

**EXPLORING TEACHERS' MORALE IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF  
BOHLABELA DISTRICT**

**by**

**MBOWENI LAWRENCE**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 30818664**

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**PROMOTER: Professor MJ Taole**

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## DECLARATION

I MBOWENI LAWRENCE declare that EXPLORING TEACHERS' MORALE IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BOHLABELA DISTRICT is my own work and that all the sources I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Name: L Mboweni



Signature

Date: November 2019

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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary aim of this study was to explore primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale in Bohlabela District, Mpumalanga Province in order to improve practice and create a suitable environment for effective teaching and learning. The aim was achieved by exploring teachers' experiences, identifying factors which influence the morale of teachers and developing strategies which could be applied to motivate teachers in their profession. The empirical inquiry was informed by behaviourism as a theoretical framework as well as the extant literature on teachers' morale. The study applied an interpretive paradigm which is qualitative in nature to collect and analyse teachers' subjective but accurate accounts of their opinions, experiences and perceptions regarding their morale. A case study was opted as the research design method and purposive sampling was used to identify 12 poorly performing rural primary schools and to select information-rich 36 teacher participants, all of who were teaching Grade 6 Mathematics and English. The primary data gathering technique was focus group interviews with teachers. Data extracted from the participants were augmented, supported, confirmed and corroborated by observations. Data were analysed using a thematic data analysis approach. Data were segmented and inductively coded into three main themes which served as the main empirical research findings. The first theme of this study dealt with experiences that influence teachers' morale which included boredom, frustrations, lack of professional development and feelings of neglect and violence. In this theme it was found that experiences such as boredom, lack of professional development, feelings of neglect and school violence negatively affected the morale of teachers. The second theme comprised factors that affect teachers' morale which included personal factors; work related factors and socio-economic factors. Personal factors and work related factors were also found to play a negative role in the morale of teachers. The third theme comprised intervention strategies to enhance teachers' morale which included improved communication, family support, safety in schools and parental involvement. Based on the findings of the literature review and the empirical investigation, recommendations were made for the improvement of practice. It was concluded in this study that low teacher morale is a challenge in the schooling systems globally including South Africa. The study further concluded that low teacher morale negatively affects both teachers' and learners' productivity. As a way of mitigating problems associated with low teacher morale, it was recommended that the Department of Education should prioritise the issue of consulting teachers as an important component when developing professional development programmes aimed at assisting teachers, this is thought will assist in identifying problem areas which affect the work of teachers which ultimately affects their morale.

**Key words:** Behaviourism, Job Satisfaction, Bohlabela District, Teacher morale, Teacher, Motivation, Self –actualization approach.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
HOD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
LTSM	Learner Teacher Support Materials
MACQT	Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Training of Teachers
NAPTOSA	National Association of Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
SAOU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwyserunie
PEU	Professional Education Union
R and R	Redeployment and Rationalization
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SEETRC	State Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee

## CONTENT

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>iv</b>

### CHAPTER ONE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

<b>1.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>RATIONALE OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3</b>	<b>PROBLEM STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.5</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6</b>	<b>AIM AND OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.7</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>1.8</b>	<b>CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>1.9</b>	<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>1.10</b>	<b>DEMARCATIION OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.11</b>	<b>CLARIFICATION OF PERTINENT CONCEPTS</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.11.1</b>	<b>Behaviourism</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.11.2</b>	<b>Experience</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1.11.3</b>	<b>Teacher morale</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1.11.4</b>	<b>Motivation</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>1.11.5</b>	<b>Job Satisfaction</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>1.11.6</b>	<b>Bohlabela District</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>1.11.7</b>	<b>Teacher</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>1.11.8</b>	<b>Self-actualization approach</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.12</b>	<b>LIMITATION OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.13</b>	<b>CHAPTER DIVISION</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.14</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS</b> .....	<b>17</b>

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

<b>2.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>THE CONCEPT BEHAVIOURISM .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURISM AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOURAL PERSPECTIVES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO MOTIVATION .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.6</b>	<b>ASSUMPTIONS OF BEHAVIOURISM .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.7</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURISM AND ITS INFLUENCE FOR TEACHING PRACTICE ....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.8</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BEHAVIOURISM .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.9</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURISM AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.10</b>	<b>MAKING SENSE OF BEHAVIOURISM IN THIS THIS EMPIRICAL RESEARCH</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.11</b>	<b>CONCEPTS AND THEORIES OF TEACHER MORALE .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.12</b>	<b>LEVELS OF TEACHER MORALE .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.13</b>	<b>FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALE .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.13.1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.13.2</b>	<b>Nature of the work performed by teachers .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.13.3</b>	<b>Level of job satisfaction by teachers .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.13.4</b>	<b>Level of teacher supervision .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.13.5</b>	<b>Teachers’ occupational levels .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.13.6</b>	<b>Teachers’ self- concept .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.13.7</b>	<b>The off- the- job activities of teachers .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.13.8</b>	<b>The age of teachers as employees .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.13.9</b>	<b>Teachers’ perceptions of rewards systems .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.13.10</b>	<b>Organisational levels .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.13.11</b>	<b>Teachers’ educational level .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.14</b>	<b>THE IMPORTANCE OF MORALE IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION .....</b>	<b>34</b>



<b>2.15</b>	<b>THE STATUS OF TEACHING PROFESSION AND TEACHER MORALE...</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.15.1</b>	<b>Teacher morale in Australia .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.15.2</b>	<b>Teacher morale in South Africa .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2.16</b>	<b>CATEGORIES OF TEACHERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.16.1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.16.2</b>	<b>Intellectually and cognitively underprepared rural schools: Quintile one .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.16.3</b>	<b>Cognitively prepared schools: Quintile two to three.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.16.3</b>	<b>Middle quintile schools .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.16.4</b>	<b>Former model C schools.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.17</b>	<b>FACTORS AFFECTING LOW TEACHER MORALE .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.17.1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.17.2</b>	<b>The influence of technology in the teaching profession .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.17.3</b>	<b>Inadequate teacher salaries.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>2.17.4</b>	<b>High expectations from teachers.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>2.17.5</b>	<b>Workload.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>2.17.6</b>	<b>Lack of quality professional development.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2.17.7</b>	<b>Management and leadership.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>2.17.8</b>	<b>Learner behaviour .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>2.17.9</b>	<b>Negative media reporting.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>2.17.10</b>	<b>Lack of teacher recognition and appreciation.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>2.17.11</b>	<b>Incoherent departmental policies .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.18</b>	<b>PRESERVING AND CREATING HIGH TEACHER MORALE .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>2.18.1</b>	<b>Positive teacher attitudes .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>2.18.2</b>	<b>Teacher self-assessment.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>2.18.3</b>	<b>Teacher empowerment.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2.18.4</b>	<b>Responsible school leadership.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2.18.5</b>	<b>Well planned administrative practices .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>2.18.6</b>	<b>Inclusive working culture and atmosphere.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>2.19</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>57</b>

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>RESEARCH PARADIGM .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>RESEARCH APPROACH.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>POPULATION OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>RESEARCH SITES .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.7</b>	<b>SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.8</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>3.8.1</b>	<b>Focus group interviews .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.8.2</b>	<b>Observations.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.9</b>	<b>PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>3.10</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.11</b>	<b>ISSUES OF CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.11.1</b>	<b>Credibility .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.11.1.1</b>	<b>Member checking.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.11.1.2</b>	<b>Prolonged engagement.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.11.1.3</b>	<b>Triangulation .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.11.2</b>	<b>Transferability.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.11.3</b>	<b>Dependability .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.11.4</b>	<b>Conformability .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.12</b>	<b>ETHICAL ISSUES.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.12.1</b>	<b>Informed consent.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.12.2</b>	<b>Privacy and confidentiality .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.12.3</b>	<b>Obtaining permission .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.13</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>71</b>

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF DATA .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>4.3.1</b>	<b>Theme 1: Experiences that influence teachers’ morale .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>4.3.2</b>	<b>Theme 2: Factors that affect teachers’ morale.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>4.3.2.1</b>	<b>Personal factors impacting on teacher morale .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>4.3.2.2</b>	<b>Work related factors impacting teacher morale.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>OBSERVATIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>SOCIO ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER MORALE .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.5.1</b>	<b>Parental involvement .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.5.2</b>	<b>Public perception towards teaching as a profession.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>4.5.3</b>	<b>Negative media reports .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>4.6</b>	<b>THEME 3: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHERS MORALE .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4.6.1</b>	<b>Improved communication.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>4.6.2</b>	<b>Family and professional support.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>4.6.3</b>	<b>Safety in schools.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>4.6.4</b>	<b>Parental involvement .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>4.7</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>98</b>

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>5.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS.....</b>	<b>109</b>
	<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>110</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes .....</b>	<b>74</b>
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## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A:</b>	
<b>A letter to the district director re requesting permission to conduct research with teachers in your district .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	
<b>Approval of request to conduct research .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	
<b>A letter to the circuit manager requesting permission to conduct research with teachers in your circuit.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	
<b>A letter to the school principal requesting permission to conduct research with teachers in your school .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	
<b>Request to the grade six Maths and English teachers to conduct focus group interviews and observations .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	
<b>Interview schedule with participants time: one hour thirty minutes to two hpours main research questions .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Appendix G: Checklist for observational field notes observation of facilities and Resources .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	
<b>Transcribed interviews theme 1.....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>	
<b>Transcribed interviews theme 2.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Appendix J</b>	
<b>Transcribed interviews theme 3.....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Appendix K</b>	
<b>Ethical Clearance Certificate.....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Appendix L</b>	
<b>Confirmation of Editing.....</b>	<b>151</b>

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Teaching is a complex and demanding profession. Teachers are expected to provide quality education irrespective of the difficult situations they might find themselves in. Unfavourable conditions under which teachers operate affect their morale which in turn influences their performance. In light of the above view, Basset, Behrstock-Sherratt, Jacques and Olson (2014:09) confirm that an issue influencing the performance and achievement of teachers in South Africa and many other countries such as Australia is teacher morale.

Govindarajan (2012:57) is of the view that morale functions in the framework of organisational theory and relates to an individual's progress towards the realization of organisational tasks and his or her perceived job satisfaction within the entire organisation. High morale of teachers is influenced by a teaching-learning process which is made possible by enthusiastic and motivated leaders and learners who are zealous and display high interest in their schoolwork (McNeil-Horton 2014:118).

It is a widely held view that morale of teachers in Australia has decreased over the last twenty-five to thirty years (Basset et al., 2014:09). Low morale affects teachers adversely to a point where experienced and skilled teachers fail to attain and maintain the accepted levels of teaching expected of them, and this further affects their job satisfaction (Perumal, 2011:06). The decrease in the morale of teachers leads to a less enthusiastic stance towards the profession (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012:217).

The decline in teacher morale is not only endemic to Australia but it is a challenge which affects teachers in many countries. The decline in teacher morale in the United States (US) is associated with demanding change due to the interest and pressure displayed by the community in its children's education (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012:217). The pressure exerted by the general public in Australia has changed the outlook and the culture of teaching and learning. The public emphasises outcome-based, career oriented education; this adversely affects teachers when they fail to meet the expectations of both the parents and the learners (Fullan, 2011:96). Failure to meet the expectations of learners and parents adds to the demands and

complexity of the teaching profession which subsequently results in despondency and low morale on the part of the teachers (Bogler, 2012:291).

It is a widely held view by teachers in Australia, the morale of teachers has been negatively affected by the exponential increase in what is expected from them yet these expectations have not been complemented by improved working conditions (Lumsden, 1998:01). In the same vein, teachers were expected to produce desired results under very stressful working conditions (Bosso, 2017:39). Smith (2010:06) indicates that apart from unacceptable working conditions, the stress of teachers is increased as they are expected to deal with learners' social issues which teachers feel is the responsibility of the parents and the community.

Dworkin and Tobe (2014:45) assert that low socio-economic circumstances coupled with the demands of the modern world have substantially changed the roles and responsibilities of teachers and added pressure for teachers. The reluctance of many education departments to improve the working conditions of teachers is attributable to the fact that even under difficult conditions teachers still strive to produce excellent results, therefore this may be the reason for the lack of effort on the part of education departments to improve the working conditions of the teachers (Tucker, 2012:120). In view of the experiences of teachers in US and Australia, the researcher contends that the morale of teachers has been taken for granted in those countries.

In South African context, the envisaged teacher expected by the African National Congress (ANC) after 1994 was that of a researcher, a critical thinker and a respectable citizen (Mhaule,2015:04). However, the status of teachers is undermined and disregarded even though their wellbeing and their rights to acceptable working conditions are enshrined in official statutes such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 and Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of 1998.

In view of the above discussion, the researcher in support of the view expressed by Mhaule (2015:04) strongly contends that, for teachers to be researchers in their profession, critical thinkers and respectable citizens as cited above, their morale should be prioritized. However, Perumal (2011:08) argues that appalling working conditions of teachers adversely affect their morale. Even after democracy in 1994 and the accompanying educational reform, teachers'

professional status and their morale as classroom practitioners have not been taken into account because teachers are still operating under poor working conditions (Perumal, 2011: 06).

In light of the above argument, the researcher goes along with Perumal (2011:06) who contends that the morale of teachers in South Africa since 1994 has only enjoyed symbolic and political rhetoric. Perumal (2011:04) states that in some South African schools, poor teacher morale is evident despite sufficient resources and facilities provided to schools. Many factors influence the morale of teachers including provision of resources.

In this regard, Mhaule (2015: 03) declares that, *“after twenty-two years of democracy there is still serious underperformance in our schools despite efforts made to improve education in our province”*. According to Mhaule (2015:03), teacher resignations before retirement time is a symptom of a demotivated teaching force. Demise in teacher morale is seen by the decreased culture of teaching, in which teachers display very little enthusiasm towards their work (Mhaule, 2015:04). Perumal (2011:07) adds that lack of general interest in their work, high level of absenteeism by teachers, high level of insubordination towards their seniors and contravening the rules of the teaching profession in general are signs of low morale as displayed by teachers.

Mpumalanga Systematic Evaluation Report (2015:15) found that (42.8%) of teachers indicated that conditions in the teaching profession are demoralizing and depressing and they were contemplating leaving the profession. It is impossible for such discouraged, depressed and demoralised teachers to produce desired results and display high levels of commitment (Perumal 2011: 07).

Bassett, Grossman, Allan, Allen, Cook and Olney (2013:54) point out that there is a link between the morale of teachers and their performance. Bassett et al. (2013:54) point out that teachers who display better performance in their work show traits of enhanced morale compared to their counterparts who perform poorly in their work. It is imperative to understand the link between the morale of teachers and their performance because the morale of teachers is gauged by their performance. Bosso (2017:30) state that there are devoted and motivated teachers who are seen as keystones of successful and effective teaching and learning, Bassett et al. (2014:63) maintain that less demotivated teachers could draw inspiration from such teachers to regain their enthusiasm towards their profession.



In the light of the above expositions, the researcher contends that there is a serious need to conduct an in-depth investigation into the morale of teachers in South Africa, this is in agreement with Bosso (2017: 07) who maintains that for teachers to be efficient in the execution of their duties, and their morale should be nurtured. Moreover, such research has never been undertaken in Mpumalanga province especially in the Bohlabela District. The researcher further contends that if the problem of teacher morale is ignored and left unattended, the South African teaching force, the education sector in general and the Mpumalanga Province in particular will experience declined levels of both learner and teacher performance.

Having elaborated on the introduction and context of the study, the researcher presents a detailed account of the rationale for conducting the empirical investigation as shown in the following section.

## **1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

According to Flynn and Goldsmith (2013:18), rationale of the study entails the reasons why the researcher believes the proposed research is worth doing and how the researcher came to develop an interest in the proposed topic. Teachers form an integral part of the schooling system as they are in direct contact with the learners than other officials of the Department of Education. The researcher has noticed a distinct decline in the performance of teachers which he contends could be attributed to their poor morale. In addition, Govindarajan (2012:57) argues that teachers are adversely affected by the poor conditions they are exposed to.

In light of the researcher's contention and Govindarajan's argument, the researcher was prompted to undertake the study intended to explore issues affecting the morale of teachers. The researcher contends that by undertaking a study on teacher morale will assist teachers to develop a positive attitude towards their profession and be enthusiastic about what they do on a day-to-day basis. This will assist in doing away with dissatisfaction with an existing practice. In the opinion of the researcher who share the same sentiment with Bosso (2017:26) who assert that, teachers are curriculum implementers which make them agents of change in the lives of the learners they teach and the entire community. For this reason, the researcher strongly believes that teachers need to be motivated and be given the necessary support. Bosso (2017:07) argues that the service conditions of teachers are trapped in a rationalized and bureaucratized structure and many teachers feel that their poor working conditions are

worsening. In addition to Bosso's argument, the researcher holds the view that although the Department of Education stresses high teacher performance, very little is done to address the working conditions of teachers which lead to their low morale.

This study is intended to explore the morale of teachers so as to develop their practice and enthusiasm about their work. In light of the above sentiment, Dworkin and Tobe (2014: 45) argue that teachers who are less enthusiastic about their work are unlikely to be effective and committed to their work. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers' morale be enhanced if desired goals are to be achieved by the teachers, learners as well as the department of education.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Teacher morale is a critical issue in the quest to enhance teaching and learning in schools (Govindarajan, 2012:60). While a number of academic studies (Basset, 2014, Fullan, 2011, Govindarajan, 2012) have delineated the extent and nature of teacher morale and made recommendations on possible solutions to the problem, there has until now been no single study which succeeded in bringing together theory and research on the issues affecting teacher morale and on its reduction and prevention (Carpenter and Pease, 2012:38). In light of the above, this study sought to obtain a deep insight into the experiences of teachers which affect their morale. According to research in the last ten years, decreased teacher morale has been a serious challenge affecting teachers in many schools globally (McNeil-Horton, 2014:05). Literature suggests that when the morale of teachers is high, learner performance is high and when the morale is low the performance of learners decrease (Bassett et al. 2014:52 and Fullan 2011:06). As a teacher who happens to be the researcher in this study, the appalling working conditions under which we operate negatively affected my enthusiasm and outlook towards my profession to point where I once contemplated leaving the profession. The salary which we get as teachers is demotivating; I think it does not correspond with the amount of work and stress we experience in our line of duty. In light of my experiences, I strongly hold the view that the morale of teachers is a serious cause for concern.

Bassett et al. (2014:52) argue that initiations and innovations in teaching and learning will not bear fruit if teachers are not prepared and do not have motivation to carry out the needed improvements. It is a widely held view that for educational innovation to be effective, the morale of teachers should be prioritised (Govindarajan, 2012:61). In contrast to Govindarajan,

(2012:61), Fullan (2011:06) argues that the morale of teachers in many countries was not given enough attention, it is against this background teachers claim that their well-being and morale are grossly undermined by educational authorities.

Govindarajan (2012:61) is of the view that teachers also need to be motivated and supported in order to be productive. Teacher satisfaction has decreased to its lowest level in 25 years with 51% of American teachers from a MetLife Survey responding that they feel immense stress multiple days of the week (Metropolitan Life Insurance:07). Budget and accountability pressures have taken their toll on teacher morale, instilling a sense of anxiety in many educators (Carpenter and Pease, 2012). On the other hand Hoadley( 2012:64), point out that( 32%) of South African teachers resigned in the teaching profession between 2005 and 2010 due to work related stress and appalling working conditions. During the period of 2005 and 2010 the department of education has seen a massive reduction in experienced teaching force (Hoadley, 2012:64). In view of the above figures, it was evident that the teaching profession was faced with a serious challenge which called for evidence based inquiry which this study seeks to explore in details.

Several studies (Bosso, 2017, Govindarajan, 2012, Perumal, 2011, Rice, 2012) about teacher morale have been conducted using a quantitative research method, this study adopted a qualitative research approach because qualitative research approach allows the researcher to examine the phenomenon within the cultural and social context in which a phenomenon takes place(Carpenter and Pease,2012:40)).By using qualitative approach to explore the experiences of teachers and how the experiences affect their morale, participants were empowered to share their lived experiences in their natural settings, that is, their schools. The qualitative research approach was opted in this research with an intention of providing a deep insight of research based intervention strategies teachers could apply to improve their morale (Flick, 2014:268).

In this regard, Mhaule (2015:02) states: *“On-going under performance particularly in Mpumalanga schools and declining numbers of the teaching force is eroding the fibre of our education system and it is a serious threat to the future of this province and our country at large”*. If the issue of teacher morale is left unattended, the Mpumalanga province is likely to suffer a huge shortage of teachers in the next five to ten years (Mhaule, 2015:03). The sentiments echoed by Mhaule reveal that teachers are demoralised and therefore, there is a serious need to empirically explore experiences that influence their morale.

So as to provide scientifically grounded intervention strategies to improve their morale. The above sentiment by Mhaule is supported by both international (Bosso, 2017:65, Govindarajan, 2012:63) and local (Perumal, 2011:07) studies which concur that poor motivation is one of the contributing factors to the attainment of job satisfaction which subsequently lead to improved morale. From the above findings, this study seeks to explore the primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale in Bohlabela District so as to improve their performance.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study explores the experiences of teachers which influence their morale in selected primary schools in the Bohlabela District with the intention to improve and sustain teacher morale to create a positive school climate. This study seeks to motivate and encourage teachers to foster love of and enthusiasm for their profession. The study will further suggest strategies to inculcate determination and commitment on the part of teachers if their morale is raised. The researcher believes that positive school climate will result in enhanced morale which will subsequently lead to intrinsic motivation.

By understanding factors which influence teacher morale, the awareness of policy makers will be raised concerning realities that exist in the educational environment especially those that affect the morale of teachers. Thus, the research intends to encourage dialogue between educators and policy makers. Policy makers may implement the recommendations of this study for designing effective programmes to raise and sustain the morale of teachers. The study is significant since the research results can inform policy formulation in South African education system. The study results could also assist educational leaders to create conducive working conditions for teachers which should be aimed at initiating policies which will compel the Department of Education to involve teachers in issues which affect them

Another significant aspect of the study is to inform and persuade the government to appreciate and recognise the efforts of teachers and the contribution they make towards the education of children. It can also sharpen teachers' own realization of the value they add to the education system. This will promote the achievement of collective educational objectives which can play a pivotal role in the improvement of teaching practice. According to Bosso (2017:07), teachers often experience a discrepancy between the moral and the affective purposes of their work and the external forces which affect it. Bosso (2017:07) argues that many teachers feel that the gap

between the moral purpose of their work and negative external forces is intensifying. In light of this, this study will shed more light on the morale of teachers with the aim of bridging this gap.

By exploring the morale of teachers, the study will add to the body of knowledge on teacher morale, motivation and development. The researcher further envisages that exploring teacher morale will assist education officials and teachers to make intelligent and informed decisions about the problem. This research is necessary for policymakers to see the connection between teacher morale, teacher performance and learner performance, hence, improving school practice.

The study is envisaged to highlight teachers' opinions and formulate intervention strategies for challenges associated with demoralising elements teachers face in their line of duty. The researcher contends that for effective curriculum implementation, the morale of teachers should be nurtured.

According to Flick, Gams –Homolova, Herman, Kuck and Rohnsch (2012:98), the research attains its significance by discussing the importance of the proposed research and its relevance. The researcher contends that the importance of exploring the morale of teachers is to improve morale which will enhance performance. Reviewing the findings of other researchers will assist the researcher in making informed and meaningful conclusions about the morale of teachers. This research is considered to be significant because it is envisaged to inculcate interest amongst teachers to partake in critical reflection and robust discussions on the improvement of teacher morale and create enthusiasm towards teaching as a profession.

This research is further envisaged to afford the researcher an opportunity to engage with other researchers in a form of knowledge transfer where researchers exchange views about a specific issue under investigation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:58). Interactions and discussions with other researchers will be attained by publishing the research findings in accredited educational journals and presenting the research findings at conferences and seminars.

This research explored deeper understanding and exposed the researcher to a plethora of literature and insight about teaching as a profession and proposes the manner in which poor teacher morale can be understood and addressed. By exploring the morale of teachers in the Bohlabela District, the study contributed to a current body of knowledge about the teaching

profession in particular and educational discourse in general. Having provided the background of and the significance of this study, the researcher formulated the problem statement and questions which guided this empirical investigation.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Gubbs (2014:277) states that questions are data collection tools which are used to provide direction for academic writings, such as dissertation or thesis studies. According to Rice (2012:10), teachers feel that their morale has been ignored over the years, this study sought to explore why teachers make this particular claim. In this research, the answers to the main research questions and sub-questions are aimed at exploring and identifying factors that influence teacher morale in Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga in particular and South Africa at large. Both international (Mackenzie, 2007:89, Bosso, 2017:65) and local (Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:447) studies concur that teachers feel that educational authorities do not prioritize the needs of teachers which adversely affect their morale, as a result this study sought to investigate reasons for low teacher morale and what could be done to raise the morale of teachers. In light of the above account, the main research question is formulated as follows: What factors influence teacher morale in selected primary schools in the Bohlabela District? The main research question is further sub-divided into the following sub questions:

**Research question 1:** What are the primary school teachers' experiences that affect their morale in Bohlabela District?

**Research question 2:** Which intervention strategies could be employed to address teachers' morale?

## **1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

In light of the main research questions (section 1.3) the study is aimed at exploring and obtaining an in-depth understanding of primary school teacher's experiences and factors that influence their morale and recommend intervention strategies aimed at managing and improving their morale. In pursuing the cited aim, the following objectives were considered for this empirical investigation:

1. To explore the primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale in Bohlabela District so as to improve their performance;
2. To recommend intervention strategies which could be employed to address teachers' morale in order to improve teaching and learning.

Having indicated the aim and objectives of the study, the researcher briefly discusses the research methodology of this study in the ensuing section.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research approach was considered suitable for this study, the reason being that it comprises of a set of interpretive and material practices which enable the world to be understood, according to De Vos, Strydom and Delport (2010:268) these practices convert the world into network of representations which include amongst others, interviews, dialogues, recordings and field notes. In this study, the researcher intended to obtain different dimensions of how teacher morale manifests itself. Halkier (2010:89) state that the qualitative research approach consists of multiple realities that are socially constructed by individuals and collectives, therefore qualitative approach was considered suitable for this study.

Further, a case study, a procedure used by researchers in planning the empirical investigation (De Vos et al., 2010:268, McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:345, Halkier, 2010:88), was also used in this study to guide the research in order to achieve the intended study objectives. The interpretive research paradigm as described by Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2013:25) was used as a method which the researcher applied in order to explore the phenomenon under study.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants in this research, Halkier (2010:89) describes purposive sampling as a non-probability technique which depends largely on the subjective discretion and judgement of the researcher, that is why this sampling technique was deemed appropriate for this study.

