

Monitoring of the Implementation of the Promotion Policy Guide for Senior Primary and Junior Secondary phases



Authors:

Ms. Lydia P. Aipinge
Dr. Jafet S. Uugwanga
Dr. Beatrice Sichombe

©NIED

Professional and Resource Development
Research Sub-Division

April 2021



National Institute for Educational Development



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

Table of Contents

List of figures	3
List of tables.....	4
Acronyms	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Objectives	6
3. Research methodology	7
3.1 <i>Research design</i>	7
3.2 <i>Population and sampling</i>	7
3.3 <i>Data analysis</i>	7
4. Report layout	7
PART ONE.....	8
Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Senior Primary Promotion Policy Guide	8
4.1 <i>Findings</i>	9
4.1.1 <i>Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide</i>	9
4.1.2 <i>Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide</i>	11
4.1.3 <i>School committees and programmes</i>	17
4.1.4 <i>Special education referral</i>	19
4.1.5 <i>Special needs support training received</i>	21
4.1.6 <i>Appreciation of the promotion policy guide</i>	22
4.1.7 <i>Understanding of the promotion policy guide</i>	23
4.1.8 <i>Alignment between the SPPPG and revised curriculum</i>	24
4.1.9 <i>Consistent implementation of the SPPPG</i>	26
4.1.10 <i>Support to implement the promotion policy guide</i>	28
4.1.11 <i>Support to deal with learners with learning difficulties</i>	30
4.1.12 <i>Monitoring learning support programme</i>	32
4.1.13 <i>Information to parents/guardians about learner performance</i>	34
4.1.14 <i>Community and parental involvement</i>	36
4.1.15 <i>Counselling of repeaters</i>	37
PART TWO	40
Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Junior Secondary Promotion Policy Guide.....	40
4.2 <i>Findings</i>	41
4.2.1 <i>Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide</i>	41
4.2.2 <i>Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide</i>	43
4.2.3 <i>School committees and programmes</i>	47
4.2.4 <i>Special education referral</i>	50
4.2.5 <i>At-risk learners in the school</i>	52
4.2.6 <i>Special needs support training received</i>	54

4.2.7	<i>Appreciation of the promotion policy guide</i>	55
4.2.8	<i>Understanding of the promotion policy guide</i>	57
4.2.9	<i>Alignment between the JSPPG and revised curriculum</i>	58
4.2.10	<i>Consistent implementation of the JSPPG</i>	60
4.2.11	<i>Support to implement the promotion policy guide</i>	61
4.2.12	<i>Monitoring the learning support programme</i>	63
4.2.13	<i>Information to parents/guardians about learner performance</i>	65
4.2.14	<i>Community and parental involvement</i>	67
4.2.15	<i>Counselling of repeaters</i>	69
4.2.16	<i>Professional support in identifying at-risk learners</i>	70
4.2.17	<i>Professional support in dealing with at-risk learners</i>	72
5.	Appreciations of the monitoring exercise.....	73
6.	Recommendations	74
7.	Conclusions	76
8.	References	78

List of figures

Figure 1: Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide.....	9
Figure 2: Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide.....	11
Figure 3: School committees and programmes.....	18
Figure 4: Special education referral.....	20
Figure 5: Special needs support training received.....	21
Figure 6: Appreciation of the promotion policy guide.....	22
Figure 7: Understanding of the promotion policy guide.....	23
Figure 8: Alignment between the SPPPG and revised curriculum.....	25
Figure 9: Consistent implementation of the SPPPG.....	26
Figure 10: Support to implement the SPPPG.....	28
Figure 11: Support to deal with learners with learning difficulties.....	30
Figure 12: Monitoring learning support programme.....	32
Figure 13: Information to parents about learner performance.....	35
Figure 14: Community and parental involvement.....	37
Figure 15: Counselling of repeaters.....	38
Figure 16: Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide.....	41
Figure 17: Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide.....	43
Figure 18: School committees and programmes.....	48
Figure 19: Special Education Referral.....	50
Figure 20: At-risk learners in the school.....	52
Figure 21: Special needs support training received.....	54
Figure 22: Appreciation of the promotion policy guide.....	56
Figure 23: Understanding of the promotion policy guide.....	57
Figure 24: Alignment between the JSPPG and revised curriculum.....	59
Figure 25: Consistent implementation of the JSPPG.....	60
Figure 26: Support to implement the JSPPG.....	62
Figure 27: Monitoring the learning support programme.....	64
Figure 28: Information to parents about learner performance.....	66
Figure 29: Community and parental involvement.....	68
Figure 30: Counselling of repeaters.....	69
Figure 31: Professional support in identifying at-risk learners.....	71
Figure 32: Professional support in dealing with at-risk learners.....	72

List of tables

Table 1: The new promotional requirements for senior primary 14
Table 2: The new promotional requirements for junior secondary..... 46
Table 3: Appreciations of the monitoring exercise..... 73
Table 4: Recommendations regarding the promotion policy guides 74

Acronyms

HOD	Head of Department
MOI	Medium of Instruction (MOI)
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
JSPPG	Junior Secondary Promotion Policy Guide
SPPPG	Senior Primary Promotion Policy Guide
SNLs	Special Needs Learners

1. Introduction

In 2011, the NIED research sub-division (Ministry of education, 2011) evaluated promotion requirements in Namibian schools. One central recommendation was to develop a coherent promotion requirements document. The document should explicitly define the purpose, describe the extent of the promotion problem, draw an explicit link between the phases, and describe the link between assessment and promotion, the core role of learning support and core elements of promotion criteria between phases. It is for this recommendation and the wide consultation with various stakeholders that NIED undertook to revise the existing promotion policy requirements in line with the revised National Curriculum for schools. The promotion policy guide for the Junior Primary phase (Grade 1–3) and Senior Primary phase (Grade 4–7) was developed for implementation in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Then, the promotion policy guide for the Junior Secondary phase was implemented in 2017 and 2018 for Grade 8 and Grade 9, respectively. The NIED research sub-division was tasked to monitor the implementation of the promotion policy requirements across phase levels (Junior Primary; Senior Primary; Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary). The monitoring of the Junior Primary Promotion Policy Guide was completed in 2019, for Senior Primary in 2020 while for Junior Secondary was completed in 2021.

2. Objectives

- a. To gauge the views of the participants on the implementation of the promotion policy guide regarding their awareness, access and understanding of the policy.
- b. To determine how schools have been supported to implement the promotion policy guidelines.
- c. To investigate challenges that schools encounter regarding the implementation of the promotion policy guidelines.

3. Research methodology

3.1 *Research design*

This study adopted a mixed-method design that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this case, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

3.2 *Population and sampling*

The population of this study consisted of 14 regions with schools having Grades 4–7 as well as Grades 8 and 9 targeting school managers and teachers. The sample for Grades 4–7 consisted of seven regions, 35 schools (five schools per region) with 54 school managers and 316 teachers. Whereas, the sample for Grades 8 and 9 consisted of seven regions, 34 schools (five schools per region except one region had four schools) with 65 school managers and 374 teachers.

3.3 *Data analysis*

The quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data together with the field notes were coded and categorised into patterns for reporting.

4. Report layout

The report is organised into four sections: findings, appreciation of the monitoring exercise, recommendations, and conclusions. The main respondents included school managers (principals, acting principals, or HOD) and teachers. The inclusion of both school managers and teachers was for validity purposes (John, 2015); their responses are triangulated. Triangulating responses exposes similarities and counter opinions between the two groups (Caillaud & Flick, 2017).

PART ONE

Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Senior Primary Promotion Policy Guide

4.1 Findings

The findings section is reported under fifteen headings, numbered 4.1.1 - 4.1.15.

4.1.1 Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide

This section intends to find out if participants (school management and teachers) were aware of the promotion policy guide. It also aims to establish if schools had copies of the policy guide, and if teachers had access to the policy guide; and lastly if teachers and the school management had personal copies of the policy guide.

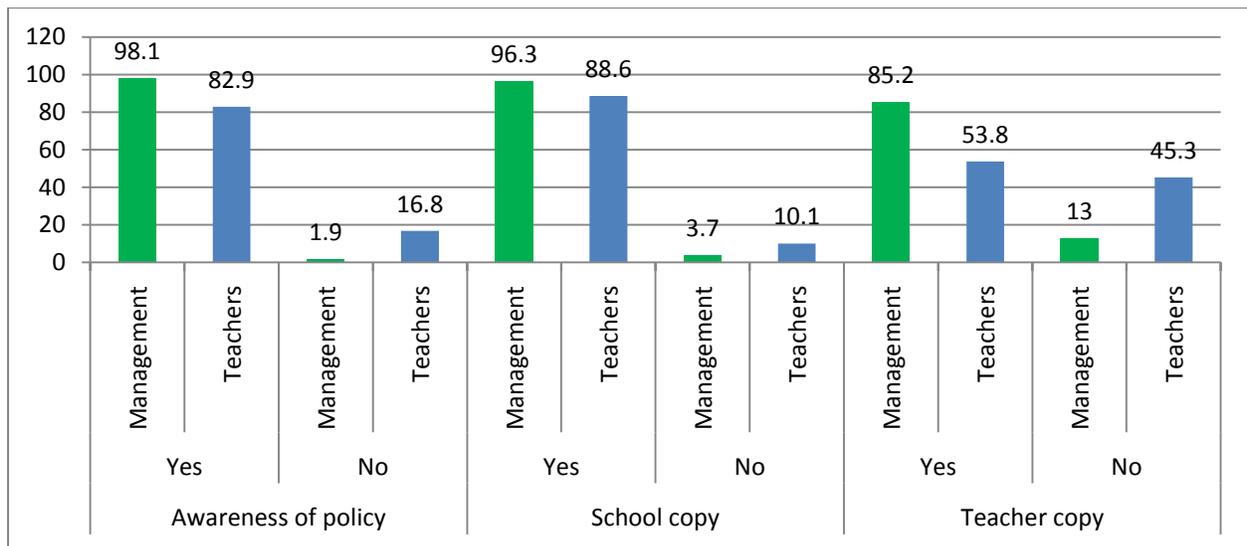


Figure 1: Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide

As figure 1 illustrates, awareness and access to the Senior Primary Promotion Policy Guide (SPPPG) was satisfactory, ranging from 53% to 98.1% across variables. However, the 1.9% and 16.8% of school managers and teachers respectively who were not aware of the SPPPG and schools without the document, as revealed by school managers (3.7%) and teachers (10.1%) is disturbing. In such instances, interviews revealed that the old SPPPG was still in usage.

Generally, it is worth noting that the agreement percentage of school managers, across all three variables, was higher than that of the teachers; implying that many school managers were aware

of the SPPPG and had access to it than teachers. Reasons and scenarios leading to this outcome vary. In some schools, the interviews revealed that only principals or HODs had copies of the SPPPG. Thus, teachers claimed not to know anything about the document. A teacher claimed:

“...except for the teachers who were not aware and only saw the document for the first time during the monitoring exercise.” (Teacher)

In extreme cases, when prompted by the data collector, teachers had an excerpt from the SPPPG on the grading section, but did not associate the excerpt to the main policy document. Whereas in some schools, schools managers claimed that all teachers had copies; meanwhile, teachers vehemently refuted the claim.

“There is a copy of the SPPPG in the principal's office but teachers have no copies in their possessions.” (Teacher)

“No access to the whole policy... Teachers have only a two (2) page copy of the SPPPG on the promotion requirements' section.” (Teacher)

Coupled with this, is the scenario in some schools with only one copy in the principal's office, and teachers only had access to the document during the promotion of learners as that requires them to follow the SPPP guidelines. This is supported by figure 1 indicating 45.3% of the teachers without personal copies of the SPPPG in their files. Below are some of the teachers' claims:

“Not every teacher has a copy of the SPPPG in his/her possession even the new teachers who came this year.” (Teacher)

“Only one teacher who had a personal copy of the SPPPG. Some of us teachers didn't have and I saw it for the first time.” (Teacher)

Generally, the awareness of and accessibility to the promotion policy guide varied among schools and participants. Though the majority of the school managers and teachers were aware of the SPPG and had access to the copy at the school, a significant number of teachers had no personal copies of the SPPG as compared to the school managers.

4.1.2 Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide

This segment (4.1.2) aims to establish whether there are sections of the promotion policy guide that were difficult and challenging to the participants to implement. The statement posed was, “There are some sections of the Senior Primary Promotion Policy Guide (SPPPG) that are challenging to implement”. In response to this statement (see figure 2), above 60% of both school managers and teachers acknowledged experiencing difficulties and challenges implementing some sections of the SPPPG.

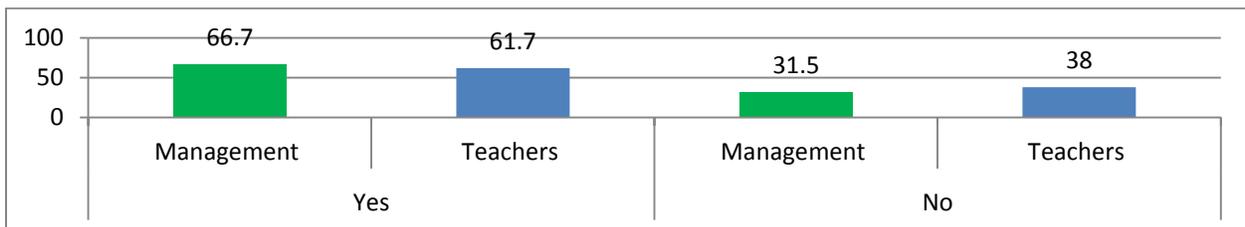


Figure 2: Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide

A further exploration of this question during face to face interviews highlighted the challenges:

- Learning support:** The SPPPG (Ministry of Education, 2015) stipulates that all struggling learners, at-risk learners, borderline cases, SNLs and repeaters should be provided with learning support. Participants felt that rendering learning support was affected by extramural activities in the afternoons. This raises a concern as mostly learning support seemed to be understood as an afternoon session only. Learning support, instead, is indispensable to teaching. “*Learning support forms part of everyday teaching and should also be portrayed in lesson plans.*” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 4) It should be rendered whenever the need arises. However, principals and teachers who understood learning support in this context cited over-crowdedness of classrooms as a hindrance. They find it difficult to, firstly, identify learners needing support, and,

secondly, even learners identified might not receive a one-on-one support as they are usually too many. Another challenge pertains to teachers' expertise. Both school managers and teachers bemoaned teachers' lack of knowledge and skills about learning support. The majority of the teachers felt that they needed professional development or more professional development in the area of learning support. This raises some concern as there is a Learning Support Teachers' Manual (Ministry of Education, 2014) authored by NIED that provide the theory and practice of learning support.

- **Transfer of learners:** According to the SPPPG (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 5), “A learner should only repeat twice in a school phase”. The transfer of learners was a huge concern for the majority of principals and teachers. One principal viewed the transfer of learners as “always a push and pull whether to take the learner forward or to make the learner remain in the grade”. In addition, some participants argued that transferring learners with learning backlogs does not benefit learners and places more challenges to the next grade teacher. In such instances, repetition was opted for through the consultations with parents who determined whether the child should be transferred to the next grade or not, contrary to the SPPPG. Below are some of the reasons and concerns why the transfer of learners is unpopular:

“Transfer of learners is not recommended... this affects the education output in future.”
(Principal)

“...we feel the learner will not benefit from going further.” **(Principal)**

- **Special Needs Learners (SNLs):** Page 4 of the SPPPG (Ministry of Education, 2015) stipulates that “Hard of hearing learners attend regular schools from the onset to capitalise and encourage residual speech, particularly when the learner does not need Namibian Sign Language. Equally, learners with low vision should attend regular schools with the necessary support services”. Furthermore, the SPPPG stipulates: “Teachers receive training to enable them to understand and meet special needs, assessment practices and have access to resource persons with expertise in remediation and specialised education in an inclusive setting” (Ministry of Education, 2015). Both principals and teachers at almost every school bemoaned the lack of

expertise to handle SNLs as a challenge. This challenge, participants attested, was a huge obstacle to quality teaching and learning. However, in the midst of challenges, teachers were always left without alternatives but to try their best to accommodate SNLs. The need to capacitate teachers with knowledge and skills to teach SNLs seemed common among all participants. However, there were some schools with a qualified teacher for SNLs; but even then, participants felt that one teacher cannot manage various grades.

- **Borderline cases:** *“These are learners who are on the edge of one category (failing) and verging on another (passing) according to the minimum promotion requirements (border). Their performance is near to the promotion mark / percentage”* (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 8). Despite the fact that conditions to condone are clearly stipulated in the SPPPG, some principals and teachers faced challenges deciding whether to condone or not. Generally, as revealed through interviews, the interpretation of when to condone borderline cases seemed a challenge. In other instances, one principal revealed that teachers found it very difficult to give what they considered a *‘free mark’* and some asked *“where do we find this mark?”* On this premise, one can extrapolate that borderline learners are on the disadvantage of repeating grades. Overall, there seemed a need to find ways that assist teachers to interpret borderline conditions.

- **Grade 4 shift to senior primary phase:** The shift of Grade 4 to senior primary phase raised some concerns among participants, namely, the absence of a transition grade and transition from class teaching to subject teaching. The revised National Broad Curriculum for Basic Education (2016, p. 4) states: *“In Pre-Primary and grades 1-3, teaching and learning take place through the medium of mother tongue or the predominant local language...The transition to English as medium of instruction is in Grade 4”*. Irrespective of this clearly stated directive, some participants seemed to understand that since Grade 4 is now part of the senior primary phase, the aspect of having a transition grade to English, which was grade 4 in the past, also falls out.

“The absence of transition year as was grade 4 in the past is a challenge as in grade 4 English is now the MOI. I think it is better to have a transitional grade for learners to be prepared in English. ...as it is now when they go to grade 4 they don’t have the basics in English.”
(Principal)

Yet, the transition to English as a medium of instruction as stipulated in the National Curriculum for Basic Education is in Grade 4. It is very disturbing since the concern was raised by a principal. One might doubt if all schools had access to the revised National Broad Curriculum for Basic Education (2016), or it could be the general tendency of not reading the whole document as was the case with the SPPPG.

The switch from class teaching to subject teaching disturbed some participants. Participants, particularly teachers, were concerned that grade 4 learners find it very difficult to change subject teachers. However, one might argue that since grade 4 is a transition grade, teachers should exercise patience and tolerance to ensure a smooth transition.

“Grade 4 learners to be promoted with E or better symbols. It's now too difficult because those learners are only coming from Grade 3 and were taught in their mother tongues and difficult to be promoted with A in English.” (Teacher)

- ***Out-of-school support services:*** Rendering learning support to struggling learners also takes place outside normal teaching time, mainly during afternoons (Ministry of Education, 2015). These outside normal teaching time activities posed challenges to participants. Some schools with learning support teams claimed had well-structured and organised out of school programmes (remedial or compensatory teaching). Despite learner related challenges of not eager to turn up for afternoon sessions due to various reasons (proximity reasons, socio-economic conditions), teachers too, principals were concerned, did not turn up. In some schools, outside normal teaching time programmes were spontaneous and individual teacher led. This mode of operation, principals lamented, did not yield satisfactory outcomes. Other reasons included the absence of learning- support teams to oversee learning support activities.

- ***New grading requirements set too high:*** The new promotional requirements for senior primary are stipulated below (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 8).

