


Restructuring and Re-culturing the Secondary Schooling Sector to Accommodate Multi-Grade Teaching and Learning



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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates why grade repetition is allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools. The paper was motivated by diverse discourses, some of which regard grade repetition to be the product of the absence of restructuring and re-culturing in the form of multi-grade teaching in secondary schools. The paper is conceptual and empirical and structured within the qualitative research paradigm. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were employed to collect data. Out of the population of 13 secondary schools in one of the circuits in Mopani district in Limpopo Province, six were conveniently sampled. In each of the six sampled secondary schools, only Chairpersons of the School Governing Bodies became research participants. The findings revealed that firstly, secondary schools need to restructure and re-culture their conceptualization of schooling. Secondly, restructuring and re-culturing management and leadership of secondary schools is essential. Thirdly, restructuring and re-culturing teaching methodology matters. Fourthly, restructuring and re-culturing learning methodology is indispensable. Fifthly, restructuring and re-culturing assessment methodology is indispensable. Lastly, restructuring and re-culturing the monitoring and evaluation methodology of secondary schools is helpful. The researcher recommends that grade repetition be frowned upon where all learners are strongly advised against it. Furthermore, the researcher recommends the improvement of the level of citizen trust in the public education sector through restructuring and re-culturing of the secondary schooling sector. This study adds to the body of existing literature on how multi-grade teaching and learning could be approached in the secondary schooling sector.

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INTRODUCTION

In the event of a shortage of teachers in secondary schools, the practice of multi-grade teaching commonly operationalised in the primary schooling sector, could be experimented with. As long as massive grade repetition leads to institutional underperformance, it should then be given no other day for survival.¹ This is the context within which this paper has to be understood. For instance, there is a debate about whether secondary schools should be fingered for lack of multi-grade teaching which orchestrates grade repetition, or whether it is learners who have to be scolded for triggering grade repetition. Either way,

¹ Equal Education, “School Infrastructure,” 2018, www.equaleducation.org.za; D. Meador, “The Role of the Principal in School,” 2019, www.thoughtco.com.

grade repetition in secondary schools is worth obstructing.² The gap in knowledge that this paper attempts to fill relates to whether multi-grade teaching and learning in secondary schools has to be approached exactly as in the primary schooling sector. Hence one of the objectives of this paper is about the interrogation of why grade repetition is allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools. Grade repetition is a condition of having to re-do a grade a pupil after failing to comply with the set promotional requirements, especially during the end of the year's summative assessments. Grade repetition is prevalent in most educational systems though at a different rate and degrees. Where it occurs on a large scale especially affecting grade 12 pupils, it could lead to a school being categorised as underachieving.³ As such, it is advisable for schools never to allow a space for grade repetition to thrive. It has the potential to become hereditary and legendary.

Bambalele advises that to search for solutions to grade repetition, causative factors need to be unveiled.⁴ Affording royal treatment to pupils inside the classroom could overturn grade repetition. Current pupils are susceptible to the monotonous pattern of treatment. Secondary schools require a decolonised, manner of teaching and learning that is largely responsive to the desires and aspirations of learners.⁵ The thesis of this paper is that any current teaching and mentoring which is colonialist in nature, could be a source of grade repetition. Diversifying and decolonising teaching, could be one of the surest ways of countering grade repetition. Van Deventer and Kruger recount that 21st-century secondary school learners achieve or underachieve on the basis of who teaches them and how are teaching and learning tasks executed.⁶ Providing pupils with what they aspire, to could have a monumental effect of enabling them to desire to achieve, and thus create a high-performing institution. Keeping the multitudes of pupils inside and outside the classroom, enticed to the lessons delivered there, could enrich rather than impoverish them educationally.⁷ As part of being serviced in a decolonised fashion to arrest grade repetition, 21st-century learners are required to operate in a schooling environment that is vibrant, heart-warming, and indescribably stimulating. Such an environment is likely to give no space for the consolidation of grade repetition. In such a schooling environment, teachers are likely to be able to convey an air of serenity to keep nervous pupils calm and focused on their lessons. That would be part of energizing the mind and stimulating creative thinking by pupils in a vibrant schooling space. Efficaciously managed and led, secondary school pupils, in a decolonised space, could foster credible and incredible classroom learning experiences that are embedded in an institution's radical ideological posture. When pupils in a classroom are being handled and treated in a decolonised, inspiring, and dignified way, they could be encouraged to roll back grade repetition.⁸