Focus group interviews were used as the main data collecting instrument in this study. As stated by Harvey (2011:441), focus group interviews are useful in allowing the researcher to extract rich data from several participants over a short space of time

Observation was used as secondary data collection method to augment data obtained through focus group interviews. (Kowall and Connell, 2014:248) state that observations assist the researcher gain data from the participants' point of view in their natural settings.

Guided by the conceptual framework of this research as suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016:04) thematic data were then identified analysed and interpreted so as to explore teacher morale with the intention to improve it.

## **1.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

To ensure validity of collected data, the researcher ensured credibility of data through member checking, prolonged engagement with participants and triangulation of data collecting methods. Other constructs which ensured that the collected data in this study are valid, credible and trustworthy included transferability, dependability and conformability. In order to attain the credibility and trustworthiness of this study as proposed by Marotzki, Holze and Verstandig (2014:450), the researcher ensured that there is consistency in his interactive style, analysing of data and the manner in which the researcher interpret data provided by participants. Furthermore, this study ensured that the collected data is credible by the explicit description of the role of the researcher, participants, data collection and analytical procedures as recommended by Kozinets, Dalbec and Early (2014:262).

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this study, the researcher ensured that ethical measures were adhered to because the research project involved human participants who should be treated with sensitivity and care. Firstly the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, University of South Africa. Thereafter, he obtained permission to conduct research from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and participants. Participants were assured in writing of the following safeguards: voluntary participation, informed consent, the right of withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality.



## **1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY**

While taking into account that the issue under investigation (teacher morale) may have equal relevance in other districts or provinces, this investigation was conducted in the Bohlabela District. Most schools in Bohlabela District are classified under quintiles 1 - 3. This means that schools in these categories do not charge a fee for learners for schooling and are located in deep rural communities where the level of poverty is very high (Mpumalanga Provincial Policy on the Education Districts, 2015:03).

Apart from the rural nature of this District, very few schools are adequately resourced and equipped with the necessary physical infra-structure, such as sufficient classrooms, textbooks, science and computer laboratories and libraries. The researcher also involved participants from adequately resourced schools to avoid the tendency of participants to mention and blame the unavailability of facilities as a reason for their decreased levels of morale.

Another rationale for conducting research in the Bohlabela District is that the researcher works there as a teacher. In this capacity, the researcher is expected to implement and realize the objectives of the curriculum and is also well acquainted with challenges which confront teachers daily.

## **1.11 CLARIFICATION OF PERTINENT CONCEPTS**

Pertinent concepts which form the crux of this empirical investigation are defined in this section to illustrate their meaning and the context in which they are employed in this study as follows:

### **1.11.1 Behaviourism**

According to Moller (2003:35), behaviourism is a philosophical orientation based on the outlook that believes that people's behaviour is influenced by factors in the environment which are beyond people's control and exercise of free will. Behaviourists regard the immediate world in line with stimuli and responses to such stimuli without recognizing what happens in a person's mind (Higgs and Smith, 2001:48). From a behaviouristic perspective, the way to resolve a challenge is to disintegrate the challenge into its component parts and fix the pieces

which are broken or scrap the programme altogether and try a new one by engineering an environment that yields desired outcomes (Moller, 2003:36). Behaviourism is a philosophical tenet which influences both the lay public and educators' perceptions of educational problems and solutions because behaviourism focuses on behaviour that is observable and measurable (Higgs, 2007:53).

### **1.11.2 Experience**

According to Soanes and Stevenson (2008:474), experience is an English word which derives from Old French and Latin word *experientia* and *experiri* which means actual observation of or practical acquaintances with facts or events. According to Soanes and Stevenson (2008:474) experience can be viewed as knowledge or skill resulting from the act of experience. Soanes and Stevenson (2008:474) also regard experience as the fact or process of being so affected, for instance, when something is learnt by the act or process of experience.

### **1.11.3 Teacher morale**

According to Perumal (2011:07), teacher morale is a state of mind and a feeling which a person or a worker displays towards his or her work or job. Rice (2012:10) views morale as the mental attitude showed by workers based on how they perceive themselves in their workplace and the degree to which the workplace attempts to meet their needs and expectations. Senechal, Sober and Hope (2016:14) conceptualises morale as the professional interest and enthusiasm which a worker shows towards the attainment of personal and group goals in a specific work environment; hence morale is an integration of an individual worker's needs and the objectives of the organisation or the workplace. Bosso (2017:24) regards morale as an inherent set of ideas which emanate from a specific response from stimuli. According to Mackenzie (2007:89) high morale can be attained when organisational objectives complement individual worker's needs whereas low morale is ascribed to an inability to influence and alter a negative status quo which causes workers to attach little meaning or no meaning to their work.

### **1.11.4 Motivation**

According to Pintrich (2003:664), from a technical stance, the etymological roots of the concept motivation derived from the term *movere* which means to move. On the contrary, from

a non-technical view, motivation means to encourage a person to perform a function which entail hard work and more effort (Mackenzie, 2007:89). This means that motivation is to make a person perform an action towards or away from something, Pintrich (2003:664) asserts that motivation is a process rather than an event, Pintrich maintain that motivation is the person's ability to persuade himself or others with an intention to channel their energy towards the attainment of improved performance.

#### **1.11.5 Job Satisfaction**

According to Ali (2016:100), job satisfaction is a pleasure experienced after a particular need of an employee is fulfilled. Ali (2016:100) is of the view that a worker or an employee derives job satisfaction when his or her expectations and needs are met. Job satisfaction describes the degree to which an individual is made content, comfortable or satisfied with his or her work (Ali, 2016:100). Job satisfaction is considered an emotional state resulting from the appraisal of a person's work and work experiences (Bosso, 2017:16). Job satisfaction is an important issue of attention which is regarded by the authorities, policy makers and top managers as job satisfaction is associated with different aspects of the organisations such as the school. It is imperative to note that it is human nature to be satisfied or dissatisfied with the work and responsibilities assigned to them (employees or workers). According to Bosso (2017:15) job satisfaction refers to the organizational determination, engagement and loyalty, which result in a motivated attitude or contentment in relation to one's working milieu.

#### **1.11.6 Bohlabela District**

Bohlabela District refers to one of the demarcations of Mpumalanga Province. Bohlabela is one of the districts of Mpumalanga Province, these demarcations also apply in the way in which education departments in the province of Mpumalanga are administratively divided, that is, Nkangala, Gert Sibande, Enhlazeni and Bohlabela.

#### **1.11.7 Teacher**

A teacher or an educator is anyone who teaches, educates and train people and offers educational services which may include professional therapy and educational psychology services at any public or independent school and who is appointed in a vacant post in any

learning or teaching institution under the Employment of Educators Act 1998 (Act No.76 of 1998). According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:11) a teacher is regarded as an agent in the promotion of culture of teaching and learning. On the other hand Soanes and Stevenson (2008:474) defines a teacher as a person who provides intellectual, moral and social instruction, train and gives information on a particular subject such as Mathematics or English. According to Ary (1990:103) a teacher is a professional who has chosen to pursue teaching as a profession which seeks to assist both the youth and adults to prepare them for responsible citizenry, to unearth their potential and help them on their way towards self-actualization and accountable adulthood.

#### **1.11.8 Self-actualization approach**

According to Francis and Kritsonis (2006:03) self-actualization is the tendency of people of becoming all what they are capable of being, in other words making use of all their potentials, capabilities and even their talents. In addition, Rouse (2004:27) asserts that self-actualization represents the process of growth to achieve an escalated level of psychological enhancement and contentment. In line with this study, teachers will always strive for continual growth and unleashing their potential and abilities.

#### **1.12 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study followed a qualitative approach with a small purposefully selected sample. The intention was to obtain rich, in-depth knowledge of the topic, that is teacher morale and not to generalise the findings. In this section practical constraints which might affect the study and the collection of data are identified and mitigated accordingly (see 5.6 and 5.7 in chapter 5).

#### **1.13 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The overall structure of the study takes the form of five chapters which are briefly described in the following sections.

## **Chapter 1**

Chapter one was regarded as the introduction and background of this study. Chapter one dealt with orientation of the study. This chapter provided the introduction and context of the study, rationale and significance of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, synopsis of research design, questions, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and demarcation of the study, clarification of pertinent concepts, chapter division and conclusion of the chapter.

## **Chapter 2**

Chapter two starts off by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, this chapter looks at how behaviourism as a theoretical framework guided this research. This chapter discussed behaviourism as a theoretical framework of the study and factors that impact teacher morale and interventions to improve it as the literature review of this research.

## **Chapter 3**

The research methodology and research design used in this study is discussed in detail. In this chapter, reasons for choosing a qualitative research approach were presented. Case study as a design used to plan this study was discussed. Purposive sampling as sampling procedure and focus group interviews and observations as data collection methods were also described. Thematic data analysis was discussed and strategies to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of data and ethical compliance were outlined.

## **Chapter 4**

This chapter discussed, presented, interpreted and analysed data provided by participants. Here themes which emerged from the study were discussed. The themes included experiences which influenced teacher morale; factors that affected teacher morale, included personal, work related and socio-economic factors. The chapter also discussed strategies which could be used to enhance the morale of teachers.

## **Chapter 5**

The final chapter draws upon the entire study, wrapping up the different theoretical and empirical strands in order to arrive at informed conclusions of the study. This chapter discussed the summary of the findings, conclusions arrived at in this study, recommendations of the study, areas of future research and limitations and practical challenges experienced during the course of the study.

### **1.14 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter introduced the overview and background of this study. The rationale of the study was outlined and why the researcher was prompted to conduct this research. The problem statement was discussed with particular reference to teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District. The significance of the study was discussed. Questions which guided this study were stated alongside the aim and objectives of the study. The choice of qualitative research methodology and the case study design of the inquiry were explained. Sampling, data collection methods which involved focus group interviews and observations, and data analysis were discussed. Strategies to ensure credibility and trustworthiness and ethical measures applied in this study were also outlined. The researcher explained how the study was demarcated, that is, where the study was conducted. Pertinent concepts were defined as well as the limitation of the study.

In the following chapter an overview of, behaviourism as theoretical framework is presented as well as relevant literature regarding teacher morale.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a review of literature on behaviourism as the theoretical framework which guided this study was discussed. This chapter further explored literature on teacher morale, teacher morale was discussed to offer a synthesis of teacher morale in order to understand what has not been written on teacher morale and or is written in such a way that it is conceptually or methodologically inadequate with a goal of clarifying silence or gaps in the existing knowledge base. Chapter two discusses behaviourism as the theoretical framework that is used to explain the dynamics of teacher morale. A review of literature review has also been presented to indicate previous research on teacher morale and to relate previous researchers' outcomes to the investigation under study. The following section discusses the impact of behaviourism as the theoretical framework which informs this study.

#### **2.2 THE CONCEPT BEHAVIOURISM**

According to Soanes and Stevenson (2008:116), the concept behaviourism derive from the word behave which means to act or to react. From a psychological point of view, behaviourism is the theory that human behaviour is determined by conditioning rather than by thoughts or feelings, behaviourism is concerned with the way one conducts oneself and the treatment of others and moral conduct, behaviourism is considered to be a behavioural science which is seen as scientific study of human and animal behaviour. According to Higgs (2007:51) behaviourism is viewed as a philosophy because it is perceived as a network of theoretical perspectives held together by common belief that personal experience is understood and exhibited as behaviour or actions that result from people's interaction with their physical and social environment. Following Pavlov (1849-1936), Watson (1878-1958), Thorndike (1849-1949) and Skinner (1904-1990) as founders of behaviourism, behavioural theories fall broadly within the ambit of empirical philosophies that hold that all knowledge is personal knowledge and knowing is necessarily evident and grounded in sense-perceptual encounters with specific experiences and events (Higgs,2007:51). Behaviourism is sometimes viewed as an *empty organism* theory of behaviour, that is, behaviourists regard the immediate world in terms of

stimuli and reaction to these stimuli without taking into account what happens in a person's mind (Moller, 2003:35).

Moller (2003:35) describes behaviourism as forces in the universe which control our behaviours and our outlook about our everyday experiences. In this study the forces of universe are teacher experiences which affect their morale (Mackenzie, 2007:94). In his attempt to understand behaviourism, Higgs (2007:51) argues that behaviourism is both uncertain in meaning and conceptually abstract; thus, to define behaviourism as a single theory is not possible. To support the narratives which seek to suggest that behaviourism is vague in meaning and conceptually complex, Mackenzie (2007:94) maintains that teacher morale as a tenet of behaviourism is a state of mind, which is why it is difficult to measure and observe its implications and how it (morale) manifests itself. In his explanation, Higgs (2007:51) describes behaviourism as a concept which has to be understood as a series of theoretical paradigms glued together by popular belief that personal experience is perceived as behaviour or actions that come from teachers' interactions with their universe.

On the other hand, teaching as expression of what is perceived by teachers as important and acceptable in relation to knowledge, its acquisition and pedagogy influence educational theory and practice in specific socio – historical and political situations (Higgs, 2007:51). Put differently, the morale of teachers may be influenced by social, historical and political factors; these factors play a role in degrading or enhancing the morale of teachers (Hoyle, 2001:144).

According to Day (1980:07-08), behaviourism describes reality as an outcome of individual's interests and life experience. In other words, the universe and the forces of nature exist but they are not arranged in specific sequence in which people are enabled to carry out their duties accordingly (Hoyle, 2001:144). After discussing the concept behaviourism and its link to teacher morale, the researcher explored the general principles of behaviourism.

### **2.3 BEHAVIOURISM AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Higgs and Smith (2001:06), teacher morale is a state of mind which manifests itself through the behaviour and experiences of teachers; it is rooted in the wellbeing of individuals and is influenced by the experiences in their setting. The impact of behaviouristic perspective in a research study is its ability to determine the research problems which are ought to be explored, analysed and the adequacy of suggested intervention strategies to the challenge under study (Bloom, 1956:104).





The appropriateness of behaviourism as theoretical framework employed in this study is based on its impact as a philosophical paradigm which propagates that teachers' behaviour and attitudes are influenced by factors in the universe which are above their competency and exercise of free will (Moller, 2003:35). Moller (2003:35) states that the educational implications of adopting behaviourism as a lens to examine the morale of teachers is informed by behaviourist tenets which promote performance and improvement of behaviour. Moller (2003:35) states that the influence of behaviourism on teachers and teaching is based on the assumption that behaviourists concentrate on behaviour which is observable and measurable. Mackenzie (2007:89) points out that teacher morale as a behavioural phenomenon can be observed through teacher-learner performance, teacher absenteeism and skilled teachers leaving the teaching profession for other professions.

Stenhouse (1981:114) states that the influence of behaviourism on theory and practice in the teaching profession emanates from the adherence to a behavioural stance and empirical epistemology. However, in understanding behavioural epistemology in the teaching profession, teachers develop knowledge of truth about their morale through logical and deductive reasoning (Eisner, 1992:302). Behaviourists are primarily interested in and encouraged by excellent teaching programmes which produce desired outcomes which raise teacher satisfaction. Teacher satisfaction is attained when working conditions are conducive which subsequently results in high teacher morale (Eisner, 1992:302).

In light of this above exposition by Eisner(1992:302) , Moller (2003:36) states that the way to overcome challenges which affect teachers and their working conditions which eventually affect their morale is to fragment and segment the educational programmes into their component units for teachers to effectively manage their teaching and learning process. According to Eisner (1992:303), breaking down the programmes into units and starting afresh in resolving teachers' challenges assists in resolving educational challenges, teacher morale included.

Contrary to what Eisner (1992:303) proposes, Tyler (1949:44) as one of the proponents of behaviourism argues that the problem in reconceptualising teacher morale or any programme or starting anew is the failure to create situations which yield outcomes which will foster job satisfaction which result in improvement of conduct and enhancement of achievement which subsequently lead to the improvement of teacher morale.

According to Wigfield and Eccles (2000:68), the effect of behaviourism on the morale of teachers is closely linked to external stimuli; in this study external stimuli are experiences of teachers which influence their morale. In other words, behaviourists view the immediate universe in relation to stimuli (Higgs and Deacon, 2003:86). Reactions to stimuli despite recognizing what transpire in teachers' minds and their working conditions; from a behavioural perspective, this is viewed as ignoring the well-being and the status of teachers (Higgs, 2007:51).

Another effect of behaviourism on the morale of teachers is its ability to propagate precise and complete facts about the issue under study and logical discussion of results and recommendations which are intended to improve practice and bridge the knowledge divide (Higgs and Deacon, 2003:63). In this section, the researcher has discussed the effects of behaviourism in this study. In the next section a detailed explanation of behaviourism as a concept is outlined.

#### **2.4 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOURAL PERSPECTIVES**

According to Creel (1987:13), behaviourists and empiricists share a common stance which is controlled by statutes and rules in which transformation conforms. Following the above account, behaviourists assert that people's behaviour is controlled by rules that govern their involvement with their universe (Hoyle, 2001:144). In support of Hoyle, Mackenzie (2007:93) maintains that teachers have to conform to policies which regulate the teaching profession.

Another principle of behaviourism is its reliance on the potential to minimize all people's interactions and behaviour to concepts of physicality, which rely on observation of and explanation of behaviour (Biehler, 1981:06). Rice (2012:06) concurs with the above sentiment by stating that incoherent policies imposed on teachers by the government limit the efforts and potential of teachers and this affects their morale.

Behaviourists perceive abstract concepts such as joy, feeling, morale, intention and choice as nothing more than speculation and guesswork as behaviourists argue that the above abstract concepts cannot be empirically observed and measured (Higgs, 2007:53-54). In light of the above exposition, Hoyle (2001:145) argues that teacher morale is a mental state which cannot be observed or measured with a naked eye; that is why often the morale of teachers as professionals is taken for granted.

The principle of significance is one of the principles of behaviourism which is feasible to relate to previous actions and behaviour or predict future behaviour with rigour that natural scientists claim in their explanation of their universe (Day, 1987:20). Simply put, adopting behaviourism as a guiding framework assists the researcher to explore what previous researchers discovered about teacher morale in order to resolve the challenges experienced by research participants in this study. Day (1987:20) further indicate that that if it is possible to predict future behaviour, it is easy to control the sequence of behaviour. Principles of behavioural perspectives have been outlined, and the next section deals with behavioural approach to motivation.

## **2.5 BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO MOTIVATION**

According to Toulmin (1982:144), behaviourists such as Thorndike, Skinner, Pavlov and Watson strongly believe that motivation is influenced by external factors such as excellent working conditions, job satisfaction and improved morale. Pintrich (2003:666) states that a behavioural approach to motivation is conceptualized in different forms such as inner forces, enduring characteristics and behavioural experiences such as morale, stimuli, beliefs and affects. Behaviourists regard motivation as an advanced and continuous step of reacting to attitudes influenced by reinforcement (Pintrich, 2003:667). According to Pintrich (2003:669), the behaviourist approach to motivation and cognitive opinions discern that people's thoughts, values and emotions have an effect on their motivation.

According to Day (1987:25), people do not directly perceive motivation but merely infer it by means of their actions and utterances because behaviourists regard motivation as a process rather than a product; in other words, motivation cannot be attained overnight; it takes time to be accomplished. According to Pintrich (2003:668), the behavioural approach to motivation comprises of objectives which provide impetus for and guide people to action. This gives rise to physical and mental action and behaviourists strongly believe that enhanced physical and mental action results in effort and endurance, which are prerequisites for motivation which is instigated and sustained.

According to Moller (2003:36), behaviourists contend that people's knowledge about motivation is primarily informed by their response to challenges, shortcomings and setbacks they are confronted with in their quest to attain their objectives. From a behaviourist approach, motivational processes such as expectations, attributions, emotions, and affects assist people including teachers deal with challenges and also assist them sustain motivation with the aim of

improving practice and performance so that they could attain job satisfaction which ultimately result in improved morale.

According to Sachs (2010:681), behaviourists assert that monetary benefits, incentives and rewards influence professionals' outlook towards their professions and working conditions. Behaviourists believe that professionals who are motivated by incentives and improved working conditions are likely to be motivated only when there are greater incentives and better working conditions (Pintrich, 2003:681). On the contrary, intrinsically motivated teachers are concerned with achieving their goals even if there are no incentives because they are results driven (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000:69).

Behaviourists believe that it is difficult for people to control their motivation because they tend to repeat behaviours linked to positive traits rather than behaviour associated with negative attributes (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000:70). In a nutshell, Wigfield and Eccles (2000:70) emphasise that there is a link between morale and motivation because from a behavioural perspective better performance is associated with a motivated workforce and a demotivated workforce is more likely to achieve poorly.

There are many approaches concerned with motivation. For the sake of this study, the researcher opted for the behaviourist approach developed by Thorndike, the rationale behind using Thorndike's approach was informed by this approach's emphasis on generating motivation through self-actualisation. Rouse (2004:27) states that Thorndike views motivation as something which is determined by self-actualisation. According to Rouse (2004:27), people actualise themselves when they do and achieve what they are capable of doing. Chindanya (2002:18) maintains that self-actualisation is a growth process, which strives for enhanced degree of physiological development and self-fulfilment.

According to the approach of self-actualization, when a person is not able to perform what he or she is capable of performing, such a person becomes dissatisfied (Francis and Kritsonis, 2006:04). Following Thorndike's approach of self-actualization, a singer has to sing songs, a sculptor must carve portraits and a teacher must teach and produce satisfactory learner outcomes to be in harmony with himself or herself (Rouse, 2004:28). Consistent with this stance, Francis and Kritsonis (2006:04) maintain that people including teachers always strive

for on-going development and growth and this assists them in unleashing their talent and potential.

Contrary to what is stated by Francis and Kristonis (2006:04) Thorndike indicates that only (2%) of people attain the phase of self-actualisation; this means that, in a given population, (98%) of people do not reach the stage of self-actualisation. According to Chindanya (2002:18), self-actualisation cannot be reached when the gratification of needs such as physiological, safety, affiliation and self-esteem are not achieved. Boeree (2006:03) concludes by stating that self-actualisation which facilitates individual motivation can only be attained when the four levels of needs cited above are regularly gratified.

In this section the researcher explored behavioural approach to motivation and its link to morale, in the following section; the assumptions of behaviourism are explored.

## **2.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF BEHAVIOURISM**

Higgs (2007:55) asserts that behaviourism is based on motivation and performance of individuals. Additionally, Cornbleth (1987:202) point out that behaviourism is exclusively founded on the assumption of ontology and epistemology. In the same vein, behaviour is influenced by what people experience in their environment because it is difficult if not impossible to separate people from their experiences (Higgs, 2007:55). According to Cornbleth (1987:191), to understand the relationship between people's experience and their behaviour, behaviourists believe in exploring and questioning the lived world of human beings.

In this study, teachers' experiences which influence their morale are investigated and the study is based on the assumption that what teachers experience in their day to day activities influences their morale. In this section, assumptions of behaviourism as they relate to the morale of teachers have been explained. The following section deals with behaviouristic implications for teaching practice.

## **2.7 BEHAVIOURISM AND ITS INFLUENCE FOR TEACHING PRACTICE**

According to Prawat (1992:373), behaviourism encourages the research discourse which applies mental aspects to expose shortfalls of reasoning and vague principles, this means that

people are equipped to mentally construct their knowledge of their world and beliefs about reality through their own direct experiences and interactions and then act upon those constructs.

According to Higgs (2007:64), in teaching as a practice, behaviourism entails assisting teachers in the process of questioning and probing their lived world so as to attain in-depth understanding of factors which affect their working environment. Behaviourists understand teaching and teachers as human aspects of reality based on the idea of congeniality and adaptability brought by experience (Cornbleth, 1987:193). According to Udechukwu (2009:75), in teaching practice, behaviourism is employed as a fundamental principle which views an individual as an active and unique being with potential, abilities and talents which such an individual strive to attain.

Adopting behaviourism in teaching practice assists in building coherence and sustainability between theory and practice; in other words, when adopting behaviouristic point of view, teachers are able to relate their experiences about their working environment (Prawat, 1992:394). According to (Biehler, 1981:100) behaviourism in the teaching practice determines the challenges which have to be analysed and the appropriateness of turnaround strategies to be applied in a particular challenge. In order to attain self-actualisation, teachers have to do self-introspection so as to discover their needs, weaknesses and potential (Locke and Latham, 2002:705). When teachers are allowed to discover their areas of need and potential, they are assisted to set attainable and realistic goals, which would generate and maintain their motivated attitude (Graham and Messler, 2004:197). The researcher outlined the link between behaviourism and teaching practice. The next section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of behaviourism which guided this empirical investigation

## **2.8 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BEHAVIOURISM**

In this empirical investigation, the researcher examined advantages and disadvantages of behaviourism in order to make the right decision regarding alternatives and recommendations in order to enhance performance and improve conduct amongst teachers. According to Toulmin (1982:16), the strength of applying behaviourism in a study is its ability to facilitate the benefit of experience which is inculcated by humans to create their own insight. Pintrich (2003:667) regards behaviourism's ability to promote logical thinking and critical analysis thereby

minimising subjectivity and encouraging objectivity in people including teachers as one of its advantages. Strength of using behaviourism is its ability to be used in any situation and its potential to motivate humans in probing their world and existence in order to make informed decisions influenced by justifiable reasoning (Moller, 2003:37)). According to Biehler (1981:100), behaviourists believe in logical reasoning which calls for robust debate and dialogue and clear channels of communication, which lead to a fellow feeling that assists humans to stand against manipulation. The interdisciplinary nature of behaviourism allows it to be used in any setting (Higgs, 2007:57). One of the strong points of using behaviourism is its potential to lead to fundamental changes in theory and practice in humans, institutions (schools) and professions including teaching (Freire, 1970:84).

However, behaviourism, like any other theory has its own shortcomings. One of the drawbacks of behaviourism is its disregard for a person's emotional well-being; this breeds insecurity in humans (Higgs, 2007:57-58). Behaviourism has the potential to make people pessimistic and uncritical of authority because people perceive behaviourism to be idealistic (Moller, 2003:37). Critics of behaviourism argue that behaviourism is highly abstract, complex and not pragmatic, these render it difficult to be associated with lived experiences of human beings (Graham and Messler, 2004:12). Behaviourism as a theoretical framework does not provide clear solutions and or answers to a given problem or challenge because it is not hard core science but it is a theory which facilitates understanding and insight informed by robust debate, dialogue and argumentation (Higgs, 2007:57). Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages of applying behaviourism in this study, the next section discussed behaviourism and educational research.