Table 1: The new promotional requirements for senior primary

<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>E-grade or better in 4 out of 5 promotional subjects;</i> <i>E-grade or better in the language used as the medium of learning;</i>
-----------------------	--

	<i>E-grade or better in Mathematics and the other language; An overall average of an E (40%)</i>
Grade 5-7	<i>E-grade or better in 5 out of 6 promotional subjects; E-grade or better in English, other language and Mathematics; An overall average of an E (40%).</i>

Participants differed on the promotional requirements for senior primary as set above. While some participants appreciated the new grading, others found E-grade (40%) too high. Citing reasons, among others:

- An E in English was not realistic for learners, particularly in rural settings, whose exposure to English is limited.
- Grade 4 learners whose MOI in grade 3 was not English, faced challenges of English Mathematics terminologies.
- Some teachers, particularly unqualified teachers, lacked subject and pedagogical content knowledge.
- Overcrowded classrooms hindered one-on-one support to learners with learning difficulties, or at-risk learners.

In spite of the concerns raised above, some participants acknowledged that the new promotional requirements needed more effort and hard work from both teachers and learners. As a result, teachers are forced to go the extra mile to ensure that learners understand and eventually promoted.

“The SPPPG seems to force teachers to work under pressure to make sure that learners are promoted, simply because parents and principals wouldn’t be happy when learners are not promoted.” (Teacher)

- **Continuity and consistency:** In some schools visited, some principals could not say much about the implementation of the SPPPG. Mostly, they claimed that they had just joined the schools and could not tell for sure whether teachers were aware of and had copies of the SPPPG. However, it is a call for concern that some principals were about six months to a year at the

school. The new placement of principals interrupted the interview protocol; but in most cases, if such principals were not newly appointed principals, they could share some of the practices from their former schools.

Generally, the majority of participants faced challenges with regards to the implementation of the SPPPG; however, 31.5% of the management and 38% of the teachers who did not face any challenges cannot be ignored.

“I have not come across anything that is difficult to implement.” (Principal)

“...no challenges at all, the SPPPG is very clear.” (Principal)

“So far no difficulties have been experienced in terms of implementing the SPPPG.” (Teacher)

“Not experienced challenges with some sections in the SPPPG. The problem only for the compulsory subjects (Maths and English) now teachers are only concentrate more on those subjects and ignore others. As some learners are forced to repeat because of those subjects.” (Teacher)

Some participants, school managers in particular, attributed challenges to this:

“...people don't read...what we do when given a document ...I only go to the grading, leaving everything else...we only concentrate on grading we think that is where everything lies but from the beginning to the end, everything in the document is important...some features of the SPPPG are neglected.” (Principal)

This admission might imply that some participants faced no challenges as the document (SPPPG) was not familiar to them, hence, not easy to identify challenges.

4.1.3 School committees and programmes

It is expected from each school, according to the promotion policy guide for Junior and Senior Primary phase, to establish committees and set-up programmes such as:

A promotion policy committee [*in each school there should be a promotion committee comprising of the school principal, heads of department and class/subject teachers. The committee has the overall promotion responsibilities by, among others, ensuring consistency in dealing with borderline cases. All recommendations by the committee should be endorsed by the Regional Education Office*]

A learning support team [*a team consisting of teachers ensuring that the subject/class teacher offers needed support to learners while working in consultation and collaboration with them*]

A gifted learners' programme [*enrichment programmes for gifted learners should be established in collaboration with the learning support group to ensure that gifted learners are sufficiently challenged*]

An individualised learning programme [*learners who could not achieve the required competencies should be supported through suitable and structured individualised programmes*].

Therefore, this section aims to find out whether the schools have established the above mentioned committees and programmes.

The trend observed in figure 3 needs further exploration. Across all variables on the establishment of committees and setting-up of programmes in schools, discrepancies were observed — school managers' yes responses were higher than that of teachers.

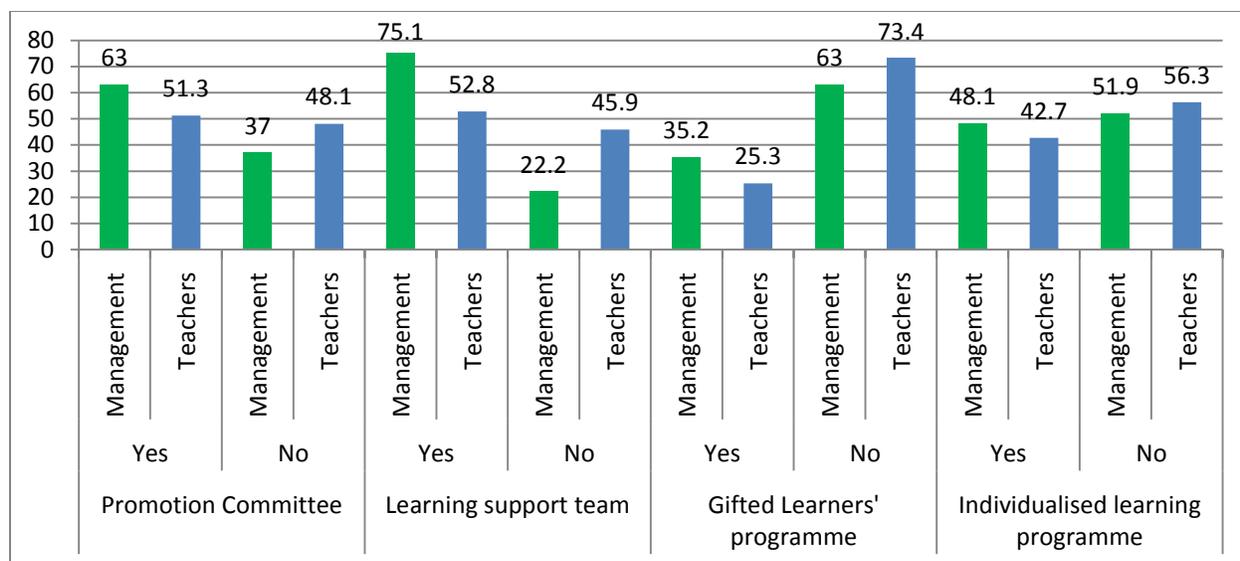


Figure 3: School committees and programmes

With regard to the promotion policy committees, as alluded to earlier on, the majority of the school managers (63%) responded yes as compared to the teachers (51.3%) who responded no. For learning support teams, 75.1% (over three quarters) of the management indicated that learning support teams were established at their schools; on the contrary, 45.9% (nearly half) of teachers disagreed. Generally, good practices were observed in some schools. For instance, though uncommon, some schools had learning support teams headed by Life Skills teachers, and including the management and some teachers. In other schools, despite the absence of learning support teams, learning support activities were planned, timetabled, monitored and effective. However, in some schools, undesirable practices, deviating from the guidelines of the SPPPG, were observed. Some schools practised the ‘up to the teacher’ approach. Each teacher had to decide how and when to provide support, and this was not timetabled, nor monitored. To the extremes, some school managers lamented the unwillingness of some teachers to render learning support, but mostly teachers’ reluctance to continue providing support in the afternoons, citing a number of reasons, among them, too much workload.

The observed discrepancies between school managers and teachers on the establishment of promotion committee and learning support teams are a cause for concern on whether to consider the school managers or the teachers’ responses. It could be possible that some school managers only said ‘yes’ to promote their schools and cover up weaknesses.

The performance of schools on the establishment of gifted learners' programmes was the worst as compared to other committees and programmes. As shown in figure 3, only over a third (35.2%) of the management, and about a quarter (25.3%) of the teachers agreed that there were programmes for the gifted learners. Generally, gifted learners, some participants acknowledged, were ignored. Programmes for gifted learners largely comprised of unorganised and spontaneous ways such as enrichment tasks, no structured programmes. However, although not a common occurrence, some schools effectively engaged such learners as 'teacher learners' who assisted fellow learners with the completion of class tasks.

With regard to the individualised learning programmes, as figure 3 illustrates, less than 50% of school managers and even fewer teachers indicated that there were learning support programmes for individual repeating and struggling learners.

Conclusively, schools without required committees (learning support, and promotion policy committee) and programmes (gifted learners' individualised learning programmes) jeopardise effective teaching and learning. As per SPPPG, these committees and programmes are indispensable to schools.

4.1.4 Special education referral

The promotion policy guide stipulates that policies and procedures for learners' referral should be followed. The referral should be conducted as early as possible in order to utilise learners' skills, aptitude and talents and to avoid repetition. For this reason, this section aims to find out if schools had policies and procedures in place for special education referral and placement.

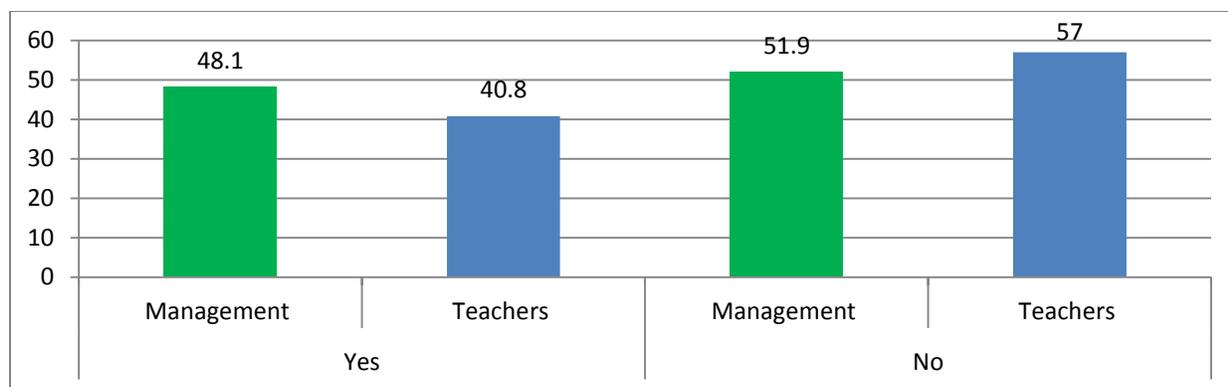


Figure 4: Special education referral

As portrayed by figure 4, slightly over 40% of the teachers and 48.1% of the school managers had indicated that there were procedures in place for special education referral and placement at their schools. At some schools, participants assured they had well established, structured and effective referral systems. However, as results show, many schools visited did not have referral and placement procedures in place. Three major hindrances were cited. Firstly, access to special schools. Participants, during interviews bemoaned the absence of, or scarcity of special schools in some regions. Some schools are far away from such schools, with only a possibility of placing such learners in hostels. The affordability of hostel fees and all the logistics thereof, make parents reluctant to move their kids to such facilities. Some parents even opt to keep their kids out of school. Secondly, delay of feedback. Schools complained of delays in getting feedback and responses from both special schools and regional offices. When applications for placements are sent out to schools, it takes too long, or no feedback is received. Similarly, some participants were concerned that, Regional Offices take forever when consulted on referral matters.

All these problems cited, culminate into the third challenge of keeping special needs learners (SNLs) in mainstream classes with minimal support due to a number of reasons to be discussed in the next section. Consequently, lack of appropriate support resulted in learners' frustrations to a point of them dropping out of school. Some schools, although not a common practice, had special classes with a special teacher. Such classes served as referral classes. All learners identified with learning backlogs, or special needs are placed in such classes until they master the targeted knowledge and skills. However, special classes seemed to benefit only struggling

learners, rather than special needs learners (SNLs), as in most cases, ‘special teachers’ too lacked knowledge and skills to teach SNLs.

4.1.5 Special needs support training received

As per the promotion policy guide, teachers should be trained to enable them to understand and equip them with the necessary skills to handle learners with special needs. This section thus aims to gauge whether the participants have received training to enable them to understand and meet the needs of the learners with special needs.

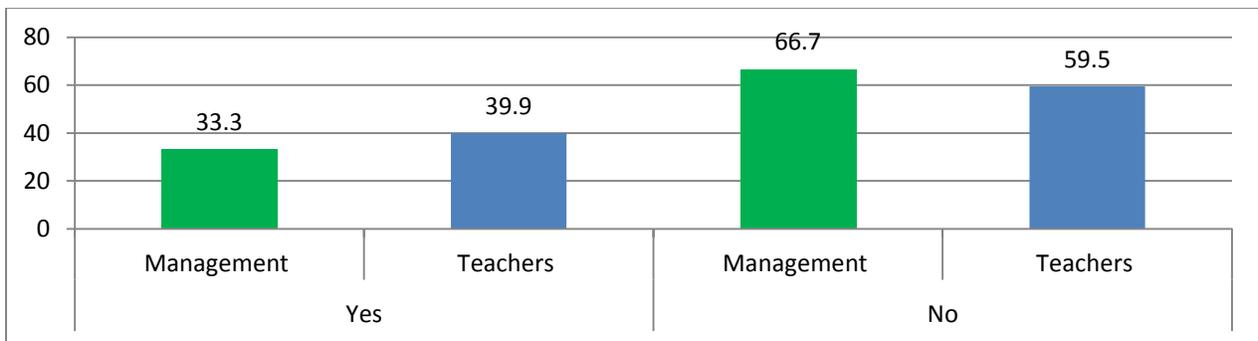


Figure 5: Special needs support training received

Figure 5 shows that 33.3% of the school managers and 39.9% of the teachers had received training to enable them to understand and meet the needs of the learners with special needs. This means that only few respondents received training as compared to the 66.7% and 59.5% of the school managers and teachers respectively who didn't receive the training. From the figures provided by the respondents, it is a worrisome situation. Most of the participants stated during the interview that no training and/or workshops were given to them on how to support learners with special needs. However, participants claimed to receive only lectures on inclusive education during their professional training at the institutions of higher learning but that was not enough as it was more theoretical. At some schools, participants indicated that only the Life Skills teachers were normally invited by the advisory teachers for the workshops in special education on how to deal with special need learners. However, Life Skills teachers felt that such workshops were inadequate to empower them to handle learners with special needs.

4.1.6 Appreciation of the promotion policy guide

In section 4.1.6, participants were asked the extent to which they appreciated the role of the promotion policy guide.

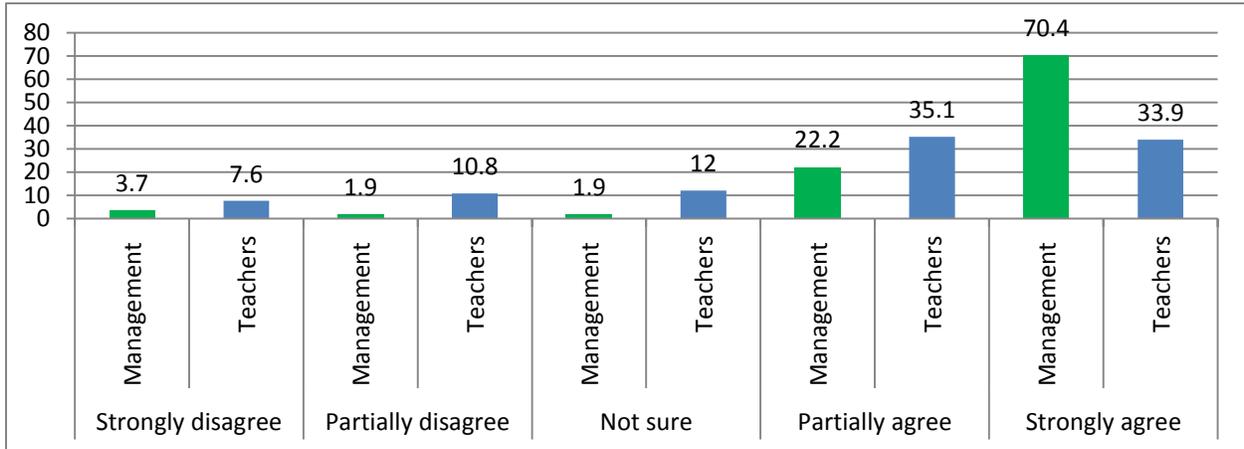


Figure 6: Appreciation of the promotion policy guide

As seen in Figure 6, the school managers (92.6%) and teachers (69%) appreciated the role that the promotion policy guide played in their daily teaching and learning process. Although, most of the teachers agreed, a significant number of the teachers disagreed. During the interview, many participants appreciated the policy as a unifying framework on promotion requirements to school managers and teachers across schools. On the contrary, some participants did not appreciate the SPPPG.

“Teachers felt that the SPPPG is a waste of time as the promotion criteria are in the syllabus and also in the curriculum document.” (Teacher)

“Not much of useful as some teachers are complaining that some learners feel that they will get promoted when they repeat.” (Teacher)

The most disturbing outcome was some participants who were not aware of the existence of the policy and/or not in possession of the document.

“Not sure of whether the SPPPG is useful or not as teachers haven’t seen the whole document.”
(Teacher)

“Teachers have not much of the ideas because they didn’t read the whole document.”
(Principal)

On the contrary, some participants stated in the interview that the SPPPG and revised curriculum did not make sense as teachers are forced to go the extra mile, beyond learners’ level of understanding.

Generally, the SPPPG seemed to provide school managers and teachers with relevant information with regard to promotion requirements. Although, it was unfortunate to some teachers who found it difficult to appreciate the SPPPG and those were not in possession of the document.

4.1.7 Understanding of the promotion policy guide

This section gauges participants’ understanding of the SPPPG. As Figure 7 shows, the majority of the principals (90.8%) agreed that they understood the SPPPG. Similarly, although the agreement response was less than that of the principals, 63.6% of the teacher admitted not having difficulties understanding the guidelines set out in the SPPPG.

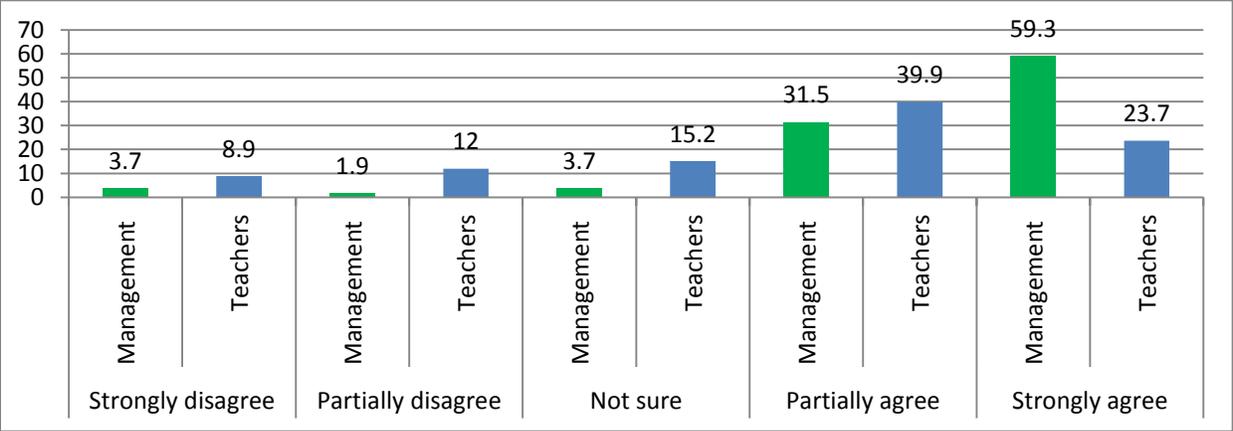


Figure 7: Understanding of the promotion policy guide

Despite a significant agreement response, 20.9% and 5.6% of the teachers and managers respectively who faced difficulties understanding the SPPPG is a call for concern. Most disturbing are principals who did not seem to have a clear understanding of the SPPPG guidelines. If principals lack understanding of the policy, how do they assist teachers? Probing further during interviews participants acknowledged a myriad of interpretations of the SPPPG document. The most cited contributing reason was the lack of training or workshop that could help teachers to have a common understanding.

“Lack of training or workshop poses implementation challenges; staff rely on reading only leading to misinterpretations...no common understanding, for example the promotion of learners and grading requirements.” (Principal)

In most cases, teachers, principals included, read on their own; a practice they felt led to misinterpretations. However, in some schools, although not that common, principals initiated workshops for teachers to reach a common understanding. This effort, to some principals was insufficient as interpretation accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

4.1.8 Alignment between the SPPPG and revised curriculum

The complementarity of the promotion policy guide and the revised senior primary curriculum cannot be overemphasised. The guide emphasises how the promotion policy guide applies to and how it should be implemented together with the revised curriculum. Figure 8 provides the responses from the participants on the question whether there was an alignment between the promotion policy guide and the revised senior primary curriculum.