This paper interrogates why grade repetition is allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools. The second objective relates to getting a direction on where to begin and what exactly to do differently to overcome grade repetition from the perspective of the School Governing Bodies. On the basis of the expressed objectives, the research question guiding this paper is: *to what extent could secondary school pupils be mentally restructured and re-cultured to spend strictly five years to complete their secondary school education?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Five years set aside for secondary school pupils to conclude their secondary education sector has to be utilised profitably. This is possible immediately after every secondary school pupil acknowledges that grade repetition has overstayed its welcome in schooling.⁹ For secondary schools to survive grade repetition, policies and practices, some of which contribute to grade repetition, which are modelled along Euro-American lines, deserve to be reviewed. This signifies that grade repetition could be triggered

² C. Olivier, *The DNA of Great Teachers* (South Africa: Learning Design, 2012).

³ O.T. Wan, *Results Management: Effective People Management to Achieve Excellent Results* (Singapore: John Wileys & Sons, 2010).

⁴ P. Bambalele, "Rapetsoa Acts on Violence as He Reworks Our Cry," *Sowetan*, October 4, 2019.

⁵ J. Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (New York: Dover Publications, 2014).

⁶ I. Van Deventer and A.G. Kruger, *An Educator's Guide to School Management Skills* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2010).

⁷ W. J. Levin, "Why Our Education System Is Failing," *The Star*, October 5, 2011; C. Southey, "Teaching Ruin and Warring Wallahs," *Mail and Guardian*, April 12, 2012.

⁸ S.A. Coetzee, E.J. Van Niekerk, and J. L. Wydeman, *An Educator's Guide to Effective Classroom Management* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2011), 32; K. Bodibe, "Change Is Inevitable," *Daily Sun*, June 5, 2012, 31; S. Memela, "Prophetic Intellectual Leaders," *Sowetan*, June 20, 2012, 13

⁹ K.G. Fomunyam, *Decolonising Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation and Internalisation* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2019).

institutionally. Allowing South African schools to be dominated by Western thoughts, deforms the African schooling space and indirectly consolidates grade repetition. Effects of colonialism and apartheid under which our schooling was once subjected to, continue to colonise schooling spaces and to engender grade repetition. Various scholars seek to provide a solution to the expressed state of affairs to be decolonisation. Owen observes that in secondary schools where grade repetition is rife, such institutions could be struggling to accord their learners a royal treatment inside the classroom. This includes making classroom life exciting and user-friendly for every pupil.¹⁰

The manner in which pupils in a classroom are being approached and handled has a share in how they ultimately respond to the business of teaching and learning.¹¹ This is to suggest that some secondary schools inadvertently sow in their own pupils a sense of grade repetition by the manner in which they engage those pupils. Any educational institution that has succeeded in cultivating a spirit of performance to its learners, is unlikely to witness too much grade repetition. The aim here is not mute to the point that normally, pupils who are studious are at the same time likely to be teachable inside the classrooms and thus never candidates for grade repetition. This is praiseworthy because the excellent and scholastic performance of learners originates in the school's classrooms.¹² A stimulating classroom environment is likely to eradicate grade repetition. A review of existing literature emphasises that there could be a multiplicity of factors in an educational institution, that could cause grade repetition. Some of those factors are a lack of monitored extra lessons for pupils who are likely to repeat a grade, failure to adopt underperforming pupils and others for continuous support. This issue of the multiplicity of factors being behind grade repetition implies the significance of a decolonised conceptualization of schooling in order to respond to grade repetition appropriately.¹³ Profiling pupils in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses and respond to them accordingly, protects institutions from grade repetition. In addition, screening of teachers for the verification of their teaching habits and attitudes also contributes to reducing grade repetition. The other essential effort towards decreasing grade repetition in schools involves stopping union activities from disturbing schooling. Where union activities are left to meddle and disrupt schooling, the first victims are likely to be the less gifted pupils who could easily be grade repeaters.