## **2.9 BEHAVIOURISM AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

According to Kokka (1998:10), principles cannot be employed to explore human situations and experiences; rather they can be applied to transform them and bridge the knowledge divide so as to enhance practice. According to Brubacher (1976:13), inquiries, information and suggestions cannot be theory-free. In other words, all scientifically investigated data is informed by a particular theoretical framework. In this study behaviourism is the theoretical framework. To get insight into pedagogical processes or a phenomenon, humans need to focus on social, economic and political situations concerning a specific issue under investigation and explore principles that are related to the problem at hand (Kokka, 1998:11). In the same vein



this study examined and investigated personal, work related factors and socio-economic factors which influence the behaviour and most importantly the morale of teachers.

According to Pintrich (2003:668), theory and educational research form a link which researchers should implement to ensure that relevant strategies, data gathering and interpretation of such data are determined. Likewise Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:76) hold the view that theory circumscribes approaches to educational challenges and promotes innovation and originality between researchers, policy-makers and teachers. On the other hand Mackenzie (2007:89) draw our attention to the fact that teacher experiences and their morale goes hand in hand, they are inseparable. As noted by Pintrich (2003:667) in the teaching profession, behavioural and motivational theories describe how teachers view their profession; unfortunately behaviourism and motivational approaches do not explain particular techniques and procedures to go through so as to arrive at the expected results as envisaged in the teaching profession and daily lived experiences of teachers. In this section behaviourism and educational research has been discussed. The next section discussed how the researcher makes sense of behaviourism as a theoretical framework for this study.

## **2.10 MAKING SENSE OF BEHAVIOURISM IN THIS EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

This empirical investigation is informed by behaviouristic perspective as the theoretical framework which assists the researcher in exploring teacher morale as related to teachers' professional experiences (Higgs, 2007:05). As a theoretical framework guiding this research, behaviourism was envisaged to further assist the researcher in determining how teacher experiences influence their morale, how morale manifests itself amongst teachers as professionals, the implications and results of morale and how to mitigate its undesirable outcomes.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may assert that behaviourism assists the study to understand aspects which count as factors that influence the morale of teachers and what needs to be done to sustain and raise the morale of teachers. In unpacking teacher experiences which may influence their morale, behaviourism assisted the researcher explores how school climate and experiences of teachers are constructed. The researcher used observation of infra-structure, facilities, and teacher- learner support materials to determine how teachers are

influenced by their experiences in their profession. This is in line with behaviourism's ability to assist researchers to analyse human behaviour (Higgs, 2007:55). There is a consensus among behaviourists that emotional wellbeing of people including teachers forms part of behavioural traits that could be identified through the morale of teachers (Higgs, 2007:54). Since the fundamental objective adopting behaviourism as a theoretical framework in this research was to explore and evaluate behaviour and experiences of teachers, the researcher as guided by this theoretical framework analysed teachers' behavioural phenomenon to establish they are experiencing in their daily activities as it relates to their morale. Teachers' conceptual assumptions of what their morale entail were explored by means of observation of infrastructure and facilities, conversations, robust debates and interviews with teachers in the selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

The researcher is of the view that analysis and interpretation of what teachers comprehend by their experiences as they relate to their morale may create a platform for teachers to develop well thought-out interventions and turn-around strategies to address issues relating to their morale, this view is supported by Lumsden (1998:12) who also alluded to the fact that for the morale of teachers to improve, teachers on their own should acknowledge that they have a problem with their morale. Once teachers embrace the fact that they have a problem with their morale, it is then that strategies to deal with problems associated with their morale could be sought as proposed by Hoadley (2012:21). By adopting behaviourism as a theoretical framework in this research, the researcher understood challenges experienced by teachers and their working conditions with an intention of improving their morale.

It is interesting to note that behaviourism enhances problem solving skills and collaboration in order to arrive at informed and sustainable conclusions about a specific issue under investigation (Moller,2003:38),for instance, the morale of teachers in this research. It can therefore be assumed that the involvement with teachers as participants of this study provided the researcher with a chance to establish how teachers' working conditions affect their enthusiasm and job satisfaction. On the other hand the behaviouristic approach to motivation and Thorndike's approach of self-actualisation may assist teachers to develop a positive attitude towards their work. There is a consensus among behaviourists that an understanding of motivation and self-actualisation assists in establishing how a positive school climate and enhanced teacher morale can be achieved (Rouse, 2004:28). Behaviouristic perspective as a

theoretical framework to guide this research has thus been outlined. In the next section; the discussion of teacher morale ensues.

## **2.11 CONCEPTS OF TEACHER MORALE**

According to Govindarajan (2012:57), morale can be defined as the degree to which the needs of a person are satisfied and people's perceptions of how the job situation engenders a state of satisfaction in the worker. On the other hand, Bosso (2017:13) regards morale as the professional interest and enthusiasm that teachers display with an intention of attaining achievement. In addition De Bruyne (2001:8), indicates that the term morale can be classified as high morale and low morale and this implies that there is a clear distinction between high and low morale.

Traditionally it has been accepted that when a positive school environment is created, teachers develop a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment from their work (Dale-Jones, 2011:18). Similarly Hardy (2010:89) asserts that when a suitable atmosphere for teaching and learning is created, the morale of teachers is enhanced. In view of what has been mentioned so far about morale, there seem to be some evidence to indicate that high morale can be attained when the goals of the school complement individual teacher's goals (Rowland, 2008:14). In contrast to Rowland (2008:14), Ying-Leh and Buda (2017:24) hold the view that, low morale amongst teachers negatively affects their professional lives, their performance and the performance of learners. In the same vein Bakirci, Turkdogan and Guler (2012:44) highlighted that lack of meaning in teachers' professional lives is worsened by their inability to change an undesirable status quo which ultimately results in their decreased low morale.

## **2.12 LEVELS OF TEACHER MORALE**

Minor, Wells, Lambert and Keller (2014:58) draw our attention to three distinctive levels of teacher morale, which are, personal morale, school morale and professional morale. According to Minor et al. (2014:58), personal morale is linked to the individual teacher's personal circumstances such as health, family matters, financial situation and his or her personal outlook towards their profession. In addition, Noddings (2014:132) states that experiences of teachers at school as their working place has an effect on their morale and such morale is termed school morale. Jones (2018:24) adds that factors which affect the morale of teachers within the school

are generated from contextual factors within the school; hence the morale is termed school morale. Liebenberg (2017:130-1) stresses that school morale is informed by personal morale because school morale depends on an individual teacher's perspective towards his or her profession which determines the manner in which such a teacher reacts to his or her personal issues which may affect morale.

Apart from personal and school morale, there is what is referred to as professional morale. According to White and Rosenbaum (2017:133), professional morale or the morale of the profession is linked to the status of teaching as a profession as well as personal and school morale. Minor et al. (2014:58) further point out that professional morale affects both school and personal morale because it comprises both of aspects but does not impact on the day-to-day activities of teachers in the same way personal and school morale do. According to Minor et al. (2014:59), some schools in Australia were able to sustain school morale while teachers' professional morale declined. For teachers to experience real job satisfaction, the three levels of teacher morale, that is, personal morale, school morale and professional morale, must be positive (Rice, 2012:138).

After careful assessment of the three types of morale, White and Rosenbaum (2017:1334) concluded that low teacher morale is linked to declines in the status quo attributed to the teaching profession while Minor et al. (2014:58) point out that high teacher morale is related to high status attached to the teaching profession.

## **2.13 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALE**

### **2.13.1 Introduction**

Minor et al. (2014:60) hold the view that teacher morale or lack thereof emanate from a variety of sources, for instance, within the school as an organisation, from the teachers themselves and sources outside the school as an organisation. Such factors influencing the development of teacher morale are discussed below.

### **2.13.2 Nature of the work performed by teachers**

Rice (2012:139) points out that there is a link between the complex and demanding nature of the teaching profession and the morale of teachers. The complex and demanding nature of the teaching profession affect the attitude of teachers towards their work as well as their morale (Minor et al., 2014:61). On the other hand, White and Rosebaum (2017:1335) state that teachers feel that they are expected to perform their work as if it is a routine and this makes them feel bored and alienated and this lead them to develop a negative attitude towards their work which adversely influence their morale.

### **2.13.3 Level of job satisfaction by teachers**

White and Rosenbaum (2017:1336) assert that the level of satisfaction a teacher derives from his or her work is a determinant of his or her morale. To support White and Rosenbaum assertion, Minor et al. (2014:61) add that When teachers feel that work related factors and the satisfaction they bring are perceived to be favourable, their morale tend to be higher than if work related factors appear to be unfavourable. Work related factors which may influence the development of teacher morale include amongst others, opportunities for promotions, job security, decent salaries and recognition of work done by teachers (Ying-Leh and Buda, 2017:46). According to Ali (2016:100), the work or a job a person does forms an integral part of the workers' life because the work a person does occupies a lot of personal and professional time compared to any other activity. It is the view of Bosso (2017:61) that the work teachers do is viewed as the means used to attain personal goals associated with the work or professions teachers do. In view of Ali (2016:100 and Bosso, 2017:61), it is clear and apparent that for workers including teachers to fulfil their professional desires and working conditions, their morale need to be nurtured. Govindarajan (2012:58) is of the view that there is a link between job satisfaction and the morale of teachers. Govindarajan's view is supported by Ali's (2016:100) who asserts that when teachers' morale is high, they derive increased job satisfaction. In the same vein, Bosso (2017:62) argues that when the morale of teachers is low, the teachers derive minimum job satisfaction.

#### **2.13.4 Level of teacher supervision**

Liebenberg (2017:132) state that the way teachers' work is monitored and supervised has tremendous influence on their morale because teachers feel that their work is evaluated on a fault finding basis. The increased levels of teacher turnover are an indication of an ineffective leadership and poor school administration (Liebenberg, 2017:132). In schools where teachers were given freedom to do their work using their own innovative ideas, their morale was reported to be higher compared to their counterparts who were supervised in a rigid and very strict manner (Meason, 2011:143). Meason (2011:143) maintains that teachers are demoralised when they are constantly supervised because Meason (2011:143) claims that no one enjoys to be monitored all the time.

#### **2.13.5 Teachers' occupational levels**

According to Tucker (2012:211) the occupational levels or ranks of teachers is one of the factors influencing the development of their morale. In addition, White and Rosenbaum (2017:1336) indicate that teachers who are occupying higher positions were reported to have higher levels of morale compared to their counterparts occupying lower ranks of the teaching profession. The morale of teachers in the lower levels of hierarchy is generally lower because teachers at lower levels compare their own attainment with those at senior levels (Tucker, 2011:213).

#### **2.13.6 Teachers' self- concept**

The way in which an individual teacher perceives or portrays himself or herself play a pivotal role in his or her self-concept and self- esteem (Tucker, 2011:214). When a teacher has confidence in himself or herself and in what he or she does in his or her profession, such a teacher is likely to have a positive self-concept than his or her counterparts who has unresolved issues with their self-esteem and self-concept (Minor et al., 2014:63). Teachers who are highly confident and who display good mental and physical health generally has high level of morale compared to those who do not have self-confidence in relation to their subject instruction and those who suffer from poor physical and mental health (Minor et al., 2014:65).

### **2.13.7 The off- the- job activities of teachers**

According to Stewart (2012:116) the relationship of the teachers with their families and their colleagues influence their behaviour and their attitude when they are at work. Teachers' personal lives which include their family lives and habits such as their financial situations or their personal habits play a role in the development of their morale (Jones, 2011:25).The pressures and influences of what teachers do when they are not at work have a significant bearing and effect on their morale.

### **2.13.8 The age of teachers as employees**

There is evidence to suggest that there is a link between the age of a teachers and how they are affected by morale (Stewart, 2012:114).To support Stewart's (2012:114) evidence, Jones (2018:25) found that, older teachers with long teaching experience were reported to have higher morale compared to young inexperienced counterparts, this variation was attributed to the fact that older teachers have more stability which comes with maturity, serious attitude towards their work, more reliability, less absenteeism, proven steady work habits, a sense of responsibility and loyalty and reduced tendency to be distracted by influences which do not relate to their work. Jones (2018:26) indicate that younger teachers' morale is negatively affected than older teachers because young teachers are more dissatisfied with higher expectations from their work compared to their older counterparts.

### **2.13.9 Teachers' perceptions of rewards systems**

Rice (2012:141) found that teachers' perception towards rewards, incentives and future chances for such rewards affect their morale to a substantial extent. Rice's (2012:141) view is supported by Bosso (2017:21) who asserts that when teachers regard incentives as reasonable and satisfactory, their morale tend to be higher than when incentives are of poor quality and not meeting their expectations (Bosso, 2017:21). Similarly, Rice (2012:115) found that if teachers perceive incentives and job opportunities as bleak, their morale tend to go down compared to when they perceive opportunities for satisfaction and attainment of incentives that lie ahead in future (Jones, 2018:26).

### **2.13.10 Organisational levels**

As noted by Jones (2018:215), one of the factors influencing the development of teacher morale is the organisation of schools as institutions of teaching and learning. By drawing on the concept of organisation, Ying-Leh and Buda (2017:48) has been able to show that organisation entail how well the school activities are arranged, planned and organised, and more importantly how well individual teachers' works are organised. A large and growing body of literature point to the fact that organisation of the school and teachers influence the attitude of teachers to their jobs and their morale (Stewart, 2012:117). There is a consensus among researchers (Bosso, 2017, Ying-Leh and Buda, 2017, Jones, 2018) that the general public reputation of an organisation such as the school may build up for better or worse in relation to the morale of teachers, in other words, a well organised school can positively enhance the morale of teachers than a disorganised school (Bosso, 2017:12, Ying-Leh and Buda, 2017:48 and Jones, 2018:26).

### **2.13.11 Teachers' educational level**

Rice (2012:143) found that there is an inverse relationship between the level of education an individual teacher has accomplished and his or her morale. In her analysis Meason (2011:146) concludes that teachers with higher academic qualifications displayed high levels of morale, better work performance and increased enthusiasm towards their work. In contrast to Meason (2011:146), Stewart (2012:117) argues that teachers with minimum academic qualifications were reported to have inferiority complex which negatively affected their confidence and most importantly their morale.

## **2.14 THE IMPORTANCE OF MORALE IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

According to Bosso (2017:19), teacher morale can have a positive effect on learners' attitudes and learning; high teacher morale creates an atmosphere conducive to learning. On the other hand, Govindarajan (2012:58) states that high morale can assist in developing interest and enthusiasm on the part of teachers, whereas low morale could lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration on the part of teachers. Teacher morale can assist teachers to strive to achieve their individual goals and the educational goals of the school system because teachers' perception of satisfaction stems from the entire school environment.



Bakirci et al. (2012:45) found that enhanced teacher morale prompts positive working conditions which create a conducive environment for improved teaching and learning. Conversely, Ying-Leh and Buda (2017:46) reported that a depressed and demoralised teaching force produces decreased productivity and this decreased productivity is fertile ground for low morale and stress. On the other hand, Liebenberg (2017:131) highlighted far reaching implications of teacher morale by stating that, the health and culture of the school and more importantly the health of the teacher is directly and or indirectly influenced by the working conditions under which teachers operate.

## **2.15 THE STATUS OF TEACHING PROFESSION AND TEACHER MORALE**

This ensuing section explores teacher morale in two countries, that is, Australia and South Africa. The rationale for using Australia and South Africa is informed by the economic status of the two countries. Australia is a well-developed country and South Africa is a developing country. The study explored the differences in the morale of teachers in the two countries respectively and explored the reasons for either low or high teacher morale in those countries.

### **2.15.1 Teacher morale in Australia**

According to Ray (2010:53), the status of teachers or teaching in Australia began to decrease in the late 1970s and reached its all-time low in the late 1990s because teachers were dissatisfied by their unacceptable working conditions. Ray's (2010:53) work on the status of teachers is complemented by Meason (2011:142) who found that in the 1990s the teaching profession in Australia was "*under a cloud*", meaning that the morale of teachers had deteriorated dismally. The community's lack of understanding about what actually transpires in teaching played a negative role in the low standards of the teaching profession in Australia (The State Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee [SEETRC], 2012:26).

Meason (2011:142) argues that, the perception of the general public about the teaching profession is in support of the narrative which seeks to suggest that anyone who has been once to school is acquainted with what is actually taking place in the classroom or teaching profession. To the contrary, the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching in Australia (MACQT) (2010:02) refutes the general public's claim of knowledge on what

teachers do in their line of duty, by stating that people's lack of knowledge about the teaching profession leads to the community making misinformed conclusions influenced by negative reporting about teaching and teachers.

In the same vein, Liebenberg (2017:132) concurs that the media pay less attention to the good work discharged by teachers and concentrate on teachers and teaching only when there are newsworthy problems and challenges such as strikes. In addition, Meason (2011:142) found that the public's outlook towards teachers is negative because the public views teachers as public servants with very little autonomy in their work. To support a sentiment echoed by Meason (2011:142), Ray (2010:45) states that the public claim that teachers have a subservient responsibility, meaning that teachers take orders from their seniors such as principals and circuit managers, they are indecisive and they rely on their immediate seniors to make decisions which affect their work.

Paradoxically, the pressures experienced by teachers are ever increasing while their social standing is declining at an alarming rate; this result in low levels of their morale (Sahlberg, 2011:158). Minor et al. (2014:59) argue that in Australia the efforts of teachers are overwhelmingly drawing public scrutiny and unacceptable criticism whereas the general public casts a shadow of doubt over teachers' skills and expertise in their profession and this doubt is not helping the improvement of teacher morale.

As noted by Tucker (2012:211), the perception of the general public towards teachers plays a pivotal role in their status because teachers view the outlook of general public towards them as very important. Minor et al. (2014:58) argues that it is difficult to change the community's outlook because the community is adamant that the status of teachers will not change or improve, instead it will further deteriorate. In light of the above, Rice (2012:56) points out that, unless there is a reform in the administration of education and a change of perception which discards the view that anyone who has been to school can be a teacher and an expert in the delivery of education, the morale of teachers is unlikely to improve.

SEETRC (2012:03) indicates that generally the status and power of people is informed by their economic status. Similarly, Jones (2018:21) argues that the status and confidence of teachers has been reduced in line with their economic status. Stewart (2012:115) claims that teachers work with minors and the latter do not have economic and political influence, which also

negatively impacts their morale. It was somewhat surprising to learn that the domination of teaching by females, lack of professional mystique which affects general public's attitude towards teaching and the fact that children are the main stakeholders or customers work against the teaching profession in relation to its status (Stewart, 2012:115).

Stewart's (2012:115) view on the perception of the general public's lack of professional mystique about teaching is complemented by Jones (2018:23) who argues that the misconception which seek to suggest that anyone who has been to class is well informed about what transpires in the classroom and can make a good teacher coupled with the narrative which seeks to suggest that teaching is predominantly a women's career and a half-step above childcare also puts a serious strain on the status and confidence of teachers and the teaching profession.

Tucker (2012:213) found that, the emphasis on administration, policy procedures, and political interference has played an influential role in decreasing the status of teachers in Australia. Surprisingly, according to Australian Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) (2013:23), there is a demand to improve teachers' working conditions in order to retain skilled and experienced teachers. On the contrary DEST (2013:25) points out that potential student teachers are demotivated to pursue teaching as their life career because of perceptions of low status associated with teachers and the teaching profession.

### **2.15.2 Teacher morale in South Africa**

After discussing teacher morale in Australia as a developed country, this section sought to explore teacher morale from a South African perspective as a developing country. In this section the study dealt with how factors affecting teacher morale play out in South African schooling system.

In the South African context, Shalem and Hoadley (2013:119) found that the status of teachers is seen in the light of structural conditions such as economic disparities, frequent curricular changes and bureaucratisation of work done by teachers and these structural conditions have a direct impact on the morale of teachers. In the same vein Kallaway (2010:42) point out that teachers' working conditions frustrate and anger them to a point where many teachers contemplate leaving the teaching profession before retirement time. According to Jones (2018:24), the structural conditions cited above have created different types of schools in South

Africa. In their article, Shalem and Hoadley (2013:120) identify schools attended by learners from poor family backgrounds and those from rich families.

According to Kallaway (2010:43), schools are sources of morale, for instance when a school is well resourced, teachers in such a school display high levels of morale whereas teachers from under-resourced schools display low levels of morale. In their analysis Shalem and Hoadley (2013:126) identify what they refer to as a dual economy of schooling in South Africa which means that schools are divided into those for the poor and those for the rich. According to Shalem and Hoadley (2013:127), in South Africa there are learners who are intellectually prepared for schooling, physically healthy and come from rich families. Shalem and Hoadley (2013:128) identify another factor which involves learners who have had access to meaningful learning opportunities in the past. Schools with an enrolment of these learners currently display a high degree of teacher-learner support materials required for effective teaching and learning and the schools are run smoothly. The next section discusses categories of teachers in the South African schooling system.

## **2.16 CATEGORIES OF TEACHERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM**

### **2.16.1 Introduction**

According to Hoadley (2012:67), there are four main analytical categories of schools and thus teachers in South Africa. In the ensuing sections four categories of schools in relation to teacher morale were discussed. The categories included intellectually and cognitively under-prepared rural schools which fall within quintile one, cognitively prepared schools which fall in quintile two to three, affluent urban schools in quintile four to five and former model C schools which fall in quintile five.

### **2.16.2 Intellectually and cognitively underprepared rural schools (Quintile one)**

According to Shalem and Hoadley (2013:127), the first category of teachers is involved with learners who are intellectually and cognitively under-prepared to learn. Learners in this category are classified under quintile one, meaning that teachers operate in schools where learners come from very poor families and the academic achievement of learners in this

category is below average due to lack of required support. It is important to bear in mind that, learners in these schools display signs of being physically unhealthy and their parents do not take part in collaborating with teachers to fulfil the cognitive needs of the school where their children are attending Shalem and Hoadley (2013:124). Shalem and Hoadley (2013:127) further draw our attention to the fact, 60-70 % of South African teachers work in intellectually and cognitively under prepared rural schools.

Some researchers (Perumal, 2011:16, Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:127) are in agreement that most parents in this category are illiterate; therefore do not attach any value to education, including their children's education. It is a widely held view that learners in these schools do not receive the support from their parents on their school work Hoadley (2012:71). This is in agreement with Gustafson and Patel (2011:68) who hold the view that few learners in this category receive assistance about their school work from their elder siblings who also went to the same type of school, meaning that any assistance they offer is very inadequate. Motala (2012:87-91) continues to point out that teachers under this category deal with learners who come from unstable family structures, which are usually headed by single mothers. Cognitively under-prepared learners are taught by their mothers the social codes to survive in difficult conditions of abject poverty Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:124). However, Gustafson and Patel (2011:69) argue that these survival tactics include girls caring for their siblings when their mothers are out to work, whereas boys are made to look after other people's livestock with the intention of earning an income for the family. Hoadley (2012:74) adds that the survival tactics cited above do not necessarily prepare the learners for processes required for formal education.

Gustafson and Patel (2011:70) discovered that teachers in this category do not get help on instructional time from learners' homes. In other words, learners in this category do not continue with their schoolwork at home. According to Hoadley (2012:76), once at home these learners do not study, read books or do their homework as they are busy with household chores such as cleaning and looking after livestock and these duties are not linked to their school work. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2012:06) found that teachers in this category have very limited access to knowledge resources and this lack of resources puts a huge strain on their part because they fail to foster effective teaching and learning and this has a direct negative bearing on their morale. In addition the HSRC (2012:07) discovered that, the few resources which were supposed to provide knowledge to both teachers and learners were of inferior quality, for example, teachers in this category rely only on out-dated textbooks to deliver their

lessons as the schools do not have libraries, media centres and computer and science laboratories.

Proudlock, Dutschke, Jamieson, Monson and Smith (2012:74) state that most schools in this category do not have basic amenities to ensure smooth running of the school, for instance, running water, ablution facilities and electricity. In the same vein Fleisch (2012:63) adds that lack of these basic amenities negatively affects the morale of teachers operating in these schools as it is very difficult if not impossible to work without these amenities. According to Proudlock et al. (2012:74), teachers in these schools face a dire shortage of learner- teacher support materials (LTSM) and administrative and non-teaching staff such as clerks and cleaners, this means that teachers operating in these schools have to do administrative duties and ensure that their classes or schools are clean and conducive for teaching and learning to take place. In addition, parents in these schools do not even have money to pay to supplement the insufficient supplies required for effective teaching and learning (Fleisch, 2012:63). A few parents who can hardly afford to make a payment make a big sacrifice to contribute to such projects (Hoadley, 2012:76). The rate of learner absenteeism in these schools is very high as some of these learners go to bed and to school without food, and transport money to school is sheer luxury (Gustafson and Patel, 2011:75).

Teachers who work in this category of schools experiment with learners who solely rely on government child support grant for survival; these learners are socially withdrawn as the environments in which they are located do not have recreational facilities to enhance their social life (Adler and Reed, 2012:84). Teachers in this category work with learners who are vulnerable and confined to relations of dependency as they rely on other people, such as older men to cater for their needs (Van der Berg, 2010:03-04). This means that teachers in this category have extra work as they are expected to follow the programme of the curriculum and also deal with social aspects of their learners (Van der Berg, 2010:03-04).

According to Fleisch (2012:64), another challenge experienced by teachers operating in these schools is to cope with the drop-out rate of (50%) of their learners when they reach the fifth grade. The rest of the cohort of learners proceeds to Grade 12 where more than (50%) of them fail to attain Grade 12 senior certificate (Fleisch, 2012:64). Teachers in these schools are demoralised as the inadequate property and organisational assets available to them makes them fail to nurture the needs and aspirations of their learners and that of the parents (Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:128).

### **2.16.3 Cognitively prepared schools (Quintile two to three)**

Perumal (2011:09) identify the second category of teachers in the South African schooling system which includes teachers who operate in schools found in better urban environments with a good standard of living. These schools are found within quintile two to three and also located in places where most people earn a moderate income (Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:128). Teachers in this category operate in schools where most of the basic necessities for effective teaching and learning are available (Soudien, 2011:90). Teachers in this category work in places with all the required facilities necessary to ensure effective teaching and learning; thus, schools in this category are fully resourced (HSRC, 2012:09). According to HSRC (2012:14), teachers in this category interact with and teach learners who are cognitively prepared for school (HSRC, 2012:14). Teachers have acquired specialised subject content knowledge in the learning areas they teach (Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:128).

Teachers in this category interact with educated parents because parents in this category have university degrees or other tertiary qualifications which makes it easy for parents to help their children with their school work because they attach meaning to their children's education (Soudien, 2011:90). Parents in this category have a choice to help their children personally or to hire private tutors to assist their children with school work because they earn better salaries to afford such services (Perumal, 2011:09). Parents in this category have permanent professions which are time-consuming and thus they may not have much time to help their children with school work on their own (Gustafson and Patel, 2011: 72 – 73).