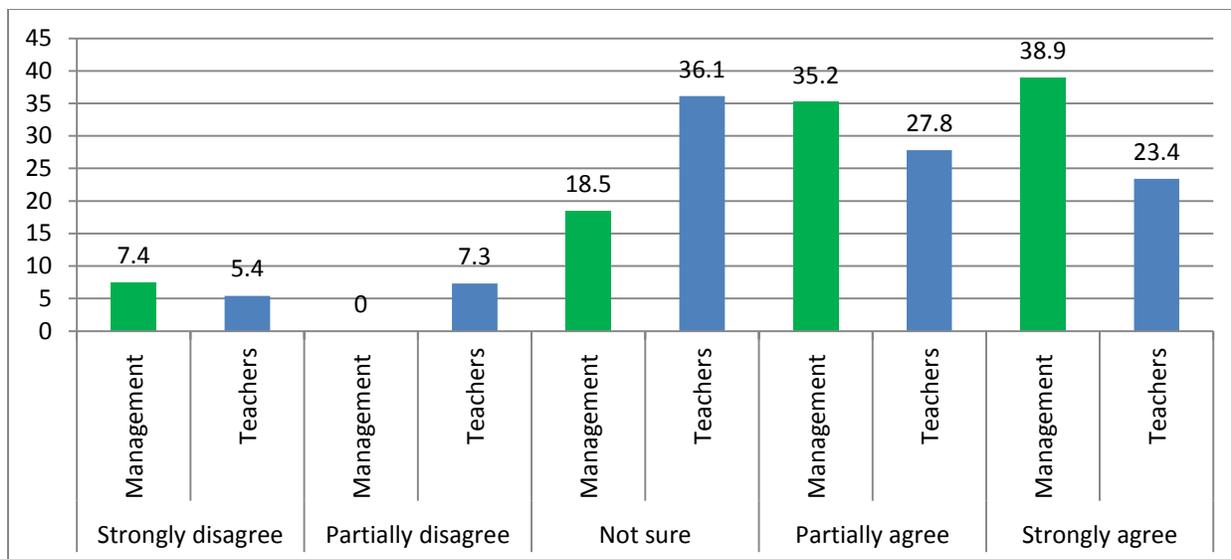


Figure 8: Alignment between the SPPPG and revised curriculum

Figure 8 indicates that 74.1% of the school managers agreed that there was an alignment between the SPPPG and the revised curriculum as compared to 51.2% of the teachers. Apart from the respondents who agreed, 18.5% and 36.1% of the school managers and teachers respectively were not sure whether the SPPPG and the revised curriculum were aligned to each other. However, during the interview, participants felt that the two documents were corresponding since the SPPPG was developed from the revised curriculum. Therefore, the promotion requirements in the SPPPG and those in the revised curriculum correlate.

“When one looks at the promotion requirements in the SPPPG and those that are mentioned in the revised curriculum, they are the same. ...there is a correlation between the two documents in terms of promotion requirements.” (Teacher)

“Go hand in hand; the same issues covered in both are the same.” (Principal)

“The curriculum and the SPPPG are integrated — no difference between the two.” (Principal)

To the newly appointed teachers, they indicated during the interview that they were not familiar with the revised curriculum to see whether it was in line with the SPPPG. This is disturbing

considering that during teacher preparation; student teachers should have been familiarized with educational policies and indispensable documents such as the revised curriculum and SPPPG.

4.1.9 Consistent implementation of the SPPPG

As per the promotion policy guide, school principals and heads of departments should monitor the quality of assessment tasks and the implementation of the promotion policy principles and procedures in order to ensure that the guide is implemented in a consistent way. This section aims to find out if the promotion policy guide was implemented in a consistent manner at the schools.

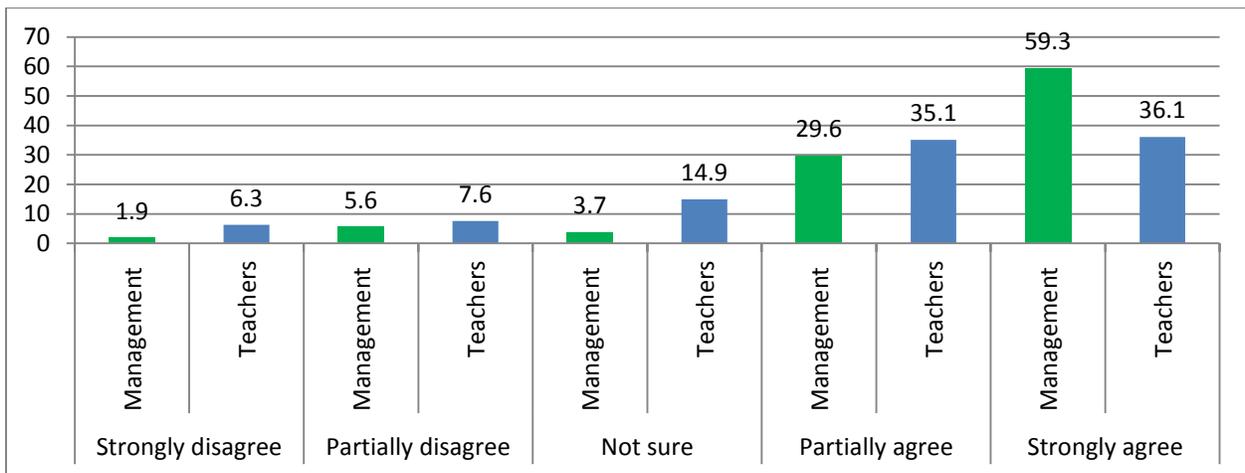


Figure 9: Consistent implementation of the SPPPG

As portrayed in Figure 9, the school managers (88.9%) and teachers (71.2%) agreed that the SPPPG was implemented in a consistent manner at their schools. However, this outcome is contrary to the interview responses as the majority of the participants indicated that they did divert from the policy; deviations become inevitable due to a number of reasons as mentioned in the extracts below.

“The school has an internal policy on the promotion of learners, and some principles of this policy deviate, especially on the condonement of learners — this is determined by the

performance of the learner (e.g. 5%) [promotion] is not automatic despite the SPPPG requirements.” (Principal)

“There could be some deviations depending on the school’s situation and need. Implied, when they are deciding who should be promoted or not, other factors are considered (social problems, distance to school, hunger etc.) that have a bearing on performance.” (Principal)

“Learners repeat two to three times until they are promoted, no transfers as per SPPPG.” (Principal)

“For the benefit of the child...the school ignores the policy and keeps learners until they pass.” (Principal)

“We first look at what the policy requires us to practice and then looked at what best suits the learners. Then we make decisions based on whether the policy accommodates learners and schools’ environment as some of our schools are located in the inland area.” (Teacher)

At some schools the SPPPG was implemented despite some reservations and dissatisfactions about some features, for instance, the ‘transfer of learners’ that some participants were not happy about.

“The policy is followed despite some features, such as the transfer of learners, we are not happy with but we are following what the policy is saying.” (Principal)

At some schools the SPPPG was religiously implemented without reservations.

“...learners are promoted according to the promotion requirements as stipulated in the SPPPG.” (Principal)

“...no deviations- implemented as is.” (Principal)

Overall, the implementation of the SPPPG was inconsistent across schools sampled. As findings revealed, while some schools adhered to the policy directives, others deviated as dictated by their school environment and learners’ circumstances.

4.1.10 Support to implement the promotion policy guide

The promotion policy guide states clearly that the regional directors should make sure that this policy guide is understood by the inspectors of education, advisory teachers, principals and parents; and also to ensure that the policy is deliberated on at all levels. Moreover, principals should ensure that the guidelines in the policy are understood by the teachers, parents and learners. Figure 10 provides participants’ responses on the extent they have been supported on the implementation of the promotion policy guide.

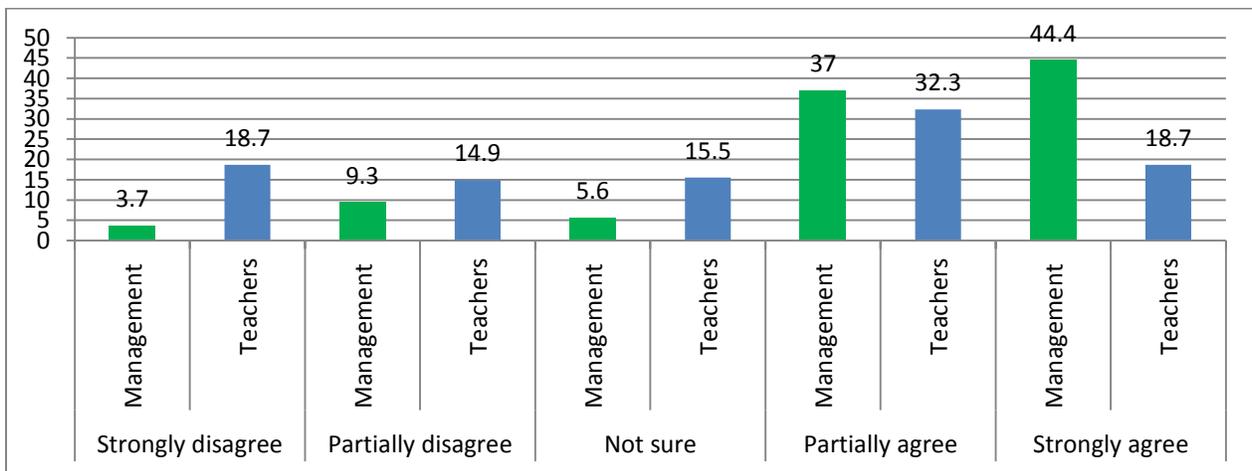


Figure 10: Support to implement the SPPPG

Figure 10 indicates that 81.4% of the school managers as compared to 51% of the teachers agreed that they received support on how to implement the SPPPG. Based on the percentages, the majority of the managers portrays a different picture as compared to the teachers. This was eminent during interviews too as the majority of the managers claimed that both teachers and principals received support on the implementation of the SPPPG.

“Principals were trained during the revised curriculum training.” (Principal)

“National training on the revised curriculum for both teachers and principals included the SPPPG.” (Principal)

“The school is supported by the advisory teachers; they are appreciated as very useful when it comes to the understanding of the SPPPG.” (Principal)

“Teachers were trained (regionally during revised curriculum training) and through workshops at school level.” (Principal)

“Teachers were trained during the revised curriculum training and at both cluster and circuit level workshops too.” (Principal)

On the other hand, the majority of the teachers stated that they were not trained or supported on the implementation of the SPPPG; instead, they only received extracts on the promotion requirements. Similarly, during the workshops, teachers claimed that the focus was mainly on the promotion requirement sections. At some schools, this scenario was overcome by the support from the school management to better understand the SPPPG and implement it accordingly.

“In cases where we do not fully understand, we normally consult our school management for help and further assistance.” (Teacher)

Some teachers further claimed that they were only trained during 2014 and 2015 on the revised curriculum and not on the SPPPG, a situation leading to different interpretations and the implementation thereof.

“No support on the SPPPG...leading to other people still interpreting the policy differently...because of lack of training.” (Teacher)

“...we have to read through the document, then discuss it among ourselves and implement it the way we understood it.” (Teacher)

It seemed that the majority of the managers were trained and supported on the SPPPG as compared to the teachers. As a result, these teachers were implementing the SPPPG with insufficient understanding. In fact, these teachers only received support occasionally from their school managers after consulting them when matters arise.

4.1.11 Support to deal with learners with learning difficulties

The promotion policy guide states clearly that teachers should identify learners with learning difficulties and set out a plan of action to remedy the learning difficulties. Therefore, this section provides responses from the participants on whether they were provided with adequate professional support to deal with learners with learning difficulties.

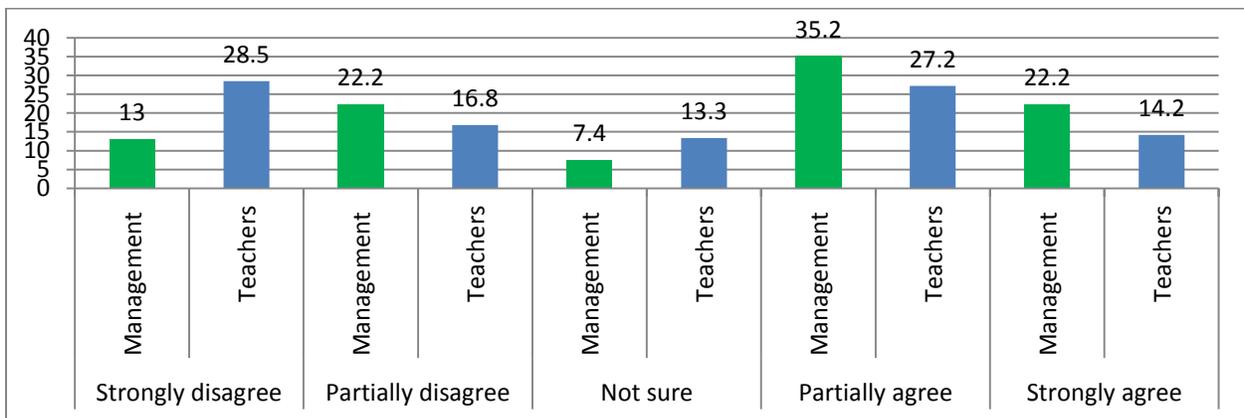


Figure 11: Support to deal with learners with learning difficulties

Figure 11 shows that 57.4% (school managers) and 41.4% (teachers) agreed that they received professional support to deal with learners with learning difficulties as compared to the 35.2% (school managers) and 45.3% (teachers) who disagreed to the statement. During interviews, participants claimed that teachers were not trained to handle special needs learners in mainstream classes. However, some teachers tried their utmost best to help these learners.

“Teachers struggle to teach SNLs as they are not trained teachers are unable to help them because they are not having that training as how they can help these learners.” (Principal)

“Teachers are not trained, but they do try their best, and some SNLs get promoted.” (Principal)

Most of the participants during interviews revealed that they were trained at universities and/or institutions of higher learning through inclusive education and counselling guidance modules but that was not adequate.

“...we are not fully trained as the training was more theoretical than practical, and it was inadequate to enabling us to support and help learners with special needs and/or learning difficulties.” (Teacher)

Therefore, participants claimed that they graduated with some knowledge but no practical skills on how to cater for learners with special needs and handle learners with learning difficulties as it was experienced by the participants on the ground. But to some participants, the training that they received from the training institutions only equipped them with necessary skills on identifying learners with learning difficulties and other problems.

“What we received from the training institutions has equipped and enabled us to tackle slow learners and those learners with mild dyslexia problem who cannot read and write.” (Teacher)

However, at some schools, especially the Life Skills teachers have indicated that, they attended the workshop where they received training and preparation on how to cater for learners with special needs using different strategies but still what they received from the workshop was not enough.

“We were invited by the advisory teachers to the workshop on special education. Although, we were told at the workshop to include learning activities such as extra preparations for these learners; ...the training was not adequate and we are still not really well prepared to deal with learners with learning difficulties.” (Teacher)

Inclusive education module seemed to only guide teachers during their training with basic knowledge and understanding on how to help learners with special needs. This means that these teachers were not provided with intensive training and guidance based on appropriate action plans that should be considered to support learners with learning difficulties as it was the case at some schools.

One can conclude that there were more teachers at schools who were not provided with adequate professional support to handle learners with special needs. And the preparation received during teacher education didn't seem to equip them sufficiently.

4.1.12 Monitoring learning support programme

According to the promotion policy guide, it is expected that principals should monitor the work done by the learners within the support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents. Thus, participants' responses on whether principals were monitoring the work done within the learning support programme are provided in Figure 12.

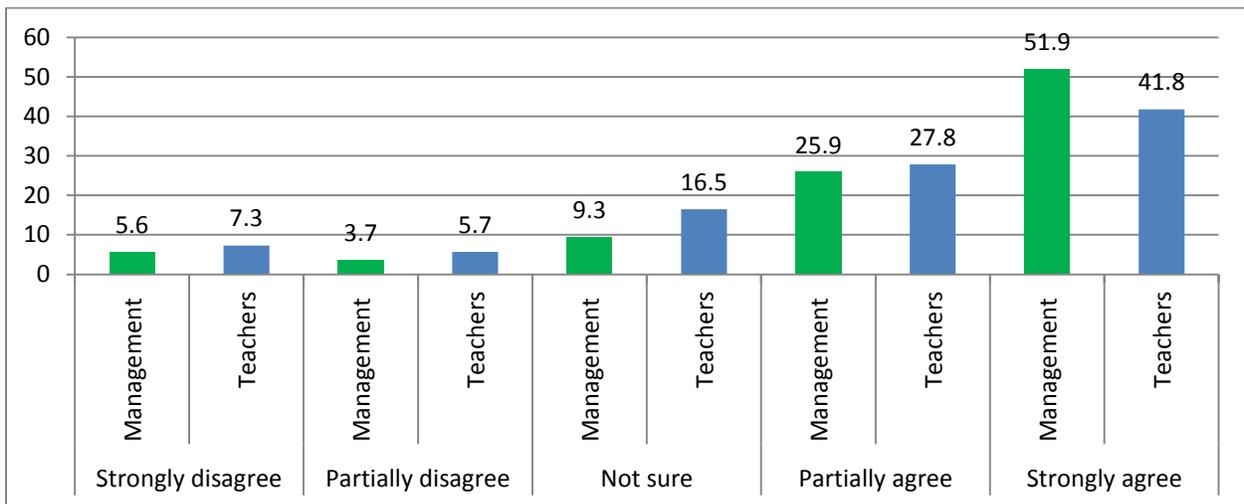


Figure 12: Monitoring learning support programme

As shown in Figure 12, more school managers (77.8%) agreed that they monitor the work done by the learners within the support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedbacks

are provided to both the learners and the parents as compared to the teachers (69.6%). On the contrary, 9.3% (school managers) and 13% (teachers) disagreed while 9.3% and 16.5% of the school managers and teachers respectively were not sure of the statement. The percentage of the teachers who were not sure of the principal's role cannot be ignored. This might imply that the principal's role of monitoring the learning support programme is not well-defined at some schools.

However, some participants acknowledged that:

- some principals were encouraging teachers to identify learners who were in dire need of being given learning support.
- some principals were always motivating teachers to come up with learning support teams / groups per subject, and then compile a timetable with prescribed dates on when to support learners.
- some principals were very active and supportive in assisting teachers who found it difficult to help learners during compensatory teaching.
- some principals were involved in the planning activities and facilitated the learning support programme on daily basis.
- some principals monitored, coordinated and supervised the entire programme.
- some principals were normally making some follow-ups with their subordinates on the programme.

“School principals are also responsible for setting-up the learning support programmes with date allocations of when the programme should be implemented.” (Teacher)

“The principal monitors the afternoon programme...ensures that there is an afternoon timetable in place, and that teachers are well-prepared, and ensures that teachers are in class, teaching; and all learners are present.” (Teacher)

“I monitor ... ‘I am the engine’ of the programme.” (Principal)

“...the school principals are overseeing the whole progress of the learning support programmes. Also to see whether teachers are carrying out their activities correctly and providing these learners with the support they need.” (Teacher)

However, at some schools, participant teachers indicated that principals were unable to monitor learning support activities since they also had afternoon classes. At some schools, there were no learning support programmes hence principals had nothing to monitor and/or facilitate.