Schooling sows in all pupils, a virtue of hard work in the culture of a school. Such a practice could enable even the least gifted pupils to try their level best never to repeat a grade.¹⁴ Lack of evolution and decolonisation in terms of how the enterprise of schooling is conducted could contribute to grade repetition. Zhu, et.al., maintain that decolonisation of the management and leadership at the school level, could aid in the reduction and elimination of grade repetition.¹⁵ The relevance of the expressed point is that it is management and leadership in institutions that drive everything, Therefore, with a decolonised management and leadership, all other schooling activities are likely to follow suit in helping to contain and counter grade repetition. The other schooling activities that could contribute to the elimination of grade repetition in support of the decolonised management and leadership in schooling include, the decolonisation of the teaching methodology. The other one is the decolonisation of the learning methodology. What follow, is the decolonisation of the assessment methodology at school. The last schooling activity to contribute to the avoidance of grade repetition is the decolonisation of monitoring and evaluation methodology at the secondary school level.¹⁶ Clearly, existing literature stresses that the multiplicity of factors obtained in an educational institution could be the drivers and the determinants of grade repetition by pupils.¹⁷ Evidently, teaching and learning in secondary schools need to be unique and decolonised for the sake of ushering in the scholastic achievement of all the pupils which is free from

¹⁰ J.O. Owen, *How to Lead: The Definitive Guide to Effective Leadership*, 4th ed. (London: Pearson, 2015).

¹¹ Equal Education, "School Infrastructure"; Meador, "The Role of the Principal in School."

¹² T. Gqirana, "Without Resources Rural Schools Will Continue to Underperform," *NGO News* 24, 2016, <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/without-resources-rural-schools-will-continue-to-underperform>; Andrea Juan and Mariette Visser, "Home and School Environmental Determinants of Science Achievement of South African Students," *South African Journal of Education* 37, no. 1 (2017): 1–10.

¹³ Ramrathan. L., "Learner Poor Performance; Provoking Bourdieu's Key Concepts in Analysing School Education in South Africa," *Southern African Review of Education* 23, no. 1 (2017): 23–36.

¹⁴ Meador, "The Role of the Principal in School."

¹⁵ C. Zhu, G. Devos, and Y. Li, "Teacher Perceptions of School Culture and Their Organisational Commitment and Wellbeing in a Chinese School," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 12, no. 2 (2011): 319–28.

¹⁶ S. Masondo, "How Super Principals and Teachers Help Matrics Soar," *City Press*, January 11, 2015.

¹⁷ L. Cohen, L. Manion, and K. Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

grade repetition. This is not likely to be as simple as it sounds especially with the generation of secondary school pupils and teachers, populating secondary schools this century. The reality that the identity of a school as well as the culture of operation in a school have a share in the performance or grade repetition of an educational institution, makes the obstruction of grade repetition in secondary schooling, a hugely demanding task to perform with success.¹⁸

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was a qualitative case study. The problem that this paper pursued, namely, grade repetition which is being treated as a normality by some secondary schools, necessitated the design of the paper. Furthermore, the objective of the paper which was to interrogate why grade repetition is allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools, also necessitated that the paper follows a qualitative research paradigm as against the quantitative one. The choice of the qualitative methodology was further triggered by the fact that the paper is being underscored by Interpretivism and by the Learning Organisation Philosophy.¹⁹ The researcher saw a need to create a synergy between the two mentioned theoretical perspectives undergirding this paper and the qualitative approach as the overriding research methodology. The combination of the three, helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of learner grade repetition in secondary schools, especially comprehending them from the perspective of the School Governing Bodies.²⁰