Due to the support which teachers in this category enjoy from the parents of their learners, they are able to turn their learners into productive citizens and this goes a very long way to sustain good teacher morale (Soudien, 2011:90). Apart from the parental support teachers in this category receive, these teachers operate in schools which are well equipped with excellent technological facilities which make teaching and learning simple and enjoyable and these conditions play a profound role in sustaining positive morale of these teachers (HSRC, 2012:04).

In 2012 Shalem and Hoadley published an article in which they proved that the majority of teachers under this category are white teachers, who experiment with smaller classes, approximately a maximum of thirty learners (Shalem and Hoadley, 2012:129). The schools in

this category are culturally and racially diverse because they accommodate learners from various racial groups (Van der Berg, 2011:05). Teachers in this category work with learners whose parents are financially well-off, in view of the above account, learners in this category of schools do not depend on the government child support grant for survival (Carrim, 2012:04). In addition, Carrim (2012:06) point out that primary school teachers in this category exercise high hopes that their learners will attain a curriculum bench-marked grade level because they are acquainted with the learning needs of the school which they are able to realise due to the overwhelming support they receive from the parent component.

According to Van der Berg (2011:07), secondary school teachers in this category are confident that their Grade 12 cohort will achieve distinctions and attain university entrance. Teachers in these schools are autonomous; their autonomy is informed by the confidence of the school management team (Carrim,2012:04). Teachers operating in these category of schools are afforded the opportunity of neutralising the bureaucratic requirements of accountability expected by education officials; in so doing the teachers' notional time is preserved (Van der Berg, 2011:07). Preservation of teachers' notional time is attributed to enhanced teacher performance which it is believed to play a profound role in the improvement of teacher morale (Carrim, 2012:07).

#### **2.16.4 Middle quintile schools (Quintile four)**

According to Van der Berg (2011:12), the third category is comprised of teachers who operate in middle quintile schools. It has been commonly assumed that schools in this category are inclusive as they accommodate different social classes and races (Hoadley, 2012:76). Teachers in this category experiment with learners who mostly are cognitively unprepared for school as they receive little instructional time at home. In addition, teachers in these schools receive little parental support because most parents do not have time for their children's education as they are working long hours; they leave early in the mornings and arrive very late in the evenings (Taylor, 2012:03). Shalem and Hoadley (2013:129) point out that teachers in this category are well educated display a high level of professional ethics and have access to knowledge facilities in the schools they operate in but their morale is highly compromised because they experiment with learners who demotivate them as these learners are cognitively unprepared for schooling.



According to Taylor (2012:04), the morale of teachers in this category is compromised because teachers are not allowed to exercise their discretion because the school management fails to organise the arrangement of teacher's work in order to preserve a teacher's teaching time. In light of the above exposition, Taylor (2012:13) argue that one can be tempted to say that the morale of teachers in this category can be high but it is jeopardised by the school management's blind compliance with superiors. Van der Berg (2011:14) further state that teachers in this category work very hard and produce excellent results with minimal resources.

### **2.16.5 Former model C schools (Quintile five)**

According to Taylor (2012:07), the fourth category of teachers includes teachers representing a hybrid of the dual system. According to Taylor (2012:07), teachers in this category operate in schools which were previously privileged with all the resources needed for effective teaching and learning but are failing to produce the desired results. Teachers operating in these schools experiment with learners who are cognitively prepared for school (Perumal (2011:14). It is believed that the morale of teachers in South Africa following under this category is highly compromised because teachers in this category do not have access to knowledge resources for effective teaching and learning and are not exposed to latest learning opportunities yet these teachers are well skilled and the physical environment is conducive for teaching and learning (Perumal, 2011:09).

Shalem and Hoadley (2013:130) argue that the various categories outlined above as structural working conditions of teachers directly and indirectly influence the morale of South African teachers. Contrary to expectations, literature on categories of teachers in South African schooling system revealed that the general morale of teachers is low. It is a widely held view by many South African teachers that the department of education's insistence on a rigid monitoring framework for teachers results in declined levels of their morale (Anyon, 2010:77). On the contrary, an attempt to resolve structural differences in society that are also embedded in schools may create ways for recognising and improving efforts of teachers, thereby improving their morale (Perumal, 2011:09).

According to Finnigan and Gross (2012:616), exploring the conditions under which teachers operate creates a platform for understanding operating practices which teachers believe in and for establishing why interactions between teachers and the department or government create a

misunderstanding about decent working conditions of teachers. It has commonly been assumed that the latter leads to a decline in teacher motivation and enthusiasm for teachers who work in different categories of South African schooling system (Finnigan and Gross, 2012:616). Having discussed categories of teachers in South African schooling system, the next section outlined factors affecting teacher morale.

## **2.17 FACTORS AFFECTING LOW TEACHER MORALE**

### **2.17.1 Introduction**

In this section, factors which affect low teacher morale are explored. The effect which low teacher morale has on the performance of both teachers and learners is outlined. This section explores the role which technology plays in the teaching profession, inadequate teacher salaries, workload, high expectations from teachers, lack of quality professional development, management and leadership, learner behaviour, negative reporting by media, lack of recognition and appreciation and incoherent policies in the education system. The above cited factors are discussed in details in the ensuing sections.

### **2.17.2 The influence of technology in the teaching profession**

Recent researches (Jones, 2018:144, Bosso, 2017:89 and McNeil-Horton, 2014:77) has suggested that the constructivist usage of technology has hugely affected the morale of teachers in countries such as Australia and the USA. According to Zhao (2012:107), the inception of technology in the teaching profession was supposed to instil commitment and job satisfaction on the part of the teachers. It is crucial to note that the challenges associated with the first stages of the implementation phase of technology placed considerable pressure on teachers in the US (Zhao, 2012:107). On the other hand lack of mentors to motivate teachers coupled with lack of incentives and lack of professional support for teachers adversely affects their morale.

It is somewhat surprising to learn that teachers in the USA were not given a chance to demonstrate their innovations in the application of technology in their profession particularly during the phasing-in of technological innovations. According to Zhao (2012:107), teachers in the US complained that the use of technology in their profession was imposed to them. Although the intention of introducing technology in the teaching profession was to improve

practice, it was unexpected that the imposition of technology placed stress on teachers rather than creating an opportunity for them to make a meaningful contribution in their profession (Bassett et al., 2013:65).

Contrary to Bassett et al.'s (2013:65) above point of view, Zhao (2012:109) argues that the use of technology has the potential to instil foundational insight and to improve teaching skills which will ultimately engender new confidence on the part of the teachers. Baylor and Ritchie (2002:17) believe that when teachers are confident, their morale is likely to improve. In their analogy, Baylor and Ritchie (2011:16) found that teachers in the US regarded the use of technology in their classrooms as a threat and they complained that they were given minimal technical, educational and administrative support in the technological competency sector but the education department expected them to apply technology effectively in their day-to-day activities without fail. Bogler (2012:287) states that when insufficient support on the use of technology is given to teachers, teachers are uncertain and sceptical about best practices which lead to unrealistic expectations and failure compounded by corresponding loss of their morale.

In contrast to Bogler (2012:287), it is interesting to note that the introduction of technology and constructivist learning theories into the classroom situation in the USA has had a huge impact on the morale of teachers because this brought about profound changes from a traditional teaching-learning situation to new ways which call for improved teaching methods which clearly articulate what is expected from teachers (Bassett et al., 2014:126).

According to Bogler (2012:288) one of advantages of using technology such as computers, accelerated learner performance because learners also used computers as learning aids and when learners' performance improves, the morale of teachers is positively enhanced. In the same vein Bassett et al. (2012:126) found that that the introduction of technology in the teaching profession enhanced the confidence of teachers through recognition of their efforts and enhanced professional development and incentives which teachers admitted had a motivational effect on their profession.

Apart from the strong points associated with the use of technology in the teaching profession, Tucker (2012:58) indicates that the use of technology in the teaching profession has its limitations which adversely affects the morale of teachers, for instance, insufficient technological equipment which is necessary for both the teachers and the learners and

inadequate time allocation for teachers to use computers in all the subjects they teach. Teacher morale was operationalized from the teacher's frame of reference to include the advantage of applying technology, opinions of fellow teachers about morale when they embrace technology in teaching, contentment with work conditions and the extent to which technology affords teachers growth and enthusiasm (Stewart, 2012:126). One unanticipated finding was that the integration of technology in the teaching profession assisted American teachers to invest time and money in technology which gave rise to content acquisition, enhanced learners' critical thinking skills and accelerated teacher competence and morale (Govindarajan, 2012:59).

### **2.17.3 Inadequate teacher salaries**

As expected, it has commonly been expected that inadequate teacher salaries would have a direct influence in lowering the status of the teaching profession thus compromising the morale of teachers (Smit, 2010:28). On the other hand, Fullan (2011:204) argues that in Australia, the salaries of teachers is far below compared to other professionals yet teachers have better qualifications compared to other professionals. Contrary to the low salaries Australian teachers claim to receive, Australian teachers widely hold a view that the complex nature of the work they carry out demand satisfactory salaries (Smit, 2010:28).

There is evidence to suggest that the Australian government uses incoherent procedures to control and administer teachers' salaries (Fullan, 2011:204). In his research Fullan (2011:204) found that the Australian education department created complicated ways of administering the salaries of teachers which makes it difficult for teachers' salaries to improve. Australian teachers attain the highest rate of their salary in a period of nine years, (SEETRC, 2012:07); however, the reason for using nine years' teaching experience as the benchmark was not provided. According to Fullan (2011:204), teachers in Australia can only improve their salaries by applying for an executive rank or by being promoted to a non-teaching based consultancy or administrative position. Some of the alternative career options within the education department are not desirable for many teachers and most teachers who cannot get non-teaching positions either leave the profession or remain demoralised in the system (Reid, 2010:118).

In South Africa, the salaries of teachers are influenced by economic-led government policies which perpetuate imbalances and low salaries of teachers and those of other professionals in

the public sector (Shalem and Hoadley, 2013:124). According to Gustafson and Patel (2012:71), after the attainment of democracy in 1994, the South African government intended to attain expenditure equity. In light of this, the government introduced a revised salary structure, which was referred to as the 1995 baseline salary structure which was intended to raise salaries for teachers at the bottom salary range. Surprisingly immediately after the inception of the 1995 baseline salary structure, the government did away with raising teacher salaries on the basis of improved qualifications and long service in the education department (Reid,2010:118).According to Fiske and Ladd (2010:105) the abolishment of teacher increments on the basis of improved qualifications and long service angered teachers and teacher organisations such as South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) ,National Association of Professional Teachers Organisations of South Africa (NAPTOSA),Suid Afrikaanse Onderwyserunie (SAOU) and Professional Educators Union (PEU). It has been reported that the 1995 salary structure caused ramifications in teacher salaries as the new salary structure was not informed by recognition of qualifications and teacher experiences (Fiske and Ladd, 2010:105).

It is a widely held view particularly by non-white teachers that the 1995 baseline salary structure failed to address the apartheid imbalances of pay differentials between black and white teachers (Isaacs and Dwane, 2012:03). According to Armstrong (2010:56), the disregard of further qualifications and experience for the purposes of improving salaries in the public sector is prominent in the teaching profession when compared to other professions. It is believed that the introduction of the notorious 1995 baseline salary structure negatively affected the morale of many South African teachers (Armstrong, 2010:56).

A reasonable approach to tackle salary challenges was a nationally stipulated formula intended to redress the disparities on teacher salaries but lack of equity between the salaries of teachers and the quintile allocations to schools has made the formula fail to address the issue of teacher salaries as expected by the majority of teachers (Isaacs and Dwane, 2012:04-06). According to the majority of South African teachers it is somewhat surprising that the department of education and the treasury does not take into account current variations in teacher qualifications, teaching experience and remuneration levels to improve their salaries (Fiske and Ladd, 2010:106).

Recent international studies (White and Rosenbaum, 2017:131, Bosso, 2017:04 and Noddings, 2014:13) has suggested that a myriad of factors such as insufficient remunerations, uneven

salary scales and lack of fringe benefits and performance-based bonuses adversely affect teacher morale and organisational culture of schools in many countries of the world including those with good economies such as USA and Canada (McNeil-Horton,2014:34).

#### **2.17.4 High expectations from teachers**

According to Fullan (2011:204) high expectations from teachers in Australia has been a serious challenge in the past two to three decades. Unrealistic expectations compounded by unfavourable working conditions and lack of resources adversely affected the morale of teachers as they were expected to give more out of very limited resources (Bosso, 2017:05). According to Sachs (2010:83), difficult and intensified working conditions of teachers are linked to issues such as high expectations from teachers by teachers themselves, their immediate seniors, that is, heads of departments at school level, principals, circuit managers, district, provincial and national officials of the department, the learners, parents and the entire school community.

It has been reported that unclear and unrealistic expectations create confusion for teachers (Noddings, 2014:14). A high, unclear and unrealistic expectation from teachers leaves teachers depressed and causes them to lose focus (McNeil-Horton, 2014:34). According to Rice (2012:10), many teachers complain about principals' failure to set reasonable, clear and attainable expectations and goals to be reached. It is believed that these vague expectations make teachers fail to accomplish their expected goals and those of the school and this failure puts the morale of teachers in jeopardy. On the other hand, Terrill and Gulfier (2010:707) argues that when the school attains its goals, it means that teachers has done their job effectively which translates into job satisfaction and enhanced morale.

#### **2.17.5 Workload**

According to Perumal (2011:06), teachers in South Africa complain about performing functions which are beyond their competency and their scope of work. This includes compilation of schedules and developing school improvement plans (Perumal, 2011:06). In support of Perumal's above argument, McNeil-Horton (2014:36) adds that teachers who experience less workload reported enhanced morale compared to their counterparts with added workload. Noddings (2014:15) state that teachers who are burdened by work were

found to operate in schools which have appalling working conditions and these conditions discouraged teachers to discharge their duties effectively with zeal.

Bosso (2017:87) holds the view that teachers do not cope with increased paper work which is aggravated by increased accountability which makes teaching a daunting and difficult task to perform. There is some evidence to suggest that the morale of teachers is negatively affected by never-ending assessments and monitoring which teachers claim is intended to find fault rather than positively develop them (Bosso, 2017:26). On the other hand, Govindarajan (2012:58) is of the view that shoddy and inadequate stipulations of accountability and unnecessary paperwork play a negative part in eroding the morale of teachers.

#### **2.17.6 Lack of quality professional development**

Access to quality professional development by teachers affects their effectiveness and ultimately impacts their job satisfaction (Bogler, 2012:306). The provision of quality professional development results in improved teacher performance which is seen through the improved performance of learners (Olson, 2013:129). Vinson et al. (2011:10) maintain that improved learner and teacher performance positively impact the morale of teachers compared to poor teacher and learner performance. Olson (2013:129) argues that teachers who have access to sufficient professional development were reported to have enhanced morale and were enthusiastic towards their work compared to their counterparts who were not professionally appraised and developed. Teachers are demotivated by the education departments when little effort is made to compliment excellent work done under appalling conditions (Fullan, 2011:125).

Teachers complain that the education department is failing to meet their expectations when it comes to appraisal and support but the department is adamant that it is doing all it can to address the problem by channelling large sums of money into development programmes (Noddings, 2014: 13). Bascia (2013:155) argues that in spite of departmental expenditure, on development programmes, teachers claim that the programmes do not address their professional needs because the department does not consult them when developing support programmes. According to Noddings (2014:14), the department's failure to meet professional needs of teachers adversely affects their morale.

Bassett et al. (2014:26) found that workers who experience a sense of empowerment were reported to display enhanced morale more than their counterparts who felt disempowered. Reid (2010:96) states that workers develop a positive attitude when they are involved in work related issues which affect them rather than when unilateral decisions are taken on their behalf. Teachers as workers feel empowered when their efforts are recognised and have a sense that their work has meaning, is significant and is contributing to a higher goal (Noddings, 2014:13). According to Noddings (2014:15), insufficient teacher development gives rise to minimised career advancement and teachers remain in the same rank for a very long time or throughout their stay in the teaching profession. This creates a situation where teachers view their profession as unchallenging.

### **2.17.7 Management and leadership**

According to Bosso (2017:13), the support and acknowledgement of work performed by teachers has a direct impact in their morale; for instance, teachers whose efforts are recognised by their leaders proved to have higher morale than their counterparts who were not supported by their leaders. Bascia (2013:25) argues that if excellent leadership positively influences the morale of teachers, then poor leadership could result in decreased morale of teachers. According to Evans (2012:24) the cynicism experienced by teachers will continue to compromise their morale if the education department does not make the morale and wellbeing of teachers their top priority.

There is evidence to suggest that the attitude and approach towards educational matters by politicians and government officials plays a role in bringing down the morale of teachers (Lovat and Schofield, 2010:09). In Australia, for instance, politicians once stated that education was “*value free and too politically correct*”. This kind of utterance was perceived by teachers to be undermining the quality of their work and the legitimacy of the curriculum which informed their practice (Bascia, 2013:25). It was perceived by teachers that by implication, the statement value free and too politically correct meant that the work teachers were doing was inferior and of no value and only served to satisfy and score political points and interests (Bosso, 2017:13).

Senechal, Sober and Hope (2016:55) are of the view that the design of policy and its implementation processes can be a complex issue to understand and principals need to handle this complexity in a manner that the goals and objectives of the school are accomplished. In



the same vein, Bascia, 2013:25) hold the view that failure to accurately understand and correctly implement policy by principals or any educational official may impose serious repercussions on the part of the teachers as teachers play an integral part in ensuring that policy is correctly and effectively implemented because they are the last on the line to see to it that policy is accurately implemented.

### **2.17.8 Learner behaviour**

Buckingham (2011:14) found that challenges associated with disruptive learner behaviour adversely affect the morale of teachers. To allay challenges caused by unruly learner behaviour, Govindarajan (2012:61) suggest that, teachers are expected to resume a social worker's role and that of a family figure so as to remedy bad learner behaviour. It has commonly been assumed by teachers that correcting bad learner behaviour is not their sole responsibility but unexpectedly teachers have to deal with bad learner behaviour to ensure that they manage their classroom instruction effectively (Hicks, 2010:08).

It is generally accepted that teachers who constantly experience problems with learner behaviour and discipline experience high levels of stress and decreased job satisfaction which ultimately results in declined levels of morale (Hicks, 2010:08). In addition, Govindarajan (2012:61) points out that dealing with unruly learners is compounded by long and complicated disciplinary procedures. It is widely believed by many teachers that a sense of helplessness coupled with inadequate dysfunctional procedures to deal with unruly learner behaviour was reported to be one of the sources of low teacher morale. Statutes dealing with children's rights are not always helpful in reducing lack of learner discipline; schools and teachers have the difficult task of handling learners' bad behaviour immediately and firmly and they have to involve learner's parents who are usually on the side of their ill-disciplined children (Bosso, 2017:35).

Govindarajan (2012:60) argues that since schools are not given sufficient powers to deal decisively with bad learner behaviour, schools or teachers often allow ill-disciplined learners to continue with their unruly behaviour. The principal is often forced to follow procedures *ad infinitum*: the principal has to consult an ill-disciplined learner's records while the teacher has to write and file referrals to other professionals who deal with unruly learners; thereafter, the disciplinary committee has to make time to meet and take a decision about the case

(Bosso, 2017:35). By the time the committee converges to take a decision, the morale of the teacher is seriously jeopardized (Bascia 2013:124).

### **2.17.9 Negative media reporting**

It is a widely held view by teachers that media plays a profound role in their morale, however it has commonly been assumed by majority of teachers in many countries including South Africa that the media highlights negative reporting about teachers in schools and disregard the good work teachers do, this results in teachers' bruised morale (Bogler 2012:289). When the media reports and highlights negative things about teachers and the teaching profession, the image and status of teachers is negatively affected (Bogler, 2012:289).

In Australia, a monthly newspaper ran a publication with a heading about teachers which read as: "*Those who can't*". Teachers claim that headings of this nature satirise the teaching profession and teachers and impact negatively on the morale of practicing teachers because the "*Those*" in the title refers to teachers and it simply means that teachers cannot make it or they are failures (Rosser, 2011: 23).

Kallaway (2010:42) reported that in South Africa teachers are the most undermined, frequently talked down and criticised by the general public and the media, teachers' work and their challenges are hugely misunderstood and they are viewed by the community they serve as a largely under-rated professional group. Kallaway (2010:42) further states that teachers are not afforded an opportunity to state their side of the story but the media and the public is quick to shift the blame and judge teachers when there is underperformance or any negative aspect involving them. Thus, teachers perceive their profession to be in a profound predicament and teachers become frustrated and regard themselves as marginalised and undervalued (Kallaway, 2010:42).

### **2.17.10 Lack of teacher recognition and appreciation**

According to Rice (2012:4), failure by the parents and the education department to appreciate and recognise good work performed by teachers negatively affects their morale. In the same way, Reed (2010:14) states that teachers are demotivated and discouraged when their efforts get a negative reception from parents, department officials and even learners. McNeil-Horton

(2014:33-34) states that the morale of teachers is enhanced when there is recognition of their wellbeing. Acknowledgement of teachers' efforts gives and inspires enthusiasm which goes a very long way in the improvement of their morale (Rice, 2012:04).

Merrow (2011:40) states that another drawback associated with lack of appreciation and recognition is that teachers whose efforts are not considered tend to show high levels of underperformance compared to teachers who receive positive reinforcement from parents, their immediate seniors, learners and department officials. According to McNeil-Horton (2014:34), when teachers feel unappreciated, they develop negative staff relationships which negatively affect their wellbeing and their morale.

### **2.17.11 Incoherent departmental policies**

According to Senechal, Sober and Hope (2016:52), there is a link between the morale of teachers and how policies in the education department are implemented because teachers as implementers of policy believe that when policy is incoherently formulated, the goals which teachers are supposed to attain are not met. Teachers have an obligation to adhere to the policies; when teachers feel that there are contradictions in policies which they have to follow, their work is negatively affected which ultimately impacts on their morale (Bosso, 2017:39). Teachers indicate that when there is lack of compliance to the policy, they are made to deviate from their job description and perform functions which are beyond their job description, for instance, data reporting and discussing lesson planning requirements which add to their existing work stress (Senechal et al., 2016:52).

Incoherent policies are regarded as sources of low teacher morale as teachers maintain that they are not provided the autonomy and freedom to exercise their professional judgment (Bosso, 2017:39). Teachers are also not afforded an opportunity to decide on the needs of their learners and because policies are imposed to them, teachers are frustrated because they cannot modify teaching according to learner needs (Senechal et al., 2016:53). Having discussed factors affecting low teacher morale, the next section discusses the preservation and creation of high teacher morale.

## **2.18 PRESERVING AND CREATING HIGH TEACHER MORALE**

In this section, the study explores factors which play a positive role in the improvement of teacher morale. It is important to indicate that high teacher morale can be achieved particularly if the following factors are taken seriously. The following factors play a role in increasing and preserving teacher morale.

### **2.18.1 Positive teacher attitudes**

According to Govindarajan (2012:59), there is no cut and dry solution in improving teacher morale because there is no single factor that can be applied to enhance teacher morale; rather a combination of issues are necessary to be applied in a bid to uplift the morale of teachers. Perumal (2011:07) maintains that teacher morale declines significantly but steadily and is noticed only over an extended period of time. When this decline takes place, teachers themselves may not be aware of the decline in their own morale (Perumal, 2011:07). Lumsden (1998:04) states that for teachers to change their attitudes, they need to realise when their morale is low. Lumsden (1998:04) further alludes to the fact that when teachers are cognisant of the fact that their morale is low, they can significantly work on improving it. According to Bascia (2013:125), when teachers admit to their diminished morale status, they will be in a position to take action so that they are encouraged and motivated again.

### **2.18.2 Teacher self-assessment**

For teachers to be motivated, they should reassess themselves in relation to their morale (Bogler, 2012:291). According to Lumsden (1998:04), reassessment entails re-examining something so as to value it once more. Bogler (2012:291) states that the direct result of reassessment and renewal is motivation and for teachers to be renewed, they have to revisit their fundamental reasons for choosing the teaching profession as their life career. Olson (2013:134) states that as a way of improving their morale teachers should replenish themselves if they intend to be innovative and excel in their work.

For teachers to reclaim their enhanced morale, they need to be sensitive and perceptive individuals who are willing to be motivated by other people and their ideologies (Stewart, 2012:128). Lumsden (1998:04) suggests that for teachers to improve their morale they need to

sustain interest and enthusiasm in their work and they need to do this with intelligence and thoughtfulness. Teachers have to identify aspects about teaching which are encouraging and motivating for them and incorporate those aspects into their individual convictions and professional lives (Bassett et al., 2014:203). Zhao (2012:118) suggests that teachers should add variety into their work and refrain from approaching their work in one and the same way every day as if it is some kind of a routine.

### **2.18.3 Teacher empowerment**

According to Bosso (2017:41), for teachers as professionals to improve in their morale, they need to be valued, recognised and empowered by their seniors and those that they are serving. Zhao (2012:119) states that as a way of improving the morale of workers, which include teachers, they need to be given a chance to express themselves about the work and functions they perform and render. In this way workers (also teachers) attach a meaning and sense of significance to their work and this leads them to contribute to the higher purpose or goal they have set for themselves and that of the organisation they serve (Noddings,2014:158).

### **2.18.4 Responsible school leadership**

Rice (2012:142) is of the view that principals have a significant role to play in the improvement of teacher morale. It is believed that principals can do this by involving teachers in decision-making processes which affect their work (Zembylas, 2013:127). As a way of enhancing the morale of teachers, principals and their management teams should appreciate and take into account the wisdom and insight which teachers bring into the school with the aim of improving practice (Vinson,Esson and Johnson,2011:152). In this way, the morale of teachers will be significantly improved and sustained (Noddings, 2014:158). In addressing the problem of morale, principals should have the responsibility to support their teachers when they are stressed by work-related problems and personal issues (Armstrong, 2010:89).

Morely (2011:127) recommends that to enhance the morale of teachers, principals should motivate teachers to work hard by delegating duties to them; this makes the teachers feel appreciated and that their competence is not taken for granted, which has the potential to empower the teachers. McNeil-Horton (2014:148) points out that teachers are well motivated when they sense that their immediate seniors are also competent in their work. In her

recommendations, Zembylas (2013:127) suggests that teachers are encouraged to emulate the good work done by their seniors and in so doing they attain job satisfaction, which subsequently translates to improved morale. For principals and the management team to achieve these aims, they need to display high levels of leadership and organisational competence, be good listeners, be approachable and demonstrate excellent and fair judgmental skills (Rowland, 2008:14).