“The principal is not monitoring since there is no learning support programme at the school.” (Teacher)

“No learning support programme at the school for the principal to monitor it. The principal used to tell teachers to have afternoon classes but now no more and as a result, not all the learners turn up for the afternoon classes.” (Teacher)

“Since no learning support programme at the school, the principal is not monitoring but planning to start with the learning support programme at the school soon.” (Teacher)

4.1.13 Information to parents/guardians about learner performance

As per the promotion policy guide, parents/guardians should be informed and updated regularly on the performance and progress of their children at school in order to support their children throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat. This section intends to find out if parents/guardians were used to be informed about the performance and progress of their children so that they are able to support their children at home.

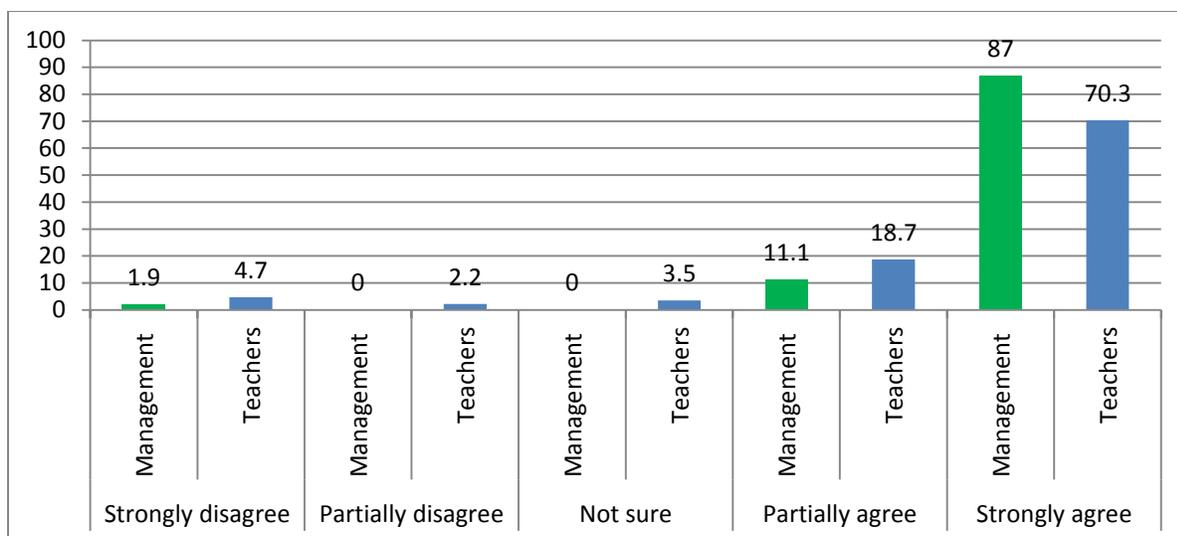


Figure 13: Information to parents about learner performance

Figure 13 portrays that 98.1% (school managers) and 89% (teachers) agreed that parents/guardians were informed about the performance and progress of their children so that they are able to support their children throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat. During the interviews, participants revealed that parents were normally informed about their children’s performance and progress during teacher-parent meetings, books’ viewing days, prize-giving ceremony days and also end of each term when they come to school to collect their children’s progress reports. At some schools, there was open door policy whereby parents/guardians were allowed to come in anytime during school hours to check and inquire anything related to their children’s school work. In some schools, community members usually came to schools to have motivational talks with learners to encourage them to work hard. But, in most cases, parents/guardians were also invited to come to schools for the whole day to enable them to discuss the performance and progress of their children with teachers in the presence of their children.

“During books viewing days, we also explain and discuss with the parents/guardians any difficulties and problems that we are experiencing with their children.” (Teacher)

“Parents days to view books and discuss learners’ performance with the class teachers/subject teachers on one-on-one. Parents meetings to inform them about the school programme. Parents

are encouraged to visit the school anytime; however parental involvement is lacking.”
(Principal)

“Invite parents to school and sit in classes to observe how learners perform; school reports; parents invited.” **(Principal)**

At some schools, parents/guardians were always provided with a hard copy of analysed statistics (number of learners who were promoted and those not) that shows how each grade has performed throughout the term. Some participants stated that they used to send learners’ marked assessment books home with them for their parents/guardians to see and check through how their children were performing. Thereafter, parents/guardians would sign and write comments (if applicable) in these books. According to the participants, the signing of the books was to confirm that parents/guardians have seen how their children perform.

“...sign the books to indicate that they are involved in the progress of their children and also to declare that they will be held accountable if they fail to help their children at home with school work. Thereafter, the children would bring the books back to school.” **(Teacher)**

On the contrary, some participants responded that most of the time the parents/guardians of the learners who struggled hardly checked their children’s books and/or signed the books. And the same parents/guardians generally lacked cooperation and support.

4.1.14 Community and parental involvement

It is stated clearly in the promotion policy that schools should form partnerships with parents by maintaining close communication, inviting them to visit the classroom. In other words, schools should build and sustain parental and community involvement and support. Therefore, this section provides the responses from the participants on whether there is parental and community involvement and support in schools.

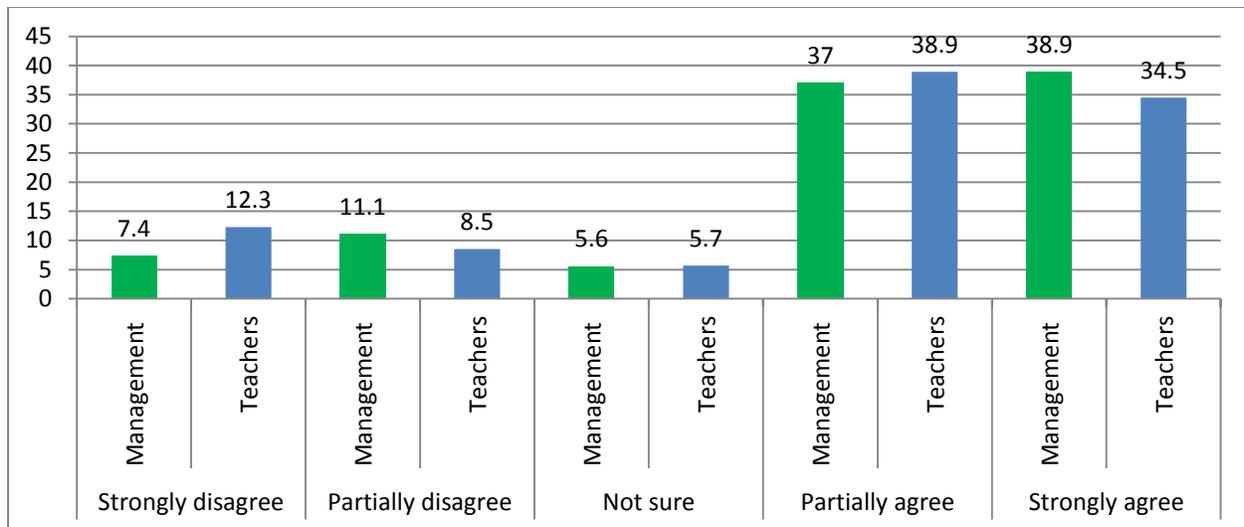


Figure 14: Community and parental involvement

According to Figure 14, the school managers (75.9%) and teachers (73.4%) agreed that parents and the community at large were involved and supported schools. While, only 18.5% of the school managers and 20.8% of the teachers did not agree to the statement; and 5.6% (school managers) and 5.7% (teachers) were not sure.

4.1.15 Counselling of repeaters

According to the promotion policy guide, learners who do not progress to the next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation. Thus, this section intends to find out if learners who do not progress to the next grade were receiving counselling to help them understand their situation.

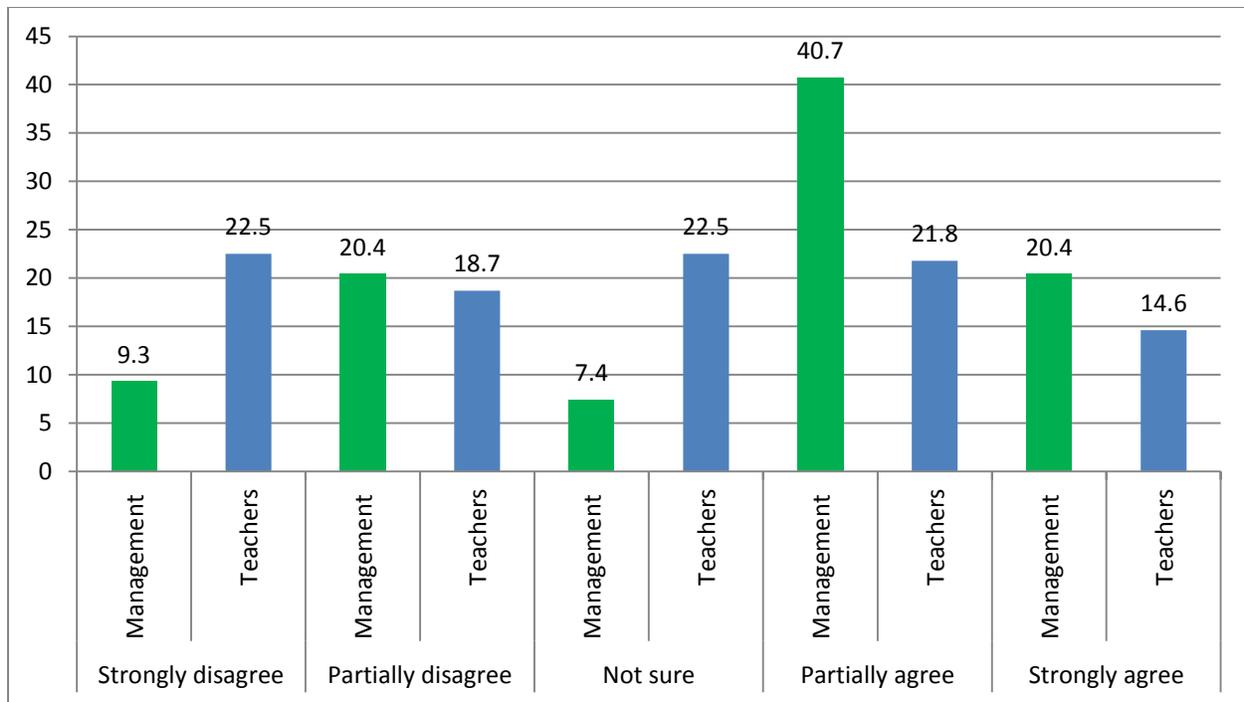


Figure 15: Counselling of repeaters

As seen in Figure 15, the school managers (61.1%) and teachers (36.4%) agreed that learners who did not progress to the next grade received counselling to help them understand their situation as compared to 29.7% (school managers) and 41.2% (teachers) who disagreed. Even though more teachers disagreed, it is worth noting that 22.5% of the teachers were not sure whether learners who did not progress to the next grade were receiving counselling or not.

From the interview discussions, participants stated that learners who were not promoted were normally encouraged and motivated by the teachers as per their subjects in order to work extra hard to enable them to master the basic competencies and being promoted next time. And if learners' situation got worse, then they were referred to the Life Skills teachers for guidance and counselling. At some schools where there was no Life Skills teachers and/or counselling programmes/groups, the schools used to invite community social workers to come to the schools to intervene by motivating and encouraging learners (together with their parents if possible) during assembly sessions.

“Teachers normally call in the learners, who would not be promoted, with their parents to school before handing out the reports and talk to them so that they both understand what happened to their children’s academic progress through the year and why they are not promoted to the next grade.”(Teacher)

Despite the fact that some schools had Life Skills teachers and went the extra mile to invite community social workers; this was not the case with some schools. Some participants stated that they had no qualified Life Skills teachers and instead they were applying the so-called ‘a big triangle’ (teachers, parents and learners) to help these learners with counselling.

PART TWO

Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Junior Secondary Promotion Policy Guide

4.2 Findings

The findings section is reported under 17 headings, numbered 4.2.1 – 4.2. 17.

4.2.1 Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide

This section intends to find out if participants (school management and teachers) were aware of the promotion policy guide. It also aims to establish if schools had copies of the policy guide and if teachers had access to the policy guide; and lastly, if teachers and the school management had personal copies of the policy guide.

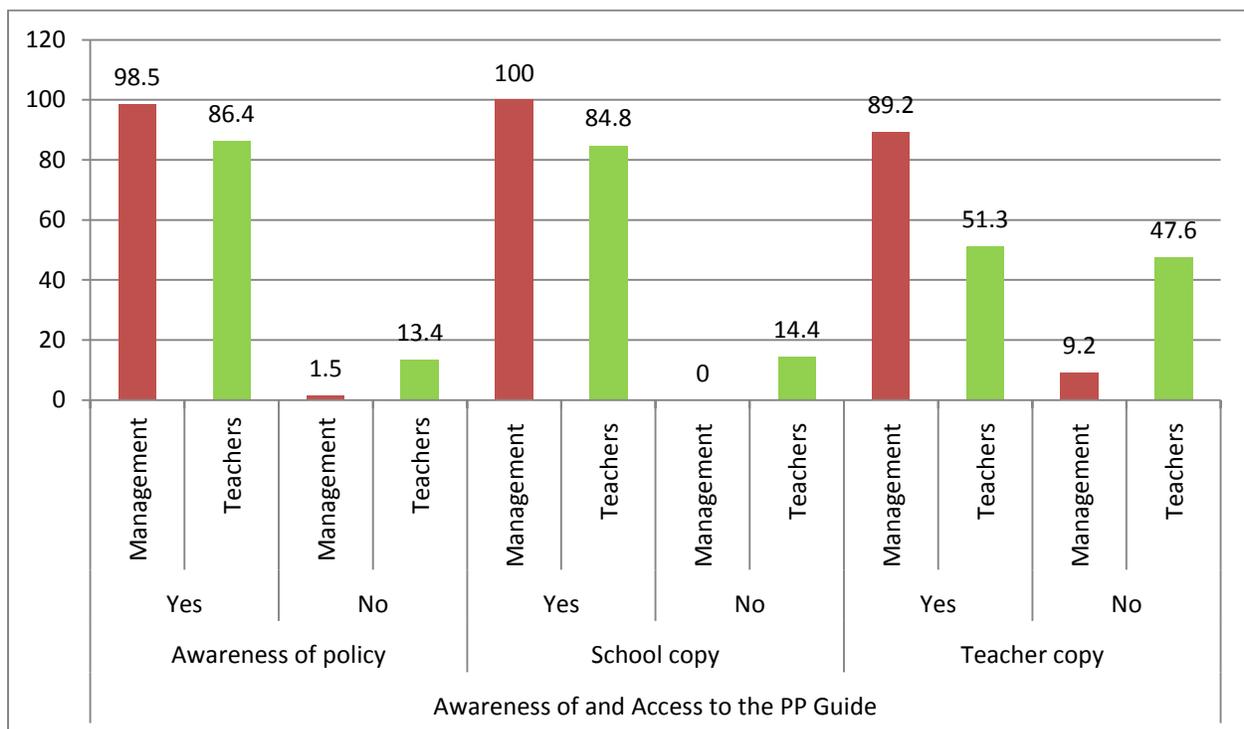


Figure 16: Awareness of and access to the promotion policy guide

Figure 1 portrays that awareness and access to the Junior Secondary Promotion Policy Guide (JSPPG) was satisfactory, ranging from 51.3% to 100.0% across all three variables. However, the 1.5% and 13.4% of school managers and teachers, respectively, who were not aware of the JSPPG and teachers without the document, as revealed by school managers (9.2%) and teachers (47.6%) are disturbing.

Generally, it is worth noting that the agreement percentage of school managers, across all three variables, was higher than the teachers; implying that many school managers were aware of the JSPPG and had access to it more than teachers. Reasons and scenarios leading to this outcome vary. In some schools, the interviews revealed that only principals or HODs had copies of the JSPPG. Thus, teachers claimed not to know anything about the document.

“No, we don’t have the document. We were not aware of the document... only find out today. Maybe we can use the general experience about what we have encountered.” (Teacher)

In most cases, when the data collector interrogated further, teachers stated that they had an excerpt from the JSPPG on the grading section and only used them during examination time. Whereas in some schools, school managers claimed that all teachers had copies; meanwhile, teachers vehemently refuted the claim.

“We don’t have a copy but we are aware of the policy guide.” (Teacher)

“During examination time when the principal is reading us that grading section of the promotion policy.” (Teacher)

Coupled with this, is the scenario in some schools with only one copy in the principal’s office, and teachers only had access to the document during the promotion of learners as that requires them to follow the JSPP guidelines. This is supported by Figure 1 indicating 47.6% of the teachers without personal copies of the JSPPG in their files. Below are some of the teachers’ claims:

“I think there is a copy for the school.” (Teacher)

“No, I don’t have, I only saw one that we are always using during exam time but it’s the only one guiding us.” (Teacher)

Generally, the awareness of and accessibility to the promotion policy guide varied among schools and participants. Although the majority of the school managers and teachers were aware of the JSPG and had access to the copy at the school, a significant number of teachers had no personal copies of the JSPG as compared to the school managers.

4.2.2 Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide

Section 4.1.2 aims to establish whether there are sections of the promotion policy guide that were difficult and challenging for the participants to implement. The statement posed was “There are some sections of the Junior Secondary Promotion Policy Guide (JSPPG) that are challenging to implement”. In response to this statement (see Figure 2), above 50% of both school managers and teachers acknowledged experiencing difficulties and challenges implementing some sections of the JSPPG.

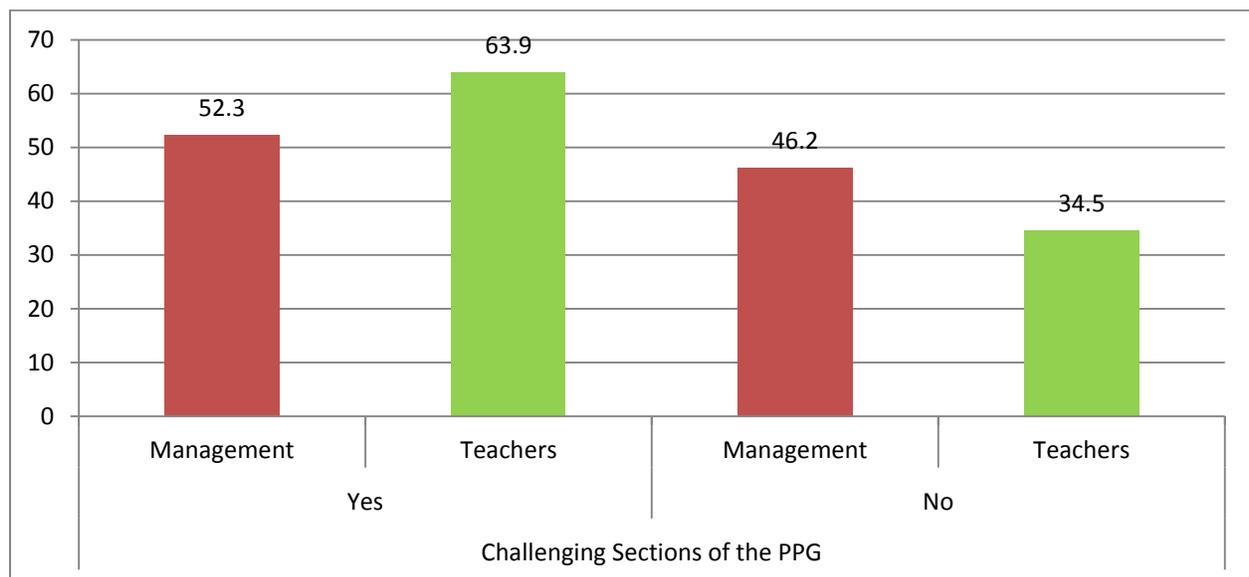


Figure 17: Challenging sections of the promotion policy guide

Further exploration of this question during face-to-face interviews highlighted the challenges:

- **Learning support:** The JSPPG (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018) stipulates that all struggling learners, at-risk learners, borderline cases, SNLs and repeaters should be

provided with learning support. Participants felt that learning support was replaced by afternoon classes and not necessarily during the normal teaching. Therefore, participants seemed to be understood that learning support is only provided in the afternoon. Although the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2018) clearly indicated that “learning support forms part of everyday teaching and should also be portrayed in lesson plans” (p. 4), it should be rendered whenever the need arises. However, principals and teachers who understood learning support in this context cited the over-crowdedness of classrooms as a hindrance. Firstly, teachers find it difficult to identify learners who need learning support, and secondly, learners who are identified are too many, thus not likely to receive one-on-one learning support. These challenges are aggravated by the lack of expertise related to learning support provision among teachers and school managers.