The researcher utilised the mentioned theoretical perspectives to interrogate why grade repetition was allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools. Unabated grade repetition by secondary school pupils is a worrisome issue warranting attention. With Interpretivism and the Learning Organisation Philosophy underscoring this paper, the researcher utilised them to decode this occurrence of learner grade repetition from the perspective of owners of schools, namely, School Governing Bodies. Amalgamating the qualitative research paradigm, Interpretivism and the Learning Organisation Philosophy aimed at maximising the strength of the three perspectives to comprehend in its entirety this stubborn grade repetition problem by secondary school pupils and to ultimately eradicate it.²¹ Combining the three, enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how despite many years of independence in South Africa, there are still secondary schools whose learner results are far from being impressive, due to incessant learner grade repetition. Such an in-depth understanding was more than necessary in order to operate from an informed position with regard to grade repetition from some secondary schools. Out of the population of 13 secondary schools, in one of the circuits in the Mopani district, in Limpopo Province, South Africa, six were conveniently sampled and in each school, a Chairperson of the School Governing Body became a research participant.

The narrative enquiry and the interviewing techniques were utilised to generate data for this paper. To be precise, Chairpersons of Secondary School Governing Bodies were given an opportunity to narrate from their own angles what makes it difficult to rid schools of grade repetition. In addition, SGBs were allowed to share that which they regarded to be the solution to the discussed problem of grade repetition. To corroborate and triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with those research participants which provided narrative enquiry. Altogether, a total of six research participants were interviewed to hear their perspectives regarding the researched problem of grade repetition by secondary school pupils and how to overcome that. Interviewing responses were audiotaped for transcription purposes later on. Both the narrative enquiry and the interviewing technique emerged very helpful in terms of accessing information germane to the root cause of learner grade repetition in secondary schools and ways to contain that problem.²²

¹⁸ E.V. Lara, "School Identity in the Modern World," 2018, www.tieonline.com.

¹⁹ K.C. Moloi, *The School as a Learning Organisation* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2005).

²⁰ D. Clark, "Theory X and Theory Y, Big Dog and Little Dog's Performance Juxtaposition," 2010; Equal Education, "School Infrastructure."

²¹ Ramrathan. L., "Learner Poor Performance; Provoking Bourdieu's Key Concepts in Analysing School Education in South Africa."

²² Meador, "The Role of the Principal in School."

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings arrived at in this paper, are in relation to the research topic whose focus is an interrogation of why grade repetition is allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the narrative inquiry and the interviewing technique. Responses of the six research participants were interrogated as regards learner grade repetition in secondary schools from the viewpoint of the School Governing Bodies. As part of discussing the findings in a clear and free-from-ambiguity fashion, the six research participants interviewed in this paper will be referred to as Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C, Respondent D, Respondent E and Respondent F. All of them are Chairpersons of School Governing Bodies and therefore owners of schools. They were labelled Respondent A to F to protect their actual identities. Paying attention only to the SGBs ought not to create an impression that every time when there is a learner grade repetition in secondary schooling, it could only be SGB members providing a solution. The context of this paper necessitated that the focus be placed on the perspective of the SGBs in relation to learner grade repetition in secondary schools.²³ In view of grade repetition of secondary schools having been debated from angles such as the principal's leadership role, teacher leadership, and others, the researcher felt a need to debate it this time from the unique angle of SGBs, as owners of schools.²⁴ Interpretivism and the Learning Organisation Philosophy in partnership with the qualitative research paradigm, have been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings. The themes which came up during the study included: decolonisation of the conceptualisation of schooling, decolonising management and leadership, decolonising teaching methodology, decolonising learning methodology, decolonising assessment methodology and decolonising monitoring and evaluation methodology. These are discussed below.

