Globally, the concept of social promotion has been met with mixed responses. Proponents argue that grade retention often does more harm than good by reinforcing a cycle of failure, wherein learners become disengaged and disillusioned with the educational system (Smith & Shepard, 2020). However, critics of social promotion suggest that promoting learners without

mastery of grade-level content can lead to cumulative knowledge gaps, further undermining their educational trajectory (Jimerson, 2016). These debates make it imperative to examine the perceptions of teachers, as their views significantly influence the implementation and effectiveness of social promotion policies.

In Namibia, the automatic promotion policy can be seen as an extension of social promotion theory. The policy, which allows learners to progress despite not having achieved certain academic benchmarks, is intended to mitigate the adverse effects of grade repetition, such as dropout rates and social isolation (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MoEAC], 2015). In the Mukwe Circuit, where socio-economic challenges are particularly acute, automatic promotion is designed to provide learners with continued access to education, despite their academic difficulties. However, the effectiveness of this policy largely depends on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, who are tasked with implementing it in the classroom.

2.3.2 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory, grounded in the work of theorists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, posits that learners actively construct their own understanding of the world by building upon prior knowledge and experiences (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory suggests that learning is an active, iterative process in which learners integrate new information with existing cognitive frameworks. In educational settings, this implies that learners must demonstrate mastery of foundational knowledge before progressing to more complex concepts (Fosnot, 2013).

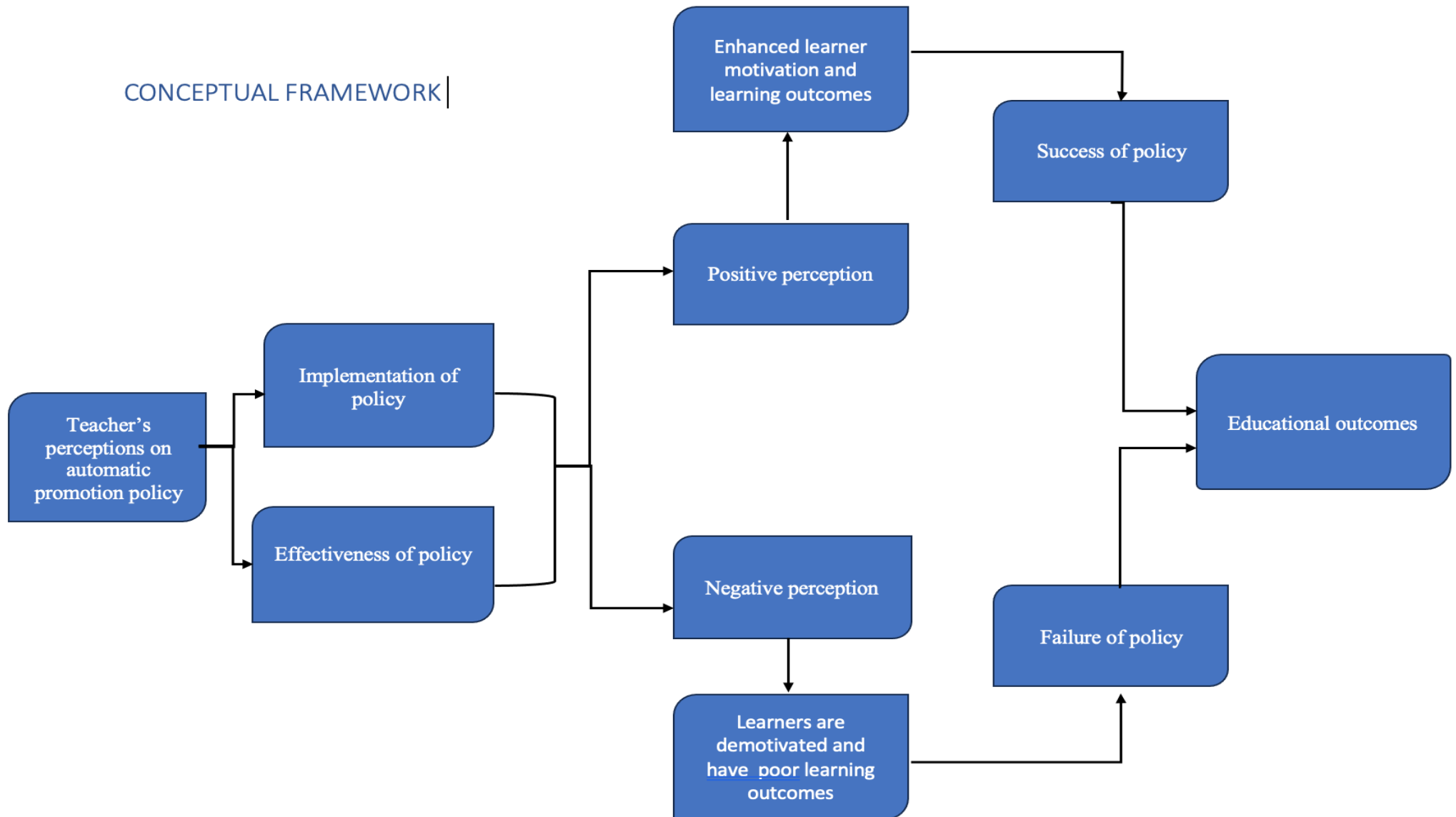
The automatic promotion policy presents a challenge to constructivist principles, as it allows learners to move on to the next grade even when they have not mastered the required competencies for their current grade. This raises questions about the ability of these learners to engage meaningfully with new content, given that they may not have a firm grasp of the foundational knowledge upon which future learning is based (Bransford et al., 2000). For teachers in the Mukwe Circuit, the tension between social promotion and constructivist approaches may shape their perceptions of the policy and its impact on learner outcomes.

The constructivist framework will be critical in exploring teachers' views on whether promoted learners can effectively engage with the curriculum in higher grades, and how these learners' academic gaps affect classroom dynamics. Teachers' pedagogical strategies, such as differentiated instruction and remedial support, will also be examined within the context of this

theoretical framework. Understanding how teachers reconcile the demands of the automatic promotion policy with the principles of constructivist learning will provide valuable insights into the policy's implementation and effectiveness.