The majority of the teachers felt they needed professional development or more professional development in the area of learning support. This raises some concern as there is a Learning Support Teachers’ Manual (Ministry of Education, 2014) authored by NIED that provides the theory and practice of learning support.

- ***Transfer of learners:*** According to the JSPPG Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2018), “a learner must only repeat once in the junior secondary phase and once in grade 10” (p. 5). The transfer of learners was a huge concern for the majority of principals and teachers. Based on the transfer of learners, one teacher stated that “*can we just let our learners learn without being promoted. So transferring of the learners should come to an end*”. In addition, some participants argued that transferring learners with learning backlogs does not benefit learners and places more challenges on the next grade teacher. In such instances, repetition was opted for through consultations with parents who determined whether the child should be transferred to the next grade or not, contrary to the JSPPG. Some of the reasons and concerns why the transfer of learners is not well received:

“Now, do the learners who went to Gr 10 have to repeat or transferred? Maybe our understanding was different with other schools because according to us we didn’t transfer learners.” (Principal)

- **Special Needs Learners (SNLs):** Page 4 of the JSPPG (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018) stipulates that “*Hard of hearing learners attend regular schools from the onset to capitalise and encourage residual speech, particularly when the learner does not need Namibian Sign Language. Equally, learners with low vision should attend regular schools with the necessary support services*”. Furthermore, the JSPPG stipulates: “*Teachers receive training to enable them to understand and meet special needs, assessment practices and have access to resource persons with expertise in remediation and specialised education in an inclusive setting*” (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018, p. 4). Both the principal and teachers at almost every school lamented the lack of expertise to handle SNLs as a challenge. This challenge, participants mentioned was a huge obstacle to quality teaching and learning. However, during challenges, teachers were always left without alternatives but to try their best to accommodate SNLs. The need to capacitate teachers with knowledge and skills to teach SNLs seemed common among all participants. However, there were some schools with qualified teachers for SNLs; but even then, participants felt that one teacher cannot manage various grades.

- **Borderline cases:** “*These are learners in grades 8 to 10, although they failed, attained a percentage close to the minimum requirement necessary to pass, i.e., their achievement is close to the promotion percentage*” (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018, p. 11). Despite that conditions to condone are clearly stipulated in the JSPPG, some principals and teachers faced challenges in deciding whether to condone or not. Generally, as revealed through interviews, the interpretation of when to condone borderline cases seemed a challenge. In other instances, one principal revealed that teachers found it very difficult to give what they considered a ‘*free mark*’ and some asked “*where do we find this mark?*” On this premise, one can extrapolate that borderline learners are at the disadvantage of repeating grades. Overall, there seemed a need to find ways that assist teachers to interpret borderline conditions.

- **Out-of-school support services:** Rendering learning support to struggling learners also takes place outside normal teaching time, mainly during afternoons (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018). These outside normal teaching time activities posed challenges to participants. Some schools with learning support teams claimed to have had well-structured and organised out-of-school programmes (remedial or, compensatory teaching). Despite learner-related

challenges of not being eager to turn up for afternoon sessions due to various reasons (proximity reasons, socio-economic conditions), teachers too, principals were concerned, did not turn up. In some schools, outside normal teaching time programmes were spontaneous and individual teachers led. This mode of operation, principals lamented, did not yield satisfactory outcomes. Other reasons included the absence of learning-support teams to oversee learning support activities.

- ***New grading requirements set too high:*** The new promotional requirements for junior secondary are stipulated below (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018, p. 10).

Table 2: The new promotional requirements for junior secondary

<i>Grades 8 and 9</i>	<i>an E-grade or better in 7 out of the 9 promotional subjects; an E-grade or better in English; An overall average of an E (40%).</i>
-----------------------	--

Participants differed on the promotional requirements for junior secondary as set above. While some participants appreciated the new grading, others found E (40%) too high.

In addition, some participants acknowledged that the new promotional requirements needed more effort and hard work from both teachers and learners. As a result, teachers are forced to go the extra mile to ensure that learners understand and are eventually promoted.

“...teachers stay for extra classes or during weekends and holidays just to assist the learners.”
(Teacher)

Generally, the majority of participants faced challenges regarding the implementation of the JSPPG; however, 46.2% of the management and 34.5% of the teachers who did not face any challenges cannot be ignored.

“I don’t think we have challenges with the policy, maybe we are not aware that we were supposed to have support team at school.” **(Teacher)**

“Not really because we have already chosen the people who are responsible for the promotional, just as a committee.” (Principal)

This admission might imply why some participants faced no challenges as the document (JSPPG) was not familiar to them, hence, not easy to identify challenges.

4.2.3 School committees and programmes

It is expected from each school, according to the promotion policy guide for Junior and Senior Primary phase as well as Junior Secondary, to establish committees and set up programmes such as:

A promotion policy committee [*in each school there should be a promotion committee comprising the school principal, heads of department and class/subject teachers. The committee has overall promotion responsibilities by, among others, ensuring consistency in dealing with borderline cases. All recommendations by the committee should be endorsed by the Regional Education Office*]

A learning support team [*a team consisting of teachers ensuring that the subject/class teacher offers needed support to learners while working in consultation and collaboration with them*]

A gifted learners’ programme [*enrichment programmes for gifted learners should be established in collaboration with the learning support group to ensure that gifted learners are sufficiently challenged*]

An individualised learning programme [*learners who could not achieve the required competencies should be supported through suitable and structured individualised programmes*]. Therefore, this section aims to find out whether the schools have established the above-mentioned committees and programmes.

The trend observed in Figure 3 needs further exploration. Across all four variables on the establishment of committees and setting up of programmes in schools, discrepancies were observed as school managers' yes responses were higher than that of teachers.

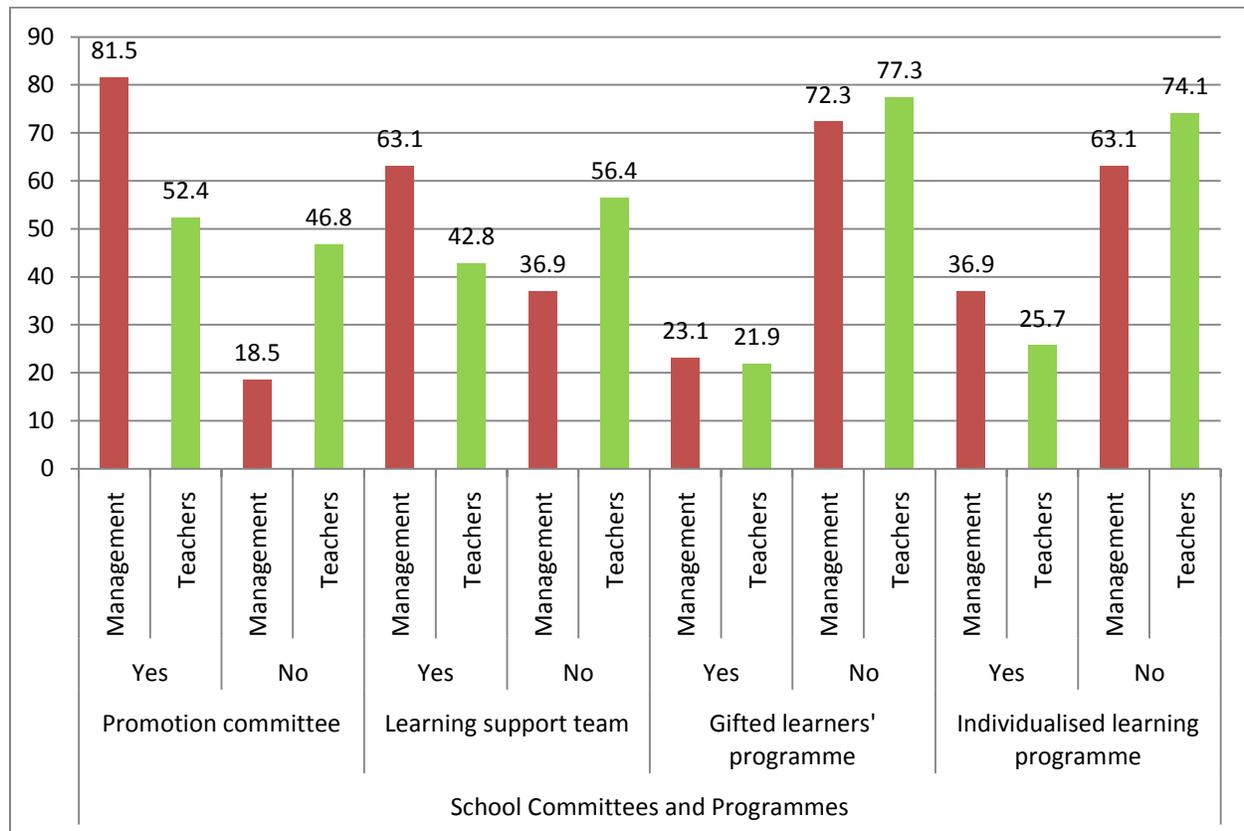


Figure 18: School committees and programmes

Concerning the promotion policy committees as alluded to earlier on, the majority of the school managers (81.5%) responded ‘yes’ as compared to the teachers (46.8%) who responded ‘no’. For learning support teams, 63.1% of the management indicated that learning support teams were established at their schools; on the contrary, 56.4% (more than half) of teachers disagreed. Generally, good practices were observed in some schools. For instance, though uncommon, some schools had learning support teams headed by Life Skills teachers, including the management and some teachers. In other schools, despite the absence of learning support teams, learning support activities were planned, timetabled, monitored and effective. However, in some schools, undesirable practices, deviating from the guidelines of the JSPPG, were observed. Some schools

practised the ‘up-to-the-teacher’ approach. Each teacher had to decide how and when to provide support, and this was not timetabled, nor monitored. To the extremes, some school managers lamented the unwillingness of some teachers to render learning support, but mostly teachers’ reluctance to continue providing support in the afternoons, citing several reasons, among them, too much workload.

The observed discrepancies between school managers and teachers on the establishment of promotion committees and learning support teams are a cause for concern on whether to consider the school managers’ or the teachers’ responses. It could be possible that some school managers only said ‘yes’ to promote their schools and cover up weaknesses.

The performance of schools on the establishment of gifted learners’ programmes was the worst as compared to other committees and programmes. As shown in Figure 3, only 23.1% of the management and 21.9% of the teachers agreed that there were programmes for gifted learners. Generally, gifted learners, some participants acknowledged, were ignored. Programmes for gifted learners largely comprised of unorganised and spontaneous ways such as enrichment tasks, and no structured programmes. However, although not a common occurrence, some schools effectively engaged such learners as ‘teacher learners’ who assisted fellow learners with the completion of class tasks.

Regarding the individualised learning programmes, as Figure 3 illustrates, less than 40% of school managers and even lower for teachers (25.7%) indicated that there were learning support programmes for individual repeating and struggling learners.

Conclusively, schools without required committees (learning support, and promotion policy committee) and programmes (gifted learners’ individualised learning programmes) jeopardise effective teaching and learning. As per JSPPG, these committees and programmes are indispensable to schools.

4.2.4 Special education referral

The promotion policy guide stipulates that policies and procedures for learners' referrals should be followed. The referral should be conducted as early as possible in order to utilise learners' skills, aptitude and talents and to avoid repetition. For this reason, this section is to find out if schools had policies and procedures in place for special education referral and placement.

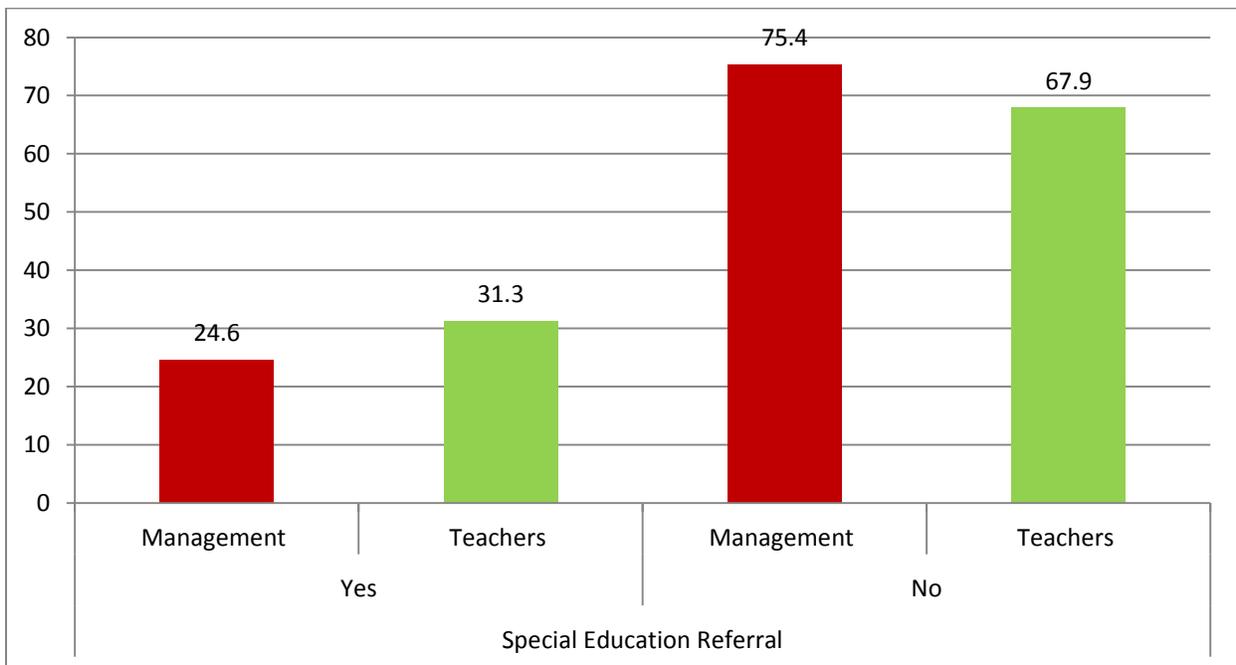


Figure 19: Special Education Referral

Figure 4 shows that 31.3% (teachers) and 24.6% (school managers) had indicated that there were procedures in place for special education referral and placement at their schools. At some schools, participants assured that they had well-established, structured and effective referral systems.

“The teacher has to write a letter and fill in the form to be referred to the Life Skills teacher who will then contact the region. The regions will assess the learner and determine if it’s a case of a learner have to go to a special school or not.” (Acting Principal)

“As teachers, when we find learners having special needs we refer them to our Life Skills teacher, ...we don’t have enough time because most of the time we are having extra lessons so our schedule is packed and no time for re-teaching but we are trying.” (Teacher)

“Yes, so far we have referrals and we work together with the Life Skills teacher we have a challenge like in most cases last year we refer one learner from Grade 1, Grade 8 and Grade 9, the referral system is here already.” (Principal)

However, as results show, many schools visited did not have referral and placement procedures in place. Three major hindrances were cited. Firstly, access to special schools. Participants, during interviews, bemoaned the absence of or scarcity of special schools in some regions. Some schools are far away from such schools, with only the possibility of placing such learners in hostels. The affordability of hostel fees and all the logistics thereof, make parents reluctant to move their kids to such facilities. Some parents even opt to keep their kids out of school. Secondly, delays in feedback. Schools complained of delays in getting feedback and responses from both special schools and regional offices. When applications for placements are sent out to schools, it takes too long, or no feedback is received. Similarly, some participants were concerned that regional offices take forever when consulted on referral matters.

“We have tried many cases to refer learners with special needs and it always turned down like in our region there is no a school or place to go. Therefore, we have a challenge that our school does not have a special needs class.” (Teacher)

All these problems cited, culminate into the third challenge of keeping special needs learners (SNLs) in mainstream classes with minimal support due to several reasons to be discussed in the next section. Consequently, the lack of appropriate support resulted in learners’ frustrations to a point of them dropping out of school. Some schools, although not a common practice, had special classes with a special teacher. Such classes served as referral classes. All learners identified with learning backlogs or special needs are placed in such classes until they master the targeted knowledge and skills. However, special classes seemed to benefit struggling learners,

more than special needs learners (SNLs) as in most cases, ‘special teachers’ too lacked the knowledge and skills to teach SNLs.

4.2.5 At-risk learners in the school

According to JSPPG (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018), “the central goal of identifying at-risk learners is to provide effective learning support to meet the unique educational needs of each of these learners” (p. 13). Thus, this section intends to find out whether at-risk learners were identified and provided with the necessary support.

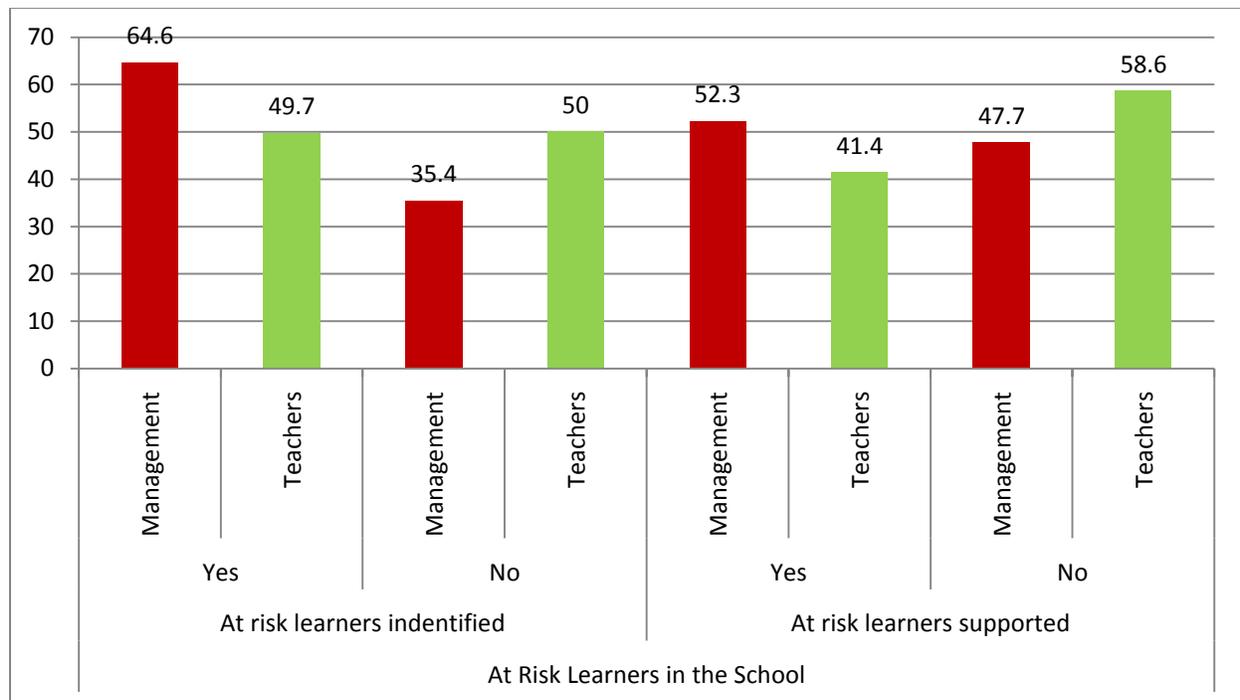


Figure 20: At-risk learners in the school

As portrayed in Figure 5, the school management (64.6%) and teachers (49.7%) indicated that at-risk learners were identified at their schools and supported by 52.3% and 41.4% of the school management and teachers, respectively.