a. Decolonising Conceptualisation of Schooling

Educational institutions are populated by diverse learners requiring to be managed and led differently to avert any of them from repeating a grade. Data abundantly showed that a myriad 21st-century educational institutions lack appropriate schooling conceptualisation to enable them to support all pupils to succeed. A one-size-fits-all all in terms of guiding pupils to success with their studies has proven to be undependable because others slip and find themselves repeating a grade.²⁵ The first theme is that decolonisation of the conceptualization of schooling, in this epoch is indispensable. Regarding this theme, SGB Chairperson C of School 1 remonstrated *"the rate at which grade repetition is occurring in secondary schools, necessitates the decolonisation of the concept of schooling as per this century, to enable schools to learn to cope with the efforts of rolling back grade repetition by secondary school pupils."* SGB Chairperson F of School 4 asserted that *"learner-underperformance which incorporates grade repetition in many secondary schools, is likely to take long to completely obstruct and eliminate, given that much of today's secondary school learners, do operate like wheel-burrows, where anything and everything pertaining to their studies is being done under duress by teachers, owing to a colonialist notion of what schooling is."* SGB Chairperson E of School 2 bemoaned that *"as a former circuit manager, I concur that the previous year notion of schooling requires decolonisation these days to match the character and calibre of school attendees of this century, who have changed so completely to how we have known pupils to be."* Summing up what has been articulated by the three research participants, it is clear that 21st-century pupils are different and have to be diverse from their predecessors for the sake of making schooling free from grade repetition. Clarke and Equal Education, support the above statement when advising that failing to sow a spirit of decoloniality within learners stands to prolong the challenge of grade repetition as witnessed and experienced in myriad secondary schools of this century.²⁶

²³ R.J. Botha, "The Role of the School Principal in the Case Study of Various Members' Perceptions," *Journal of Social Science* 30, no. 3 (2017): 263–71; Juan and Visser, "Home and School Environmental Determinants of Science Achievement of South African Students."

²⁴ Lara, "School Identity in the Modern World"; Meador, "The Role of the Principal in School"; T. Bush et al., *External Evaluation Research Report of the Advanced Certificate in Education: 30-School Leadership and Management* (Pretoria: Zenex Foundation, 2019).

²⁵ A. Bernstein and J. McCarthy, "Teachers Poor Value for Money: Incentives for Good Educators Need to Be Introduced but the Challenge Is Deeper than Training and Skills Only," *The Star*, October 5, 2011; N S Modiba, "Every Educational Journey Has a Destiny," *Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Paper Presented to Motivate All Learners to Be Aware That Schooling Days Are Numbered* 1 (2011); S. Mgxashe, "Time for This Carelessness with Our Lives to Be Stopped, Mr President," *Sowetan*, December 7, 2011; H. Mueller, "Advocate's Scandal Just a Tip of the Iceberg," *The Star*, October 5, 2011.

²⁶ A. Clarke, *The Handbook of School Governors* (Cape Town: Kate McCallum, 2009); Equal Education, "School Infrastructure."

b. Decolonising Management and Leadership

These days, management and leadership ought not to be practised in a vacuum, but in relation to organisational dynamics. Among others, the kind of an environment engulfing a school as well as the general institutional incumbents need to determine and prescribe how management and leadership have to be. One of the themes of this study is the essence of decolonising management and leadership in schools. This theme was discussed with an SGB Chairperson A of School 3 who retorted that *“one of the common problems which SGBs especially in public secondary schools grapple with, is management and leadership- related, where in case teachers question the management and leadership styles of a principal, they end up making a school have incredible grade repetition which will be mirrored by underperformance of a school.”* SGB Chairperson D of School 5 concurred that *“shifting management and leadership to how it has been in the past to match the nature of today’s population in schools, could reduce countless challenges associated with management and leadership, which schools face and which lead to uncontrollable grade repetition.”* SGB Chairperson E of School 3 reasoned that *“the spate of learner grade repetition which secondary schools are battling to obstruct and eradicate, are likely to be greatly reduced immediately management and leadership in schooling are decolonised to confirm that South Africa is in a new dispensation where management and leadership of schooling is not a one man show but a collective responsibility and accountability of every member.”* These research respondents mean that institutional incumbents, such as learners do get fed up with always being subjected to schooling that literally and figuratively enslaves them in the form of operating in an antiquated and old-fashioned manner, where issues of re-organisation, restructuring and re-culturing as part of decolonisation, are not given the necessary attention and space. That could aggravate learner grade repetition, some of its manifestations could be unteachability tendencies. Clarke advises that in an educational institution, a challenge like grade repetition has to be identified and processes put in place to formulate solutions based on the cause of that problem.²⁷ Decolonisation of management and leadership of an educational institution has the potential and capacity to contain grade repetition.²⁸