### **2.18.5 Well planned administrative practices**

According to Rowland (2008:19), administrative practices should be employed to sustain positive teacher morale. To positively influence their subordinates, the principals should strive to inculcate positive morale themselves (Zembylas, 2013:126). According to Lumsden (1998:08), principals should possess the skill to turn challenges into learning experiences. Rowland (2008:20) points out that for the principal to better understand the teachers' concerns, he or she should put himself or herself in the position of the teacher. By effectively communicating understanding of the needs and challenges of the teachers, the principal demonstrate his or her ability to be a team player (Bassett et al., 2013:205).

By setting attainable and considered objectives and priorities and sticking to them, the principal can help in building the confidence and morale of teachers (Tucker, 2012:202). To be effective in administrative duties and to sustain teacher morale, the principal should exercise authority in a professional manner by providing positive feedback to hard-working teachers who are dedicated to promote and advance the objectives and mission statement of the school (Bassett et al., 2013:205).

### **2.18.6 Inclusive working culture and atmosphere**

Govindarajan (2012: 58) states that the morale of teachers can be improved if working conditions and atmosphere are improved; a harmonious working atmosphere makes teachers productive and less complacent. Giving teachers awards which recognise their efforts, promoting teachers to higher ranks and giving genuine heartfelt acknowledgement play an important role in the upliftment of teacher morale (Jones, 2018:144).

Wigfield and Eccless (2010:231) suggests creating and promoting fun in the workplace by using unusual meeting styles such as allowing teachers who are not part of the School Management

Team to chair the meetings and creatively present issues in the meetings can assist in the improvement of teacher morale. In a school where emphasis is on shared beliefs and values, teacher morale is sustained because this paves the way for open communication channels where issues which affect teachers are entertained openly (Hargreaves, 2013:217).

Treating teachers like adults by allowing them autonomy and freedom, professional respect and expecting positive results from them play a positive role in the improvement of their morale. Thus, teachers develop a feeling of respect because they are considered as leaders in their own right and this positively uplifts morale (Smit, 2010:05-06). Having discussed factors affecting high teacher morale, the next section outlines the conclusion of this chapter.

## **2.19 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presented behaviourism as a theoretical framework which influences teacher morale. The chapter discussed the influence of behaviourism as it plays out in education in general and the teaching profession in particular. The behavioural approach to motivation, advantages and disadvantages of using behaviourism as a theoretical framework were outlined in this chapter. Behaviourism and educational research as well as making sense of behaviourism for this study were clearly outlined. The chapter further discussed teacher morale in detail by explaining the levels of teacher morale, factors affecting low teacher morale and ways of creating and preserving high teacher morale. The next chapter is based on discussing research methodology employed in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two discussed the theoretical framework which guided this research. The literature review which sought to find out what previous researchers and scholars said about teacher morale was explored. The chapter further outlined teacher morale, its levels, status and factors which influence both low and high teacher morale.

The primary role of this chapter was to discuss and explore methodological options and motivate choices of such methodological options. Qualitative research methodology as the principal method to be used in this empirical investigation was deemed suitable. This chapter presents qualitative research methodology by outlining the role of the researcher in a qualitative study and data collection techniques of qualitative nature applied in this research. The researcher further outlined the research design of the study. The research design of this research is a case study. Case study design assisted the researcher to answer the main research question and to realise the aims and objectives of the study as mentioned in section 1.3.

This chapter further discussed sampling procedures, data collection methods and the data analysis framework. Issues of validity and reliability were discussed in this chapter. The chapter further explored the ethical considerations of this research. The study sought to obtain a thorough understanding of primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale in the Bohlabela District in order to create positive school climate which may assist in the improvement of teacher morale, thereby improving practice and bridging the knowledge gap about teacher morale.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2010:268), a research paradigm is an approach a researcher chooses to explore a specific or particular phenomenon. In this study, experiences of teachers' morale in selected primary schools in Bohlabela District were explored. This study used an interpretive research paradigm as it has the potential to expose what participants understand about the issue under investigation (Henning, van Rensburg and



Smit, 2013:21).The choice of the interpretive research paradigm was informed by its emphasis on participants' experiences and how they interpret their own experiences (Henning et al., 2013:21). The interpretive paradigm allowed for gaining deep understanding of experiences of teachers about their morale in the selected primary schools.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The qualitative research method was considered appropriate and relevant for this research. As Marvasti (2014:354) put it, the qualitative approach involves identification of the research questions, analysing and interpreting the collected data and sharing the research findings with the participants in the research and all interested stake holders such as principals, circuit managers, district officials and education officials at senior levels. Maxwell and Chimie (2014:540) state that qualitative approaches accommodate multiple realities that are socially constructed by individuals and collectives; hence qualitative research is premised to focus on the naturalistic. The researcher intends to gain multiple realities on the phenomenon under study.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

McGregor (2010:75) state that a research design refers to all the decisions which the researcher applies when planning his or her empirical investigation. Mouton (2012:138) define research design as a set of small, worked out formulas from which the researcher can select and develop a plan or blueprint for their intended research goal. According to Mugo (2011:94), different types of research designs used by qualitative researchers vary depending on the aim of the research, research questions, skills and resources available to the researcher.

Neill (2010:327) identify five research designs that are frequently used and which could be used to design a qualitative research. The first type is biography which deals with reporting on and documenting an individual's life history and experiences. The second type of research design is phenomenology; this design aims at getting insight and interpretation of meaning which participants provide from their lived experiences. The third research design is the grounded theory which allows the researcher to generate abstract analytical schema of phenomenon, simply put, this research design is used when the researcher seeks to explain some action, interaction or process (Marshall and Rossman, 2010:145). The

fourth type of research design is ethnography, this is the design in which the researcher use observations over a prolonged period of time to explore cultural or social phenomenon in an individual or group (Machi and McCoy, 2012:145). The fifth one is case study. According to Esin, Fathi and Squire (2014:208) case study is viewed as an exploration and deep analysis of a bounded system which can be bound by time or place over a given period of time.

This study employed a case study design. In this study, the exploration of teacher morale in selected primary schools occurred through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, which were focus group interviews and observations. Case study was used in this study as it has the ability to allow the researcher to acquire a better and deep understanding of a social issue being investigated (Coffey, 2014:367). The researcher used case study method because the main purpose of the research was not to generalize the research findings but to explore deep understanding about the morale of teachers. In this instance, the researcher used a case study to gain in-depth understanding of primary school teachers' experiences as it related to their morale. Furthermore, case studies allow the researcher to pose probing questions during fieldwork, questions which lead to better understanding of and insight into participants' perceptions regarding challenges they experience, which is teacher morale in this study (Vital and Jansen, 2010:06).

### **3.5 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011:213) state that a population is a group of individual people or items from which samples are drawn for measurements, for instance a population of medical doctors, academics or professors. In this study the target group and population comprised of 36 teachers who were teaching Mathematics and English in Grade 6 in Bohlabela District. The 36 teachers who formed part of this study were purposefully selected from 12 primary schools within the district. Teachers who failed to attain a provincial bench mark of 60 % in Mathematics and English in Bohlabela District between 2014-2018 formed the population of this study. Mathematics and English were chosen for this study due to the Department of Education's emphasis on improvement of numeracy and language literacy in primary schools (Mhaule, 2015:06). It is important to indicate that Grade 3 and 6 are regarded as exit points. Grade 3 is the exit point from Foundation Phase into Intermediate phase; Grade 6 is the exit point from Intermediate Phase into the Senior Phase.

The Department of Education used these grades to test the level of performance in Mathematics and English; however, for the purpose of this study the researcher opted to use Grade 6 to be part of this study.

### **3.6 RESEARCH SITES**

This study was carried out in the Mpumalanga Province. The province of Mpumalanga is politically divided into four Districts. The same demarcation applies in the Department of Education. The districts are Nkangala, Gert Sibande, Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela. This empirical investigation was carried out in the Bohlabela District. Bohlabela District is divided into sixteen circuits. This study was carried out in four circuits of Bohlabela District which are Greenvalley, Manyeleti, Aurtherseat and Casteel. Bohlabela District consists of 336 primary schools. The selected schools are based in the rural part of Mpumalanga; most selected schools do not charge fees for learners to attend. They fall in quintile one, as they are located in poverty stricken communities.

Out of the 336 primary schools, 150 failed to attain the (60%) provincial bench mark in Mathematics and English in Grade 6 between 2014 to 2018. Out of the 150 primary schools which could not attain (60%), the researcher purposefully selected the last three poorly performing schools in each of the four circuits cited above. Bohlabela District was chosen to be part of this study because it was the lowest performing District in Grade 6 Mathematics and English in the Mpumalanga Province. From 2014 to 2016, Bohlabela District achieved (56%) pass rate in English and (48%) in Mathematics. In 2017 to 2018, the percentage dropped from (56%) in English to (44%) whereas in Mathematics, the percentage dropped from (48%) to a staggering (36%).

### **3.7 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

According to Kozinets (2010:251), sampling is the process where the researcher obtains data from a smaller group or subset of the total population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of population under study. In this study the researcher used purposive sampling to select the participants. Olesen (2011:202) assert that, purposive sampling is one of the types of non-probability sampling or qualitative sample. Paechter (2013:147) state that purposive sampling relies entirely on the subjective discretion and

judgement of the researcher, because this sample is comprised of traits and attributes of the population.

The use of purposive sampling in exploring the morale of teachers in the selected primary schools was primarily informed by the fact that teachers in these schools were viewed as rich sources of information the researcher aimed at gathering (Coltart and Henwood, 2012:35-36). The population involved Grade 6 Mathematics and English teachers who could not attain a (60%) provincial bench mark from 2014-2018. In addition, these teachers had four to five years teaching experience. The researcher obtained information on the performance of twelve schools from the District and purposefully selected last three poorly performing schools from the list of each of the four circuits of Bohlabela District.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Bazeley and Jackson (2013:145) are of the view that data collection is a process of creating a body of knowledge which intends to bridge the knowledge divide and improve practice. The choice of a particular data collection method is primarily informed by the researcher's quest for understanding the participants' subjective perspectives on their day-to-day lived experiences with the phenomenon (Mikos, 2014:409). In this study the researcher used focus group interviews as the main data collection method and observations as the supplementary data collection method. The two data collection techniques assisted the researcher to interact with teachers at their respective schools and learn how they interpreted and attached meaning to their experiences that influenced their morale.

According to Parker (2013:223), when the researcher uses more than one method of collecting data; the process is known as data triangulation. It has commonly been assumed that the use of triangulation in a study provides a comprehensive understanding about the phenomenon under study which would not have been possible should a single data collection method was used (Pink, 2012:149). In the same vein, McMullen (2011:145) indicates that the advantage of applying triangulation in research encourages the researcher to search for more and better explanations about the issue being investigated. The researcher discussed observations and focus group interviews respectively in the following sections.

### **3.8.1 Focus group interviews**

Plummer (2011:195) define a focus group interview as a form of group interview which relies on the interactions within a group which discusses a topic provided by the researcher, teacher morale in this study. Rapley (2014:182) views focus group interviews as any group discussion where the researcher actively promotes attentive group interaction. Silverman (2010:06) is of the view that focus group interviews seek to get insight into and explanation of meanings, feelings, behaviour and attitude of individuals such as teachers, hence the choice to use focus group interviews in this empirical investigation. Using focus group interviews allows the researcher to create a favourable atmosphere which motivates participants to share their views, experiences and opinions without being pressurised (Walliman, 2011:238). Participants were allowed to freely express their views with little instruction and or interference from the researcher in this study.

In this study, there were six focus groups. Each group consisted of four to six members; the number was limited to six in order for the groups to be manageable. Having six focus groups with a limited number ensured that each group member got a chance to express himself or herself. The total number of participants from all the groups was 36 teachers drawn from twelve schools in four circuits of Bohlabela District. After determining the size of the focus group and the composition of each group, the researcher drew up an interview guide (Appendix F) in which the questions to be covered were specified. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2012:126) suggest that the outline in the interview guide increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes the data somewhat systematic for each participant. On the other hand, Ray (2011:1316) point out that when using an interview guide logical gaps in data can be identified and closed and this allows interviews to be fairly conversational and situational.

### **3.8.2 Observations**

Observations in this study were used as a secondary data collection tool. According to McGibbon, Peter and Gallop (2010:135), observation is the technique of obtaining data which entails the researcher's immersion in an empirical investigation setting and logical observation of perspectives of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions and events. Observations were also opted for because they probed how participants constructed their realities. Thomson, Hadfield, Kelly and Sharpe (2010:135) and Reeves (2010:315) mentions that observations allow the collection of

data to be conducted in the physical setting; in this research, observations were carried out in selected primary schools.

The researcher observed the physical conditions of classrooms, the number of learners in each classroom and availability or unavailability of facilities such as textbooks, libraries, computers laboratories, science laboratories and any other facilities which might affect the teaching-learning process (Appendix G). Observations were carried out in all 12 selected primary schools respectively and repetitively. In this study, two sets of observations were conducted, totalling 24 observation sessions in eight weeks because the researcher had to visit each of the 12 schools twice during the duration of this research.

### **3.9 PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA**

As a way of preparing for interview sessions, the researcher developed and used the interview schedule which comprised questions relating to participants' experiences of morale and factors which impact on their morale in the selected primary schools. The questions in the interview schedule were open-ended to allow robust debate during focus group discussions. The researcher made appointments with the participants before visiting the selected schools. The researcher contacted each of the 36 participants' telephonically. While making these appointments, the researcher ensured that the purpose of the interview and observations were clearly explained.

In his letter for requesting permission (Appendix A and E), the researcher indicated that the interviews would be conducted after school but asked that participants set times and dates which were convenient for them. The actual interviews were conducted in the staff-rooms and lasted for 70 minutes each. Interviews were conducted after school hours so as not to affect teachers' contact time with the learners and also to avoid distractions such as noise and people who were not part of the interviews (Waterfors, Akertrom and Jacobson, 2014:41).

The interviews were conducted in English but participants were allowed to switch to their mother tongue for better understanding and clarity. The researcher is familiar with the local language which is Xitsonga. In that way the researcher motivated participants to respond to the questions posed to them.

Data were recorded using an audio recorder. Permission was sought from the participants before using the audio recorder. The audio recorder was used to capture the verbatim discussion



during interviews as it would not be possible for the researcher to remember everything that was said. Sandelowski and Leeman (2012:1404) assert that the use of a recorder enhances flow of information during interviews while giving the researcher accurate and complete data directly from the participants.

Rubin and Rubin (2012:348) advise that the researcher should embrace new ideas and concepts throughout the process of interviews. In this regard probing was used for clarity seeking purposes and follow-ups to gain a better understanding. The researcher reassured the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided and thanked them for being part of the study. Prior arrangements were made with participants to observe their classrooms and resources which might affect the process of teaching and learning thus affecting their morale.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

Flick, Gams-Homolova, Herman, Kuck and Rohnsch (2012:98) views data analysis as the procedure of systematically searching and the arrangement of interview transcripts and field notes which assisted the researcher to have a better insight into the issue under study in order to present the discovery of other people's experiences. Data analysis involves working with data, organising data and arranging them into workable and manageable units which can be synthesised in order to search for patterns (Schonfelder, 2011:04-05). Analysing data assists a researcher discover what is important and helps a researcher make a decision on what is worthy to present to readers of his or her thesis or any academic writing (Roulston, 2014:312). Data collection and analysis were done simultaneously in this qualitative study; this assisted the researcher to make sense of quality of collected data by reducing the volume of data, identifying patterns and developing a framework for communicating the essence of what was revealed in the data (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014:153).

This study used thematic analysis to analyse data. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016), thematic analysis is the method of identifying, analysing, organising, describing and reporting themes found within a data set. In this study, thematic analysis was used to search for themes or patterns that occurred across a data set during interviews and observations. By using thematic analysis, the researcher was able to get a general sense of what the participants were saying with regard to their morale as related to their professional identity and growth.



The researcher formulated codes when analysing data as recommended by Flick (2014:370). Coding is the systematic process of developing and refining how data is interpreted (Schreiner, 2014:170). As suggested by Rose (2012:24), the researcher applied a coding scheme to categories and themes and marked passages in the data using the codes. In this study, the researcher used coloured koki pens or markers. Three bright coloured inks were used: yellow, red and blue. Similar responses provided by participants were classified in the same themes and categories, in other words, themes and categories which were similar were identified by a specific colour. Data in theme 1 and its categories were highlighted with blue, data in theme 2 and its categories were highlighted in red and data in theme 3 and its categories were highlighted in yellow.

As proposed by Marshall and Rossman (2010:114), after identification of themes and categories which emerged from interviews and observation, collected data were arranged and categorised according to topics and subtopics. From these categories patterns that evolved were identified, labelled and interpreted. (Teays, 2012:194) states that once data are gathered, meaningful data analysis starts with the reading and interpretation of data.

Salmons (2010:07) emphasises that field notes derived through observations are used to increase the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon and to be able to present the findings. In this study direct quotation from the participants assisted in providing the richness of descriptive data. As mentioned earlier in this section, thematic analysis assisted the researcher in identifying, coding and categorising primary patterns in the data. In this research interview transcripts were analysed to determine how teachers experienced morale in the selected primary schools of Bohlabela District. Bamberg (2012:78) suggest six steps of data analysis using a thematic approach which were also applied in this study. The steps were discussed below:

1. **Familiarising yourself with your data:** by transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas.
2. **Generating initial codes:** the researcher coded interesting features of the data in a systematic way across the entire data set and collated data relevant to each code.

3. **Searching for themes:** the researcher collated codes into potential themes by gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. **Reviewing themes:** the researcher checked if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the whole data set in order to generate a thematic map of the analysis.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** the researcher made continuous analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and this generated clear definitions of and names for each theme.
6. **Producing the report:** this was the final chance for analysis, where the selection of vivid, compelling extracts or examples occurred, final analysis of selected extracts relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature and a scholarly report of the analysis was produced.

### **3.11 ISSUES OF CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Qualitative studies have been criticized for inaccuracy and lack of comprehensiveness of coverage (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011:194). In this research, validity was attained through the triangulation of data collection methods and the data itself. Looking at an issue from different angles, that is, methodological triangulation, the use of various sources of data which collaborate and supplement one another and comparison of data from varying methods as well as participants was crucial in this research investigation (Flick, Gams-Homolova, Herman, Kuck and Rohnsch, 2012:98). In this research trustworthiness frameworks for ensuring rigour were taken into consideration. Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability were the four constructs the study addressed,

#### **3.11.1 Credibility**

To promote confidence that the research has accurately recorded the phenomenon under study, that is the study is credible, the following provisions which included member checking, prolonged engagement and triangulation were made and are briefly discussed below:

### ***3.11.1.1 Member checking***

Member checking is regarded as by Friese (2011:140) as the most important provision that can be made to bolster a study. As a way of enhancing the trustworthiness of the empirical findings in this study, the researcher took the interview transcripts back to the research participants so that they could confirm what was contained in the interview transcripts before these transcripts were analysed and interpreted as proposed by Mondala (2012:304). The participants confirmed whether their words matched what they actually intended to say or their articulation had been correctly captured.

### ***3.11.1.2 Prolonged engagement***

As a way of improving validity the researcher spent considerable amount of time in the research field (Taylor, 2012:388). According to Daston and Lumbeck (2011:02), it is important for a researcher to make participants feel at ease and relaxed; he or she can achieve this by spending time with the participants. According to Coltart and Henwood (2012:35-36), it is a standard procedure to reveal the letter that the researcher was granted by authorities to conduct a research. In this study the letter of approval was granted by the Education Department of Mpumalanga Province (Appendix B). As a way of ensuring trustworthiness and enhancing rapport between the researcher and the participants the researcher had to explain the purpose of the study, period which the researcher envisaged would take for interviews to be concluded and to explain to the participants how the research findings would be used in order to instil trust between the researcher and the participants.

In addition, participants were allowed to express themselves in a language they felt comfortable with. Although the interviews were conducted in English, during the focus group sessions, participants were allowed to switch to their vernacular (Xitsonga) for better understanding and expression.

### ***3.11.1.3 Triangulation***

According to Sahlberg (2011:147), triangulation is the mixing of different data collecting methods in a single study of one issue. The purpose of triangulation in a qualitative study is to increase reliability and validity of research findings because when findings from all data collection

methods come to the same conclusion, validity and reliability of the study have been attained (Esin, Fathi and Squire, 2014:382). In this study triangulation took place by using two data collection methods, that is, focus group interviews and observations.

### **3.11.2 Transferability**

The important aspect in transferability was the degree to which the research findings could be employed in other situations (Gibbs, 2014:277). To ensure transferability in this study as suggested by Flick (2014:187), the researcher provided sufficient details of the context or research site for the reader to decide if the findings could be justifiably applied in other settings.

### **3.11.3 Dependability**

From a positivist point of view, dependability is more concerned with repetition of work in similar context and similar methods and attaining the same findings (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:283). Although it is difficult to meet dependability in a qualitative study, dependability as a construct enables future researchers to repeat the study. In this research, dependability of the results was attained by use of overlapping methods as suggested by Friese (in Cohen et al., 2011). Teachers as participants in this study were involved in focus group interviews and observations. Data from these instruments were reported in detail giving the reader ample chance to appreciate the rigour of research practices as recommended by Flick (2014:187).

### **3.11.4 Conformability**

Conformability with objectivity as its equal was crucial in this research to make sure that the research findings are the outcomes of valid experiences and views (Bless et al., 2013:24) and not the researcher's biases. The researcher provided the detailed account of the methods applied in this study to ensure that conformability was attained and took steps to demonstrate that findings emerged from the data and not from his own predisposition.

### **3.12 ETHICAL ISSUES**

This research involved human subjects. Thus, Bless et al. (2013:29) stresses the need to respect human rights when conducting research. De Vos et al. (2012:115) state that ethical principles should guide the interaction and rapport with the participants by ensuring humane and sensitive treatment of participants.

#### **3.12.1 Informed consent**

According to Bless et al. (2013:25) informed consent is a procedure where participants exercise their right of choice to take part in a research study after being informed of the issues which would likely influence their decision to be part of the investigation. As suggested by Bless et al. (2013:25), the researcher notified teachers as participants of this study of the nature of the study they were about to be part of and explained that they would participate in the study voluntarily. After this explanation, teachers were provided with consent forms (appendix E) to read and sign.

#### **3.12.2 Privacy and confidentiality**

Data collected from participants must be kept under very strict and secure conditions. Data provided by the participants (Appendix E) will never be associated with the participants' names or any form of identifier (Flick, 2014:188). The researcher ensured that the data provided by the participants were kept private and confidential by identifying the participants using numbers, for instance, participants were named as participant 1, 2,3,4,5 and 6. The focus groups to which participants belonged were named focus group A, B, C, D, E and F. This kind of identification ensured that no one had access to individual information or names of participants except the researcher himself and participants were given an assurance that their identity would not be revealed unless with their permission.

#### **3.12.3 Obtaining permission**

The researcher requested the approval of the Department of Education through the office of the District Director of Bohlabela District (Appendix A). In the letter to the director, the purpose of the study, target participants and the duration of the study were outlined. As suggested by

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:345), it was also stated in the letter that ethical considerations such as confidentiality and privacy would be strictly adhered to. The letter further indicated that participants were free to take part in the research and withdraw any time and that there was no monetary gain for participants except the experience of being part of the investigation.

When visiting selected schools participants were shown the letter of access from the Department of Education. The researcher also requested permission from the circuit managers and principals of the participating schools. Teachers as participants in this study were requested to be part of the study through a letter written by the researcher (Appendix E). In the letter directed to the teachers, the purpose of the study, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined. The letter also indicated the duration of the study and times of the interviews. In the letter it was indicated that participants would be tape recorded and they had the right to agree or disagree to be tape recorded.

### **3.13 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of qualitative research methodology where the role of the researcher and the rationale behind using qualitative research approach as the main method was outlined. The research design of this study which is a case study was also discussed and the reason for opting for a case study design was outlined as well as its benefits and the procedures used to craft a case study design. Data collection methods used in this study were explored. Data was collected by means of observations and focus group interviews. The procedures to be followed when using both interviews and observations were explained. Data analysis was outlined. This chapter also highlighted issues of credibility and trustworthiness and ethical principles followed in this study. The next chapter will deal with the presentation and the analysis of data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three presented, analysed, and interpreted data. Issues of ethical consideration and ensuring trustworthiness of results were also discussed.

Data were obtained by means of focus group interviews and observations. In this study thematic analysis was used as the method of analysing data; data were transcribed where the recorded conversations, responses from interviews and observation field notes were transformed into text for analysing it. The research findings were discussed as being guided by the purpose of the research and research questions against the background of the relevant literature review as discussed in the second chapter. It is important to indicate that research findings were qualitatively presented in accordance with the aim and objectives of the study.

To preserve confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used. Participants' identities were concealed for confidentiality and privacy; participants were identified as participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Their real names were not used so as not to link the information they provided with their identity. Out of the 12 schools which were sampled, six focus groups were formed. Each focus group consisted of six participants bringing the total number of participants to 36. The focus groups were named alphabetically as follows, A, B, C, D, E and F. The main purpose of this study was to explore the experiences that influence primary school teachers' morale in the Bohlabela District. The chapter presents analyses and interprets data. Data analysis is a process of examining and interpreting data in order to derive meaning gain an understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Flick, 2014:370). In this chapter, comments and statements made by participants were quoted verbatim from the audio recorder to capture the actual words of the participants. Data was coded and themes were developed.

## 4.2 PRESENTATION OF DATA

In this section, the data collected by means of focus group interviews and observations were presented. A total of 36 teachers from 12 primary schools in the Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province participated in the focus group interviews. Observations of infrastructure and facilities such as conditions of classrooms and availability of learner-teacher support materials were also done as part of collecting data. Infrastructure and facilities of the 12 schools which were sampled were observed (Appendix G). The thematic analysis method was used to analyse data.

## 4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Raw data from the focus group interviews and observational notes were processed using thematic data analysis. The development of themes, categories and sub-categories from raw data was informed by the theoretical framework and the literature on teacher morale as outlined in chapter 2. The main research aim formed the framework of the themes and the categories used to manage and order the raw data accordingly. The categorization of the raw data made it possible for the researcher to discuss the findings of the study as shown in table 4.1. Table 4.1 below depicts how the raw data from the two data collection techniques were analysed and developed into three main themes and nine sub-themes. As shown in table 4.1 below, teacher morale in selected primary schools was influenced by three main themes, which are experiences that influences teachers' morale, factors which affect teachers' morale and intervention strategies to enhance teachers' morale in selected primary schools. Such themes and their sub-themes represented the main empirical findings of this research as they were fully discussed as shown in the next section.

The findings were categorised in the following three main themes:

**Theme1:** Experiences that influence teachers' morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

**Theme 2:** Factors that affect teachers' morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.



**Theme 3:** Intervention strategies to enhance teachers’ morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

The above three main themes are based on the three research questions of the study:

**Research question 1:** What are the primary school teachers’ experiences that influence their morale in Bohlabela District?

**Research question 2:** What are the factors influencing primary school teachers’ morale in Bohlabela District?

**Research question 3:** Which intervention strategies could be employed to address teachers’ Morale?

Under each main theme several sub-themes of the study emerged and are represented in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Themes and sub-themes**

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
<p><b>Theme 1</b> Experiences that influences teachers’ morale</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Boredom</li> <li>2. Frustration due to lack of resources</li> <li>3. Lack of professional development</li> <li>4. Feeling of neglect</li> <li>5. Violence</li> </ol>
<p><b>Theme 2</b> Factors that affect teachers’ Morale</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal factors impacting on teacher morale</li> <li>2. Work related factors impacting on teacher morale</li> <li>3. Socio-economic factors impacting on teacher morale</li> </ol>
<p><b>Theme 3</b> Intervention strategies to enhance teacher morale</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved communication</li> <li>2. Family support</li> <li>3. Safety in schools</li> <li>4. Parental involvement</li> </ol>

### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Experiences that influence teachers' morale

**Research question 1:** What are the primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale in Bohlabela District?

The researcher used focus group interviews to obtain data from participants about their experiences of morale. An attempt has been made to discuss those experiences in the section below. In this research participants in various focus group interviews in the selected twelve schools who were purposefully sampled identified five factors which influence their morale: boredom, frustration due to lack of resources, feelings of neglect, lack of professional development and violence in schools. Experiences of teachers which affect their morale are discussed in the ensuing sub-themes.

#### **Sub-theme 1.1: Boredom**

Participants indicated that approaching their work in more or the same way every day made them feel that teaching is a boring profession. Participants felt that they no longer enjoyed their work and their passion for teaching was gone. In addition, participants felt that they were not valued as their contribution was not taken into account when decisions were made. In support of this finding, participant 5 in focus group D remarked:

*Participant 5: I find teaching to be a boring profession, in my view it's not a profession which inspires innovation, you do the same thing, in the same way every year, and there is no variety. I no longer enjoy this work. You have to unquestioningly account to your seniors. When I started as a teacher five years ago, I was so passionate about teaching, but my passion has died down because I feel as if my contribution is not taken into account.*

In support of what is expressed by participant 5 in focus group D, participant 1 in focus group F indicated:

*Participant 1: Teaching is not challenging me because I know what to expect every time I get into the classroom, it is more of a routine than work.*

Considering the responses of participants above, it became evident that teachers are not inspired by their profession to a point where they regard it as a routine rather than a profession. If participants do not enjoy their work and regard it as lacking challenge, this is problematic. When one is not enjoying himself/herself, he/she cannot be happy. This unhappiness can translate into one's work and one ends up neglecting one's tasks.

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Frustration due to lack of resources**

Resources play an important part in teaching and learning. Participants indicated that they lacked sufficient resources to help them to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. To motivate this finding, participant 2 in focus group C remarked:

*Participant 2: I am a dedicated teacher who loves his work but I am frustrated by chronic shortage of resources in our school.*

In support of this finding, participant 5 in focus group E had this to comment.

*Participant 5: It is discouraging to work in an under-resourced work situation when you are results driven; your morale is badly affected when you don't get the necessary resources and support you need to do your work.*

Considering the responses by most participants in this study, it became evident that shortage of resources and lack of support negatively affected the morale of teachers. Although participants mentioned that they loved their work, they were frustrated as they were not getting the support they expected from their schools.

### **Sub-theme 1.3: Feeling of neglect**

Participants revealed that they feel neglected by the Department of Education as it does not create a suitable atmosphere for improved teaching and learning which participants thought could improve their morale. In support of this finding, participant 3 in focus group F remarked:

Participant 3: *I think ignoring the needs of teachers such as support and development and adequate resources play a role in making teachers have a sense of neglect. On the other hand, I think little is done to appreciate work done by teachers especially by the department of education.*

In support of what is expressed by participant 3 in focus group F, participant 6 in focus group A agreed:

Participant 6: *I think teachers are highly marginalised, looked down upon and neglected professionals yet I think they play an important part in developing the country by teaching the children of the nation.*

In expressing his feelings of neglect, participant 4 in focus group B said:

Participant 4: *I think the department has neglected us by being less concerned about our needs such as better pay and acceptable working conditions.*

Judging by the responses of the participants concerning this theme, it was evident that morale of teachers has been adversely affected by the unappreciative attitude of the government. It was revealed by participants in this study that Department of Education failed to support and develop teachers and provide adequate resources which was viewed by teachers as a way of marginalising and looking down upon them as professionals. It was also revealed that poor salaries and unacceptable working conditions contributed to the sense of neglect experienced by participants.

#### **Sub-theme 1.4: Lack of professional development**

Participants in this study admitted that professional development plays an integral part in developing the morale of teachers. Participants 5 and 3 in focus group C had these remarks to make regarding this particular point:

Participant 5: *I think the department is doing very little to ensure that teachers receive the professional development and support they need. I also believe that when teachers are provided with necessary skills for improving*

*their performance, this will positively affect their morale but the department is not prioritizing skills development to improve teachers and learners' performance. Another concern is that as teachers we are not consulted to verify our areas of development, I think the department uses a blanket approach when dealing with teacher development.*

*Participant 3: I think that exposing teachers to professional development that responds to their concerns will assist in the improvement of their morale but as it is, I think the programmes of the department are not addressing the needs of us as teachers. As teachers we are not given a chance give our opinions on professional development programmes. This demoralizes us because it cannot be for us without us.*

Considering the responses of the majority of participants in this study, it became evident that the department is not prioritising teacher development and it does not conduct a skills audit to verify areas of developmental needs.

Most participants also indicated that most professional development programmes do not address their areas of need as these programmes are not first communicated to teachers before they are rolled out. On the issue of professional development, participant 4 in focus group F made this comment:

*Participant 4: There are few subject advisors to re-skill us in our areas of need. The few subject advisors we meet are with us for an hour or two once a term and this is not enough to address a range of concerns which we have as teachers. Another issue is the lack of consistency and continuity in the professional programmes offered by the department. As a teacher, I don't attach meaning to their programmes and what I do in the classroom. This lack of coherence between the department's programmes and my classroom activities frustrate me a lot. Another concerning point is that subject advisors report in the District office which is difficult for us as teachers to reach them.*

From the responses of the participants in focus group C, a shortage in subject advisors who should facilitate teacher professional development accordingly was evident. Participants complained about the difficulty of reaching the subject advisors in the District offices where they are based. Lack of expertise by the subject advisors, lack of continuity of the professional development programmes and its lack of coherence with classroom activities were factors which affected the morale of participants.

### **Sub-theme 1.5: Violence in schools**

Participants in this study indicated that the high levels of violence and lack of safety in schools impacted negatively on the morale of teachers who took part in this research. In support of the above view, participants 4, 5 and 3 in focus group E had the following remarks to make in relation to school violence and teacher morale:

*Participant 4: The level of violence and lack of safety in our school is so rife to a point where teachers feel we are very vulnerable to this social ill. I think that the level of violence in our schools is an extension of how violent our society is, I also believe that gender-based violence in our homes is contributing to the spate of violence in our schools.*

*Participant 5: Violence in our schools is a very serious problem because as teachers we put our lives on the line and the government is doing nothing to address the scourge.*

*Participant 3 in focus group D remarked in relation to school violence: I think much as cell phones are used for research purposes by learners, they also contribute to the level of violence in our schools because some learners imitate the violence they see on social media platforms.*

Considering the responses of the participants in focus group A, it became evident that violence in schools is seriously affecting teachers negatively. Teachers as participants in this research argued that the government is not doing enough to curb this crisis. It was clear that the availability of cellphones in school play a role in promoting violence. Participants in focus group B had the following remarks to pass in connection with violence in schools as it relates to their morale:

Participant 1: *You may think that schools should be the safest place for teaching and learning but with the prevalence of violence in our schools, I can clearly state that schools have become one of the most dangerous places to work in. I'm scared to be in class especially when I'm writing on the board as I was once stabbed by a fourteen year old boy and I sustained serious injuries and the frustrating part - nothing was done to the culprit as he was a minor and I received no compensation from the department for being injured in the workplace.*

Participant 3: *I fear for my life when I'm at work because I witnessed the death of my colleague whom I shared a table with. She was gunned down by her partner in full view of the learners and teachers. I'm also devastated every time I get into the staffroom where she was killed in cold blood. I think the community is contributing to violence in our schools and this can be attributed to lack of proper security in our schools.*

Participant 2: *Our schools are very dangerous places to work in because I was once raped on school premises while trying to complete my unfinished work after school; I was gang-raped by members of the community who had easy access to the school.*

Judging by the responses of the majority of participants in focus group B, it was clear that teachers felt unsafe in their workplace. In addition, the participants mentioned that the level of violence in schools had escalated to a point where there was loss of life. Participants felt that there was lack of proper security in schools.

In light of the responses of the majority of participants, the participants felt that they are operating in unsafe environments and were frustrated as several had been victims of school violence.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Factors that affect teachers' morale**

Research question 2: What are the factors influencing primary school teachers' morale in Bohlabela District?

The researcher used focus group interviews to obtain data from the participants. In his interviews, the researcher was able to identify personal factors impacting teacher morale, work related factors impacting the morale of teachers and socio-economic factors impacting the morale of teachers.

#### **4.3.2.1 Personal factors impacting on teacher morale**

In this study participants identified two personal factors impacting on their morale: financial problems and working conditions. They are discussed below.

##### **Sub-theme 2.1: Financial problems**

Most participants indicated that their personal financial situations influence their morale. Participants mentioned that their morale at work deteriorated when they experienced financial problems. Other participants indicated that when their personal financial issues were stable, their morale was positively enhanced. Here are some of the comments made by participants in focus group F:

*Participant 5: When I have a financial problem, my work related stress is also aggravated. When I experience financial stability, my morale is enhanced.*

*Participant 3: I once had a serious financial problem which made me to be frequently absent from work, my work lagged behind, my morale took a serious knock. I was never free and confident amongst my colleagues and even to the learners. I did not have an urge to do my work effectively.*

*Participant 1: I had a serious financial problem which affected me to a point where I resorted to alcohol. As a result of my financial problems, I ended up being frequently late for work and even absent. This affected my performance and my self-esteem and I lost interest in my work.*

It is clear that financial problems experienced by the participants led to other problems which further affected their morale adversely. One participant mentioned that his financial problems



affected his teaching performance and self-esteem to a point where he lost his interest and enthusiasm towards his work. He resorted to alcohol abuse and unprofessional conduct such as late coming and absenteeism.

### **Sub-theme 2.2. Working conditions**

According to participants, working conditions under which they operate has an influence on their morale. To substantiate this view, some participants in focus group B had these remarks to make:

*Participant 2: Poor working conditions under which we operate are seriously killing our morale and motivation. I strongly believe that these days we are much concerned with reaching target dates for submission of work to our HODs and our HOD to their immediate seniors rather than concentrating on helping the child learn at his or her own pace. This emphasis on targets dates do not even consider the wellbeing of teachers and their working conditions is adding to the pressure which we already have.*

The results showed that participants regarded unfavourable working conditions as the source of their low morale. Participants in this focus group mentioned that an emphasis on submission target dates without considering their abilities was very stressful. Teachers were not coping with their work under unfavourable working conditions and this strained them.

To support the above sentiment, participant 4 in focus group C remarked:

*Participant 4: I think as a teacher, who is motivated despite unfavourable conditions, I derive job satisfaction when I see my learners perform better. This plays a role in improving my morale. I believe that teachers should be encouraged to have a sense of accomplishment even under strenuous conditions; this would give rise to their motivation.*

Most participants illustrated that when teachers were self-motivated, a sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction was achieved. However, it was difficult for participants

to respond to and discuss lack of motivation as one of the personal factors impacting their morale. At the most, participants merely provided solutions for lack of motivation rather than providing reasons for lack of it (motivation).

#### **4.3.2.2 Work related factors impacting teacher morale**

In this study, participants identified eight work related factors affecting teacher morale: redeployment and rationalisation, inadequate content knowledge, technology in the teaching profession, overcrowded classes, work overload, infrastructure and resources and learner attitude towards schoolwork. These factors are discussed below.

##### **Sub-theme 1.1: Redeployment and rationalisation**

Participants indicated that the movement of teachers from one school to another played a part in the decrease of their morale. The movement of teachers from one school to another is commonly known as redeployment and rationalisation (R and R). In support of the above view, participants 4, 1 and 2 in focus group A had these remarks to make:

*Participant 4: I regard redeployment as one of the sources of stress for teachers because you are never sure when it will affect you and I also understand that the process of R and R was intended for even distribution of teachers in our schools but I believe it is wrongly handled by the principals who say that they will use R & R to get rid of rotten elements.*

*Participant 1: The criteria and procedures of carrying out the process of redeployment are not clearly communicated to us as teachers and this causes a lot of confusion on our part. I think teachers should be actively involved in the process but as teachers we are side-lined when decisions of who are affected by the process are made yet we form an integral part in the process.*

*Participant 2: The worst part about the process of redeployment is that principals give us short notices on when to relocate to another school, which at times may mean relocating to another place and this very stressful.*

*Some schools are very far from our homes; this causes a confusion on us teachers and our families.*

Considering the responses of the majority of participants, it was evident that the process of redeployment and rationalisation of the teaching force was badly administered by principals and it was used by principals to target teachers whom they no longer needed at their schools. Participants felt that the process was misused by principals to retaliate against teachers who held different views from theirs.

It is also evident that there was no clear communication between the principals and the teachers who were affected. Unilateral decisions were taken on behalf of teachers. Participants further elaborated that uncertainty and short notice issued by principals added to the strain that comes with redeployment and rationalisation.

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Inadequate subject content knowledge by teachers**

Participants indicated that one of the factors which affected their morale was inadequate content knowledge regarding the subjects they teach. In this regard, participants 3, 5 and 6 in focus group D had this to comment:

*Participant 3: I think a lot has changed in the subject I teach, I feel I'm out of touch. The low performance of my learners is the litmus paper that I use to check if I'm still relevant for the subject I teach. As a Maths teacher, I avoid some sections because I'm not sure about what to teach. This depresses me a lot. My morale is negatively affected when I fail to effectively deliver my subject matter.*

*Participant 5: I teach Mathematics in the sixth grade but I qualified to teach in the Foundation Phase. I have been teaching this grade for the past five years but I am not still not conversant with the teaching methods in the Intermediate Phase. As a qualified Foundation Phase teacher, I avoid some topics as I lack basic content knowledge on them.*

Participant 6: *I have been changing the subjects I teach every year in the last three years. I believe that these annual changes cause inconsistency. It is difficult for me to master a specific subject as I have to teach it for a year. By the time I begin to master some of its aspects, I am given a different subject to teach.*

Participants admitted that the content they taught had changed radically; as a result they felt inadequate. Participants were no longer confident about the content they taught. It should be noted that lack of confidence on the part of teachers could affect their performance and subsequently their morale.

Considering the responses of the majority of participants, it was evident that the expertise of teachers in a particular subject was not taken into account. Teachers teach in school phases for which they were not qualified to teach. Teacher migration from one grade to another was seen as a problem as teachers did not get sufficient opportunity to master the curriculum. Hence they were expected to master a new curriculum every year. Teachers were not given ample time to master the subjects they taught as they were frequently moved from subject to subject and this created great inconsistency.

### **Sub-theme 1.3: Technology in the teaching profession**

Participants indicated that the use of technology in teaching was a major factor which impacted on their morale. Participants 4 and 2 in focus group D had these remarks to make:

Participant 4: *As a teacher I'm sceptical that the introduction of technology in our profession is aimed at replacing us teachers and as much as I appreciate the intentions of the department to improve teaching methods in order to be abreast with the rest of the world, I still feel that teachers need ample time to adapt to the technological methods of imparting knowledge. I think the use of technology in the teaching profession should be introduced in stages and not all at once.*

Participant 2: *I accept the use of technology in the teaching profession, but I think it will be very difficult for me as I cannot even operate a*

*computer. I believe as teachers we need a thorough in service-training to embrace technology in our profession. It is depressing because the department imposes technology on us without even training us on how to operate gadgets such as computers, tablets and laptops. I think as a veteran teacher, I feel the department is using technology to get rid of us, I feel that the old methods of teaching were best, after all why do we have to keep changing things in our education system?*

The above quotes suggest that the introduction of technology in schools is viewed as a threat to teachers' job security. Participants felt that they might lose their jobs. The responses of the majority of participants indicated that participants were not ready to embrace technology as part of their profession. On the contrary some participants acknowledged that the use of technology in the teaching profession was long overdue, but maintained that technology had to be phased in incrementally.

Furthermore the results of the study showed that some participants were resisting change accompanying technology. Teachers chose to stick to the old ways of doing things rather than embracing new technology. Participants further indicated the need of training when it comes to how to operate technological gadgets rather than having the department impose technology on them. Participant 3 in focus group C had this to comment:

*Participant 3: The department expects teachers to use computers in their teaching yet our schools do not have computer laboratories, I think there is a need to build more computer centres if the department is serious about technology in the teaching profession. I also think that for technology to bear fruits in our schools, learners too must be provided with devices like laptops and tablets because it is of no use for a teacher to use a laptop while teaching when his or her learners are still using old methods of learning.*

Contrary to the views expressed by participants in focus group C, participants in focus group F felt that technology plays a pivotal role in the improvement of teacher morale. Participants further indicated that using technology in teaching was fun and made teaching easy. This goes a long way in the enhancement of teacher morale but most participants indicated that if learners lacked devices to complement what teachers were doing, introducing technology was a futile

exercise. To support the view of participants in focus group F, participant 2 in focus group A had this to say:

*Participant 2: Since I started using computers as my teaching aid, I have seen a great improvement in the performance of my learners although learners do not have tablets or laptops; I think this plays a role in boosting my morale as I experience job satisfaction. Using technology in the teaching profession makes teaching easy and efficient. It becomes easy to network with other teachers on a particular topic, and this has improved my performance considerably.*

Considering the response of the above participant, it was evident that some participants agreed that the inception of technology in the teaching profession had improved their performance and this had positively enhanced their morale as technology created fun and interaction amongst teachers.

#### **Sub-theme 1.4. Work overload**

Participants indicated that their morale decreased considerably when assigned additional duties and an uneven allocation of subjects. In substantiating the above view, participants 1, 3 and 2 in focus group A had these to say:

*Participants 1: Apart from teaching, we are expected to do extra jobs which I think are beyond our scope of work, for instance, unnecessary paper work which entails photocopying, typing and preparing files. In my view these extra duties add to the pressure which we already have. As teachers we are supposed to concentrate on teaching but we are made to do extra duties such as feeding the learners and ensuring that learner's classrooms are clean.*

*Participant 3: As teachers our workload is doubled because we are expected to assist in administrative duties of the school because in our school there is a shortage of staff. We are expected to assist in managing aspects such*

*as Integrated Quality Management system (IQMS), stock register and so forth.*

*Participant 2: As teacher I feel more is expected from me than I can possibly do, for instance, teaching goes beyond just going to the classroom and teach. As a teacher, I am expected to deal with vulnerable learners who come from broken families. Some of these children have behaviour problems which I have to handle in the classroom. These factors add more work to me especially because it is difficult to deal with such learners.*

Considering the comments by most participants, it was evident that teachers were burdened with unnecessary paper work and added duties that they felt did not add to the value of teaching but increasingly demotivated them. Participants in focus group C felt that they dealt with social issues such as vulnerable children and they felt that that responsibility was beyond their scope. In addition, they also felt that they lacked the necessary skills to deal with such issues. However, it became evident that some participants felt that the extra duties assigned to them served as a learning curve. Participant 5 in focus group D had the following positive remark to make regarding this particular point:

*Participant 5: As a teacher, I strongly feel that doing extra duties such as assisting vulnerable learners is one way or another of contributing to the society in order to make a difference and when I do this, there is a sense of job satisfaction on my part and I feel that this plays a pivotal role in the improvement of my morale. As a teacher, I think I have to embrace the fact that workload is just part of the package; it comes with the territory of being in the teaching profession.*

According to the responses of participants in focus group D, it was clear that some participants converted the challenges of work overload into areas of development; they used these experiences as a new opportunity for learning.

### **Sub-theme 1.5: Learners' attitudes towards their schoolwork**

Participants revealed that learners' lack of commitment in their work and ill-discipline were causes of decreased morale. In substantiating the above statement, participants 1 and 4 in focus group E had the following remarks to make:

*Participant 1: Learners who are not devoted to their work frustrate us as teachers. I strongly believe that poor performing learners are sources of my stress because when these learners underperform, the whole blame is shifted to me despite my efforts to ensure that the learners achieve. It is very frustrating for me as a teacher to devote much of my time and energy to help learners only to find that learners do not take their schoolwork seriously*

*Participant 4: It frustrates me a lot because some learners are just ill-disciplined. You give them tasks to do, and they decide not to do it without any valid reason and as a teacher there is nothing that you can do. I can safely confirm that there is a direct link between lack of discipline and lack interest in learners' schoolwork, I have also noticed that disciplined learners are devoted to their schoolwork compared to ill-disciplined ones.*

Participants judged their success according to the success achieved by learners. If learners do not succeed, they consider themselves failures. This affects their self-worth. Considering the responses of the participants in this focus group, it became evident that learner performance has a direct contribution to make to the morale of teachers. Some learners displayed lack of interest in and unwillingness to work hard at their schoolwork. Participant 3 in focus group D remarked:

*Participant 3: In my class I have learners who are well disciplined but they are slow learners, this frustrate me a lot as I have to put extra time to help these learners, but I am demotivated to assist these learners as I don't get the necessary support from the school management team. Learners who show interest in their schoolwork motivate me to do more for them and this play a role in the improvement of my morale.*



Considering the response of participants in this focus group, it became clear that lack of support from school management to assist with underachieving learners impacted negatively on the performance of teachers and this affected them negatively. Motivated learners communicate their motivation to their teachers through their enthusiasm and interest in learning and this positively enhances the morale of teachers. However, the converse is also true.

#### **4.4 OBSERVATIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES**

The researcher used observations as his secondary data collection instrument to obtain data by observing infrastructures and resources of the 12 selected schools. Data obtained from observations were used to augment and corroborate data derived from focus group interviews. Observations were carried out in classrooms, specialised buildings such as libraries, science and computer centres and with regard to availability of learner-teacher support materials such as textbooks (Appendix G).

##### **Sub-theme 1.6: Overcrowded classes**

The researcher observed that overcrowded classes contributed to the deteriorating morale of teachers. In confirming what he observed, participant 1 in focus group B had the following remark to make:

*Participant 1: It is difficult to manage an overcrowded class. You don't get to attend to individual learners' problems. I can confirm that when the performance of my learners goes down, my morale also takes a serious knock. The high number of learners in my class negatively impacts on my delivery of subject matter.*

The researcher also observed that one teacher is assigned to a very large number of learners in one class. To confirm the researcher's observations, participant 4 in focus group B remarked:

*Participant 4: I teach an English class of 72 learners. It is difficult for me to mark learners' scripts and give feedback in time. This makes me add extra hours trying to complete the work and this makes me miss my target dates and this add to my stress. I think exposing teachers to overcrowded*

*classes is one way or another of undermining their conditions of work and the rights of learners to receive learning in a conducive environment.*

It was evident from the researcher's observations and the views of the participants that overcrowding of classes negatively affected the delivery of subject matter as teachers were unable to provide feedback on the learners' work within an acceptable time framework.

#### **Sub-theme 1.7: Infrastructure and resources**

The researcher observed that in most selected schools the physical conditions of classrooms was very poor to a point where teaching and learning was difficult. The observations of the researcher were confirmed by participant 2 in focus group F who said:

*Participant 2: The commitment of the department in addressing this issue of classroom shortage leaves much to be desired. Our working conditions are not encouraging us as teachers to be enthusiastic towards our work. As teacher I am demoralised by shortage of resources in our school.*

In his observations the researcher found out some classes are not fit for human occupation, not to mention teaching and learning. To support his observations, participant 4 in focus group D remarked:

*Participant 4: As you can see, this classroom has no window panes. It is difficult to teach during harsh weather. The floor does not have concrete and the classroom does not have a door. We have to sweep goat droppings every morning as this a sleeping place for goats after school because the fencing is broken.*

During his observation sessions, the researcher found that of the only three of the 12 schools visited have managed to convert classrooms into libraries which are not fully resourced. The researcher observed that all the schools lack science and computer centres. To confirm his observations, participant 3 in focus group commented:

*Participant 3: Lack of basic resources demotivates me, shortage of laboratories and computer centres kills our morale.*

In his observations, the researcher found that only four of the 12 schools had sufficient textbooks. The researcher also observed that some learners shared old, worn-out textbooks whereas in some learning areas there was only one text book for the teacher. Learners had to copy notes from the chalkboard and to add to matters, chalkboards were insufficient. Participant 5 had this to remark to support the researcher's observations:

*Participant 5: It is very stressful to teach learners without textbooks because learners do not have textbooks for reference and this affects my performance badly, and when my performance is bad my morale goes down.*

Judging by the researcher's observations and the confirmation of his observations by the participants, it became evident that the unavailability of reliable infrastructure and resources affected the performance of teachers which had negative implications for the morale of teachers.

#### **4.5 SOCIO ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER MORALE**

Findings indicated that socio-economic factors affected teachers' morale. These were parental involvement, public perception and negative media reports.

##### **4.5.1 Parental involvement**

Majority of participants indicated that positive parental involvement in children's schoolwork was imperative in ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place. Participants believed that they needed to join hand with parents in assisting the learners. It became evident that the absence of parents in their children's education jeopardised the commitment of teachers in their work.

Participants 5 and 6 in focus group F had the following remarks to make:

*Participant 6: I view the involvement of parents in their children's school affairs as a positive feedback on my part as a teacher, when parents respond positively to their child's schoolwork, I get motivated. I strongly believe*

*that parents play an integral part in the success of their children and when parents are on board, I develop a sense of satisfaction.*

*Participant 5: It is difficult to get full cooperation of parents because most of them are working far away in the farms. Children are left alone with no one to ensure that they go to school properly, learners coming from these families are always absent from school, and learner absenteeism is a serious problem and difficult for teachers to resolve when parents are not involved. I think that lack of parental involvement is linked to the high level of illiteracy around our school community; I think the illiteracy factor is contributing to parents' lack of commitment to their children's education as they don't attach any meaning to education. A score of learners in my class come from broken families where it is difficult to get parental support, it is difficult to get hold of these parents as they don't even attend parents meetings.*

According to the responses of participants in this focus group, it was revealed that parental involvement in their children's education was a positive reinforcement of what teachers were doing. Lack of parental involvement affects children's education negatively. Participants emphasised that the positive involvement of parents in their children's education was a source of motivation. Participants 4 and 3 in focus group B had the following to comment:

*Participant 4: In my experience as a teacher, I have noticed that learners who get support from their parents or guardians are very much likely to perform better than children whose parents are not involved. As my way of getting parents on board, I request them to sign their children's books to verify if they do check their children's schoolwork but in a class of 50 learners, you find that only 15 learners' books have been signed by their parents.*

*Participant 3: I frequently communicate with parents and parents who respond to me but it's difficult to involve parents who don't even respond to you as a teacher.*

The above quotes suggested that although most participants felt that they were not supported by learners' parents, they were aware of the challenges that hampered positive parental involvement such as illiteracy and child-headed families. These factors negatively affected the performance of teachers which ultimately affected morale.

#### **4.5.2 Public perception towards teaching as a profession**

Participants revealed that the outlook and perception of the general public towards teachers in particular and the teaching profession in general had a direct impact on their morale. Participants 1 and 3 in focus group A explained as follows:

*Participant 1: The general public is misled to think that teaching is for people who could not pursue other professions which they think are better than teaching.*

*Participant 3: As a teacher I think that the way the general public sees teachers is also informed by the way in which teachers conduct themselves in public. In my opinion, teachers who conduct themselves with respect and dignity will earn the trust and respect of the general public than teachers who misbehave and bring the reputation of other teachers and the teaching profession into disrepute.*

The results of the study showed that teachers felt that the general public entertained a negative perception towards them and the teaching profession. They did not feel respected and valued by members of the public. However, some participants ascribed this to ill-disciplined teachers who put the profession in disrepute. Participants acknowledged that teachers had a responsibility to place themselves and their profession in a positive light by conducting themselves in a manner which makes people respect them and their work.

#### **4.5.3 Negative media reports**

Some participants indicated that negative reporting by media impacts on their morale as that influences public perception of teachers and teaching. Here are some of the comments made by participant 6 in focus group F:

Participant 6: *I think that media reporting is not helping in building our morale. The media always report negative things affecting teachers. When teachers do well, the media seems to turn a blind eye but they make a lot of noise when something negative is done by teachers.*

In support of what participant 6 said, participant 3 in focus group A remarked:

Participant 3: *When we underperform, the media blows our underperformance out of proportion. But when teachers are victims of violence, the media is quick to defend the learners even if they are perpetrators of violence towards teachers and when teachers behave in an unethical manner, for instance, sexual relations, the media quickly makes headlines by painting all the teachers with one brush and makes it look as if all the teachers are bad. I must say this kind of reporting is not helping in the enhancement of our morale.*

Considering the responses of the above participants, it became evident that teachers felt that the media continually reported negatively about teachers and the teaching profession. Participants also indicated that the media seemed less concerned when teachers acted positively but showed interest when they behaved unprofessionally, for instance, teacher underperformance and unethical behaviour such as teachers engaging in sexual relations with learners,

#### **4.6 THEME 3: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHERS MORALE**

**Research question 3:** Which intervention strategies could be employed to address teachers' morale?

The researcher used focus interviews to obtain data from participants to address this research question. In the interviews the researcher probed the participants to recommend intervention strategies to enhance their morale. Three intervention strategies to enhance the morale of teachers were identified by participants who were purposefully sampled to participate in the interviews.

The intervention strategies were improved communication, family support, safety in schools and parental involvement.

#### **4.6.1 Improved communication**

Participants indicated that improved channels of communication among the learners, parents and the Department of Education could assist in enhancing the morale of teachers. In support of this finding, participant 4 in focus group A remarked:

*Participant 4: When the parents and the learners join hands with teachers, our performance is enhanced and this positively affects our morale. In my view, having constant and consistent meetings at convenient times with the parents can improve our mode of communication and when this happens, quick and positive feedback is attained which goes a very long way in the enhancement of our morale.*

To support participant 4 in focus group A, participant 3 in focus group D said:

*Participant 3: I think our morale can improve if the department listens to our needs and gives themselves time to resolve our problems and they can do it better if we as teachers are involved in issues which affect us.*

#### **4.6.2 Family and professional support**

Findings indicated that participants' morale was enhanced when they were supported by learners' families in the work they do. To support this finding, participant 1 in focus group C said:

*Participant 1: I am motivated by parents who come to us and appreciate the good work we are doing to their children and the community.*

In support of this finding, participant 6 in focus group D remarked:

Participants 6: *The fact that there are awards at various levels to appreciate and acknowledge our good work that gives me courage to carry on doing what I like best.*

Considering the responses of participants in this study, participants felt that teacher morale could be enhanced when they experienced a sense of support from learners' families and the Department of Education. Teachers are motivated by family support and the recognition they get from the department when it stages events where teachers' good work is recognised.

#### **4.6.3 Safety in schools**

As a way of enhancing the morale of teachers, participants in this study recommend that the Department of Education should prioritise safety in schools. To support this intervention strategy, participant 4 in focus group E said:

Participant 4: *I think the safety of our schools should be put first. I believe more money should be made available to appoint more skilled security staff to patrol our schools.*

Participant 2 in focus group D mentioned the following intervention strategy to enhance safety in schools:

Participant 2: *I think the broader community should be involved in the safety of their children by refraining from glorifying violence in schools. Violent crime done by learners in schools should be treated like crime committed in any sector of the society.*

Judging by the responses of the participants, it was clear that prioritising school safety and channelling financial resources and security staff to schools could improve the safety of schools thus enhancing the morale of teachers.



#### **4.6.4 Parental involvement**

Participants indicated that the involvement of parents in their children's education played a role in enhancing their morale. In support of this, participant 5 in focus group B said:

*Participant 5: The positive relationships that I have with the parents of learners I teach proves that parents appreciate my work and this positively enhances my morale.*

As a way of enhancing the morale of teachers, participant 2 in focus group F remarked:

*Participant 2: When parents communicate with me about their children's schoolwork, it helps me to know my learners' weaknesses in order to help them and in so doing, my morale is given a boost.*

Considering the responses given by the participants, it was evident that a good relationship between the teachers and parents would contribute powerfully to the enhancement of the morale of teachers.

#### **4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Chapter four presented, analysed and interpreted findings provided by the participants. The findings were discussed in accordance with the research questions. The findings of this study were categorised into three main themes, that is, experiences which influence the morale of teachers, the experiences include amongst others, boredom, frustration, feeling of neglect, lack of professional development and violence in schools. The second theme discussed factors affecting teachers' morale which are divided into personal, work related and socio-economic factors. Participants identified personal factors such as financial problems and working conditions. In this chapter, work related factors impacting the morale of teachers as identified by the participants were redeployment and rationalisation, inadequate subject content knowledge by teachers, technology in the teaching profession, overcrowded classes, work overload, infrastructure and resources and learners' attitudes towards their schoolwork. Participants also suggested intervention strategies which formed part of the third theme which

can be applied to enhance the morale of teachers. These included improved communication, family and professional support, safety in schools and parental involvement.

The next chapter provided summary of the research, concluding remarks and recommendations, areas of further research and limitations of the research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The primary objective of this research was to explore the experiences that influence teachers' morale in the selected primary schools of Bohlabela District. In chapter four, research findings from focus group interviews and observations were presented. The presentation of research findings was done in accordance with the aim and objectives of the empirical investigation. The intention of this chapter is to provide a concise summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this research. Collated findings as provided by research participants are used to provide recommendations of this empirical investigation. Conclusions arrived at in this research were informed by the research questions of this empirical research investigation. After providing the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study, areas of further research are suggested.

Teacher experiences which impact on the morale of teachers in the selected primary schools of Bohlabela District were discussed in varying sections of the previous chapters of this empirical investigation. This empirical investigation provided a deeper insight into factors which influence teacher morale, how teachers conceptualise their own morale and more importantly how morale manifests itself amongst teachers as professionals in the selected primary schools in the District of Bohlabela. The study provided an opportunity for teacher participants to express themselves about what affects them most in their day- to-day activities.

In an effort to attain the aim of the study, an interpretative paradigm was applied; to achieve this, case study as the design of this study was chosen. The case study design was used in this study as a guide in selecting research sites, selection of research participants by means of purposive sampling, data collection by means of focus group interviews and observations to gather rich data from the participants. After obtaining permission to conduct research in Bohlabela District, 36 teachers were purposively sampled based on this criterion: Grade 6 Mathematics and English teachers who failed to attain the provincial benchmark of 60% in the last five years (2014-2018). The rationale behind opting to use Grade 6 Mathematics and English teachers was the government and department's emphasis to promote literacy and numeracy in schools. In all the selected 12 primary schools, data were collected through focus

group interviews and observations. Recorded interview data was transcribed for analysis. While collecting data, the researcher adhered to the rules of research ethics; this specifically included the obtaining of informed consent from participants and education authorities. The researcher established mutual trust (rapport) between the participants and himself. The researcher ensured that trustworthiness of the study was attained by carefully assuming his role as the researcher, by triangulating the obtained data, accurate note taking and using his recording device effectively.

As informed by the literature review, the researcher developed three themes and several categories which represented the core findings of the research. In order to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research, the researcher applied low interference descriptors and verbatim account of participants who made poignant points. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, focus groups were code named as focus group A to focus group F. Members of each focus group were code named 1 to 6.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

In this study, it was found that morale plays itself out in different contexts in the personal as well as the professional lives of the teachers. The study found that boredom, frustration, lack of professional development, feelings of neglect and violence in schools have a negative impact on the morale of participants. This finding is in agreement with behaviouristic framework which holds the view that behaviour is influenced by what people experience in their environment. Higgs (2007:64) contends that it is difficult to separate people from their experiences and to understand the relationship between behaviourists' belief in exploring and questioning the lived world of human beings. In this study, teaching was viewed by participants to be a somewhat boring profession as participants regarded their daily task as more routine than enjoyable work. It was also found that unfavourable working conditions such as chronic shortage of resources frustrate participants. This finding is also supported by Proudlock et al. (2008:74) who conclude that teachers in intellectually and cognitively underprepared rural schools face a dire shortage of learner-teacher support materials. The study further showed that lack of resources is regarded by participants as a form of neglect by the Department of Education which does not fully acknowledge participants and what they do. It was the finding of this study that the prevalence of violence in schools negatively affects the morale of

participants. The study found that the level of violence and lack of security in schools was so dire that loss of lives and brutal crimes such as rape occurred.

According to Rouse (2004:27) Thorndike views motivation as something which is determined and informed by self-actualisation. In the same vein, Rouse (2004:27) states that when people actualise themselves, they do and achieve what they are capable of. However, Francis and Kritsonis (2006:04) argue that when a person is unable to perform what he or she is capable of doing, such a person becomes demoralised. The above approach of self-actualisation by Thorndike is in support of the findings of this study in the sense that factors which affect the morale of teachers such as personal factors which include financial problems and working conditions make teachers incapable to perform their work. For instance, personal financial problems lead to absenteeism which adversely affects their performance and their morale. On the other hand, poor working conditions such as bad infrastructure and more emphasis on work submission dates without considering the capabilities of participants were found by this study to be sources of low morale on the part of the participants.

The study further revealed that there were work- related factors influencing the morale of teachers. From a behaviourist point view, motivation is strongly informed by external factors such as excellent working conditions, high job satisfaction and most importantly, improved morale (Toulmin, 1949:144). Contrary to the view expressed by Toulmin, it was found by this study that job satisfaction could not be attained because participants lacked adequate subject content knowledge and working conditions of participants were unfavourable. Participants were overloaded with work, for instance, some participants were expected to perform administrative duties such as managing IQMS. The study revealed that overcrowded classes affected the performance of teachers and this overcrowding was aggravated by shortage of proper infrastructure and resources such as textbooks. Apart from overcrowding, learners' attitudes towards their schoolwork also affected the morale of teachers as some learners were ill-disciplined and did not take their work seriously. The introduction of technology in the teaching profession contributed to the declined levels of the morale of participants as some participants indicated that little time is allocated to train them on how to operate technological gadgets such as computers. Participants were sceptical about embracing technology as they thought that it was there to replace them or take away their jobs. The above findings are supported by Pintrich (2003:681) who hold the view that professionals who are motivated by

incentives and better working conditions are likely to be more motivated than their counterparts who operate in schools where there are poor working conditions and incentives.

According to Rice (2012:06), incoherent policies limit efforts and potential of teachers which has commonly been believed to negatively affect their morale as well as their performance. The view of Rice (2012:06) on policies is supported by the finding of this study which found that redeployment and rationalisation of the teaching force were badly handled by principals who made it difficult for participants to see the good intentions of the process of redeployment and rationalisation. According to Higgs (2007:54), there is widely held view by behaviourists who strongly believe that people's motivation and willingness to resolve challenges is informed by their reaction to challenges and shortcomings as well as setbacks they are confronted with in their quest to achieve their goals. Thus, the study developed four intervention strategies to enhance the morale of participants.

The first strategy entailed improvement of communication between parents and teachers by having constant and consistent meetings at convenient times for parents which would promote rapid feedback. The study discovered that family and professional support play an integral part in enhancing the morale of teachers. Findings also indicated that teachers are motivated by parents who come to them and appreciate the good work they are doing. The above finding is supported by the view of Gustafson and Patel (2011:72-73) who state that teachers in cognitively prepared schools enjoy the support of parents because parents in these schools get to a point of hiring private tutors to help their children with schoolwork. This plays a role in the improvement of teacher performance which is linked to job satisfaction. It was suggested in the study that more financial resources should be channelled into rural schools in order to prioritise school safety. This finding is in agreement with the view expressed by Higgs (2007:55) who asserts that behaviourism enhances problem solving skills in order to arrive at informed and sustainable conclusions about the issue under study such as teacher morale. The study indicated that to solve the problem of violence in schools, violent crime committed by learners at school should be treated the same way as crime done by any other member of society.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

Conclusions arrived at in this study were derived from the empirical studies and literature on teacher morale. Conclusions served as basis for improvement of teacher morale and creation of a positive school climate conducive for teachers to attain job satisfaction. The results of the study would further allow teachers to be knowledgeable and equipped to improve their morale in order to attain an enhanced culture of teaching and enthusiasm towards their work. The main conclusions of this research were discussed in accordance with the research questions as cited in the first chapter. Low teacher morale is a problem in schooling systems worldwide including South Africa and its negative effects on teacher and learner productivity and the profession as a whole are well-documented. Conversely, positive morale and enthusiasm among teachers is a characteristic of an effectively functioning school system.

Informed by behaviourist theory, this qualitative study investigated teacher morale among rural primary school teachers in the Bohlabela District, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. Low performing rural schools and teacher participants whose learners had achieved poorly in Mathematics and English in Grade 6 were purposefully selected. Interviews and observations allowed the researcher to explore the dynamic of teacher morale and to identify the factors which eroded teachers' morale. In so doing the researcher addressed the three main research foci: primary school teachers' experiences affecting morale from their own point of view; factors which influence teachers' morale and intervention strategies to improve practice. It is envisaged that this study will contribute to the knowledge gap regarding teacher morale in South African context and that the recommendations made can assist individual teachers, principals, members of governing bodies and the Department of Basic Education to take action in future to improve poor morale and to sustain positive morale among the teaching corps.

### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This part of the study intends to provide recommendations from the findings and conclusions drawn in this research. The purpose of providing recommendations for this study is to improve teachers' morale and create a conducive school environment aimed at improving practice and attainment of job satisfaction. Recommendations are discussed below.

1. To avoid boredom, it is recommended that the Department of Education should initiate refresher courses and excursions for teachers to meet, have fun and engage in creative activities to avoid work related stress.
2. To address the feeling of neglect experienced by teachers, the Department of Education should recognise and appreciate good work done by teachers by providing performance bonuses for teachers who excel in their work. This will encourage all teachers to improve their performance as they will be aware that they will earn extra money when they work harder. The Department and the general public should assure teachers that they recognise the good work they are doing; a simple “Thank You” will go a very long way in improving the morale of teachers.
3. In addressing lack of professional development, the Department should consult teachers when they develop professional development programmes for teachers in order to identify problem areas which should be addressed. The study recommends that more subject advisors should be employed and they should be easily accessible to teachers. It is also recommended that curriculum implementers should report for work in circuit offices where teachers can reach them rather than reporting in District offices which are located far from teachers.
4. To prevent violence in schools, the Department of Education should make more funds available to appoint additional skilled security staff to patrol schools and crimes committed by learners should be treated the same way as crime committed by any other member of society.
5. The Department of Education should use the services of financial advisors to visit schools and advise teachers on sound financial management.
6. To resolve problems related to redeployment and rationalisation, teachers should be involved in all decisions taken concerning the process of redeployment and rationalisation. It is further recommended that drastic action such as suspension and deducting one month's salary from principals who are found guilty of misconduct should be taken.
7. To solve the problem of inadequate subject knowledge by teachers, it is recommended that more in-service training should be conducted to keep teachers up to date on their subjects. It is recommended that more teachers should be appointed to avoid a situation where teachers teach in phases for which they do not qualify. It is advised that teachers who qualified to teach in Foundation Phase must teach in the



Foundation Phase, the same must apply to teachers teaching in the Intermediate and the Senior Phases.

8. To allay fears and uncertainties associated with the use of technology, teachers should be taught the advantages of embracing it in their profession. This includes quick feedback and access to information. Teachers should be assured that technology is not there to replace them but to make their work more interesting and simpler.
9. To address the problem of workload, it is recommended that the government should recruit more young people to choose teaching as a career by increasing teacher salaries, eliminating violence in schools and reporting positively about teachers and the teaching profession. It is further recommended that administrative work should be strictly done by non-teaching staff to minimise work pressure exerted on teachers.
10. To change the attitude of learners towards their schoolwork, collaborative involvement among parents, teachers and learners should be prioritized. It is recommended that teachers should display high level of commitment towards their work; learners will emulate this and take their schoolwork seriously.
11. More funds should be made available to address the issue of the poor state and unavailability of infrastructure and resources. A special directorate should be established to deal specifically with infrastructure and leave teachers only to teach.
12. It is recommended that the government and the media should report positive things about teachers. Conversely, it is recommended that teachers should conduct themselves in an ethical manner in order to earn the trust and respect of the general public. Teachers should refrain from unethical behaviour such as theft, embezzlement of state funds, illicit sexual relations with learners and intoxication in the workplace which puts the teaching profession in disrepute.
13. Teachers should motivate parents to be actively involved in their children's education by making them sign children's activity books regularly to verify their progress.

In the next section, areas for future research, limitations and practical challenges of the study are discussed.

## **5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study suggested the following areas of further research.5.5.1. The first area of future research entails conducting longitudinal studies to determine the impact of morale amongst teachers to be carried out in Mpumalanga and in South Africa as a whole. In addition, models need to be developed to test the theoretical and practical impact of teacher morale which will be aimed at promoting and improving the morale of teachers to make teachers develop love and enthusiasm towards their profession.

5.5.1 The second area that needs further research is the determination of teacher self-actualisation and how it can be enhanced to maximise motivated attitudes, behaviour and job satisfaction. In light of the data collected and analysed, some teachers did not clearly conceptualise their morale, such a gap has a negative impact in attaining the objectives of the school climate conducive for effective teaching and learning.

5.5.2 The third area of future research is the study intended to determine the exact behavioural approach to motivate South African teachers. This will help in generating and sustaining motivational attitude and behaviour relevant for improved teacher performance and job satisfaction. At the moment, the behavioural approach to motivation is unclear in the provision of intervention strategies to enhance and sustain teacher morale.

5.5.3 The fourth area which calls for future research is the study aimed at exploring the prevalence of violence in South African schools because this problem is a serious cause for concern which negatively affects effective teaching and learning. In light of this, the researcher feels that an evidence based investigation into the spate of violence in South African schools is needed; otherwise, the country will lose its productive teaching force.

## **5.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

According to Flick (2014:381), acknowledging the limitations of the study empowers the reader to appreciate constraints imposed on the study and understand the context in which the research claims are set. Finally a number of limitations needed to be considered in this study. This research worked within five important limitations. The access to participants and schools was limited because the department allowed the interviews only to be done after school hours;

this was a serious limitation because observations had to be carried out during lessons as the researcher needed to observe factors such as overcrowding.

Three of the selected primary schools changed principals during the course of the study; two of the new principals did not want to allow the researcher to use the teachers' staffroom as interview venue. Although the purpose of the study was clearly stated at the onset of the research, some participants were reluctant to be part of the study particularly when they realised that they were sampled on the basis of their under-performance in Mathematics and English.

Two participants in one of the focus groups withdrew their participation at a later stage of the study. In some schools participants were not available for interviews as they were relocated to other schools due to the process of redeployment and rationalisation.

Absenteeism by participants in the interview sessions was identified as a limitation in this research.

## **5.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In this study, as far as possible, the researcher indicated how the above limitations were accommodated. The researcher specified trade-offs made given the identified constraints. To address access to schools during school hours, the researcher applied for leave at work in order to have time to visit schools when lessons were in process to conduct observations. To address the issue of interview venues, the researcher had to produce the approval letter from the District director to conduct research to the two new principals who were reluctant to allow interviews to take place in staff rooms. The researcher had to recruit other participants teaching Mathematics and English to replace the ones who were unwilling to be part of the study. As for those who withdrew at a later stage of the study, the researcher used the data they provided earlier. To address the problem of participant absenteeism, the researcher was forced to reschedule the interview sessions with the affected participants. Apart from areas of further research limitations and delimitations discussed above, the research accomplished its aim of exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

## **5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter concluded this research. The summary of the study, critical conclusions and recommendations emanating from this research were highlighted. The chapter exposed areas of future research and limitations of the study which were discussed alongside the delimitations of the study. At the end the researcher does not claim that the study outcome in this research project is the final word or claim that the data collection methods applied here were flawless but strongly hope that something credible and worthwhile was attained by undertaking this empirical investigation.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: A letter to the district director re requesting permission to conduct research with teachers in your district.**

Title of the research: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District

The District Director

Bohlabela District

Private Bag X 1242

HAZYVIEW

1242

27 February 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

I Lawrence Mboweni am doing research under the supervision of Prof. M.J. Taole in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a PHD degree at the University of South Africa. I am inviting teachers within your district to participate in a study entitled: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

The aim of the study is to obtain an in depth understanding of factors that influence teacher morale .The study seek to enable the researcher to explore teacher experiences as they impact on the morale of teachers. The study further aim to help the researcher want to identify and explore these factors in order to create a positive school climate so as to raise and preserve the morale of teachers. The objective of raising and preserving teacher morale is to improve on teacher and learner performance. I have chosen to do this research in your district because I work within the district you administer. As a teacher in this district I have noticed the deteriorating standards in Maths and English. As an English teacher, the low performance in this subject prompted me to undertake a study using grade six teachers. The choice of grade six teachers is informed by the department's emphasis on improving numeracy and literacy in

the primary schools. I will use schools which failed to attain the department's provincial benchmark of 60% in the last five years.

Since the study seeks to get insight into teacher experiences which affect and influence their morale, the study will provide the researcher an opportunity to explore in detail why teachers are demotivated in their profession. The study will entail focus group interviews targeting grade six Maths and English teachers who obtained less than 60% in their final examination results in the last consecutive five years. The study will also use observations as a tool of collecting data; here aspects such as conditions of classrooms, number of learners in the classrooms, availability of textbooks and other resources will be the focus of observations.

The benefits of this study is to allow the researcher and the readers of this thesis an opportunity to understand the experiences teachers go through in their day-to-day activities when they perform their work, as it relates to their morale. There are no foreseeable negative consequences in partaking in the study, ground rules will be set at the beginning of the research session and participants will be asked to commit themselves in adhering to the rules to prevent behaviours which could offend other participants.

The interviews will be conducted after school hours to ensure that school activities are not disrupted. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail a written submission and presentation about some of the helpful and interesting findings in my study.

My contact numbers are as follows: cell number is: 0636621442.

Email address: [mbowenilawrence@gmail.com](mailto:mbowenilawrence@gmail.com).

My supervisor can be contacted at 012-429-3451 or at [taolemj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:taolemj@unisa.ac.za)

Yours Faithfully

Lawrence Mboweni

## Appendix B : Approval of request to conduct research



Ikhamanga Building , Government Bouevard, Riverside Park , Mpumalanga Province

Private Bag x11341, Mbombela , 1200

Tel:013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line:0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Department van Onderys

Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

---

Mr L Mboweni

P.O.BOX 152

Acornhoek

1360

Dear Sir

### APPROVAL OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEACH

Kindly be informed of the approval of your request to conduct reserch study for the purpose of obtaining an in depth in understanding of factors that influence teacher morale investigation in sampled teachers teaching Maths and English in the sixth grade. in the selected Primary School of Bohlabela District.

Furthermore , plase be informed that the Mpumalanga Department of Education will require acces to your reserch finding and recommendations. You are advised to communicate with your chosen schools and ensure that no inconveience is experienced at any given time. Teaching and learning must not be negatively affected in any way.

Your professionalism in this regard will be highly appreciated . Good luck on your reaserch ;your interest on matters of Adult Education in the District is appliuded

20/03/2018

MS L.N GOBA

DATE

**Appendix C: A letter to the circuit manager requesting permission to conduct research  
with teachers in your circuit**

Title of the research: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District

27 February 2018

The Circuit Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

I Lawrence Mboweni am doing research under the supervision of Prof.M.J. Taole in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a PHD degree at the University of South Africa. I am inviting teachers within your circuit to participate in a study entitled: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

The aim of the study is to obtain an in depth understanding of factors that influence teacher morale .The study seek to enable the researcher to explore teacher experiences as they impact on the morale of teachers. I have chosen to do this research in your circuit because I work within the circuit which you administer. As a in this circuit, I have noticed deteriorating performance in Maths and English. As a teacher in this circuit I felt there is a need to improve this performance, I realized that low learner performance which translates to low teacher performance can be attributed to the morale of teachers. This prompted and encouraged me to do a research in your circuit. The choice of grade six Maths and English teachers is informed by the department's emphasis on improvement of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. I will use schools which failed to attain the department's provincial benchmark of 60% in the last five years (2014-2018).

Since the study seeks to get insight into teacher experiences which affect and influence their morale, the study will provide the researcher an opportunity to explore in detail why teachers are demotivated in their profession. The study will entail focus group interviews targeting grade six Maths and English teachers who obtained less than 60% in their final examination results in the last consecutive five years. The study will also use observations as a tool of collecting

data; here aspects such as conditions of classrooms, number of learners in the classrooms, availability of textbooks and other resources will be the focus of observations.

There are no foreseeable negative consequences in partaking in the study, ground rules will be set at the beginning of the research session and participants will be asked to commit themselves in adhering to the rules to prevent behaviours which could offend other participants.

The interviews will be conducted after school hours to ensure that school activities are not disrupted. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail a written submission and presentation about some of the helpful and interesting findings in my study.

My contact numbers are as follows:

cell number is: 0636621442.

Email address: [mbowenilawrence@gmail.com](mailto:mbowenilawrence@gmail.com).

My supervisor can be contacted at 012-429-3451 or at [taolemj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:taolemj@unisa.ac.za)

Yours Faithfully Lawrence Mboweni

**Appendix D: A letter to the school principal requesting permission to conduct research  
with teachers in your school**

Title of the research: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District

27 February 2018

The Principal

Dear Principal

I Lawrence Mboweni am doing research under the supervision of Prof.M.J. Taole in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a PHD degree at the University of South Africa I am inviting teachers within your school to participate in a study entitled: Exploring teacher morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

The aim of the study is to obtain an in depth understanding of factors that influence teacher morale. The study seek to enable the researcher to explore teacher experiences as they impact on the morale of teachers. The study further aim to help the researcher want to identify and explore these factors in order to create a positive school climate so as to raise and preserve the morale of teachers. The objective of raising and preserving teacher morale is to improve on teacher and learner performance.

Your school has been selected because it falls within the number of schools which failed to attain the 60% provincial benchmark in grade six Maths and English in the final year examination in the last five years consecutively.

Since the study seeks to get insight into teacher experiences which affect and influence their morale, the study will provide the researcher an opportunity to explore in detail why teachers are demotivated in their profession. The study will entail focus group interviews targeting grade six Maths and English teachers who obtained less than 60% in their final examination results in the last consecutive five years. The study will also use observations as a tool of collecting data; here aspects such as conditions of classrooms, number of learners in the classrooms, availability of textbooks and other resources will be the focus of observations.

There are no foreseeable negative consequences in partaking in the study, ground rules will be set at the beginning of the research session and participants will be asked to commit themselves in adhering to the rules to prevent behaviours which could offend other participants.

The interviews will be conducted after school hours to ensure that school activities are not disrupted. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail a written submission and presentation about some of the helpful and interesting findings in my study.

My contact numbers are as follows:

cell number is: 0636621442.

Email address...[mbowenilawrence@gmail.com](mailto:mbowenilawrence@gmail.com).

My supervisor can be contacted at 012-429-3451 or at [taolemj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:taolemj@unisa.ac.za)

Yours Faithfully

Lawrence Mboweni



**Appendix E: Request to the grade six Maths and English teachers to conduct focus group interviews and observations.**

P. O. Box 152  
Acornhoek  
1360  
27 February 2018

Dear Colleague

Request for permission to conduct focus group interviews and observations

The title of the research: Exploring teacher's morale in selected primary schools of Bohlabela District.

I Lawrence Mboweni am doing research under supervision of Prof.M.J Taole, professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a PhD degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting your permission on to conduct focus group interviews and observations under the title cited above.

The aim of the study is to obtain an in- depth understanding of factors that influence teacher morale to enable the researcher to explore the morale of teachers so as to create a positive school climate. The objective of raising and preserving positive teacher morale is to improve on teacher and learner performance.

The research used purposive sampling to sample grade six Maths and English teachers who could not attain a provincial 60% benchmark in the last consecutive five years in Maths and English. The study will entails focus group interviews and observations over the period of 8 weeks. The second procedure will be that of conducting focus group interviews, the latter will be conducted in your staffrooms after school hours. Each interview session will last up to two hours.

Potential risks seem minimal because both observations and focus group interviews will occur within school premises and among small group of teachers who are familiar to each other. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail assembling participants and give feedback on the observations well as focus group interviews. Moreover my contact details are as follows: my phone number: 0603 662 1442

my e-mail address is mbowenilawence@gmail.com.

My supervisor comes contacted at 012-429-3541 or at taolemj@unisa.ac.za

Yours faithfully

Lawrence Mboweni

Consent / Assent to participate in the study

I .....(participant name) confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report ,journal publication and or conference proceedings, but my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the focus group interviews. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant name and surname (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name / Surname (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview schedule with participants**

**time:one hour thirty minutes to two hours**

#### **main research questions**

1. What are the primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale?
2. What are the factors influencing primary school teachers morale in Bohlabela District?
3. Which intervention strategies could be employed to address teacher morale?

#### **KEY QUESTIONS**

##### **RESEARCH QUESTION 1**

What are the primary school teachers' experiences that influence their morale?

##### **THEME 1**

###### **Experiences that influence teachers morale**

1. What do you think are the factors which influence your morale as a teacher?
2. What are the factors which frustrate you about your work as it relates to your morale?
3. You mentioned feeling of neglect as one of the factors which influence your morale, how do feeling of neglect impact on your morale?
4. As you said, lack of professional development is a serious cause for concern,how does it influence your morale?
5. What is the impact of violence in your school as one of the factors which influence your morale?

## **RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

**What are the factors influencing primary school teachers morale in Bohlabela District?**

### **THEME 2**

#### **Personal factors influencing primary school teachers' morale in Bohlabela District**

1. What are the personal factors impacting on teacher morale?
2. You mentioned financial problems as one of the factors which impact on your morale. How does this factor affect your morale?
3. How do working conditions in your school impact on your morale?

#### Work related factors affecting teacher morale

1. What are the work related factors affecting your morale?
2. You mentioned redeployment and rationalization as one of the work related factors which influence your morale, how do this factor affect your morale?
3. How does inadequate subject content knowledge affect your morale?
4. You mentioned the use of technology in the teaching profession as one of the work related factors influencing your morale, how does it influence it?
5. How do overcrowded classes impact on your morale?
6. You said that work overload is a work related factor affecting your work, how do this affect your morale?
7. You mentioned that infrastructure and resources affect your morale, can you explain how infrastructure and resources affect it?
8. According to what you said, learners' attitude towards their schoolwork is one of the work related factors, how do learners attitude influence your morale?

### **Socio-economic factors impacting the morale of teachers**

1. What are the socio-economic factors impacting on the morale of teachers?
2. You cited parental involvement as one of the factors impacting on your morale; explain how the involvement of parents in their children's school work affects your morale?
3. When answering question 1 you mentioned public perception as one of the socio-economic factors affecting your morale, explain how this affects you.
4. You mentioned negative media report as the socio-economic factor impacting on your morale, how does negative media reports affect your morale?

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

**Which intervention strategies could be employed to address teachers morale?**

### **THEME 3**

#### **Intervention strategies employed to address teachers morale**

1. Which intervention strategies can you recommend as a way of enhancing your morale?
2. You mentioned family support as a way which can enhance your morale, how so?
3. Explain how improved communication can enhance your morale?
4. In answering question 1 you mentioned that prioritizing school safety as a strategy which can be used to enhance your morale, how do you think safety of schools can enhance your morale?
5. How does the involvement of parents in their children's education assist in the enhancement of your morale?

**Appendix G**  
**Checklist for observational field notes**  
**observation of facilities and resources**

<b>ASSESSMENT COMPONENT</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>1 CLASSROOMS</b>	
1.1 Physical conditions of the classrooms	
1.1.1 Doors	
1.1.2 Window panes	
1.1.3 Floors (conditions of the floors)	
1.1.4 Availability or unavailability of chalkboards	
1.1.5 Plugs and globes	
1.1.6 Roofing (ceiling and leaks)	
1.1.7 Number of classrooms	
1.1.8 Number of learners in classes	
<b>2 SPECIALIZED BUILDINGS</b>	
2.1 Administration buildings	
2.2 Staffrooms	
2.3 Science laboratory	
2.4 Computer centres	
2.5 Libraries	
2.6 Ablution systems	
<b>3 LEARNER –TEACHER SUPPORT MATERIALS (LTSM)</b>	
3.1 Textbooks	
3.2 Computers and laptops	
3.3 Duplicating machines and printers	
3.4 Desks or tables and chairs	

<b>4 SAFETY</b>	
4.1 Fencing	
4.2 Security personnel	
4.3 Security equipments	
<b>5 OTHERS</b>	



## **Appendix H**

### **Transcribed inetrviews theme 1**

**RESEARCHER:** As a teacher, which experiences affect,, morale?

**PARTICIPANT:**There are several factors which affect my morale ,there are those which affect me positively and those which affect me negatively.

**RESEARCHER:** Before we can talk about how thse factors affect you, do you care to me these factors?

**PARTICIPANT:** Frustration is one of them, boredom, feeling of neglect, violence in schools and lack of professional development, just to mention a few.

**RESEARCHER:** Can you explain howfrustration link to your morale and how it affects you? **PARTICIPANT:**I am frustrated because inour school there are no resources for teachers to effectively do their work .You get to school fuuly prepared to help the learners only to find that there are no textbooks or even chalks to write with.

**RESEARCHER:**What do you think causes these shortages because as a school there should be a budget for for necessities such as these?

**PARTICIPANT:**I think lack of knowledge on financial matters and incompetent leadership is the cause of these problems.

**RESEARCHER:**Apart from shortage of resources ,what else frustrate you to a point where you think your morale is low?

**PARTICIPANT:** Another frustrating thing in teaching is the tendency of government to keep on changing things in our curriculum,when you start to get use to a particular thing,they change and what is more frustrating for teachers is that we are not even consulted when these changes are imposed on us.

**RESEARCHER:** You talked about frustration as one of the factors which influence your morale, what else do you think affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** To answer your question, teaching is a boring profession.

**RESEARCHER:** How so?

**PARTICIPANT:** You do the same thing everyday, you meet the same learner everyday for the whole year, it is not an exciting profession, and it is like a routine. **RESEARCHER:** Why do you say teaching is a routine?

**PARTICIPANT:** As a teacher very little room is left for me to approach my lesson the way I like, there are strict procedures which are not both teacher and learner friendly.

**RESEARCHER:** You mentioned a serious issue, feeling of neglect, who neglect you and why do you are neglected?

**PARTICIPANT:** People who were supposed to support us as teachers are the ones who neglect us, the parents and the department of education are not giving us the support they were supposed to give us.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think they should do to show support?

**PARTICIPANT:** From the parents we need their bcomplete involvement in their childrens schoolwork especially on the issue of discipline and from the department there is a need to recognize and appreciate our hard work.

**RESEARCHER:** I think the department is supporting teachers, they pay your salaries and give you awards and certificates, your take on this?

**PARTICIPANT:**The pay we get do not in any way match the difficult work we do and what are going to do with a certificate which do not increase your salary.

**RESEARCHER:** Violence in schools is a serious issue, how does it affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** Violence seriously affects us as teachers because we even fear for our lives.

**RESEARCHER:** Why do you say you fear for your lives?

**PARTICIPANT:** My colleague was gunned down in cold blood in our scool.It was the most horrible thing I have ever seen.

**RESEARCHER:** I can see that you are not comfortable talking about this, what led to yopur collea gue shooting?

**PARTICIPANT:** Her partner came to our school and confronted her and before we knew she was lying in a pool of bold, apparently they were having family problems.

**RESEARCHER:** Listening to what you saoid, is your school safe t o work in?

**PARTICIPANT:** Without any doudt, as teachers we are no longer safe,we are attacked by members of the community and even by our learners,another colleague in a nearby school was gang-raped.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think is causing this violence?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the violence which affects teachers in schools is a reflection of how violent our society is.Itthink our society is violent and intolerant and I believe that our learners copy the hostile behaviour of the society.

**RESEARCHER:** What doyou think need to be done to solve school violence?

**PARTICIPANT:**I think school violence should be treated just like any other crime because I think the government is very lenient to learners who do crimes in schools.the safety of schools

should be emphasized by hiring well trained security people and pay these security people good pay for them to be dedicated to their work.

**RESEARCHER:** You mentioned lack of professional development as one of the factors which affect your morale, how does this factor affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** The department of education is doing very little to address the problem of developing teachers, this lack of development negatively affect our morale. **RESEARCHER:**

Are you saying that the department is not developing teachers? **PARTICIPANT:** Like I said, little is done about the issue, the programmes which the department roll out do not address the needs of teachers and this seriously affect your our performance in a negative way.

**RESEARCHER:** Why do you say the programmes donot address your needs?

**PARTICIPANT:** The reason I say this is because teachers are not involved in the development of these programmes which affect them,I think the input of teachers is not valued by the department of education.

**RESEARCHER:** How frequent do you have these these development programmes?

**PARTICIPANT:**We have development programmes once a term and these development sessions last for an hour to two,another problem is that there are very few facilitators and they are far from teachers,it is difficult to get hold of the facilitators because they are based in the district office which is far from teachers and schools.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think need to be done to solve this problem?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the department should involve teachers in issues which affect them. Their input and opinion should be valued and taken into account.

**Appendix I**  
**Transcribed interview theme 2**

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think are the factors which affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I think morale manifest itself in three ways, that is, personal, in the work place or systemic factors and it also manifest through socio and economic ways.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you mean by systemic factors?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** In my understanding, these are factors which are work related.

**RESEARCHER:** How do family responsibilities affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** My responsibility towards my family has a strong bearing when it comes to my work. As a devoted teacher and a responsible family woman, I have to strike a good balance between my work and my accountability towards my family because if either the work or the family suffers, that negatively affects my morale at work.

**RESEARCHER:** Do you get any support from your family as it relate to your work?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I can manage the stress that is caused by the complex nature of my profession because I have a very strong support system from my family especially my husband, even though he is not a teacher, he understand what I'm going through.

**RESEARCHER:** You say you have a good support system, what kind of support is your family giving you?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** There are times when I have to take my uncompleted work home, when this happens, my husband take pains of ensuring that he prepares the supper, help the children with homework and put them to sleep, he will even wash the dishes before he goes to bed. This gives me a good chance to concentrate on completing my school work.

**RESEARCHER:** What is the link between family responsibility and the work you are doing?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I can say that they are both demanding tasks. Running a family and the complex nature of the teaching profession are two daunting responsibilities, no wonder as a teacher I am stressed by these responsibilities.

**RESEARCHER:** How do your financial circumstances affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** My financial situation affect my morale in two ways, firstly, when I am in control of my finances or when I have financial stability, my morale and my attitude towards my work is also perfect. Secondly when I experience financial difficulties, morale is also affected negatively.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you mean perfect?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I mean that I perform better and get desired results when I don't have financial problems compared to times when I have serious financial constraints.

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think are the effects of financial problems to a teacher and his or her work?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Financial problems affect many aspects of a person, personally, I once had a financial problem which caused me to abuse alcohol, I misused the little money I had by spending it on alcohol, abusing alcohol made me to be absent from work which negatively affected my performance. As a result I could not meet my submission dates and my work lagged behind, this problem made me hate my work to a point where I contemplated leaving the profession to get my pensions in order to settle my debts.

**RESEARCHER:** How did your financial challenges and the problem of alcohol affect you professionally?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Firstly as I said my work performance was below standard; my confidence was also affected because I could not relate well with my colleagues particularly the principal because she had to call me to her office to reprimand me. I lost the respect and trust which a teacher should have from his or her learners. I felt I was a misfit in the teaching profession.

**RESEARCHER:** How do your working conditions as a teacher affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The poor working conditions which we work under are seriously destroying our enthusiasm and motivation. As a teacher I am fully devoted to do my best but my working conditions are making it difficult for me to bring out my best. I believe that the emphasis is on reaching target dates and submission of work without taking in to account the well being of teachers and the appalling working conditions they are exposed to.

**RESEARCHER:** How do the conditions you work under affect your motivation?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** As a teacher I am demotivated and discouraged by attitude of the department when it comes to our working conditions. The department of education is unsupportive and that attitude is killing our passion and commitment.

**RESEARCHER:** How do the process of redeployment and rationalisation affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Redeployment and rationalisation is one of the main sources of stress for teachers because of the uncertainty that goes with it. Principals are misusing the process by being bias and using it to get back to teachers who disagree with them.

**RESEARCHER:** Hoe do principals misuse the process of redeployment?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The department of education had good intention when they introduced this process, the department intended to evenly distribute the teaching force but principals do not

adhere to the procedures needed to get it up and rolling. Instead principals target teachers who are not in their good books.

**RESEARCHER:** How do redeployment and rationalization affect your performance as a teacher?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** You are never sure when you will be affected by redeployment; this makes me as a teacher not to give my full potential because of the anxiety and uncertainty that is associated with redeployment and rationalization.

**RESEARCHER:** How is your morale affected by your inadequate subject knowledge?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** As a teacher I think this one of the factors which causes me a lot of stress because I feel I am out of touch. The subject that I teach now was only introduced to me in the teaching field; I mean that I did not get any training to qualify to teach it. As a result I sometimes avoid teaching certain aspects and sections of this subject.

**RESEARCHER:** What other factors affect your inadequate subject knowledge?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** As teachers we are made to change the subject we teach time again. As a teacher I am not given ample time to master a particular subject, another thing as a teacher I teach many subjects which makes it difficult to be an expert in one of the subjects I am teaching.

**RESEARCHER:** What kind of help are you getting it come to inadequate subject content?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** There is no help which we get as teachers, instead our H.O.Ds and principal add to the problem because they teach one subject each even if the other teachers at lower levels are teaching up to four subjects and this means that they will not act on the problem.

**RESEARCHER:** Can you say something about professional development and support as it relates to your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** My morale is negatively affected by the lack of professional development and support in the teaching profession. The problem is aggravated by shortage of subject advisors, the few subject advisors who are available spend very limited time with teachers, one to two hours once every term, this is not enough to address most of problems individual teachers are having. The department rolls out professional development and support programmes once a year and facilitators of these programmes are not skilled to address the problems of teachers. Their programmes do not speak to the needs of the teachers because teachers are not made part of the programmes which are intended to address their concerns. The department and its officials are not within the reach of teachers and lack of professional development and support plays a negative role in the morale of us as teachers.

**RESEARCHERS:** Tell me, as we live the age of technology, how is this affecting you and your profession?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I think the introduction of technology such as computers in our schools is good but I have a problem with some of the things when it comes to technology.

**RESEARCHER:** Tell me your problems and concerns.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I strongly believe that the use of technology is just imposed on teachers. We are expected to use it and we are always told that technology is here to stay but nothing is done to make us embrace it.

**RESEARCHER:** What should be done and who should do it?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The department should be in the forefront in ensuring that technology is phased in stages and teachers are given enough training about the use of technology in their profession.

**RESEARCHER:** Don't you think that being sceptical to embrace technology is a resistance to change?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It is not resisting change but technology should be introduced in such a way that teachers embraced it.

**RESEARCHER:** How do you think technology should be introduced?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It has to be introduced in stages to allow teachers to get used to it.

**RESEARCHER:** Do you think technology can improve your morale, if so how?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** When administered properly, yes it can significantly improve my morale because when using technology a teacher has an advantage of getting information quicker, teachers are able to network and have discussion forums about a particular subject matter and feedback is quick and prompt.

**RESEARCHER:** As a teacher, what do you think are the challenges of using technology in the teaching profession?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The problem associated with technology is lack of facilities such as computer laboratories in schools and the fact that learners themselves do not have these technological devices.

**RESEARCHER:** I see your classes are overcrowded, how do this condition affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It is difficult to teach a class this big and overcrowded, it is difficult to maintain discipline. Some learners are talking while I am teaching and that frustrate me a lot because I have tried all the tricks but it seems I am not winning. **RESEARCHER:** How many learners are in this class?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** There are 68 learners today, some are absent.

**RESEARCHER:** Without putting words in your mouth, this class is a good source of stress because I am already devastated by the noise of these learners, how are you coping by working here every day of your life?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It is a very stressful environment to work in, I was once admitted to the hospital due to the stressful condition of this class, I was out of work for a month and the teacher who replaced me was also admitted to the hospital because of the same problem. I am back again and I am not coping, despite of all these appalling conditions I am expected to produce desired results and meet my target dates promptly.

**RESEARCHER:** Looking at this overcrowded class, it is clear that you are overloaded with work; tell me how this affects your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Apart from teaching this large class I still have to teach other classes which are also large and overcrowded, I teach four subjects, this means that I have a lot of scripts to mark when I give them work. Apart from teaching large classes as a teacher I am expected to take part in extra-curricular activities, I am a sports organiser, I am a member of the IQMS team and it is a demanding task to perform. During breaks as teachers we are expected to feed the learners and ensure that they don't fight over their meals. To make matters even worse, there is a list of paper work in our daily routines of teaching, and this is helping in putting a strain in our part.

**RESEARCHER:** Your school has very few classrooms and I see you have many learners, tell me how this affecting your work and morals?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** We don't have enough classrooms that is why our learners are cramped in the classes, this makes teaching and learning difficult. We have a shortage of textbooks which are an integral part of teaching and learning. As teachers we don't have teacher's guides which mean that we are not following the CAPS policy in our teaching. There are no computer laboratories and libraries to assist in making teaching and learning efficient.

**RESEARCHER:** How do you draw inspiration by working in such conditions?

**PARTICIPANT:** To be honest I am not inspired to operate in this conditions, I am depressed and discouraged by this situation.

**RESEARCHER:** You work with children, tell me about their attitudes as it relate to your morale.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Very few learners are committed to their school work and that is a positive but the majority of the learners are not committed, they don't do their projects, they don't write home works and classrooms activities and there is very little that I can do as a teacher because



my hands are tied when it comes to disciplining them. The worst part is that learners are aware that there is nothing a teacher can do if they don't do their work.

**RESEARCHER:** While talking about the commitment of learners in their school work, tell me something about the involvement of parents in their children's education.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Some parents are involved in their children's school work and such parents play a role in uplifting my morale because when I get feedback from the parents that in a way tells me that I am on the right track. On the other hand many parents are not concerned about their children's education, they don't respond to the communication strategies that we as teachers try to get them on board, they don't attend parent's meetings, they don't come when they are called to the school individually, as a teacher you end up very frustrated because some parents openly send their children to come and tell you as a teacher that they will never come to school, they have important things to do that attending to their children's school matters. **RESEARCHER:** Talking about parent's involvement, how does the perception of the general public affect your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Without doubt, the public think very little of us as teachers and our teaching profession.

**RESEARCHERS:** Why is that so?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I think it is because of the way in which the department of education view teachers; they are always ridiculed by the very officials who should at least protect and talk good about teachers. I believe that the media is also playing a role in making the public look down upon teachers because of the negative reporting teachers receive from the media. Teachers who misbehave also has a hand in the way the public perceive teachers, some teachers spoil the good work by having sexual relationships with learners, going to work drunk and some by mere laziness.

**RESEARCHER:** Violence in schools is a topical issue these days, how is this affecting your morale?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Without doubt, our schools are dangerous places to work in. As a teacher I fear for my life because I once witnessed my colleague killed in cold blood, as a teacher I'm never free in a school yet this used to be the safest place to work in. Lack of security and the reluctance of the government to take school violence serious is adding to the stress of many teachers.

**RESEARCHER:** Thank you very much. We have come to the end of your interviews.

**Appendix J**  
**Transcribed interviews theme 3**

**RESEARCHER:** What do you think are the intervention strategies which can be applied to enhance the morale of teachers?

**PARTICIPANT:** I can suggest a few things which need to be done to improve the morale of teachers.

**RESEARCHER:** Which things?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think good communication between the department and the parents can help,

**RESEARCHER:** What about learners? Don't you think they also need to be involved in improving your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** As teachers we work with learners, learners should be involved because when they perform poorly, as teachers we are affected, so communication with them should also be improved.

**RESEARCHER:** Why do you think improving communication will improve your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** To enhance our morale, the department should involve teachers in issues which affect them and they can only do this if they give themselves time to listen to the needs of the teachers.

**RESEARCHER:** You mentioned good communication as one of the intervention strategies to improve the morale of teachers, what else do you think can enhance the morale of

teachers? **PARTICIPANT:** I think every worker needs the support of his or her family and the support of his or her employer, as a teacher I believe that for my morale to improve I need the support of my family as teaching is a stressful profession, I also need professional support from the department.

**RESEARCHER:** How do you think the department of education should support you?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the department should support us by appreciating the good work we do and give us better salaries to motivate us; in that way I think our morale can be enhanced.

**RESEARCHER:** Do you think money can enhance your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think it can indirectly motivate us but good working conditions and support from both the family and the department can go a very long way in enhancing our morale. **RESEARCHER:** Do you think your family supports you in your work especially

when it (work) stresses you? And how do they support you?

**PARTICIPANT:**I have good support from my family,they give me moral support and help me with household chores when I have to complete unfinished work at home as we always take our work home.

**RESEARCHER:** Apart from communication and support what else do you think should be done to enhance your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the department should prioritize the safety of schools and make sure that people who come in and out of schools are thoroughly checked fer dangerous weapons and drugs.

**RESEARCHER:** How do you think this thorough cheking should be done?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think schools should be declared national key points so that tight security is made because of loss of life which goes with violence that happens in schools.

**RESEARCHER:** What other intervention strategy do you think should be applied to enhance your morale?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think as teachers we have to involve teachers in what we do because when parents are on board, our learners performance can improve, we can involve parents by having meetings which are convenient for them.

## Appendix K

### Ethical Clearance Certificate



#### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2018/03/14

Ref: 2018/03/14/30818664/23/MC

Dear Mr Mboweni

Name: Mr L Mboweni

Student: 30818664

Decision: Ethics Approval from  
2018/03/14 to 2023/03/14

Researcher(s): Name: Mr L Mboweni  
E-mail address: 30818664@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 63 662 1442

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof M J Taole  
E-mail address: Taolemj@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3541

#### Title of research:

Exploring Teacher morale in selected primary school of Bohlabele district.

Qualification: PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2018/03/14 to 2023/03/14.

*The low risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2018/03/14 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



University of South Africa  
Pretter Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

Open Rubric

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date 2023/03/14. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

The reference number 2018/03/14/30818664/23/MC should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Dr M Claassens  
 CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC  
 mcdic@netactive.co.za



Prof V McKay  
 EXECUTIVE DEAN  
 Mckayvi@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template - updated 16 Feb 2017

University of South Africa  
 Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
 PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
 Tel: phone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
 www.unisa.ac.za

## Appendix L

### Conformation of Editing

CONFIRMATION OF EDITING      1 May 2019

To whom it may concern:

This is to confirm that the following D Ed Thesis: EXPLORING TEACHERS' MORALE IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BOHLABELA DISTRICT by L Mboweni has been edited for language use and technical aspects.

Eleanor M Lemmer  
864 Justice Mohamet Street  
Brooklyn  
Pretoria  
ID 5407110118088

*E M Lemmer*