“For academically affected learners, we support them by giving them afternoon classes etc. And for the dropouts, we follow their absenteeism records through the HoDs and do home visits. We

contact the parents and find out what happened, and sometimes we help learners in need of school uniforms, pads or toiletries. So, we have a system in place to assist them and those things are available at school.” (Principal)

“Sometimes we call learners in and talk to them and also their parents and talk to them. ...learners with hearing problems and those can’t see well, we put them in front because we know them and we speak loud to accommodate them.” (Teachers)

“We have teachers that offer extra classes or remedial class for at-risk learners who are doing extremely weak.” (Principal)

Although at some schools at-risk learners were supported, the majority of the teachers (58.6%) disagreed as compared to the school management (47.7%). Here is what some of the participants said.

“Many boy learners are in drug cases, and we cannot handle them because they don’t come for counselling and when the social workers come to school, they don’t go so we struggle with them.” (Teacher)

“...the support is so little because you have no option even you realize that this learner is good even in dancing or sports there is no way how you can help because even if you help the learner will go nowhere no one will come and support these learners. And sometimes we don’t have materials that really help these learners to develop their talents.” (Principal)

“I know of learners who are sexually abused and they are now ill-disciplined. So, we cannot help them.” (Teacher)

Drug abuse, poor performances and sexual abuse were some of the factors that at-risk learners were faced with. And this resulted in them becoming undisciplined learners and the participants found it difficult to support them.

4.2.6 Special needs support training received

As per the promotion policy guide, teachers should be trained to enable them to understand and equip them with the necessary skills to handle learners with special needs. This section, thus, aims to gauge whether the participants have received training to enable them to understand and meet the needs of the learners with special needs.

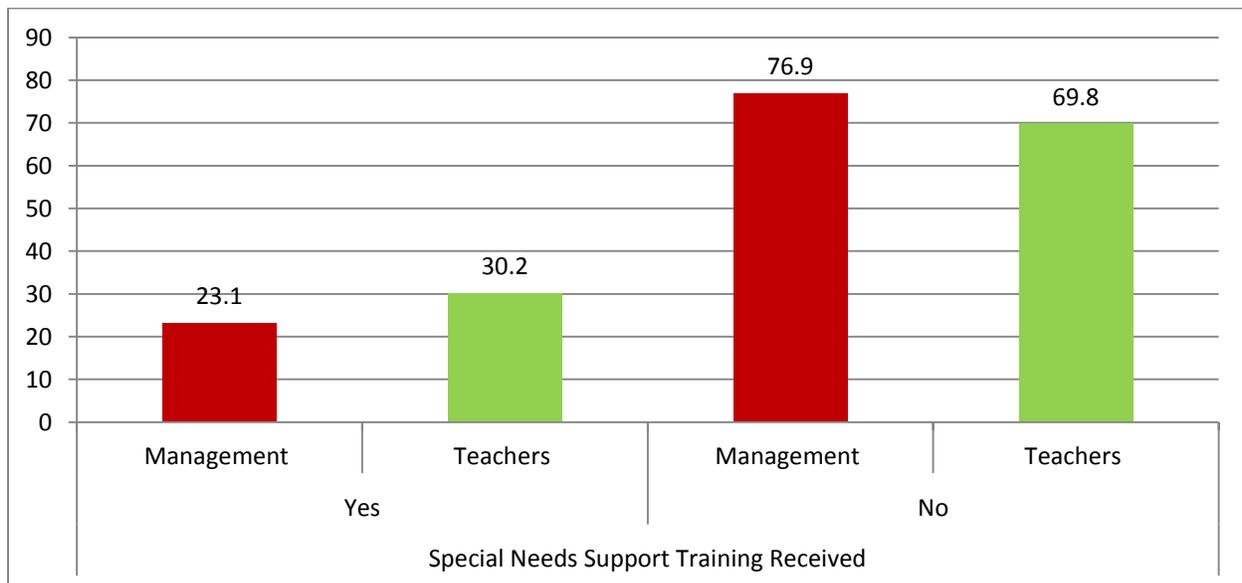


Figure 21: Special needs support training received

Figure 6 shows that 23.1% of the school managers and 30.2% of the teachers had received training to enable them to understand and meet the needs of learners with special needs. This means that only a few respondents received training as compared to the 76.9% and 69.8% of the school managers and teachers, respectively, who did not receive the training. From the figures provided by the respondents, it is a worrisome situation. Most of the participants stated during the interview that no training and/or workshops were given to them on how to support learners with special needs.

“Since we have been employed here none of us have received special training and I think it’s one of those areas which are challenging to us because since we do not have a specialist in that area

it makes it difficult for us to assist or provide assistance to the learners who need assistance from us as a school.” (Principal)

“We did not receive any special training for this and for example if a child is having ear or eyes problem I will just ask this learner to come and sit in front.” (Teacher)

However, participants claimed to receive only lectures on inclusive education during their professional training at the institutions of higher learning but that was not enough as it was more theoretical. At some schools, participants indicated that only the Life Skills teachers were normally invited by the advisory teachers for the workshops in special education on how to deal with special needs learners.

“We had a module during our course called inclusive education, that gave us training with some skills and if I had to be honest, I don’t think I had training that have prepared me to deal with learners with such difficulties.” (Teacher)

However, Life Skills teachers felt that such workshops were inadequate to empower them to handle learners with special needs.

4.2.7 Appreciation of the promotion policy guide

In Section 4.1.7, participants were asked the extent to which they appreciated the role of the promotion policy guide.

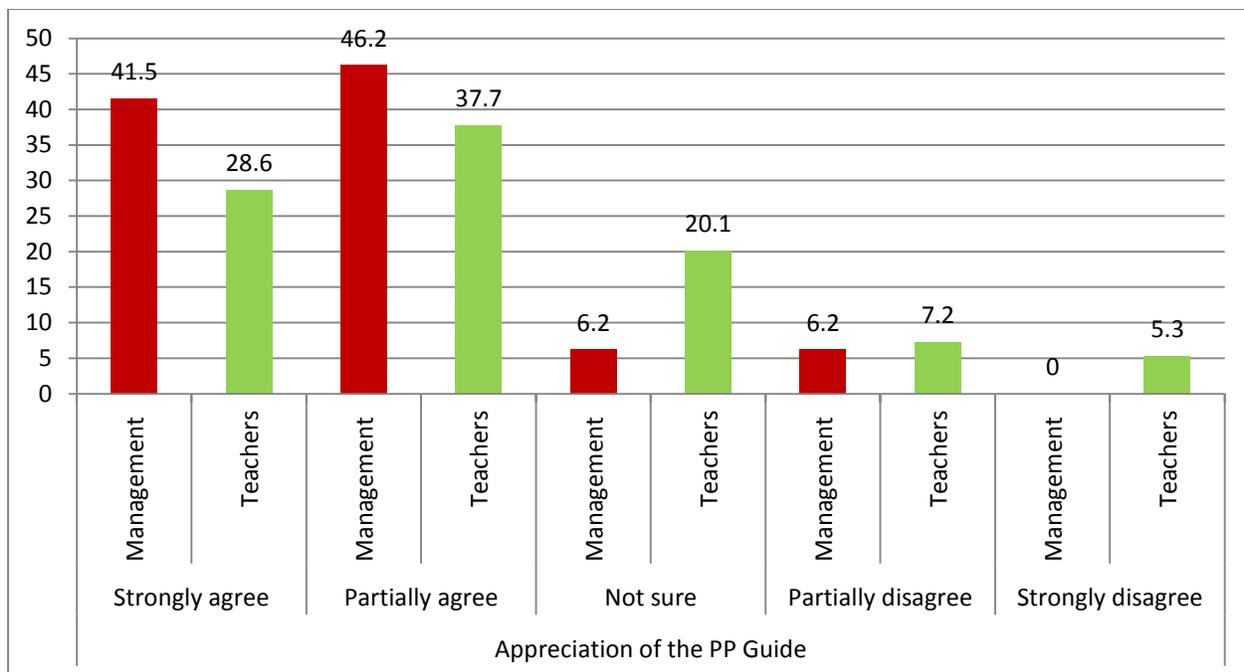


Figure 22: Appreciation of the promotion policy guide

Figure 7 portrays that the school managers (87.7%) and teachers (66.3%) appreciated the role that the promotion policy guide played in their daily teaching and learning process. Although most of the teachers agreed, a significant number of the teachers (12.5%) disagreed. During the interview, many participants appreciated the policy as a unifying framework for promotion requirements for school managers and teachers across schools. On the contrary, some participants did not appreciate the JSPPG.

“For me it’s not useful. It’s too high for the system itself. The requirement is too high for what is being done for these learners in order to meet promotion requirements. Under no circumstances will you be required to promote these learners with those requirements with environment not conducive for the learners.” (Teacher)

“The policy itself might not be useful because we are just putting something in work with no support. We don’t know how to tackle it or deal with it because we did not receive any support.” (Teacher)

The most disturbing outcome was some participants who were not aware of the existence of the policy and/or were not in possession of the document. On the contrary, some participants stated in the interview that the JSPPG and revised curriculum did not make sense as teachers are forced to go the extra mile, beyond learners’ level of understanding. Generally, the JSPPG seemed to provide school managers and teachers with relevant information regarding promotion requirements, although some teachers, unfortunately, found it difficult to appreciate the JSPPG and those who were not in possession of the document.

4.2.8 Understanding of the promotion policy guide

This section gauges participants’ understanding of the JSPPG. As Figure 8 shows, the majority of the principals (93.8%) agreed that they understood the JSPPG. Similarly, although the agreement response was less than that of the principals, 62.5% of the teachers admitted not having difficulties understanding the guidelines set up by the JSPPG.

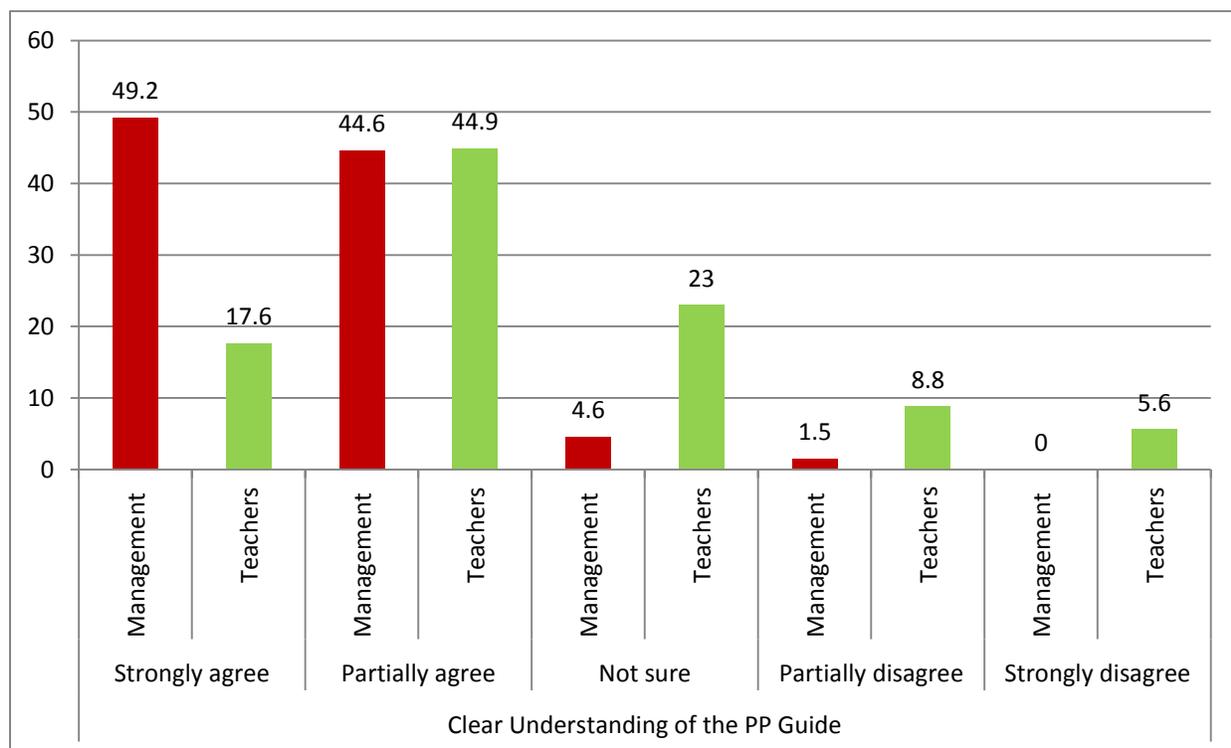


Figure 23: Understanding of the promotion policy guide

Despite a significant agreement response, 14.4% and 1.5% of the teachers and managers respectively who faced difficulties understanding the JSPPG is a call for concern. The most disturbing are the principals who did not seem to have a clear understanding of the JSPPG guidelines. If principals lack understanding of the policy, how do they assist teachers? Probing further during interviews participants acknowledged a myriad of interpretations of the JSPPG document. The most cited contributing reason was the lack of training or workshop that could help teachers to have a common understanding.

“No, to be honest with you we did not attend any training when it comes to the implementation of the policy guide; we implemented it on our own. We did not receive any assistance or guidance.”

(Principal)

In most cases, teachers and principals read on their own; a practice they felt led to misinterpretations. However, in some schools, although not common, principals initiated workshops for teachers to reach a common understanding. This effort, to some principals, was insufficient as interpretation accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

4.2.9 Alignment between the JSPPG and revised curriculum

The complementarity of the promotion policy guide and the revised senior primary curriculum cannot be overemphasised. The guide emphasises how the promotion policy guide applies and how it should be implemented together with the revised curriculum. Figure 9 responds to the participants on the question of whether there was an alignment between the promotion policy guide and the revised senior primary curriculum.

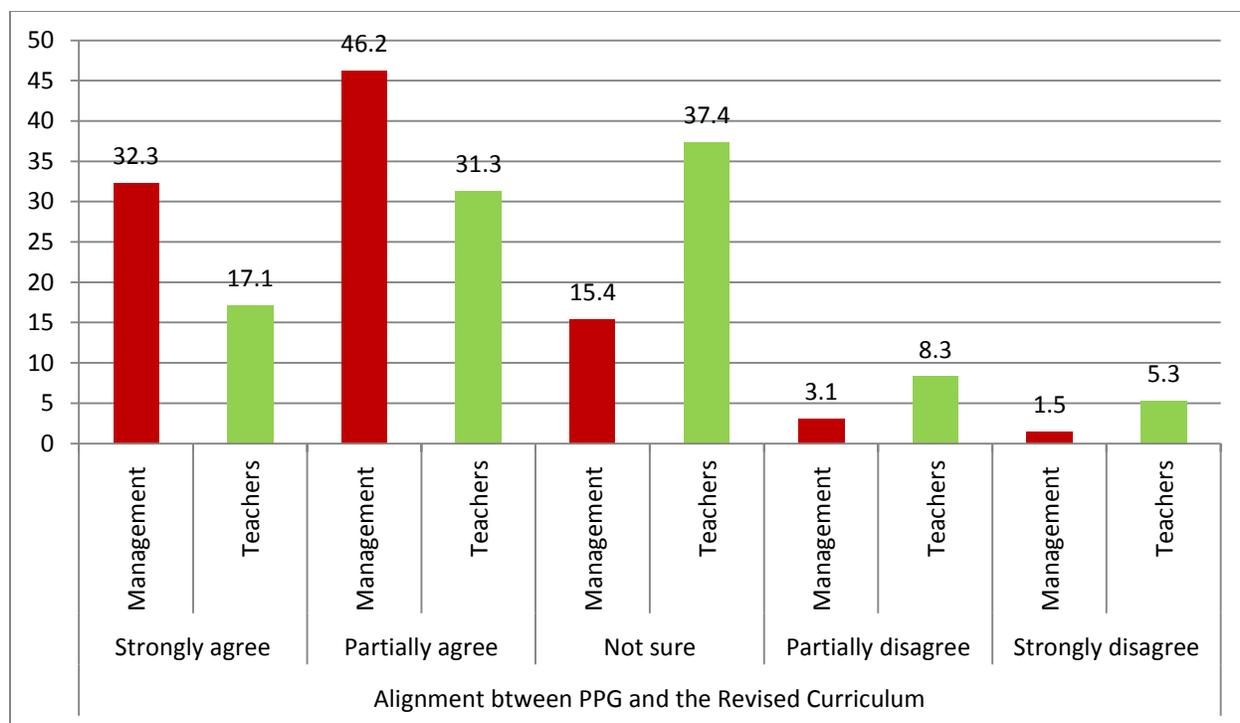


Figure 24: Alignment between the JSPPG and revised curriculum

Figure 9 indicates that 78.5% of the school managers agreed that there was an alignment between the JSPPG and the revised curriculum as compared to 48.4% of the teachers. Apart from the respondents who agreed, 15.4% and 37.4% of the school managers and teachers, respectively, were not sure whether the JSPPG and the revised curriculum were aligned with each other. However, during the interview, participants felt that the two documents were corresponding since the JSPPG was developed from the revised curriculum. Therefore, the promotion requirements in the JSPPG and those in the revised curriculum correlate.

“They are the same because what the syllabus is telling us to do is the same as the policy.”
(Teacher)

“I think there is an alignment and the content is being strengthened from the lower grades. Therefore, I think the current one is forward looking considering subjects which are aimed of equipping the skills to those who are not academically.” **(Principal)**

The newly appointed teachers indicated during the interview that they were not familiar with the revised curriculum to see whether it was in line with the JSPPG. This is disturbing, considering that during teacher preparation; student teachers should have been familiarized with educational policies and indispensable documents such as the revised curriculum and JSPPG.

4.2.10 Consistent implementation of the JSPPG

As per the promotion policy guide, school principals and heads of departments should monitor the quality of assessment tasks and the implementation of the promotion policy principles and procedures in order to ensure that the guide is implemented consistently. This section aims to find out if the promotion policy guide was implemented consistently at the schools.