c. Decolonising Teaching Methodology

The delivery of an educational service has to promote and facilitate learner and institutional performance. Those who lord over an educational institution and those ruled, need to ascertain that there is always sufficient obsession and infatuation for the performance of learners which indirectly means the avoidance of grade repetition. One of the themes that came up during the discussion, divulged that plentiful educational institutions in Limpopo Province, lack decolonised teaching methodology. SGB Chairperson C of School 6 said that *“the era of teachers delivering their lessons being guided by their preferred teaching styles, have long past by to give way for the new decolonised teaching methodology which considers how learning occurs.”* SGB Chairperson D of School 2 contended that *“no doubt, persisting to put a blame squarely on pupils after a lesson has been delivered with no reciprocal learning results, is a serious indication that colonisation of schooling has regarded teaching and learning to be independent of each other instead of being interdependent of each other.”* SGB Chairperson F of the same school affirmed that *“a high-level grade repetition recorded in public secondary schools should be a wake-up call for educational institutions for the urgent need of decolonising teaching other than keeping it colonised where when it is not leading to learning, little efforts are being taken to address that.”* All the expressed views by the research respondents, emphasise how much 21st-century secondary school learners aspire to meet inside a classroom with teachers whose teaching strategies are completely free from the vestiges of the colonial-apartheid past. Mkhabela and Ramphela posit that in the 21st century, institutions need to be populated by secondary school teachers able to cajole one another to deliver classroom lessons free from grudges, where a reminder to honour one’s lessons by a line manager is completely out of the picture.²⁹ Modiba, Juan and Visser articulate that current institutions deserve and

²⁷ Clarke, *The Handbook of School Governors*.

²⁸ Kehdinga George Fomunyan, “The Ideological Ware as Key to Improving Learner Performance,” *Journal of Educational Studies* 16, no. 1 (2017): 108–25; Meador, “The Role of the Principal in School.”

²⁹ Mkhabela, M. Constitution must be celebrated for 15 years South Africa had a living document. *Sowetan*, December 7, 2011; M. Ramphela, “The Culture of Impunity,” *City Press*, August 4, 2011.

qualify for the deployment of seasoned secondary school teachers who de-routinize their teaching patterns and constantly enhance their lesson delivery efficacy to confirm that they are decolonising.³⁰

d. Decolonising Learning Methodology

Arden and Botha assert that 21st century educational institutions need to be sensitive to grade repetition such that where it occurs when it could have been avoided, it should be a clarion call to that institution to quickly learn to do things in a decolonised fashion.³¹ One of the research findings in this study discloses that a remedy for the prevalent grade repetition in secondary schools, is decolonisation of how pupils learn. SGB Chairperson C of School 5 discussing this theme maintained that *“myriad secondary schools especially in Limpopo Province are witnessing a high rate of grade repetition as a result of how long, learning has always been connected to teaching, where in case tuition has been a flop, then learning was expected to be a flop as well.”* SGB Chairperson D of the same school reiterated that *“although it takes long to groom pupils to be independent learners other than continuing to be dependent pupils who only learn after teaching has taken place, it is however a good sign of a maturing way of doing things in an education system to decolonise learning and gradually free it from teaching, something which colonial-apartheid schooling has not been doing all along.”* SGB Chairperson F of the same educational institution recounted that *“ourselves as school governors, we experience on a daily basis, unmanageable grade repetition in institutions, because most teachers do not honour their lessons and colonialist way of schooling is premising learning on teaching while a decolonised schooling, is stressing that there can be learning even if teaching never occurred.”* Mabote and Ramrathan, posit that every educational institution contributes either directly or indirectly to the low or high-level grade repetition it has, by means of how decolonised learning has been conceptualised and is being pursued in that educational institution.³²

e. Decolonising Assessment Methodology

Turner and Bambalele stress that tried and tested secondary school teachers need to be encouraged by challenges like mounting grade repetition rather than being disheartened by them.³³ This signifies that those kinds of teachers have to fight to oppose grade repetition in their classrooms by any means at their disposal. One of the findings in this paper was that in many secondary schools, grade repetition of pupils could be eradicated through decolonising the institution’s assessment methodology. Such a practice is even likely to minimise antagonism between pupils and teachers inside and within the school and could subside future repetition of grades by learners.³⁴ On the expressed matter, SGB Chairperson E of School 2 emphasised that *“it shall remain a disgrace when the experienced learner grade repetition at a secondary school, is found to be traceable to the manner in which assessment patterns which are largely colonial in nature, are triggering that hatred and talked about grade repetition.”* SGB Chairperson E of School C remarked that *“as an indication that the present day teachers are different and intend contributing adequately to the eradication of grade repetition in public secondary schools, they need to decolonise how they assess their own pupils so that where possible, pupils do know how they would be assessed and about what, as a way of ascertaining that where necessary, all the assessed learners end up all performing, something which leads to a zero grade repetition.”* SGB Chairperson A of School 3 asserted that *“the complete overhaul of how assessment has always been done and how it has to be conducted in a decolonised schooling set-up and where it aims at easing grade repetition in secondary schooling, it is what all current educational institutions need to get ready for as part of having a sustainable solution to the thorny grade repetition dilemma.”* The expressed views explicitly suggest that

³⁰ Modiba, “Every Educational Journey Has a Destiny”; Juan and Visser, “Home and School Environmental Determinants of Science Achievement of South African Students.”

³¹ P. Arden, *It’s Not How Good You Are, It’s How Good You Want to Be* (New York: Phaidon, 2013); Botha, “The Role of the School Principal in the Case Study of Various Members’ Perceptions.”

³² M.D. Mabote, “Why Schools Underperform: Some General Causative Factors,” in *Capricorn District. Limpopo Province. An Educational Address during the Curriculum Roadshow Meeting with Mogodumo School Principals in Mogodumo Cluster Gathering.*, 2008; Ramrathan, L., “Learner Poor Performance; Provoking Bourdieu’s Key Concepts in Analysing School Education in South Africa.”

³³ A. Turner, *Born to Succeed*. (Britain: Falmer Press, 2000); Bambalele, “Rapetsoa Acts on Violence as He Reworks Our Cry.”

³⁴ W. Gae, “Primary School Learners’ Perspectives on Factors That Impact Their Learning and Wellbeing at School” (Stellenbosch University, 2016); Y. A.Omar, “Wanted Political Entrepreneurs to Forge a Common Nationhood in SA,” *Sowetan*, October 4, 2019.