2.4 Conceptual framework

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK |



The conceptual framework for this study will focus on the relationship between the automatic promotion policy and key variables such as teacher perceptions, teaching practices, and learner outcomes. The framework will outline how these variables interact to shape the policy's implementation and effectiveness within the Mukwe Circuit.

At the core of the framework is the automatic promotion policy, which serves as the central policy intervention. This policy is designed to address high repetition and dropout rates by allowing learners to advance to the next grade level even if they have not met the traditional academic requirements. However, the success of this policy depends on its implementation, which is mediated by the perceptions and actions of teachers.

Teacher perceptions are a key variable in the conceptual framework. Teachers' attitudes toward the policy, their beliefs about its effectiveness, and their views on its impact on learners will directly influence how the policy is implemented in classrooms. Positive perceptions may lead to more effective implementation, with teachers providing additional support to struggling learners and using differentiated instruction to meet their diverse needs. Conversely, negative perceptions may result in inadequate implementation, with teachers feeling demotivated or resentful of the additional workload imposed by the policy.

Teaching practices are another important variable in the conceptual framework. The automatic promotion policy requires teachers to adjust their instructional strategies to accommodate learners who have been promoted without mastering grade-level content. This may involve providing remedial support, modifying lesson plans, or using formative assessment techniques to monitor learner progress. The success of these strategies will depend on teachers' willingness and ability to adapt their teaching practices in response to the policy.

Finally, learner outcomes are the ultimate variable of interest in the conceptual framework. The primary goal of the automatic promotion policy is to improve learner retention and reduce dropout rates. However, the policy also has implications for learners' academic achievement, social development, and motivation. By examining teachers' perceptions and teaching practices, this study will explore how the policy influences learner outcomes in the Mukwe Circuit.

The interaction between these variables—automatic promotion policy, teacher perceptions, teaching practices, and learner outcomes—will be at the heart of this study. The conceptual framework will provide a lens through which to analyse the complexities of policy implementation and its impact on the educational system in Namibia.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviews literature on the automatic promotion policy, which advances students to the next grade irrespective of academic performance, with the aim of improving retention and reducing dropout rates. While the policy has noble intentions, it has generated significant debate, particularly regarding its impact on teaching effectiveness and educational quality.

Studies from South Africa (Adonis, 2022) and Namibia (Connor, 2018) reveal that teachers experience increased workload, compromised teaching strategies, and feel pressured to pass underperforming learners, often without adequate training or support. Research from Pakistan and Uganda (Chohan & Quadir, 2011; Mukosi, 2020) acknowledges the policy's role in reducing dropouts but highlights concerns about resource strain and maintaining education standards.

Namibian studies (Mbudhi, 2022; Chataa & Nkengbeza, 2019) further confirm that teachers feel excluded from the policy design and face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, increased workload, and lack of training. Ama (2003) similarly notes a disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities, resulting in concerns about diminished accountability and educational quality.

Teachers have proposed several improvements, including the integration of remedial programs, competency-based approaches (Navola, 2016), professional development initiatives, and greater collaboration between schools and policymakers (Aiping et al., 2021).

The chapter concludes by recognizing that although the policy promotes retention, it risks undermining educational quality if not supported by proper teacher training and resource provision. The conceptual framework for this study will examine the relationship between the automatic promotion policy, teacher perceptions, teaching practices, and learner outcomes, focusing on how these variables interact within the Mukwe Circuit.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The previous chapter reviewed literature from different scholars and countries. This chapter describes structure of the research process. To address the research questions, A qualitative approach, specifically purposeful sampling was used. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the design above was appropriate because it is well-suited for examining the perceptions that teachers have about the implementation of the Automatic Promotion Policy in Namibian Schools, focusing mainly on the Mukwe circuit in the Kavango East Region. Below are the methods and techniques that the researcher used to capture the teachers' perceptions.

3.2 Research design

Purposeful sampling used was criterion sampling to select teachers for a detailed examination of the policy. Participants were selected based on specific criteria that included school location, this case being schools in a rural area, the selection of schools all came from public schools in the Mukwe Circuit. The study worked with teachers that have at least two years of teaching experience as they will have a better understanding of the policy. An interview guide was used in the data collection, of which each interview was recorded with a recording device, and later thematically analyzed.

3.3 Study area

The study focused on the remote schools of the Mukwe circuit located on the eastern side of the Kavango East region. Mukwe, about 200km from the region's main capital-Rundu, is mainly occupied by marginalized communities that face severe socio-economic challenges. The Circuit is characterized by extensive distances between schools, high dropout rates, limited infrastructure, inadequate teaching materials and high student-teacher ratios. This setting focused on both primary and secondary schools in the circuit, studying teachers' perceptions in this context offered a comprehensive understanding of the implications of automatic promotion across different grade levels and how the policy interacts with local educational challenges such as those mentioned above.

3.4 Study population

The study population was taken from Primary and secondary Schools that make use of the automatic promotion policy. I managed to interview seventeen (17) teachers and two (2) heads of departments. The participants were from across all school phases, as these are the people on the ground hence, they have first-hand experiences with learners while implementing the policy. The participants were from three (3) different schools in the Mukwe Circuit, each of the schools offer all four school phases (Junior primary, Senior Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary). A total of 6 participants were interviewed from school A, 5 teachers and 1 HOD from School B and 5 teachers with 1 HOD from School C.

3.5 Sample size

The Kavango East region has a total of 161 state schools, but this study focused on 3 schools from a selection from the 19 primary and secondary schools in the Mukwe circuit. The size of the sample was determined by saturation when no new information was emerging from the school.

3.6 Sampling technique

To explore the diverse experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of the automatic promotion policy, criterion sampling was used to select teachers for a detailed examination of the policy. This type of purposeful sampling was used because the teachers needed to possess specific characteristics such as having more than two years of experience in order to adequately give firsthand experiences with the policy therefore making them the perfect participants for this study as they have worked with learners that were promoted under the policy. Teachers/Head of departments were also purposefully selected to give experiences from a management's perspective. Participants were selected on various criteria that include school location, this case being schools in a rural area, the selection of schools was from public schools in the Mukwe Circuit..

3.7 Instruments for data collection

The study made use of an interview guide during the one-on-one interview sessions to serve as a roadmap for the interviewer, this ensured that data from participants was gathered systematically and consistently. A pre-test on the interview guide was done in Rundu Circuit to see if the questions were clear. The results were used to improve the research guide. The guide consisted of questions and topics that explored teachers' experiences, opinions, and insights regarding the policy. To enable the researcher to build trust and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, the prolonged engagement approach was used, this ensured that the findings are accurate and a reflection of the participants' true experiences and flexibility to explore new topics that arise during the conversation.

3.8 Data collection methods

After improving the interview guide from the pre-test because some questions were not clear while some did not necessarily respond to the main research questions. The researcher had one-on-one interview sessions from all four school phases in the Mukwe circuit between the 15th of January 2025 and the 21st of January 2025. The initial aim was to interview at least one teacher per school phase with one head of department to gain insights on experiences from different teachers and management level. Teachers were selected from each phase because they have different experience based on the age groups as well as those dealing with learners transitioning from one phase to another, while management gave their perspectives on how this policy affects how they manage the school. This was not the case though as some of the teachers across the school phases were not available, such as those at Junior primary at school A.

3.9 Data analysis

To identify patterns and themes during the interviews, a thematic analysis of data was employed. To help the researcher systematically review data, they made use of their personal cellphone as recording device to give an opportunity to the researcher to listen to the data and identify, analyse, and interpret patterns or themes within the data. The Content analysis approach was used to systematically analyse themes from the one-on-one interviews with regards to the policy document.

The researcher listened to the recordings and transcribed the recordings. The researcher listened to the recordings several times and noted down similar patterns. The following themes emerged from the thematic analysis:

1. Understanding of the policy

The first theme focused on the teacher's knowledge, interpretation and acceptance of the automatic promotion policy. Teachers' awareness and views on the policy were mainly influenced by the lack of training and their involvement in the policy's development. The researcher cross-checked these views with the official policy document and comparing the intentions. Teachers have a different there were some discrepancies between teachers' understanding and the policy's written goals.

2. Policy implementation

This theme came about during the investigation of challenges that teachers faced during the implementation of the policy in the classroom. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of training and involvement in the policy's development, which impacted their ability to implement the policy effectively. During classroom observations, majority of the teachers did not consider repeating content for automatically promoted learners because they wanted to finish the syllabus in the prescribed time. Two of schools have implemented compulsory study sessions after school, which some teachers use to give remedial lesson. This is not the case at one of the schools because it is situation in the national park and learners had to be released early everyday due to the danger of animals in the game park. The policy guidelines state that learners need learning support, which is hardly possible during school hours because of the number of lessons that both teachers and learners have to attend to

3. Behavioural changes

Majority of the teachers mentioned behavioural challenges, such as learners' reduced motivation and engagement due to automatic promotion. The shift in learners' attitudes and the understanding of the policy was identified as a concern, as students seemed to feel less pressure to perform academically. The policy documents states that Learners who do not progress to the next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation Learning gaps (National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Primary phase,2025). Teachers stated that learners do not understand the policy, hence

a need for specialized counsellors, these views align with the policy document on a need to offer the learners support.

4. Learning gaps

The issue of learning gaps was prevalent, particularly due to learners progressing without mastering essential competencies. Teachers reported the difficulty in addressing these gaps while still trying to meet the curriculum requirements for the entire class. It was observed that two of the three school schools in the study offer compulsory study sessions which some of the teachers use to offer remedial lessons, while the others give this opportunity for leaners to read and catch up on their studies. The initiative of offering compulsory story study sessions that incorporate remedial lessons align with guidelines form the policy document, though majority of the teachers that this activity takes a lot from their personal time in trying to assist learners during this period.

5. Quality of education

1. Teachers expressed fear that promoting learners who had not mastered the basic competencies would compromise the quality of education in the long run. The policy document states that each learner should master the minimum level of expected competencies in one grade before being promoted to the next grade, as part of the resolutions of the 2011 National Conference on Education. Teachers view the policy promotes learners that have not mastered the basic competencies, the policy states that learners should master a minimum level of the content.

6. Performance

Teachers reported that their professional pride was affected by the perceived underperformance of students who had been automatically promoted. The frustration of seeing underperforming students progressing without mastering content led to demotivation among teachers. Majority of the teachers are not happy with the backlash on their poor performance in which automatically promoted learners are a key contributing factor.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Before starting with the data collection, the researcher waited for written clearance from the University of Zambia (UNZA), the Director of education in the Kavango east region, the Mukwe circuit inspector of education and clearance from the school management. A form was designed and given to participants to give consent as well as a letter containing necessary information for the participants. To ensure privacy, the interviews took place in a separate office/classroom and the participants were ensured that the information would not be divulged with a third party. No names will be revealed in the report, and the recording device was accessible to third parties as it has a password that is only known by the researcher. The research analysis was also typed on a computer that is password protected.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an in-depth background for understanding the study on the automatic promotion policy in the Mukwe Circuit, Kavango East Region. It highlighted the significance of the problem by discussing the high dropout and repetition rates and the potential impact of teachers' perceptions on policy implementation. The scope of the study was defined, focusing on primary and secondary school teachers within the specified region. The theoretical framework incorporated educational theories on retention, motivation, and learning, while the conceptual framework illustrated the relationships between policy, teacher perceptions, and educational outcomes. Limitations of the study, such as geographical constraints and reliance on self-reported data, were acknowledged. Key terms were defined to ensure clarity and understanding. The chapter set the stage for the subsequent detailed examination of the automatic promotion policy and its implications for the education system in the Mukwe Circuit.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Data presentation

The previous chapter described the methodology and methods that were used to collect data from the target population of the study. This chapter presents the findings of the Teachers views and perceptions on automatic promotion and its classroom implications at selected schools in the Mukwe Circuit, following the one-on-one interviews conducted with teachers and members of management (Heads of department) in the Mukwe Circuit. This chapter will clearly outline the views and perceptions of the participants and asses the implications of the policy in the classroom. The goal of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence teacher's attitudes towards its implementation, the challenges that they face, its impacts on current learning outcomes as well as future learning outcomes. This section of the research will provide a detailed explanation of a professional point of view and perceptions from teachers at classroom and management level. This study was conducted in selected schools within the Mukwe circuit located on the eastern side of the Kavango East region. Mukwe circuit is mainly occupied by marginalized communities that face severe socio-economic challenges. The research findings will be presented in themes in according to the following research sub questions.