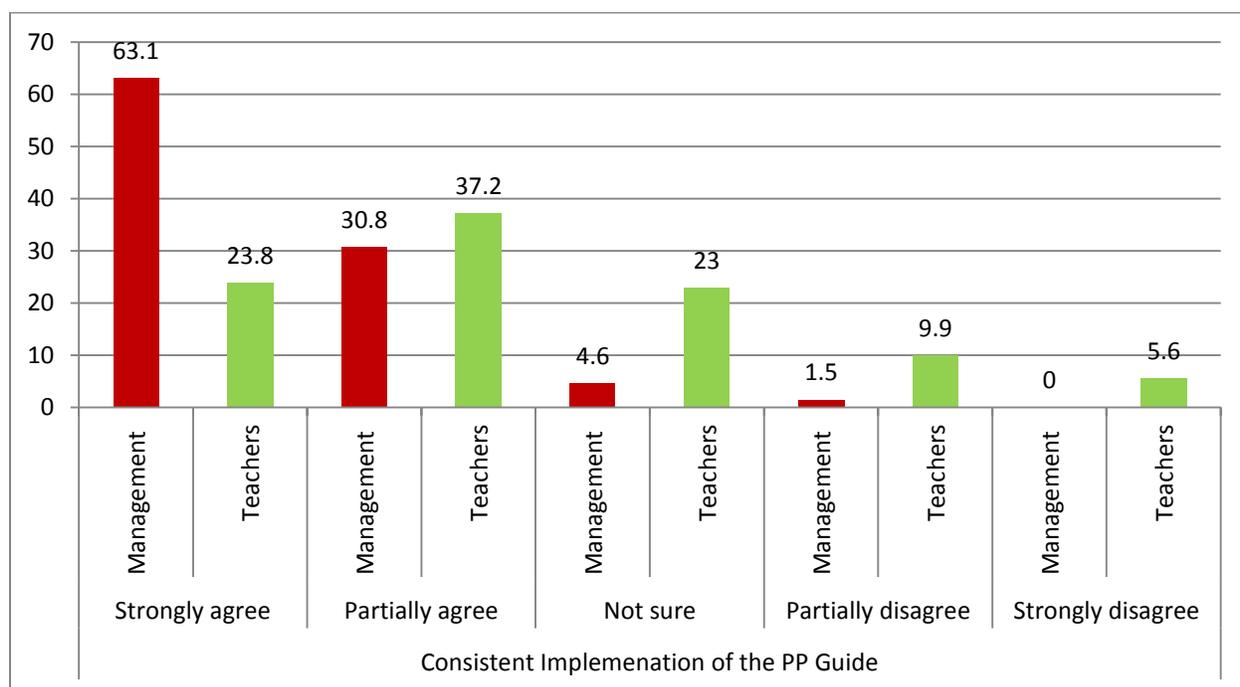


Figure 25: Consistent implementation of the JSPPG

Figure 10 portrays that the school managers (93.9%) and teachers (61.0%) agreed that the JSPPG was implemented consistently at their schools. At some schools, the JSPPG was implemented despite some reservations and dissatisfactions about some features, for instance, the ‘transfer of

learners' that some participants were not happy about. Whilst at some schools the JSPPG was religiously implemented without reservations.

“At the moment we do not deviate from the policy because our internal policies are not well communicated to the community, therefore we are implementing the policy as it is.” (Principal)

“No, there is no deviation we are following the policy.” (Teacher)

Overall, the implementation of the JSPPG was inconsistent across the schools sampled. As findings revealed, while some schools adhered to the policy directives, others deviated as dictated by their school environment and learners' circumstances.

4.2.11 Support to implement the promotion policy guide

The promotion policy guide states clearly that the regional directors should make sure that this policy guide is understood by the inspectors of education, advisory teachers, principals and parents; and also to ensure that the policy is deliberated on at all levels. Moreover, principals should ensure that the guidelines in the policy are understood by the teachers, parents and learners. Figure 11 provides participants' responses on to what extent have they been sufficiently supported in the implementation of the promotion policy guide.

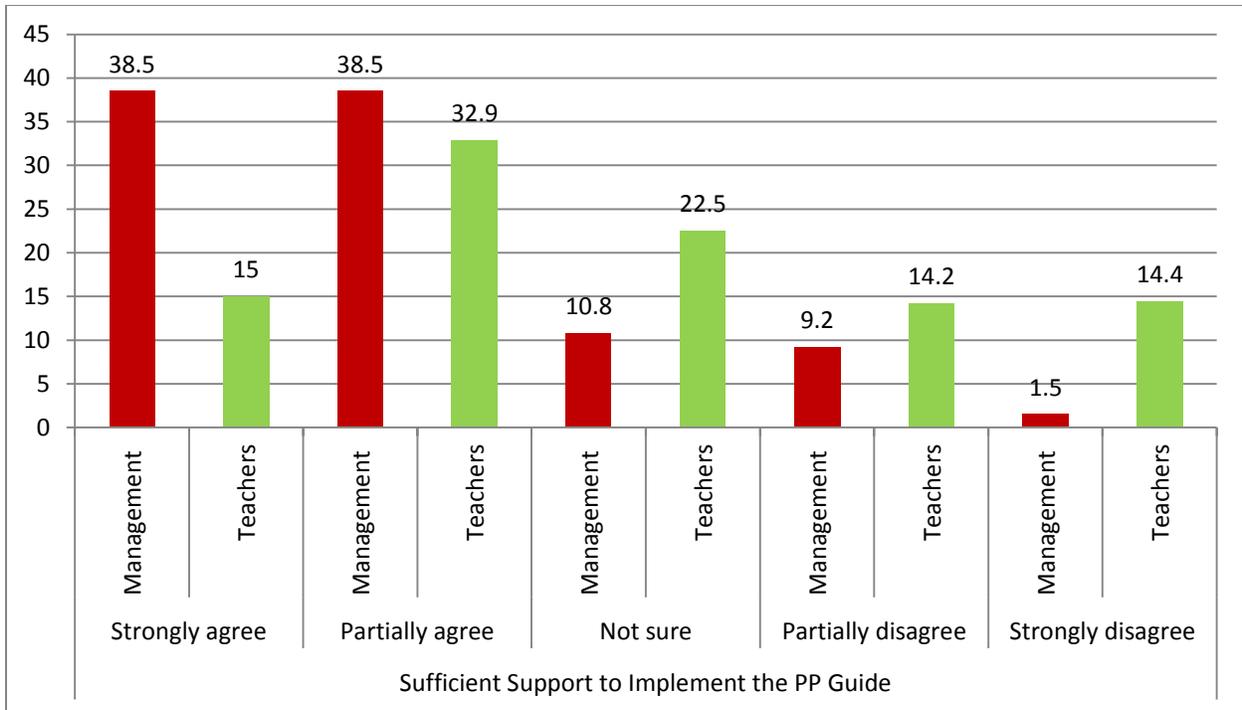


Figure 26: Support to implement the JSPPG

Figure 11 indicates that 77% of the school managers as compared to 47.9% of the teachers agreed that they received support on how to implement the JSPPG. Based on the percentages, the majority of the managers portray a different picture compared to the teachers. This was eminent during interviews too as the majority of the managers claimed that both teachers and principals received support for the implementation of the JSPPG.

“We have been trained with teachers by the regional office through the Advisory Teachers that have been training at NIED so they give us a workshop on the implementation of the promotion policy guide so at least for the first time they did that.” (Principal)

“Yes we got support, especially at the end of the term and we were always going back to get support because it’s a new thing.” (Teacher)

On the other hand, the majority of the teachers stated that they were not trained or supported in the implementation of the JSPPG; instead, they only received extracts on the promotion requirements. Similarly, during the workshops, teachers claimed that the focus was mainly on the

promotion requirement sections. At some schools, this scenario was overcome by the support from the school management to better understand the JSPPG and implement it accordingly.

“No, we did not get any support or training because the document came through the principal and the examination committee.” (Teacher)

“I don’t think so, because there was no proper training in the school. No one came from outside to give us guidance. We just did it ourselves as a group.” (Teacher)

“The only time we were supported was during the exams when we took the report cards to the principal to see where we can be assisted and to also rectify if we were correct. I think that’s the only time that we are supported.” (Teacher)

It seemed that the majority of the managers were trained and supported on the JSPPG as compared to the teachers. As a result, these teachers were implementing the JSPPG with insufficient understanding. In fact, these teachers only received support occasionally from their school managers after consulting them when matters arise especially during the examination.

4.2.12 Monitoring the learning support programme

According to the promotion policy guide, it is expected that principals should monitor the work done by the learners within the support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents. Thus, participants’ responses on whether principals were monitoring the work done within the learning support programme are provided in Figure 12.

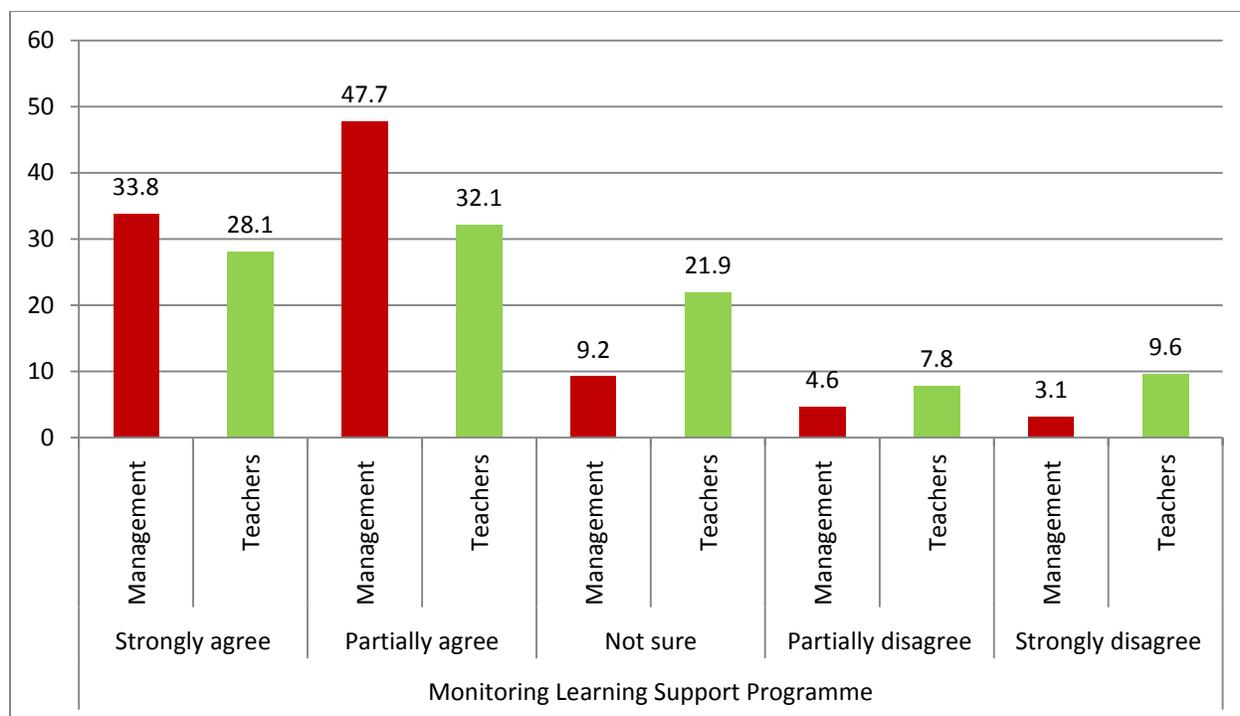


Figure 27: Monitoring the learning support programme

As shown in Figure 12, the school managers (81.5%) agreed that they monitor the work done by the learners within the support programme and ensure that continuous individual feedback is provided to both the learners and the parents as compared to the teachers (60.2%). On the contrary, 7.7% (school managers) and 17.4% (teachers) disagreed while 9.2% and 21.9% of the school managers and teachers, respectively, were not sure of the statement. The percentage of the teachers who were not sure of the principal’s role cannot be ignored. This might imply that the principal’s role in monitoring the learning support programme is not well-defined at some schools.

However, some participants acknowledged that:

- some principals encouraged teachers to identify learners who were in dire need of being given learning support.
- some principals were always motivating teachers to come up with learning support teams/ groups per subject and then compile a timetable with prescribed dates on when to support learners.

- some principals were very active and supportive in assisting teachers who found it difficult to help learners during compensatory teaching.
- some principals were involved in the planning of activities and facilitated the learning support programme daily.
- some principals monitored, coordinated, and supervised the entire programme.
- some principals were normally making some follow-ups with their subordinates on the programme.

“The principal is involved in monitoring this program.” (Teacher)

“My role is to motivate teachers to do learner support and also to monitor learner support like at Junior Primary. I asked teachers to submit names of learners who cannot read and write so that I keep on making follow-up on how far are the learner who cannot read.” (Principal)

“...to guide and monitor to see whether classes are taking place, ...to make sure that the right learners are taken into the programme and also to have a timetable in place.” (Principal)

However, at some schools, participant teachers indicated that principals were unable to monitor learning support activities since they also had afternoon classes. At some schools, there were no learning support programmes, hence principals had nothing to monitor and/or facilitate.

4.2.13 Information to parents/guardians about learner performance

As per the promotion policy guide, parents/guardians should be informed and updated regularly on the performance and progress of their children at school in order to support their children throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat. This section intends to find out if parents/guardians were used to being informed about the performance and progress of their children so that they can support their children at home.

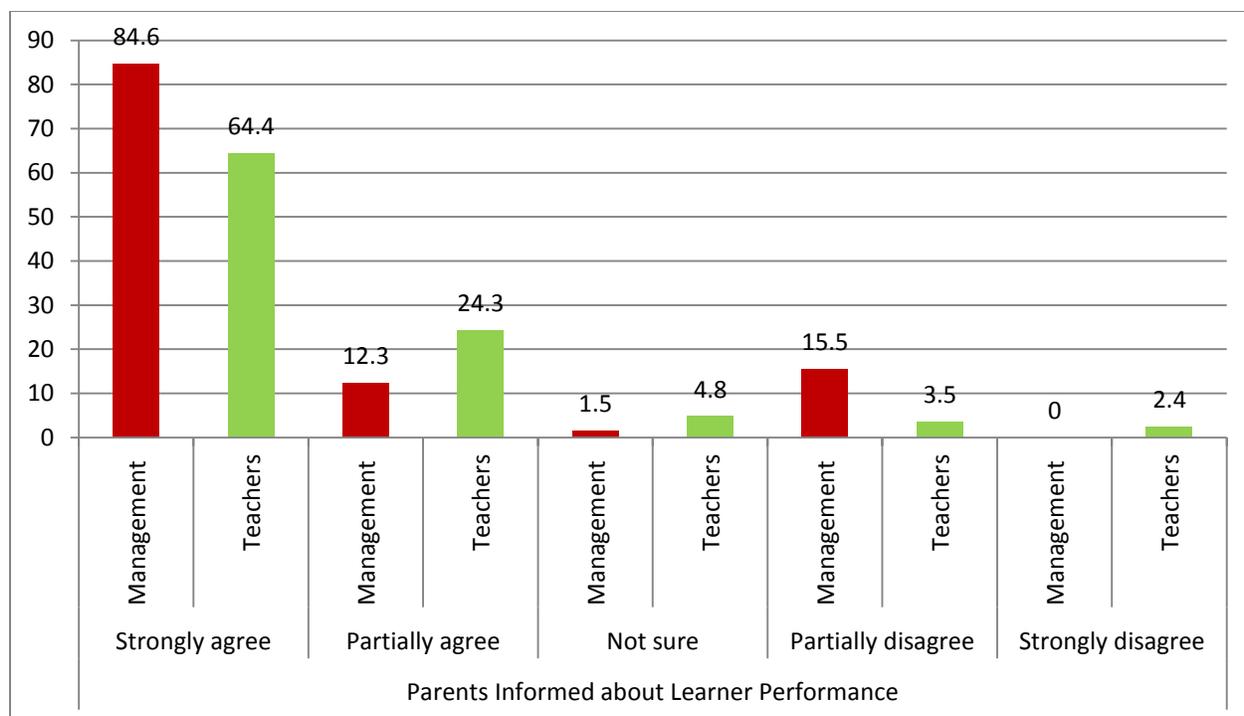


Figure 28: Information to parents about learner performance

Figure 13 portrays that 96.9% (school managers) and 88.7% (teachers) agreed that parents/guardians were informed about the performance and progress of their children so that they can support their children throughout their schooling and not only when they repeat. During the interviews, participants revealed that parents were normally informed about their children’s performance and progress during teacher-parent meetings, book viewing days, prize-giving ceremony days and at the end of each term when they come to school to collect their children’s progress reports. At some schools, there was an open-door policy whereby parents/guardians were allowed to come in anytime during school hours to check and inquire about anything related to their children’s school work. In some schools, community members usually came to schools to have motivational talks with learners to encourage them to work hard. But, in most cases, parents/guardians were also invited to come to schools for the whole day to enable them to discuss the performance and progress of their children with teachers in the presence of their children.

“During the term, we do have a special parents’ day whereby parents will come and have a look at the learners’ books, activities and tests.” (Principal)

“We call in the external supporters in a small group to come and motivate these learners, and then we monitor their progress.” (Teacher)

“We are always having motivational speakers to talk to the learners while teachers usually having mentorship section with them to assist.” (Principal)

At some schools, parents/guardians were always provided with a hard copy of analysed statistics (number of learners who were promoted and those not) that shows how each grade has performed throughout the term. Some participants stated that they used to send learners’ marked assessment books home with them for their parents/guardians to see and check how their children were performing.

4.2.14 Community and parental involvement

It is stated clearly in the promotion policy that schools should form partnerships with parents by maintaining close communication and inviting them to visit the classroom. In other words, schools should build and sustain parental and community involvement and support. Therefore, this section responds to the participants on whether there is parental and community involvement and support in schools.

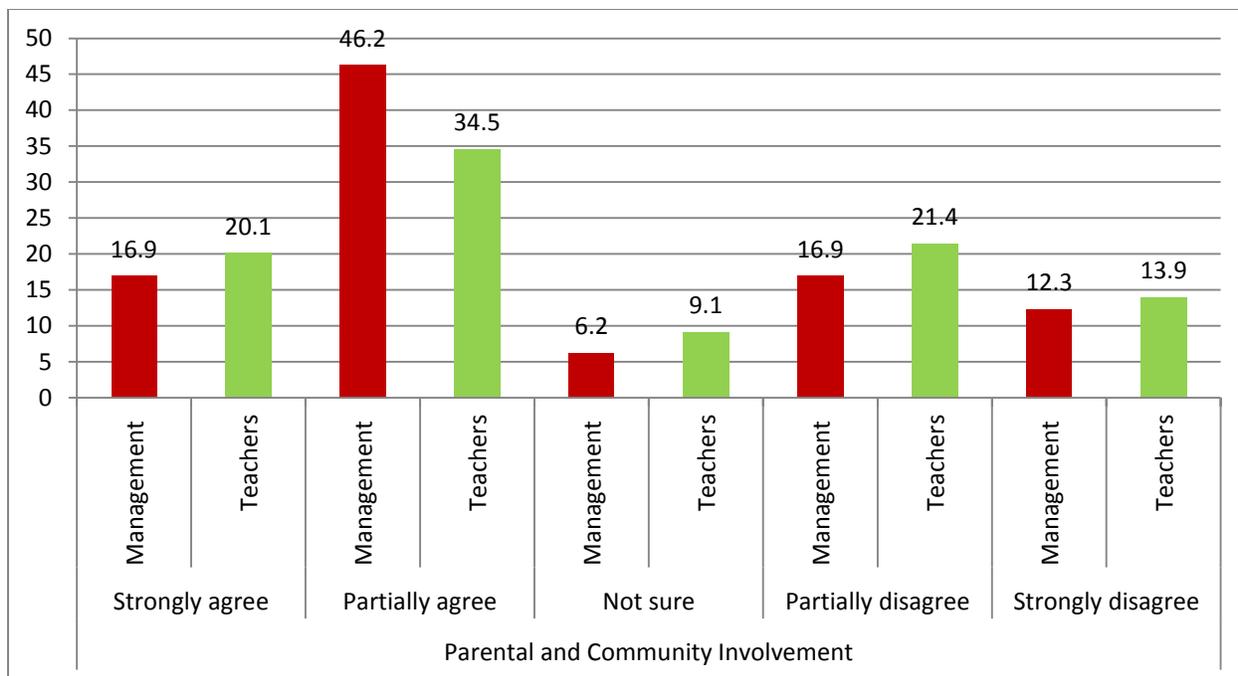


Figure 29: Community and parental involvement

According to Figure 14, the school managers (63.1%) and teachers (54.6%) agreed that parents and the community at large were involved and supported schools. While only 29.2% of the school managers and 35.3% of the teachers did not agree with the statement; 6.2% (school managers) and 9.1% (teachers) were not sure. At some schools, the business community has supported the school by providing financial assistance to needy learners to further their studies.