21st-century learners have to be treated differently and heterogeneously compared to their predecessors as far as utilising assessment to ease grade repetition goes. This stands to enable them to enliven the schooling set-ups, where the bulk of teachers populating those schools are likely to pride themselves that grade repetition is a thing of the past. This matter could also be construed to mean that 21st-century secondary school pupils are not in schools as passengers but as active participants in the business of teaching and learning. Modiba, Gqirana, and Lara sum this eloquently when observing that grade repetition which has become legendary in secondary schools could find its solution from the decolonised manner of assessment which leads to pupils producing a zero percentage grade repetition.³⁵

f. Decolonising Monitoring and Evaluation

Current secondary schools are likely to struggle to subside grade repetition due to not according to special treatment to learners under their tutelage, by means of emphasising monitoring and evaluation in schools. Rife grade repetition that emanates from a lack of performance of monitoring and evaluation, could be aggravated by failure to adopt underperforming pupils and failure to profile learners to know their strengths and weaknesses for better provision of remedial teaching. Through the performance of monitoring and evaluation in schools, many lessons are likely to be learnt on how best to put grade repetition under control. One of the findings in this paper stresses the significance of decolonising monitoring and evaluation in schools. This is an attempt to make it more impactful to the elimination of unpalatable grade repetition. On this point, SGB Chairperson A of School 2 stated *“Since in every educational institution, it is pupils who mainly create grade repetition, and who equally end up being victims of grade repetition, so logically for schools to overcome grade repetition, learner transformation through vigorous monitoring and evaluation of how potential grade repeaters are faring with their studies, is essential.”* SGB Chairperson F of School 3 contended that *“the repetition of grades by pupils is an indication of not fully embracing schooling by pupils, something which could be contained by means of emphasising learner accountability which could be ascertained through decolonisation of monitoring and evaluation.”* SGB Chairperson A of School 5 recounted that *“since grade repetition leads to low educational outcomes by schools, a decolonised monitoring and evaluation which would include checking on individual pupils on a daily basis to determine their movement away from producing low educational outcomes, is necessary, if grade repetition has to be completely eliminated in schools.”* Ramphela displays her invaluable experience in schooling when accentuating the need to completely overhaul the South African education system to make it functional and always high-performing.³⁶ This is supported by Kuseka and Bush et al., who stated that secondary schools, need to learn to resort to their own witticism to wrench themselves out of the welter of difficulties of this century, some of which include having to cope with perpetual grade repetition by pupils especially in secondary schools.³⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

The basis of these recommendations is the discussed findings which are as follows: there is a need for the decolonisation of the conceptualisation of schooling by educational institutions. In addition, educational institutions need to decolonise how management and leadership are being practised in schools. Furthermore, decolonisation of the teaching and learning methodologies in schools could assist immensely in curbing and combatting grade repetition in schooling. Moreover, there is a need for schools to decolonise how they assess pupils in the form of making an assessment in schools sufficiently participatory. Keeping assessment decolonised in the form of making it open, transparent, consultative and negotiable could aid in utilising it to overcome grade repetition. There is a need for grade repetition to be frowned upon with pupils being advised against it. Again, there is a need to improve the level of citizen trust in the public education sector. Finally, there is also a need for schools to decolonise monitoring and evaluation in order to apply them differently and to have them mitigate grade repetition, especially in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

³⁵ Modiba, “Every Educational Journey Has a Destiny”; Gqirana, “Without Resources Rural Schools Will Continue to Underperform”; Lara, “School Identity in the Modern World.”

³⁶ Ramphela, “The Culture of Impunity.”

³⁷ P. Kuseka, “The Power Within,” *Sunday Sun*, July 15, 2008; Bush et al., *External Evaluation Research Report of the Advanced Certificate in Education: 30-School Leadership and Management*.

CONCLUSION

As has been displayed in the discussion of the findings of this paper, both the review of literature as well as the theoretical frameworks undergirding the paper, played a critical role in talking to the findings of the paper. In addition, the narrative enquiry and the interviewing techniques together with the two selected theoretical perspectives provided a better context within which the entire paper had to be located and comprehended. It is evident that pillars that maintain grade repetition in public secondary schools were exposed which included a lack of decolonisation of the conceptualisation of schooling and others. The conclusion arrived at in this paper, is being informed by the perspective of the School Governing Bodies as owners of schools as regards why grade repetition has been allowed to be a normality in public secondary schools and how to counter and contain it in schools.

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