1. How do teachers in the Mukwe circuit perceive the automatic promotion policy and what factors influence their attitudes towards its implementation?
2. What challenges do teachers in the Mukwe Circuit face when implementing the automatic promotion policy, and how do these challenges affect their instructional practices?
3. How do teachers in the Mukwe Circuit perceive the impact of the automatic promotion policy on student engagement and learning outcomes.

This questions supports the primary research question: Teachers views on automatic promotion and it's classroom implications in the Mukwe Circuit,Namibia. The research questions above guided the researcher in the collection of the necessary data related to the research objectives.

4.1.1 Demographics

A total of 19 participants were interviewed in the study, 9 female and 10 male teachers with different years of experience ranging from 2 years to those that have taught for more than 27 years. Three of the participants were members of management, specifically Heads of Department (HODs) from different school phases. For ethical presence of anonymity and confidentiality the following codes represented the participants, codes P1-P16 were used to represent teachers, while codes H1-H3 were used to represent Heads of department (HODs). All participants in the study are teachers although three of them held managerial posts.

The tables below show the biographical data for the of the 19 teachers, three heads of department and sixteen teachers. The biographical information shows the gender, the number of years' experience in the faces the teachers teach.

Table 1: School A

Participant	Gender	Years of experience	School phase
H1	Male	17-21	Senior Secondary
P1	Male	12-16	Senior Primary
P2	Female	2-6	Senior Primary
P3	Male	2-6	Senior Secondary
P4	Female	17-21	Senior Secondary
P5	Male	2-6	Junior Secondary
P6	Male	More than 27	Junior Secondary

Table 2: School B

Participant	Gender	Years of experience	School phase
H2	Male	12-16	Junior Primary
P7	Female	2-6	Junior Primary
P8	Female	2-6	Junior Primary
P9	Male	7-11	Junior Secondary
P10	Male	7-11	Junior Primary

Table 3: School C

Participant	Gender	Years of experience	School phase
H3	Male	17-21	Senior Secondary
P11	Female	7-11	Senior Secondary
P12	Male	12-16	Senior Secondary
P13	Male	7-11	Junior Secondary
P14	Female	7-11	Senior Secondary
P15	Female	2-6	Senior primary
P16	Female	2-6	Junior Primary

4.1.2 Data collection

The face-to-face interviews were conducted with 16 teachers and 3 HODs using the one on one interview guides in the Appendix A, part B to interview all participants. The interviews were conducted at three schools, hereafter referred to as School A, School B and School C. the interviews were conducted between the 6th and 9th of February 2025 and each interview lasted about 30 to 40 minutes depending on the number of probing questions. The researcher ensured that the participants had more than 2 years' experience as they will have a better understanding of the policy. All participants were asked to go through the information to the participants sheet as well the consent form which they were required to sign before the interview. The consent form stressed that participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. Each participant was contacted via the school principal to an appointment. The participants each selected a time that best suited them because they had to attend to their lessons. Most interviews were conducted during the afternoon study sessions, while a few participants opted to be interviewed over the weekend because they were too busy and tired during week days.

The study was mainly interested in gaining insights into firstly, the understandings that teachers have on the policy as stipulated in the 'National Promotion Policy Guide for Junior and Senior Primary School Phase, secondly the perceptions that they have on this policy, the challenges they face while implanting the policy and the impact it has had on their teaching practices as

well as the suggestions that they have to enhance the effectiveness of the policy. In presenting the findings, six major themes were identified and accompanying sub-themes generated from the questions posed during the interview.

The researcher engaged in an informal conversation with each participant to create a comfortable mood and encourage honesty and openness during the interviews. I reminded each participant about their right to leave the study at any time and each notified that the audio would be recorded and transcribed. Each participant went through a copy of the research questions that they will be responding each interview observed a protocol of 6 main topics with 18 sub questions to ensure that each topic was fully addressed. At the conclusion of each interview, the recordings were reviewed several times before transcribing the information. Next, member checking was utilized to validate the accuracy and interpretation of the participant's responses to the interview questions. This process was completed by providing the findings of the one-on-one interviews to each participant. The participants were given the opportunity to provide any information related to their responses. The participants supported and approved the findings, and therefore no changes were made to the data.

Each of the interviews were recorded with the researcher's personal mobile phone. With each recording labeled according to the codes given to each participant and their respective schools. Each interview was transcribed on the day it took place to maintain accuracy, and used each interview to improve on the way questions were presented to other participants. The researcher reviewed their notes and the audio recording simultaneously multiple times in order to gain a deep and complete understanding of the responses that helped determine emerging patterns before transferring notes into Microsoft word.

Below are the major and minor themes that were identified.

Table 4: Themes and Sub - themes emerged

Themes	Sub-themes
a. Policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Understanding of the policy ii. Implementation of policy
b. Challenges faced by teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Behavioural changes ii. Learning gaps
c. Effects of the policy on engagement and learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Quality of education ii. Performance

4.1.2 a. Policy implementation

The following subthemes emerged from the first research question that focused on the understanding that teachers have of the policy, the impacts the policy has had towards putting it into practice as well as the causes of these opinions.

i. Understanding of the policy

It is important to find out if teachers understand the policy because they are the ones who directly involved in putting the policy into practice in the classroom. Without a clear understanding of the policy's goals, guidelines, and procedures, the teachers will not be able to effectively implement the policy. Understanding the policy allows teachers to adjust their instructional practices to best meet the needs of all students, regardless of their academic progress. Misinterpretations or a lack of understanding of the policy can lead to inconsistent application, therefore teachers' understanding of the automatic promotion policy is vital for its successful implementation, its continuous improvement, and ensure that it has a positive impact on students and learning outcomes.

Participant P6 described the policy as

“The automatic promotion policy is a policy that was introduced to allow learners to go to the next grade if they are too old or if they repeated the grade too many times”.

While H3, an HOD ant school C commented that

“Teachers know what the policy says and its main objectives, but they do not understand the policy, they do not see the bigger picture”

ii. Implementation of policy

It is crucial to find out how the teachers have implemented the policy in their classrooms in order to assess whether they have been following the recommended guidelines as prescribed by the policy.

P7 from School B

“I feel robbed off my opinion. I know my learners best so I’m able to make an appropriate recommendation on who will benefit most if they are to be automatic promoted. Now this policy tells us to promote who ever without knowing the learners”

Other participants from C said that:

Participants P12

“The ministry does not care about academic success, its only concerned about putting learners through the mainstream, but at the end of the day, the policy is tampering with the learner’s academic success because learners who have been put through the mainstream via their automatic promotion policy still end up on the streets”

Participant 14 also added that,

“ This policy is simply just a way to get rid of underperforming learners. The policy is encouraging a cycle in which learners keep being transferred from one grade another and end up on the streets and increasing the number of uneducated people that have reached the exit grade”

Although P13 of school C feels that the policy has a positive impact on learners, he still expressed his frustration towards the policy saying

“Now that I keep receiving underperforming learners because they have automatically promoted ,it causes a negative impact on my reputation as a teacher because I can’t reach my targets or pass average”.

He added that he feels the policy paves a way for criticism on his performance as a teacher, critics not noting that he had to work with learners who have not grasped the concepts from their previous grade and still struggle with content in their current grade.

“Now it’s like I’m not doing my job”

he added in frustration.

H3 School C also shared the same sentiments because this criticism extends to the department as a whole. He further added that this also contributes towards subject fields such as those in the Science department being deemed as difficult or hard to pass.

On the other hand, H2 argued that although there was no formal training, teachers are still guided by the the learning support policy that suggest that they use of the learner cumulative record cards

“teacher are supposed to make use of the learners cumulative record cards that show how a specific learner has been performing and their areas of improvement. But teachers are not doing this, nor are they requesting for these cards.” “Teachers do not want to do these type of administrative work ”

4.1.2 b. Challenges faced by teachers

The following sub - themes emerged from the second research question. The main aim of this question was to identify the challenges faced by teachers due to the implementation of the policy as well as their influence towards their instructional practices.

i. Behavioural changes

Teachers were also interviewed on the different behavioural challenges they face in the classroom because they present different behavioural changes.

Participant 12 said that,

“They do not appreciate the purpose of the policy, they have absolutely no respect nor do they appreciate this opportunity because they did not earn going to the following grade.”

ii. Learning gaps

Majority of the teachers expressed their frustration towards the effort in filling the learning gap between the learners that underperformed and those that performed. Participant 15 said that,

“Most if not all of these learners need remedial classes because automatically promoted learners struggle to keep up, I feel overloaded because we as teachers are expected to give 100% in trying to fill this gap, yet the learners do not put in as much effort. It’s really discouraging because we sacrifice our personal time giving remedial classes while that time would have been used to spend time with family and engage in our hobbies, my whole life style changed because of these learners”.

Participant 14 added further that,

“Repeating content slows down the pace at which the syllabus is being covered. I’m expected to cover my syllabus and at the same time make room for these learners in my class. When the syllabus is not covered in time, I’m questioned by my supervisor, it feels like I’m creating one problem while trying to solve another”.

Participant 2 from School A, who was an upper primary teacher raised concerns surrounding the modes of instruction.

She stated that,

“Our learners find it difficult when they transition to upper primary from lower primary because the mode of instruction changes from local to English.”

Participant 17, who was a Junior primary teacher stressed that too much is expected of them.

“Not every teacher is creative no artistic in making teaching aids to help our learners, especially those that are struggling to keep up. It would be better if primary teachers were provided with resources such as teaching aids, storybooks, toys in other stationery needed at Junior primary”.

The same sentiments were shared by H1, an HOD at school B. He expanded more saying,

“we need more materials at this stage because learners needs hands on.”

4.1.2 c. Effects of the policy on engagement and learning outcomes

The last research question addresses the views that teachers have on the effects of the policy towards student performance, their perceptions on learners' active participation, motivation, learning interests as well as the cause-effect relationship between the policy and learning outcomes.

i. Quality of education

Teachers were asked to comment on the views they have regarding the impact that the policy has on education. Participant 13 highlighted saying,

“Though one of the benefits of the policy is that most learners will reach the exit grade, increasing the statistics of learners that have gone through the mainstream, majority fail and do not qualify for university, hereby increasing the country's failure rate. In the end the country ends up with an educated people that have finished school”.

Participant 11 noted that,

“the quality of education is also affected because even learners at the Junior primary phase, which is the foundation stage. Therefore, low performance roots from an early stage and grows into other faces, eventually compromising educational quality from the foundation stage to the exit grade.”

On the other hand, Participant 13 stated that,

“ basic education doesn't only constitute to academic success, learners still learn other skills such as social and life skills that they can use after the exit great.”

ii. Performance

Participant 4 observed an improvement in some learners after making interventions in assisting these learners, but said it is exhausting to keep doing this year in year out. She stated that,

“Learners underperform because they know they know the policy and some of this learners end up saying that its okay to fail that year because they'd be transferred the following year, now how do we expect a learner to pass with such a mentality? The

learner will obviously not perform because they know what to do to be transferred to the next grade.”

Head teacher 2 from school B mentioned that,

“learners also underperform because it is difficult for learners to grasp content that is more challenging in the grade that they are transferred to while they failed to pass content that is shallow in the previous great.”

Participant 17 observed that most teachers tend to put in less effort because the learners will be transferred anyway. He said that,

“When a learner that keeps on failing is transferred, it gives me a sense of relief because it’s like I’m transferring my problems to another teacher in the next grade”.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

In the aims to determine teachers views on the Automatic Promotion Policy and the implications that the policy has had on classroom dynamics, chapter 4 presented findings in relation to the research questions. This chapter will instead address research findings based on objectives of the study as listed below:

1. To examine teachers' perceptions of the automatic promotion policy in the Mukwe Circuit.
2. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in the Mukwe Circuit during the implementation of the automatic promotion policy.
3. To explore teachers' perceptions of the impact of the automatic promotion policy on student engagement in the Mukwe Circuit.

5.2 Factors that influence teachers attitudes towards the Automatic promotion.

This section of chapter 5 will discuss key contributing factors towards the attitudes that teachers in the Mukwe Circuit have on the Automatic Promotion Policy. Findings have shown that teachers have mixed feelings towards the Automatic Promotion Policy and have therefore triggered different attitudes towards the policy upon its implementation.

The automatic promotion policy states that learners are only permitted to repeat twice during the primary phase and once each in junior and senior secondary phase, therefore allowing learners to advance to the next grade even if they have not met the academic requirements for promotion, in aims of keeping them within their age groups. It further states that teachers are expected to support learners by offering additional resources and remedial instructions to help learners catch up on essential competencies without the need for grade repetition.

Three themes were drawn from the engagements with the participants that took part in the study: Teacher involvement and training, Teacher support and workload as well as teacher's personal targets.

5.2.1 Teacher involvement and training

One of the burning factors that have contributed towards the attitudes that teachers have towards the policy is the fact that there was no teacher involvement in the stages of the policy development, teacher feel like it was rather just passed for implementation in schools. This is true for most studies show that if teachers are not involved in the development of the policy, they will always develop a negative attitude during its implementation (Aipinge, Uugwanga, & Sichombe, 2021; Tani, 2018).). Teachers expressed that they have appreciated being involved in the development of the policy as they are the people on the ground and directly deal with learners that are affected by the policy. These teachers' arguments align with the constructivism's focus on active learning, where teachers facilitate and adapt instruction based on learners' needs.

Majority felt that they are in the best position to give recommendation on which learners need to benefit from this policy and those who don't because they know the learners best. This agrees with the theory used in this study and other studies (Fosnot, 2013) and the Conceptual Framework. Teachers' perceptions on the policy plays a huge role in the successful implementation of the policy. Majority of the teachers in the Mukwe circuit have wrong perceptions about the policy. They have implemented the policy but have not done so effectively because they see more harm than good. Findings show that none of the participants have received training nor any form of briefing on how to assist learners that have benefited from the policy, this contributes a decline in policy effectiveness and in the end, learning outcomes are not met as expected, eventually leading to the downfall of the policy.

They also argued that their involvement would have contributed to refine and come up with the best practices in the implementation of the policy because they may give insights on how to ensure that promoted students receive necessary support and keep a balance between the classroom realities and the intentions of the policy.

The teachers also expressed their dissatisfaction towards the policy implementation because not only were they not involved in its development, but they also did not receive any training on how to successfully implement the policy. The lack of training in handling underperforming students highlights a major concern of social promotion theory, because students may struggle in new grade levels without adequate academic or emotional support, leading to further challenges in learning and transition.

Not only do they need training on how to assist the diverse learning needs of under performers that benefit from the policy, but also training on how to deal with learners as they transition from one phase to another. Training would help teachers employ constructivist strategies to better support students transitioning through different phases of education. The study noted that teachers faced problems when learners transition from one phase to another, if students are suddenly placed in a new grade without adequate preparation may struggle to integrate new knowledge effectively, contravening the constructivist theory. Learners also face changes such as an exposure to different subject teachers, as opposed to phases in which only one teacher delivers all the subjects to one class. Another challenge is an increase in the number of subjects, as well as a transition in subjects, for example: Junior Primary=Environmental studies, Senior primary=Natural Science, Junior Secondary=life science, Senior Secondary=Biology.

5.2.2 Teacher support and workload

Findings have shown that teacher support and workload has also been a contributing factor towards the attitudes that they have towards the policy. As stated earlier, the policy states that that teachers are expected to support learners by offering additional resources and remedial instructions to help learners catch up on essential competencies without the need for grade repetition. Data analysis has shown that this is a contributing factor because they are expected to provide resources as well as remedial lessons to these learners, without actually having resources to assist them with in the first place. According to (UNICEF, 2019), Social promotion is particularly important in educational systems where learners may face socio-economic challenges that hinder their academic performance, such as poverty, limited access to resources, and familial responsibilities. The study has noted that a lack of resources according to the social promotion theory has greatly contributed to the attitudes that they have

because there is a scarce availability of stationary, especially text books and teaching aids, as well as human resources. This agrees with Ama (2003) as well as those by Chataa and Nkengbeza (2019) that teachers often feel overwhelmed by policies that do not align with their instructional practices

On learning gaps, participants felt like it is a burden for them to create teaching aids to assist learners, which they feel is quite exhausting because too much is expected of them, therefore raising the argument on human resources. Because of the workload that teachers have, they feel that there is a need for an increase in human resources to assist in areas such as offering remedial lessons. It was also noted that participants also expressed a need for a specialized counsellor to guide and council learners regarding the policy, as well as assisting them with their behavioural problems which play a huge role on classroom dynamics. The study has shown that teachers are struggling to implement individualized learning strategies due to limited teaching aids and resources. The lack of sufficient human resources, such as remedial instructors and counsellors, further hinders personalized learning. In a constructivist classroom, students need support to build their understanding at their own pace, but the overwhelming teacher workload and resource scarcity make this difficult, leading to negative attitudes toward the policy.

5.2.3 Teacher performance

The last theme that has contribute towards the attitudes that teachers have on the automatic promotion policy is the effect it has on the individual teacher's performance as well as departmental performance and the school at large. Teachers pride themselves in the number of learners they have successfully assisted in their academic excellence. With an increase in the number of learners that are benefiting from the Automatic Promotion Policy, teachers have expressed being demoralized teachers because it has cause backlash from both community and fellow colleagues. The underperformance of automatically promoted students suggests a lack of deep, conceptual understanding, which constructivism argues is essential for academic success. If students are not given the opportunity to engage in personalized, interactive learning, their progression becomes superficial, leading to gaps in knowledge and skills as they advance. Majority of the automatically promoted learners underperform because they are in a cycle that has been promoting them even after performing below average. This under performance negatively affects teachers' reputation towards the grade the under achiever is

promoted to, because teachers there feel like the previous teacher did not deliver as expected. This backlash also falls onto the department as well as the school depending on the number of under performers that have been promoted, which makes the community feel like the school is sending too many learners into the streets after the exit grade.

5.3 Implementation challenges faced by teachers, and their effects on instructional practices

The second research objective was to look into challenges teachers face and the effects that the policy has had on their instructional practices and two themes emerged

5.3.1 Alignment of lesson plans and instructional methods

Teachers find it challenging to ensure that their lesson plans and instructional methods accommodate both groups of learners. The learners who have achieved below minimum need special attention in the classroom, mainly because of their diverse learning needs. This has posed a challenge on the way teachers plan their lessons because they constantly have to repeat previous content, but should at the same time accommodate those that have reached the basic requirements. Striking a balance between these two has also been challenging because each learner has their own learning needs, therefore creating another challenge in developing the best instructional methods in the classroom.

5.3.2 Syllabus completion

Another challenge that was raised was the pace at which the syllabus is being covered because learners that have benefited from this policy need a lot of attention, remedial lessons, yet teachers are still expected to finish their syllabus. Teachers find it hard because they are expected to do so much to assist these learners and should it affect the pace of syllabus coverage, they are condemned for not keeping up in the aims to help create an understanding of the current content based on previously covered topics.

5.4 Teachers' perceptions on the impacts that the Automatic promotion policy has on student engagement and learning outcomes.

The last objective focused on the perceived impacts that the policy has on student engagement and learning outcomes.

Analysis has shown that very few teachers are optimistic about the learning outcomes that result from the implementation of the policy because learners are demotivated, lack interest in excelling academically and have developed a wrong understanding of the policy. Therefore, the policy has negatively affected classroom engagement and has resulted in a decline in achieving expected learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview

The previous chapter digested research findings based on the research objectives. The current chapter will summarize overall findings on teachers views on the automatic promotion policy and its classroom implications. The chapter will also present some recommendations that emerged from the study, as well as a presentation of recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that the participants feel that the policy is aimed at addressing issues such as the dropout rates, repetition rates, keeping learners in a formal school setting for as long as possible, as well as the opportunity for learners to reach the exit grade. In light of these intentions, views from the policy implementers in regard were needed as they are the forefront of this initiative.

Findings have shown that teachers understand the objectives and main goals of the policy, but they feel like the policy is doing more harm than good. Data analysis has shown that majority of the participants feel like the policy is sending too many learners into the streets after the exit grade, while its aim it to put majority of the learners through the mainstream. Findings also show that teachers are not happy with teaching learners that were automatically promoted because it affects their reputation and feel excluded because they do not have a say in recommending which learners should benefit from the policy and those that should not.

The study has shown that teaches find it challenging to ensure that their lesson plans and instructional methods accommodate both groups of learners. They also find it difficult to finish the syllabus because learners that have benefited from this policy need a lot of attention, remedial lessons are helpful, but the learners still struggle and effort slows everyone down. Because of all the efforts and interventions teachers put in, they end up exhausted, frustrated and demotivated because their efforts go in vain because the larger mass still ends up underperforming.

Finally, the analysis has shown that very few teachers are optimistic about the learning outcomes that result from the implementation of the policy because learners are demotivated,

lack interest in excelling academically and have developed a wrong understanding of the policy. Therefore, the policy has negatively affected classroom engagement and has resulted in a decline in achieving expected learning outcomes.

6.3 Recommendations

A number of issues were examined regarding the views that teachers have on the automatic promotion policy and the implications that the policy has in the classroom. Based on study findings, the following recommendations emerged.

1. The automatic promotion policy should not apply to the Junior Primary phase, or the number of times a learner should repeat in this phase should be increased. This is a foundation stage and it will compromise the rest of the student's learning journey.
2. Consider employing methods from the old curriculum such as reintroducing subject levels. Secondary school subjects were grouped into three subject difficulty levels, namely, Core level (Low), Ordinary level (Medium) and High level. This will keep set standards and reduce the number of under achieving learners that move out of the exit grade.
3. There is a need for teachers to revisit the learning support policy in order to keep track of learner's progress throughout their academic career.
4. The policy has planned for learners to go through the mainstream without meeting the minimum requirement, they should also make a plan for them after they have reached the exit grade as there are too many learners on the streets.

6.4 Suggestions for further studies

The results in this study cannot be generalized to other circuits, therefore, there is a need to extend this research to other circuits in the Region.

6.5 Limitations of the study

1. Most teachers were not available, they were preparing for the academic year. The researchers therefore had to go back to the school several times or meet the teachers during weekend, while some were only available telephonically. This added to transport and telecommunication costs.
2. Some teachers were uninterested in the interview, they gave vague answers while some wouldn't engage much, they just wanted to get over and done with the interview.

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Appendix

1. Information to participants

Dear Participant

My name is Martha Namene with student number 2023007950. I am currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Education Management and Administration at the University of Zambia (UNZA). As a requirement of my degree, I need to do a study. My research interests currently lie on the Implementation of the National Promotion Policy guide, my topic being: **Navigating Policy and Practice: Teachers' Views on Automatic Promotion and its Classroom Implications in the Mukwe Circuit, Namibia**. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Harrison Daka and Dr Paul Kakupa.

The purpose of the study is to assess the perceptions that teachers in the Mukwe Circuit have on the automatic promotion policy.

The information that will be noted in the questionnaire and interview guide will not be shared with anyone besides the supervisors of the study.

The information will be kept safe and the participants will not be forced to take part in the study.

Participants may withdraw from the study without any negative impact on them.

With your permission as a participant, you are required to voluntarily share your understanding of the topic stated above. I guarantee your anonymity, confidentiality, and right to withdrawal during the whole study. Your name will be omitted throughout the study.

If there are any questions about the research, feel free to contact me on +264818468011 alternatively send me an email on namene.martha@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisors Dr Daka on +260 97 4765442 or alternatively drop him an email at harrison.daka@unza.zm and Dr Kakupa on +260975250646 or reach him via email at paul.kakupa@unza.zm.

If you agree, kindly sign the consent form

2. Consent Form

Participant

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw if I wish so without any penalties.

I understand that in any report on the study of this research, my identity will remain unknown.

I understand that all information I provide will be treated with outmost confidentiality.

I understand that I am free to contact the Research Ethical Committee to seek further clarity if need be.

.....

Research participant

.....

Date

.....

Witness 1

.....

Date

.....

Witness 2

.....

Date

3. Questionnaire

Participant number

Section A

Name of school:

.....

Is the school making use of the policy?

- Yes
- No

School phase taught by participant

- Junior Primary
- Senior Primary
- Junior Primary
- Senior Primary

Age

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59

Number of years of experience

- 2-6 years
- 7-11 years
- 12-16 years
- 17-21 years
- 22-26 years
- More than 27 years

Highest qualification

- Diploma
- Degree
- Honours Degree
- Post-graduate
- Master's Degree
- Doctor of Philosophy
- other

Section B

Interview Guide for Teachers

1. Background Information

- 1.1 Could you tell me about your teaching experience, including the number of years you have been teaching and the grades you currently teach?
- 1.2 Have you received any formal training or briefing on the automatic promotion policy? If so, could you describe this training?

2. Understanding of the Automatic Promotion Policy

- 2.1 What is your understanding of the automatic promotion policy, especially in terms of its objectives and guidelines?
- 2.2 How would you describe the main goals of this policy?
- 2.3 Do you believe that the policy is necessary to address dropout and repetition rates? Why or why not?

3. Perceptions of the Policy

- 3.1 What are your personal views on the automatic promotion policy?
- 3.2 How do you feel about promoting students to the next grade even if they haven't fully mastered the required competencies? Is it beneficial to the students? Why?
- 3.3 Have you observed any changes in student motivation, behaviour, or engagement since the implementation of the policy? Could you describe these changes?

4. Challenges faced in the implementation of the policy

- 4.1 What challenges, if any, do you face in implementing the automatic promotion policy in your classroom?
- 4.2 How does the policy impact your lesson planning and instructional methods?
- 4.3 Are there particular aspects of teaching that have become more difficult since the policy was implemented? If so, could you explain?
- 4.4 Do you find it challenging to manage classrooms with students who have been automatically promoted but may not have mastered prior competencies?

5. Impact on Teaching Practices and Student Outcomes

- 5.1 Could you describe any specific adjustments you have had to make in your teaching to accommodate learners affected by the automatic promotion policy?
- 5.2 In your experience, how does automatic promotion affect students' confidence, engagement and willingness to participate in class?
- 5.3 Are there differences in academic performance or behaviour between students who have been automatically promoted and those who meet the grade requirements?

6. General Feedback and Suggestions

- 6.1 What would you say are the strengths of the automatic promotion policy, if any?
- 6.2 In your view, what are the policy's weaknesses or areas for improvement?
- 6.3 What specific changes would you recommend to enhance the effectiveness of the automatic promotion policy?
- 6.4 Is there any other support or resources you believe teachers need to implement this policy successfully?
- 6.5 Do you have any additional comments on how this policy affects your role as a teacher or your experiences within the Mukwe Circuit?

Interview Guide for Members of management

7. Background Information

- 1.3 Could you tell me about your managerial experience, including the number of years you have been in management?
- 1.4 How long have you been teaching in the Mukwe Circuit?
- 1.5 Have you received any formal training or briefing on the automatic promotion policy? If so, could you describe this training? Commitment

8. Understanding of the Automatic Promotion Policy

- 2.4 What is your understanding of the automatic promotion policy, especially in terms of its objectives and guidelines?
- 2.5 How would you describe the main goals of this policy?
- 2.6 In your view, what problem(s) is the automatic promotion policy trying to address in the Mukwe Circuit?
- 2.7 Do you believe that the policy is necessary to address dropout and repetition rates? Why or why not?

9. Perceptions of the Policy

- 9.1 What are your personal views on the automatic promotion policy?
- 9.2 How do you feel about promoting students to the next grade even if they haven't fully mastered the required competencies?
- 9.3 Have you observed any changes in teacher motivation, behaviour, or engagement since the implementation of the policy? Could you describe these changes?
- 9.4 In your opinion, does this policy help or hinder teachers in reaching their full teaching potential?

10. Implementation Challenges

- 4.5 What challenges, if any, do you face in ensuring that teachers effectively implement the automatic promotion policy in your classroom?
- 4.6 What initiatives has the school put in place to assist teachers in implementing the policy?
- 4.7 Are there particular aspects of your work as a member of management that have been affected since the implementation of the policy.

4.8 Are there specific support resources (e.g., remedial materials, training) that you feel would help the teachers implement the policy more effectively?

4.9 How do you think the policy could be improved to address these challenges?

11. Impact on Teaching Practices and Student Outcomes

5.4 What impact, if any, do you think the policy has on the quality of education.

5.5 In your experience, how has the automatic promotion policy affected teachers' motivation?

5.6 Are there differences in the school's dropout rates since the implementation of the policy?

5.7 Are there differences in the school's overall performance since the implementation of the policy?

12. General Feedback and Suggestions

12.1 What would you say are the strengths of the automatic promotion policy, if any?

12.2 In your view, what are the policy's weaknesses or areas for improvement?

12.3 What specific changes would you recommend to enhance the effectiveness of the automatic promotion policy?

12.4 Is there any other support or resources you believe teachers need to implement this policy successfully?

Do you have any additional comments on how this policy affects your role as a teacher or your experiences within the Mukwe Circuit?

4. Ethical clearance



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

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APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376
HSSREC IRB No. 00006464
REF NO. HSSREC-2024-DEC-055

5th February, 2025

Ms. Martha Namene
The University of Zambia
P.O. Box 32379
LUSAKA

Dear Ms. Namene

RE: "NAVIGATING POLICY AND PRACTICE: TEACHERS' VIEWS ON AUTOMATIC PROMOTION AND ITS CLASSROOMS IMPLICATIONS IN THE MUKWE CIRCUIT, NAMIBIA"

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:- 2024-DEC-055
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 4 th February, 2025	Expiry Date: 3 rd February, 2026
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	3 rd February, 2026
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	<input type="checkbox"/> English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled "late submissions" and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.
- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.

- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



DR. J. I. Ziwa
CHAIRPERSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB

CC: Director, Directorate of Research, Innovation and Development
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research, Innovation and Development
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research, Innovation and Development



Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Kippi George Primary School
P O BOX 5074
Divundu
Mukwe Circuit



Inquiries: Mrs. A.T. Samati

Cell: 0813739180

Dear Ms Martha Namene

The school management has received your letter requesting to conduct a research about **Navigating policy and practice: Teachers view on Automatic promotion and its classroom implications in Mukwe circuit, Namibia.** The school head is pleased to inform you that your request has been approved and you may carry out your study from 6 February 2025.

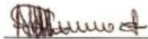
You are kindly reminded to make arrangement on time with the participant at their convenient time, to avoid obstructing/hindering lessons.

I wish you will find the best solution your topic of research/studies you have at hand.

Sincerely

Mrs.A.T. Samati

School Principal







Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Kippi George Primary School
P O BOX 5074
Divundu
Mukwe Circuit



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Mrs.A.T. Samati

School Principal