“We had some special kids went to study medicine and the community supporting them with bursaries and accommodated them. The community supports learners to excel in whatever they are doing.” (Teacher)

“Basically, we use the community to talk to the learners and find out about them.” (Teacher)

Some participants also stated that some teachers were also playing parental duties to assist learners who were physically abused and not well taken care of by their parents.

4.2.15 Counselling of repeaters

According to the promotion policy guide, learners who do not progress to the next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation. Thus, this section intends to find out if learners who do not progress to the next grade were receiving counselling to help them understand their situation.

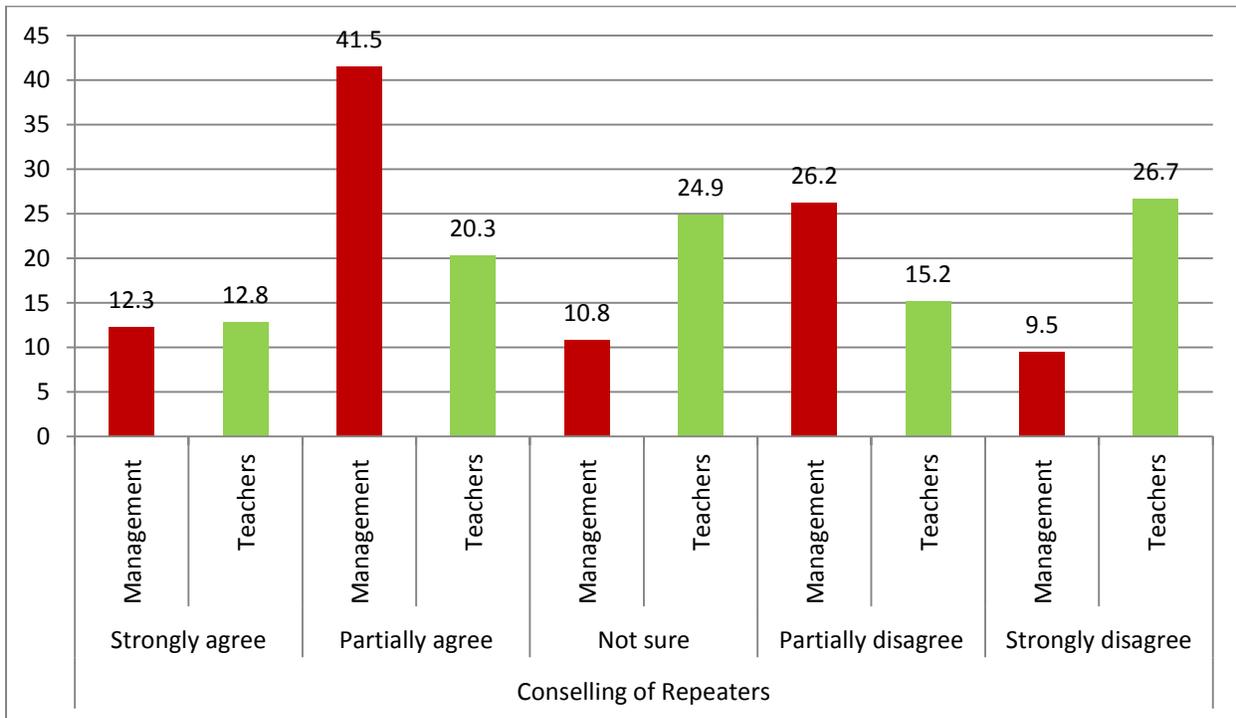


Figure 30: Counselling of repeaters

Figure 15 shows that the school managers (53.8%) and teachers (33.1%) agreed that learners who did not progress to the next grade received counselling to help them understand their situation as compared to 35.7% (school managers) and 41.9% (teachers) who disagreed. Even though more teachers disagreed, it is worth noting that 24.9% of the teachers were not sure whether learners who did not progress to the next grade were receiving counselling or not.

From the interview discussions, participants stated that learners who were not promoted were normally encouraged and motivated by the teachers as per their subjects in order to work harder enabling them to master the basic competencies and thus to be promoted next time. And if

learners' situation got worse, then they were referred to the Life Skills teachers for guidance and counselling. At some schools where there were no Life Skills teachers and/or counselling programmes/groups, the schools used to invite community social workers to come to the schools to intervene by motivating and encouraging learners (together with their parents if possible) during assembly sessions.

“We always have three meetings with these learners at the beginning of the year whereby we call in somebody from outside like the social worker. Last time we called in the school regional counsellor just to come and talk to the learners on issues about their learning and just to motivate them to be strong.” (Principal)

“...we are working with the community social workers and we usually bring in the parents to take it up.” (Principal)

“Sometimes we go to the councillor's office to get social workers to come and talk to these learners.” (Principal)

Even though some schools had Life Skills teachers and went the extra mile to invite community social workers, this was not the case in some schools. Some participants stated that they had no qualified Life Skills teachers and instead applied the so-called ‘a big triangle’ (teachers, parents and learners) to help these learners with counselling.

4.2.16 Professional support in identifying at-risk learners

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2018) stipulates that *“the central goal of identifying at-risk learners is to provide effective learning support to meet the unique educational needs of each of these learners. The identification is done in consultation with the learning support team, the class teacher and the parents/guardians”* (p. 13). This section intends to find out if teachers were provided with professional support on how to identify at-risk learners.

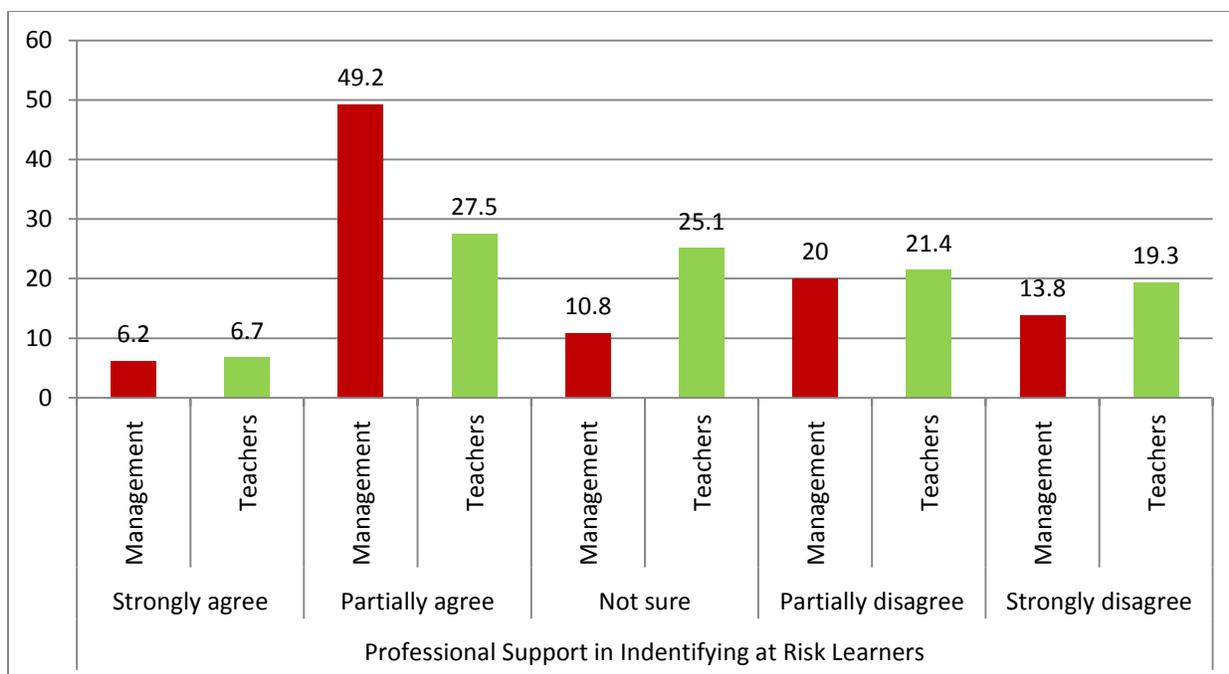


Figure 31: Professional support in identifying at-risk learners

As shown in Figure 16, 55.4% of the management and 34.2% of the teachers agreed that they were provided with professional support on how to identify at-risk learners. However, the management (33.8%) and teachers (40.7%) indicated that they were not provided with any support. It seems that many teachers were not supported professionally on how to identify at-risk learners; however, they were applying their teaching experiences to identify these learners.

“Sometimes we just look at learners’ physical appearance and one can see that these learners are neglected. And where we see such a situation, the Life Skills teacher usually used to call the neighbours of these children at the school, and ask the situation.” (Teacher)

“Like those learners with learning difficulties we are looking at their performances and see that these learners are not performing and sometimes we look at their physical appearance whether they are wearing uniform or not then such learners are vulnerable.” (Teacher)

At some schools, at-risk learners were identified by their physical appearance and academic performances. Through that, teachers would then be able to conclude that such learners are vulnerable, neglected and at risk.

4.2.17 Professional support in dealing with at-risk learners

This section gauges participants’ professional support in dealing with at-risk learners. Figure 17 portrays that about half of the school managers (49.2%) agreed that they were supported professionally on how to deal with at-risk learners, whereas, 47.3% of the teachers disagreed.

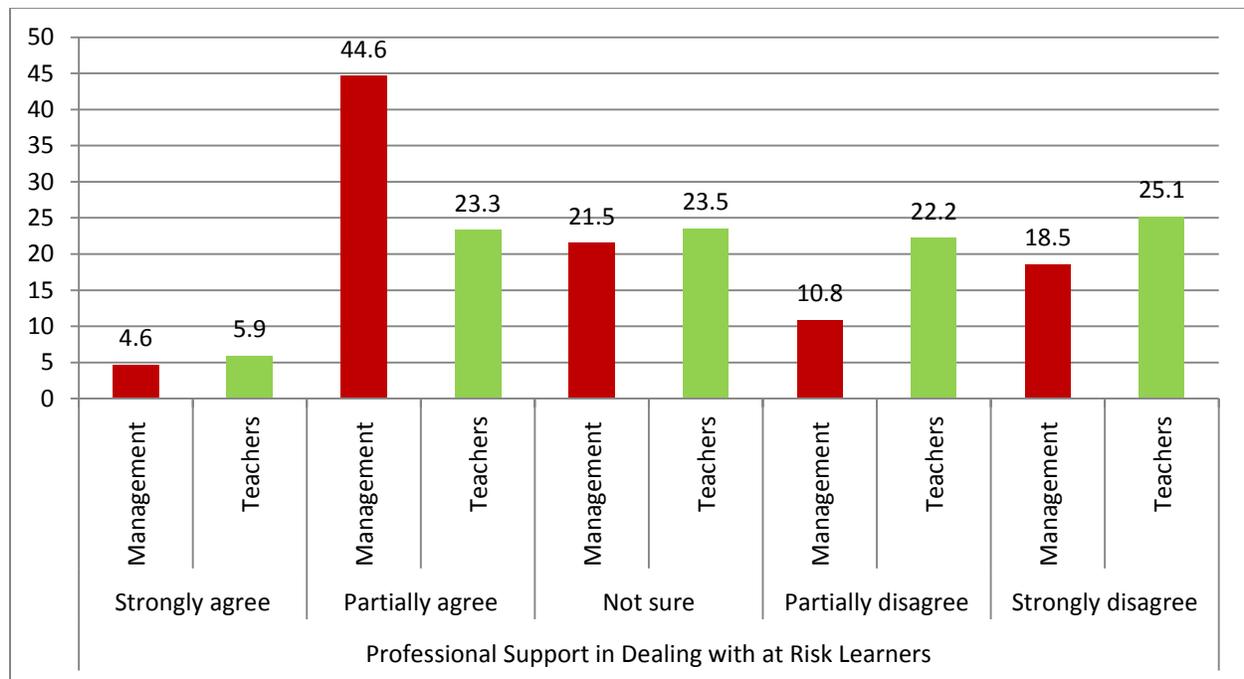


Figure 32: Professional support in dealing with at-risk learners

Even though many school managers agreed, the majority of the teachers who disagreed remain a concern. This is possible, resulting in many at-risk learners not being supported in schools to enable them to realise their dreams. During the interview, some participants asserted that:

“...continue with social support and we also establish links of support with the community police departments and also try to talk to the learners and help them to overcome these difficulties and also provide them with counselling.” (Teacher)

“...we go out of our way to assist these learners through the Life Skill teacher and Star For Life. They go as far as to these children’s homes where those at-risk learners are staying to find out what is the situation on the ground.” (Principal)

“Sometimes the school buys cakes at the tuck shop for the hungry learners, and individually teachers sometimes gave their lunch boxes to those kids or they eat from the feeding programme at the school. The Life Skill teacher also provides these orphans and vulnerable ones especially girls with sanitary pads from her office. At-risk learners are counselling because when you are vulnerable otherwise it affects them psychologically and some individual teachers even buy uniform for these vulnerable learners.” (Teacher)

Despite the lack of professional support provided to the school managers and teachers on how to deal with at-risk learners, at some schools, participants took it up for themselves to help at-risk learners. Some participants assisted at-risk learners with food and school uniforms, whereas the Life Skill teachers support these learners psychologically and with sanitary pads.

5. Appreciations of the monitoring exercise

Participants appreciated the monitoring exercise.

Table 3: Appreciations of the monitoring exercise

Senior Primary phase	Junior Secondary phase
-----------------------------	-------------------------------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wake-up call; ‘honestly, it is an eye-opener even to the teachers who were interviewed’ (realized the importance of getting to understand the SPPPG and any other policy sent to schools. The realization that the SPPPG does not start and end with the promotion requirement section only; there are features and principles. • The establishment of committees and programmes as stipulated by the SPPPG (particularly one for gifted learners, and the learning support team). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The promotion policy was appreciated as a document that guides the schools on how to support learners academically. • The establishment of committees and learning support team. • Participants appreciated the work put in by NIED officials to enable them to implement better policies within the schools countrywide.
---	---

6. Recommendations

Participants recommended that:

Table 4: Recommendations regarding the promotion policy guides

Senior Primary phase	Junior Secondary phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though, during participants’ studies at the institutions of higher learning, some of them did inclusive education; according to the participants, this was not sufficient. Therefore, participants recommended that more professional training and/or workshops are needed in order to enable participants to fully assist and support learners with learning difficulties especially in rural schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should be allowed to make provisions for their internal policies from the promotional policy on promotion requirements that fit in each school to encourage learners to work harder. • Schools should be provided with well-trained staff member(s) who can easily identify learners with learning difficulties/specific challenges who need to be assisted academically.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More refresher training and workshops should be conducted to support participants on the successful implementation of the SPPPG. • The SPPPG should be made available to all the participants. In so doing, participants would know how to assist, handle and deal with struggling learners; and the government should assist parents who are unable to take their kids to the special schools due to financial crisis. • Participants felt that the current 40% pass requirements marks are too high and therefore they recommended that the marks should be reduced to 30% for the lower grades and keep 40% for the Secondary phase (Grades 8-12). • Learners should repeat once in each grade rather than in the phase to avoid transferring cases. Because learners are no more putting much effort into their studies knowing that when they fail, they will surely be promoted to the next grade, even without mastering the basic competencies. Therefore, some participants recommended that the transfer cases must be abolished, and learners should repeat the grade until they meet the promotion requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers who are serving on the promotion committees must be trained on the implementation of the policy to enable them to guide other teachers on how to conduct learner support in different subjects. • There must be continuous engagement between schools and officials from the regional education offices to assess the implementation of the programs and see if it is effectively implemented and figure out what challenges were experienced. • Educational policies such as Junior Secondary Promotion Policy should be introduced to the student teachers while still at the universities. Otherwise, it will be difficult for novice teachers to implement such policies. Alternatively, the responsible persons (officials) should keep on giving refresher training to the newly appointed teachers. • In addition, participants felt that Mathematics should not be made compulsory like English for the learners to be promoted to the next grade but to be allowed to move to the next grade even if they fail Mathematics.
---	--

7. Conclusions

This study monitored the implementation of the promotion policy guide for Senior Primary and Junior Secondary. The study was threefold: gauged the views of the participants on the implementation of the promotion policy guide regarding their awareness, access and understanding of the policy; determined how schools have been supported to implement the Senior Primary and Junior Secondary promotion guidelines; and investigated the challenges that schools encountered regarding the implementation of the promotion policy guidelines.

The majority of the teachers and school management were aware of the revised promotion policy guide. Although they were aware, the majority of school managers had access to the document as compared to teachers. In some schools, participants were not aware, and neither had access to the revised promotion policy guide. Both the school managers and teachers experienced difficulties and challenges to implement some sections of the policy such as learning support, transfer of learners, special needs learners, borderline cases, out-of-school support services, and new grading requirements set too high.

Over three quarters of the management indicated that learning support teams were established at their schools and this is a concern as half of the teachers disagreed. Despite the absence of learning support teams in some schools, learning support activities were partially planned, timetabled, monitored and effective. However, undesirable practices, such as deviating from the promotion policy guidelines were observed as some schools practised the ‘up-to-the-teacher’ approach. At some schools, programmes for gifted learners largely comprised unorganised and spontaneous ways such as enrichment tasks, no structured programmes or were completely ignored.

At some schools, participants assured that they had well-established, structured, and effective referral systems. However, many schools visited did not have referral and placement procedures in place. Some schools, although not a common practice, had special classes with a special teacher and such classes served as referral classes.

The majority of the school managers and teachers appreciated the role that the promotion policy played in their daily teaching and learning process. However, a significant number of the teachers did not appreciate it as they faced difficulties to understand the policy.

Most of the participants cited a lack of training or workshops that could help them to have a common understanding. As a result, they read the policy on their own, a practice they felt led to misinterpretations due to insufficient support. However, in some schools, principals initiated workshops for teachers to reach a common understanding. This effort, to some principals, was insufficient as interpretation accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

The majority of the school managers received professional support to deal with learners with learning difficulties in comparison to the teachers. Teachers were not trained to handle special needs learners in mainstream classes; however, some teachers tried their utmost best to help these learners.

The work done by the learners within the support programme was monitored to ensure that continuous individual feedback was provided to both the learners and the parents. At some schools, teachers indicated that principals were unable to monitor learning support activities since they also had afternoon classes. While at some schools, there were no learning support programmes hence principals had nothing to monitor and/or facilitate.

The majority of the school managers indicated that learners who did not progress to the next grade received counselling to help them understand their situation but most of the teachers disagreed. At some schools, participants stated that learners who were not promoted were normally encouraged and motivated by their subject teachers in order to work harder to enable them to master the basic competencies. And if learners' situation got worse, they were referred to the Life Skills teachers for guidance and counselling. In cases of no Life Skills teachers and/or counselling programmes/groups, the schools invited community social workers to intervene by motivating and encouraging learners during assembly sessions. At some schools where there were no qualified Life Skills teachers, they applied the so-called 'a big triangle' (teachers, parents, and learners) to help these learners with counselling.

8. References

- Caillaud, S. & Flick, U. (2017). Focus groups in triangulation contexts. In R. Barbour & D. Morgan (Eds). *Advances in focus groups research* (pp. 155-177). Hampshire (UK): Palgrave Macmillan.
- John, A., C. (2015). Reliability and validity: A sine qua non for fair assessment of undergraduate technical and vocational education projects in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 34(6), 68–75.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Learning support teachers' manual*. NIED, Okahandja.
- Ministry of Education. (2015). *National promotion policy guide for junior and senior primary school phase*. NIED, Okahandja.



National Institute for Educational Development
Private Bag 2034
Okahandja
Namibia

Telephone: +264 62 509000
Facsimile: +264 62 509073
Website: <https://www.nied.edu.na>

Printed by NIED
Copyright © NIED: Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture