

**CAUSES OF TEACHER ATTRITION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
SELECTED TEACHERS WHO LEFT THE PROFESSION**

by

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Declaration

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I declare that CAUSES OF TEACHER ATTRITION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED TEACHERS WHO LEFT THE PROFESSION is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis/dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted parameters for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



ALICE PALM (19/04/2020)

Dedication and acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to all the learners who are keen to learn but do not have teachers to teach them; to all the teachers who have left the profession too early in their careers; and finally, to all future learners, who may all hopefully have the opportunity to be taught by qualified teachers. I hope that my research contributes to increasing the retention of teachers in the profession and that it provides some insight into the changes that need to be made in order to reduce teacher attrition.

This study would not have been possible without the help of the following individuals.

Firstly, God. He provided and made a way when I thought there was none.

A huge thank you to my husband, Johan, who spent extra time taking care of our children and doing chores so that I could work on this.

Prof. Ferreira, my supervisor, who never complained when she had to review the same chapters over and over again, always providing really encouraging, but honest feedback.

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Finally, my mother, Liekie, who passed away a year ago. She always encouraged me to study further and I will forever be grateful for her love and support.

God bless and keep you all.

Summary

A qualitative study was conducted on the causes of teacher attrition from urban schools in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces of South Africa. Besides identifying the causes of attrition, the study intended to determine what needs to be changed to entice teachers who have left the profession to return. The rationale of the study was founded on the teacher shortage in South Africa and the alarming rate of teacher attrition from the profession, coupled with the growing number of learners needing education. Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, formed the conceptual framework of the research. Fourteen participants, comprising seven teachers who have left the profession from each province, were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to inform the findings. From the data analysis, five factors were identified as the main causes of attrition. Recommendations on what should be done to encourage a return to the profession were based on the identified causes of teacher attrition and input from the participants.

Key words

Teaching; Attrition; Retention; Self-Efficacy; Motivation; Mentoring; Support; Classroom discipline; Training; Workload

Isifinyezo (isamari)

Kwenziwe ucwaningo lwe-qualitative ngezimbangela zokuncipha kothisha ezikoleni zaseGauteng kanye naseNtshonalanga Kapa eNingizimu Afrika. Nangaphandle kokubheka izimbangela zokuncipha kothisha, ucwaningo belunenhloso yokubheka izinguquko ezidingekayo ukuhuha othisha abashiye iprofeshini ukubuyela ezikoleni. Isizathu socwaningo bekuwukusweleka kothisha eNingizimu Afrika kanye nezinga eliphezulu lokuncipha kwabo ezikoleni okuhambisana nenani elikhulayo labafundi abadinga imfundo. Ithiyori ka-Albert Bandura ye-self-efficacy kanye ne-Maslow's hierarchy of needs zibe wuhlaka lomqondo wocwaningo. Kwenziwa ama-interview nababambiqhaza abayishumi nane, abebequka othisha abayisikhombisa asebeshiye iprofeshini kwiprovinci ngayinye ebalulwe ngenhla, ngokusebenzisa ama-semi-structured interview ukuthola imiphumela. Ngokulandela ulwazi oluhlaziyiwe, kuphawulwe izinto ezinhlanu njengezimbangela ezinkulu zokuncipha kothisha. Kwenziwe izincomo ngokuthi yini okumele kwenziwe ukukhuthaza othisha ukubuyela kwiprofeshini ngokulandela izimbangela zokuncipha kothisha kanye nemibono evela kulabo ababambe iqhaza.

Opsomming

Daar is 'n kwalitatiewe studie uitgevoer oor die oorsake van natuurlike poste-afname van onderwysers in stedelike skole in die provinsies van Gauteng en die Wes-Kaap in Suid-Afrika. Buiten om die oorsake van natuurlike poste-afname te identifiseer, was die doel van die studie om te bepaal watter veranderinge nodig is om onderwysers wat die beroep verlaat het, oor te haal om terug te keer. Die beweegrede vir die studie was die tekort aan onderwysers in Suid-Afrika en die skrikwekkende tempo van die natuurlike poste-afname van onderwysers, tesame met die toenemende aantal leerders wat onderrig benodig. Albert Bandura se selfdoeltreffendheidsteorie en Maslow se hiërargie van behoeftes het die konseptuele raamwerk van die navorsing gevorm. Daar is onderhoude gevoer met 'n totaal van 14 deelnemers, bestaande uit sewe onderwysers wat die beroep verlaat het in elkeen van die bogenoemde provinsies. Halfgestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik om die bevindings mee te deel. Uit die dataontleding is daar vyf faktore geïdentifiseer as die hoofoorsake van natuurlike poste-afname. Aanbevelings oor wat gedoen kan word om 'n terugkeer na die beroep aan te moedig is gebaseer op die geïdentifiseerde oorsake van natuurlike poste-afname en insette van die deelnemers.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study is concerned with the reasons why teachers in two provinces in South Africa leave the profession. Teachers leaving the profession create a teacher shortage that may result in schools employing poorly qualified teachers (DeCesare, Workman & McClelland, 2014:1). The study not only focuses on why teachers leave but also on what could be done to entice them back to the profession.

Teacher attrition is not a challenge that is unique to South Africa. A number of countries, amongst which are Canada, Ireland, Sweden, the United States of America (USA), the Netherlands, Finland and China, also struggle with teacher attrition (Craig, 2017:859). Although teacher attrition is a global issue, this study will focus on the phenomenon in South Africa.

Simkins (2015:7) projects that the number of learners attending schools in South Africa will increase by 9.4 per cent from 2013 to 2025. Due to the high teacher attrition rates, the projected stock of trained teachers in 2025 will be approximately only 7 per cent greater than in 2013, which will result in a teacher shortage (Simkins, 2015:11). It is estimated that South Africa will need an extra 30 000 teachers between 2013 and 2025 to retain the present ratio of teachers to learners (Van Broekhuizen, 2015:30). If these statistics are reliable, one can deduce that it is important for the future of education to find out why teachers leave the profession and what could be changed to encourage teachers to return or to prevent them from leaving in the first place.

When teachers leave the teaching profession this has a negative effect on the learners in those schools. It may hamper learner achievement especially if these teachers are replaced by more inexperienced teachers (Glazerman et al., 2010:23). Replacing teachers who leave sooner than expected could also be an expensive process as schools need to recruit and train new teachers to fill the void (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003:4).

According to literature, teachers are concerned about their salaries, workloads, and the amount of administrative responsibilities and stress they have to deal with whilst teaching (Rhodes, Neville & Allan, 2004:67; Glazer, 2018:62). Several studies have been conducted around the world regarding the causes of teacher attrition. For instance, Den Brok, Wubbels and Van Tartwijk (2017:88) found that leading causes of attrition in the Netherlands constituted “emotional stress, negative relationships with school management and difficulties with the teaching task or role”. In a study conducted by Glazer (2018:65) in the USA, the leading causes of teacher attrition were “interference of imposed curricula, the influence of testing and job insecurity”. Nambundunga (2016:93) conducted a study in Namibia and found that the lack of advancement opportunities, heavy teacher workloads, inadequate resources, preparation time needed and class sizes played a role in teacher attrition.

It is necessary, however, to determine which factors have the greatest influence on teacher attrition in South Africa, and particularly for this study, the provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape. It is also important to determine if teachers who have left the profession are of the opinion that something could be done to entice them to return to the profession. If these issues are addressed, it may encourage other teachers to remain in the profession.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

This study is concerned with the high attrition rate of teachers from the profession and seeks to determine the main reasons for this. A number of possibilities are proposed in the literature such as poor advancement opportunities, heavy workloads, insufficient resources, stress, socialisation issues, poor classroom and time-management, confusion about what is expected from them and not receiving proper orientation (Anhorn, 2008:15; Darling-Hammond, 2003:7; Kutsyuruba, Godden & Tegrunna, 2014:3). However, this study aims to highlight the key issues from the perspective of teachers who have left teaching and to propose possible solutions to address these issues. If teachers leave the profession for a particular reason, it is

reasonable to deduce that if this is addressed, attrition could be prevented and the return of those who have left the profession could be prompted.

Consequently, the main research question is: Why do teachers in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces of South Africa leave the teaching profession?

From this the following sub-questions arise:

- What are the prevalent causes of teacher attrition?
- What needs to be changed to prevent teaching attrition?
- Would teachers who have left the profession return if changes were implemented?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to determine why teachers leave the profession and subsequently to investigate if there are possible ways to reverse the process.

Teachers who have left the profession will have spent time reflecting on their experiences as teachers and should be able to stipulate what caused their exit. Drawing from their experiences and the subsequent time of reflection should provide the opportunity to determine their main reasons for leaving their teaching careers.

As they should be able to provide reasons for leaving the profession, they should also be able to suggest what factors could have ensured their remaining in their teaching career. This will be done by determining which aspects need to be altered for them to return to the profession. There are three objectives the researcher will seek to achieve through the course of the study.

- To conduct interviews with teachers who have left the profession to determine the factors contributing to their departure from the profession.

- To determine, through said interviews, what changes need to be made to prevent attrition.
- To recommend possible strategies to entice teachers who have left, to return to the profession.

1.4 STUDY RATIONALE

Teacher attrition rates globally, as well as in South Africa, are of concern. Coupled with an increasing number of learners requiring education, the result is a shortfall in the number of teachers required and consequently a larger learner-to-teacher ratio. The likelihood that all class sizes will increase equally is unlikely. Schools that are able to meet the needs of teachers are more favourable, and will likely have smaller classes, leaving other, less desirable schools with larger teacher-to-learner ratios. The effect of large class sizes has been studied extensively (Finn, Pannozzo & Achilles, 2003; Howes, Phillips & Whitebook, 1992; Bowne, Magnuson, Schindler, Duncan & Yoshikawa, 2017). In general, a low teacher-learner ratio is more beneficial to learners and teachers than a high one as it makes it easier for teachers to provide learners with individual attention, as well as to effectively monitor classroom activity (Bowne et al., 2017:408). Consequently, the teacher attrition rate is a cause for concern. Simkins (2015:7) asserts that if an education system is struggling to find enough teachers to teach the increasing numbers of learners attending schools, it cannot afford to lose qualified teachers.

It is imperative that research be conducted, not only on the causes of teacher attrition, but also on whether or not teachers who have left will ever consider returning to the profession if conditions that contributed to their departure are changed. Conducting an investigation into what aspects need to be changed to entice teachers back to the profession provides valuable insight on changes that need to be implemented to improve teacher retention.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on aspects that influence teacher retention, such as mentorship programmes (Weeks, 2019), retention bonuses (Springer, Swain & Rodriguez, 2016), and working conditions (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018), it is necessary to determine the specific factors

that will encourage the return of teachers who have left the profession, particularly in the South African setting. By determining what needs to be done to encourage the participants' return to the profession, teacher retention within the South African education system could be improved.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study will be developed through a conceptual framework. According to Maxwell (2012:39), a conceptual framework may be defined as “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs... research”. A component of the conceptual framework, which will act as the ‘lens’ through which this study will develop (Casanave & Li, 2015:107), is Alfred Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. The Self-Efficacy Theory is complemented by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in that the meeting of needs may contribute directly to motivation, and hence to self-efficacy (Harrigan & Commons, 2015:25). Literature indicates the existence of a relationship between capability, job satisfaction, motivation and self-efficacy, as well as between low self-efficacy, stress and burnout. For this reason, the researcher opted to conduct the study through the lens of Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, with consideration to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

According to Albert Bandura (1994:2), self-efficacy is the belief an individual has about his or her ability to produce a level of execution that has an impact on the occurrences that influence their lives. The self-efficacy theory, therefore, is concerned with the development of self-efficacy and the effect of one’s level of self-efficacy on daily life. For the purpose of the study, self-efficacy will be defined as “the belief the participants have in their ability to succeed in the teaching profession”. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, namely physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs are related to various teacher needs. Within this study, physiological needs relate to salary, safety needs (both job security and safety within schools), social needs with the participants’ feeling of belonging and feeling supported, and esteem and self-actualization needs with the participants experiencing job satisfaction in the teaching profession. When considering which participant needs were met when they were in the profession, a parallel may be drawn between motivation and self-efficacy.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature and will be positioned within the constructivist paradigm, which takes into consideration that the data gathered during this study will be gained from the participants' subjective experiences. Along with this is the assumption that the participants, being teachers, have experienced factors contributing to their departure from the profession, and will more likely than not have had time to reflect upon their departure, and have consequently constructed a body of knowledge based on their experience. By using the qualitative approach, a hypothesis is not being tested, but rather an open-ended strategy is followed that can be adapted and modified throughout the course of the ongoing research, which, according to Talbot (2015), "enhances the quality of the data and insights generated". The use of the qualitative approach will provide deeper understanding of areas - such as teacher attrition – by focusing on the participants' experiences and perspectives, as well as on their own constructed knowledge, on why they left the profession.

As stated, the study will gather data from the participants' subjective experiences. In order to comprehend the phenomenon of attrition from the perspective of a subjective reality, phenomenology will be employed by seeking to understand what individuals experienced and how they experienced it (Qutoshi, 2018:2150; Creswell & Poth, 2018:75). For this study, the phenomenon that will be studied is teaching attrition, with the focus being on seeking to understand the participants' experience with the phenomenon. Purposive snowball sampling will be used to select participants from whom subjective knowledge will be gathered.

Teachers who left the profession in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces were contacted to locate and make further contact with teachers who had left the profession. Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were then conducted with the identified participants. These interviews were used as a method to collect data to gain an understanding of the teachers' thoughts and experiences. The use of SSIs relied on several guiding questions to structure the interview, but leeway was also given for diversion if certain other areas or

responses needed further exploration. The interviews were in-depth and intensive in nature, with the primary focus on gaining the respondents' personal perspectives (Boyce & Neale, 2006:3).

Due to the flexible nature of SSIs, an environment was created where new information could be discovered and elaborated upon. This was done by having a list of questions prepared ahead of time to guide the interview, but which also allowed interviewees the freedom to express their own views in their terms. The SSIs were held in locations where the participants would feel comfortable. This was done by giving them the opportunity to select the interview location. Semi-structured online interviews, using WhatsApp® video call, were held with participants who were no longer working and living in the provinces included in this study. This meant that interviewees could select where to be interviewed, ensuring that they felt more comfortable in their environment.

The semi-structured in-person and online interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed after all interviews had been held. Field notes, as proposed by Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008), were also made during and after each interview to highlight specific areas, expressions or answers. After transcription, the data were analysed to identify themes, categories and to ultimately place codes within their suitable categories. The categories formed the backbone of the data presentation and discussion.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is concerned with teacher attrition in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa. These two provinces were selected as the researcher had been a teacher in both provinces and had access to potential participants and gatekeepers. The researcher also set out to determine differences between the data gathered from these two provinces. The study was limited to qualified teachers who have either a Bachelor of Education (BEd) or a bachelor's degree with a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and who had left the profession. The researcher

interviewed teachers who had taught in urban schools, and who had left the profession before reaching their retirement age.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2017), research needs to be conducted with honesty, excellence and transparency. There are also various other guidelines that should be followed, namely that the participants need to be made aware of the purpose and possible applications of the research study and why their participation is required. Prior to the interviews being conducted, the participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study as well as why their participation was needed (Healey, 2013:4).

Secondly the participants were informed that the information supplied by them would be kept confidential and that their identities would not be revealed. According to Kaiser (2010:1634), a convention of confidentiality is upheld “as a means to protect the privacy of all persons, to build trust and rapport with study participants, and to maintain ethical standards and the integrity of the research process”.

Lastly, participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, and their consent informed (Healey, 2013:4). The participants were informed about why they had been invited to take part and what the study is about. It was deemed important that all participants had to know that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Prior to the interview/s, participants were informed that they were free to leave at any stage if they felt unable to continue with the study. However, specific attention was given to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable and at ease. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the Ethical Clearance Committee of UNISA’s College of Education.

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Teacher - A teacher is someone who is currently teaching learners and has a full-time position in a school.

Professional (teacher) - A person who has obtained a teaching degree, more specifically, a Bachelor of Education or any bachelor's degree followed by a Post-Graduate Certificate of Education, or a valid teaching diploma obtained either full-time or part-time from a registered institution.

Teacher attrition - the loss in the number of teachers from the profession as a result of a teacher leaving, not only his/her position in a particular school, but the teaching profession *per se*, in search of a different profession.

Teacher retention - retaining teachers currently in the teaching profession as well as enticing teachers back to the profession (Oke, Ajagbe & Ejoywokeoghene isiauwe-Ogbari, 2016:372).

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides a brief background to the research problem contained in the introduction, the aims and objectives of the research as well as the justification for the chosen research methodology.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature and provides a conceptual framework wherein possible factors leading to teacher attrition and possible solutions to said problems will be explored.

Chapter 3 will elaborate on the research methodology and selected research design. The use of purposeful sampling is justified. The chapter also provides background information on the participants.

Chapter 4 presents, analyses and interprets the findings. The interview findings discussed reveal why teachers leave the education field and also present possible solutions to the problem.

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings and draws a conclusion. Recommendations are made on the basis of the findings and possibilities are proposed for future research.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The causes of teacher attrition and possible ways to retain teachers were determined by conducting interviews with teachers who have left the

profession. The interviewees were also able to provide insight into the possibility of their return to the profession if conditions leading to their exit are addressed. The following chapter discusses the conceptual framework within which the study develops and provides a review of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's main aim was to determine why teachers in urban schools in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa leave the profession and subsequently to investigate possible ways to prevent their departure. Findings from this study will contribute to current knowledge about the causes of teacher attrition as well as the possibility of enticing teachers back into the workforce.

In order to contribute to current knowledge, a research philosophy and, specifically, a conceptual framework need to be selected. When conducting research, the researcher's epistemology - "how things really are" and "how things really work" in an assumed reality' (Jabareen, 2009:51) and ontology - assumptions made about the nature of reality (Mayer, 2015:53) will be considered to determine the research paradigm. This study is qualitative and positioned within the constructivist paradigm.

Constructivism originated, among others, from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology philosophy. The ontological and epistemological beliefs of the researcher are that reality is socially and personally constructed and dependent on an individual's mind. In this sense, reality is limited to a specific "context, space, time and individuals or group in a given situation" (Kawulich, 2012:11) and cannot be generalised to one common reality. Although participants in any study have their own realities, there will be overlapping, group-shared realities. The knowledge gained from the participants will be subjective as it is socially constructed by the individual. When one considers constructivism and how it relates to teaching and learning, namely that knowledge is created based on the reflection of individuals on their experiences and the connecting thereof with knowledge they already possess (Olusegun, 2015:66), one could apply this consideration to participants in the study. The participants are teachers who have

experienced factors contributing to their departure from the teaching profession and more likely than not have had time to reflect upon their departure and have constructed knowledge based on their experience. The knowledge gained by the researcher during the study was examined within the context of a conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework, which serves as the 'lens' through which the study develops (Casanave & Li, 2015:107), constitutes Alfred Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

2.2 SELF-EFFICACY THEORY AS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Self-efficacy defined

Albert Bandura (1994:2) defines self-efficacy as the beliefs people have about their own capabilities to "produce levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives". He continues by stating that self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel as well as how they motivate themselves, and ultimately behave. When individuals possess a high level of self-efficacy, they approach difficult tasks as opportunities to conquer the challenge rather than viewing them as threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1977:194). Self-efficacy emerges due to a variety of factors such as personal life events, experiences, external setting and the behaviour of oneself and others. The self-efficacy possessed by an individual has an influence on personal goals and aspirations (Bradley, Browne & Kelley, 2017:519; McKim & Velez, 2017:172).

Individuals who possess self-efficacy set themselves goals and remain committed to attaining them. When they do experience a setback or failure, however, they attribute the failure to inadequate knowledge or skills, which they are able to acquire. According to Stanton, Cawthon and Dawson (2018:56), teachers who possess high self-efficacy are better at managing their learners as well as remaining more persistent in their classrooms. Consequently, their viewpoint produces individual accomplishments and may reduce susceptibility to stress and depression (Bandura, 1994:3). The opposite is true, however, for low self-efficacy. Stress, which may be induced

by low self-efficacy, experienced over an extended period, may lead to burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010:1060). There is a causal relationship between stress, burnout and attrition (Harmsen, Helms-Lorens, Maulana & Van Veen, 2018:626), as well as the negative correlation between self-efficacy and teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010:1060).

A number of studies have been conducted on self-efficacy in relation to various aspects regarding teaching and teachers. Perera, Granziera and McIlveen (2018:4) conducted a study on teacher personalities and their relationship to self-efficacy, work engagement and job satisfaction. They state in their article that teacher attrition is partly attributed to low engagement and a lack of satisfaction with work.

Pendergast, Garvis and Keogh (2011:48) conducted a study in which they state that self-efficacy has a significant effect on motivation. They posited that teachers are more likely to remain in the profession for longer than five years when beginning teachers have a greater belief about their capability. Congruently, Berkant and Baysal (2018:165) conducted a study on self-efficacy and teaching, in which they state that teachers who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy are easily able to cope with the problems they encounter.

Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai and Yang (2015) conducted a study on teacher burnout, self-efficacy and stress. They state in their article that teachers with low self-efficacy experienced a higher level of burnout than teachers with high self-efficacy. They also found that when teachers were placed in positions where they faced a high level of pressure, they developed lower self-efficacy and were more prone to burnout, making it more likely for them to leave the profession.

As is apparent, several studies have been conducted on self-efficacy as it relates to teachers and teaching, as well as possible links to attrition and retention. Self-efficacy, as it relates to factors leading to attrition, as well as methods used to improve retention, and the self-efficacy theory as conceptual framework for this dissertation, will be used to discuss the findings of the study.

2.2.2 Self-efficacy theory

Bandura (1994:9) theorised a number of ways in which self-efficacy can be developed. One such way includes theory on the development of self-efficacy through one's lifespan. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on the development and presence of self-efficacy of adults, as the participants in the study were interviewed on the factors contributing to their departure from the profession, as well as the exploration and interpretation of possible links to self-efficacy. Individuals cannot alter their past development of self-efficacy, nor does this lie within the scope of this study. The primary concern is current self-efficacy levels, the self-efficacy levels of teachers at the time of their departure from the teaching profession, as well as future possibilities of increasing self-efficacy by using methods such as professional development, mentorship and improved training. According to Lee (2013:2), self-efficacy can be developed in four ways (see Figure 2.1). These are past performance accomplishments, vicarious/mastery experiences, social persuasion and physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1977:195).

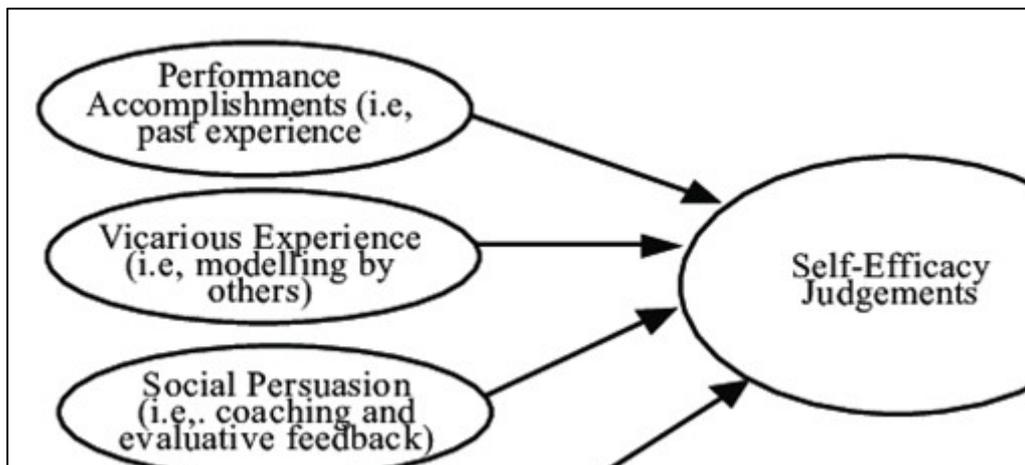


Figure 2.1: Self-Efficacy theory (Lee, 2013)

When young teachers enter the workforce, they are often unprepared. The experience they gained whilst obtaining teaching qualifications often does not provide them with “past performance accomplishments” (see Figure 2.1) to refer back to when facing challenging situations (Ritchie, 2016:3). Bandura (1977:195) states that the most effective way of cultivating self-efficacy is through “mastery experiences”. Success helps one build a belief in one's

personal efficacy whilst failures that occur before a personal sense of self-efficacy is established, undermine it (Wilson, Woolfson & Durkin, 2018:3). An individual's perception of success and their own sense of worth have been correlated to the retention of novice teachers. Literature has highlighted the importance of ensuring that novice teachers feel valued and receive the support necessary to experience success in teaching (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson & Burke, 2013:114).

Mentorship, professional development (PD) and teacher orientation and in-service education and training (INSET) are possible methods of, not only improving retention by providing the support necessary to experience success when teaching, but also to increase self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1994:2), self-efficacy increases through "vicarious experiences provided by social models" (see Figure 2.1). People seek models who possess qualities or capabilities to which they aspire. This is related to mentoring, for example, in that mentorship has been defined as a relationship in which a mentor "provides support, challenges, and vision to their protégés through a formal or informal process" (Jackevicius et al., 2014:1). When there is a shortage of social models or competent colleagues, teachers' self-efficacy may be influenced negatively as they may feel isolated as teachers are influenced socially (Wilson et al., 2018:12). Feelings of isolation may in turn result in stress, burnout (Cancio et al., 2018:452) and ultimately attrition. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is also strengthened and developed through a method called social persuasion (see Figure 2.1).

Social persuasion is a method of strengthening self-efficacy that verbally persuades individuals that they are capable of completing certain tasks or overcoming challenges. This also promotes the development of skills in order to overcome these challenges (Bandura, 1994:3). People who encourage the growth of self-efficacy place individuals in situations that raise their beliefs in their own capabilities by having them face situations that are likely to bring success, and by not prematurely placing them in situations where they are likely to experience failure frequently. Social persuasion may occur through PD and INSET, which serve the purpose of helping teachers become more efficient (Arslan, Sahin, Akturk & Celik, 2014:2484) and achieving success in

the classroom. According to Wilson et al. (2018:12), teachers possess more self-efficacy when they feel that the environment they are in has a high level of competency as their self-efficacy is socially influenced.

The final source of self-efficacy is physiological and emotional states. Self-efficacy may be influenced by the way in which individuals feel, both physically and emotionally. If they are tired and feeling negative or stressed, their self-efficacy could diminish. When teachers become negative when they are stressed, not only does their self-efficacy diminish, they may experience feeling burnt out too (Yu et al., 2015:702), which may result in attrition. To increase self-efficacy, the individual's perception and reactions to stress needs to be altered (Bandura, 1994:3). INSET, for example, could bring this about, and training may reduce the stress experienced in challenging situations.

Once the sources of self-efficacy have contributed to the development thereof, self-efficacy judgements (see Figure 2.1) or effects occur, which in turn influence the individuals' behaviour.

2.2.3 Effects of self-efficacy

Firstly, self-efficacy has an effect on cognitive processes. The result is that higher goals are set and the commitment to attaining said goals is higher. According to Bandura (1994:4), when an individual possesses a strong sense of self-efficacy, he/she remains focused on the task at hand even when there are various failures and setbacks. Low self-efficacy may cause individuals to become erratic in their way of thinking, which may lead to lowered aspirations and a deterioration of performance, whereas individuals who possess self-efficacy have more confidence in their abilities and persevere when faced with failure (Grossman & Salas, 2011:107). For this study, the focus will be on attrition and the connection there may be to poor self-efficacy. Although most research suggests a connection between poor self-efficacy and attrition, the possibility exists that some participants may possess self-efficacy and that this is what could have led them to leave the teaching profession in search of something more challenging.

The second area self-efficacy influences is 'motivational processes'. When individuals regard themselves as having a high level of self-efficacy, they blame their failures on insufficient effort and not on low ability. The beliefs one has about self-efficacy contribute to one's level of motivation (Vancouver & Kendall, 2006:1146) in several ways, namely, how much effort is applied to attaining one's goals, how long one perseveres, and how resilient one is when faced with failure. When individuals have a low sense of self-efficacy and harbour self-doubt, they tend to give up quickly (Bandura, 1994:5).

Thirdly, self-efficacy influences affective processes. How individuals handle stress and depression that they experience in challenging situations, is affected by their beliefs in their coping abilities as well as their level of motivation (Zulkosky, 2009:94). The stronger an individual's sense of self-efficacy, the more willing the person is to take on challenging or threatening activities. However, teachers who possess a low level of self-efficacy may be vulnerable to stress, burnout and attrition.

The fourth area that self-efficacy affects, is selection processes. According to Bandura (1994:7), beliefs of self-efficacy can influence the direction lives take by having an influence on the type of activities and surroundings chosen. People tend to avoid situations that exceed their perceived coping abilities. When they believe they can handle a situation, however, they undertake the challenging activities (Lee, 2013:2).

The effects of self-efficacy result in various behaviours or performance. There is a link between self-efficacy, stress, teacher burnout and consequently, teacher attrition. Studies have shown that low self-efficacy levels in an individual meant a higher level of stress and burnout (Yu et al., 2015:702), which in turn increases teacher attrition rates. The likelihood that teachers leave the profession increases if they start their careers with a low level of self-efficacy and if they are not afforded opportunities to improve their level of self-efficacy. However, there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and career commitment (McKim & Velez, 2017:173).

2.3 SELF-EFFICACY AND MASLOW'S NEEDS HIERARCHY

When relating Bandura's self-efficacy theory to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there are certain overlapping facets of both theories relevant to teacher attrition. Maslow (1943:372) formulated a theory in which he stated that humans have various levels of needs (see Figure 2.2.). The needs provide people with motivation (Harrigan & Commons, 2015:25). The levels of needs exist in a hierarchy whereby the lower-placed needs have to be met in order for one to be able to focus on the next level of needs.

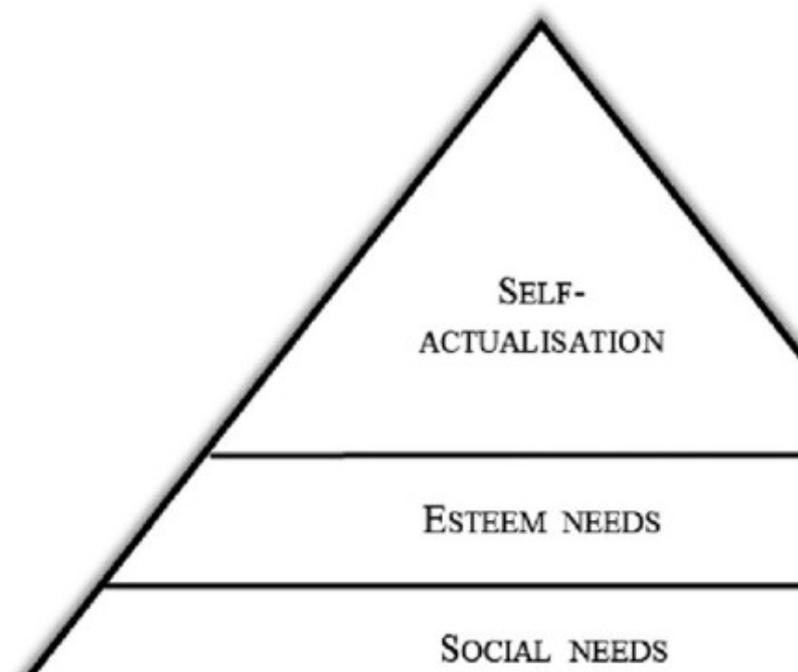


Figure 2.2: The Maslow pyramid (Quintavalla & Heine, 2019)

The first level of needs constitutes physiological needs. Physiological needs are needs such as food, shelter, water or oxygen (Fallatah & Syed, 2018:26), most of which are acquired using money. Physiological needs, with reference to teaching, are comparable to remuneration. Insufficient remuneration could be a contributing factor to high attrition rates among teachers, but is not necessarily the primary factor. A study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2015 indicated that only 24.5% of teachers attributed their reason for leaving the teaching profession to insufficient salary (Smithers & Robinson, 2015:2). One may therefore deduce that a greater portion of teachers do not

view salary alone as a large enough reason to leave the profession, although it may be a contributing factor.

The second level is that of safety needs. This is comparable to job security and safety issues in the education field. Statistics show that there is a teacher shortage globally (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016:1), hence job security is not considered a major contributing factor to teacher attrition. An integrated report on Educator Supply and Demand in the South African Public Education System (Peltzer et al., 2005:16) found that teachers who had experienced violence at school during the last twelve months prior to the study, were medium predictors of attrition. However, a study conducted in the United States of America (USA), by Reaves and Cozzens (2018:59), found that when teachers felt safe and supported within their school setting, they had a significantly higher level of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. There is thus a relationship between safety, self-efficacy and attrition. Although the geographic area and schools where this study draws its subjects from are generally considered safer schools, the possibility of safety issues being a contributing factor to the participants' decision to leave the teaching profession cannot be disregarded.

The third level of Maslow's hierarchy in Figure 2.2 involves social needs. Social needs are needs such as friendship, encouragement and a feeling of belonging. This need results from the desire to be loved and accepted by others (Gobin, Teeroovengadum, Becceea & Teeroovengadum, 2012:205). According to Abdallah (2009:2), 50% of outgoing teachers cited a sense of isolation from their colleagues and not experiencing a feeling of belonging as a main contributing factor to their departure from the teaching profession. Bandura's self-efficacy theory states that one of the methods to improve self-efficacy is when people seek proficient models who, in a teaching environment, are mostly other staff members. These staff members are those who possess the skills or qualities that other teachers aspire to have (Bandura, 1994:3). Knowledge and affective skills can be passed on to observers in order to meet various environmental demands. When PD, INSET and mentoring are not provided, teachers may experience feelings of

isolation. Not only do these teachers struggle to improve self-efficacy, they also do not have their social level of needs met.

The fourth and fifth levels of needs, namely esteem- and self-actualisation needs, strongly relate to self-efficacy. According to the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994:4), individuals who are overwhelmed with self-doubt and a lack of esteem may become erratic in their analytic thinking, have reduced aspirations and the quality of their performance may deteriorate. These stages could be quite strongly involved in why many teachers leave the profession. Fallatah and Syed (2018:30) state that employee job satisfaction, which correlates with esteem needs, could be ensured by rewarding, praising and recognising teachers' efforts as well as providing them with opportunities to feel successful and accomplished. Many young teachers enter the workforce unprepared for the challenge at hand, making it difficult to experience success initially. This, coupled with a variety of other contributing factors, as mentioned above, not only dampen self-efficacy development, but also make Maslow's fourth and fifth needs levels unattainable.

Thus far, in this chapter, the study objectives have been placed within a conceptual framework. The following section reviews research that contributes to themes related to the study objectives.

2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.4.1 Introductory remarks

According to the Global Partnership for Education, approximately 69 million teachers need to be recruited by 2030 to meet the needs of primary and secondary schools, with 24.4 million needed for primary schools alone. Of the 24.4 million, 21 million will be required to replace teachers who leave the workforce, whilst 3.4 million teachers will be required due to the growing numbers of children requiring education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016:1).

In addition to having to replace teachers leaving the workforce due to retirement, teachers who leave the profession due to attrition also need to be replaced. Attrition rates may be as high as 30%, especially amongst novice

teachers, increasing up to 50% in poverty-stricken areas (Den Brok et al., 2017:882). In England, studies have found that 60% of teachers continue teaching in government schools for longer than five years (Sibieta, 2018:6), whereas in Hong Kong the attrition rate is between 4.8 and 5% (Den Brok et al., 2017:882). There is also an ongoing debate on the rate of teacher attrition versus the attrition rate of other professions. Ingersol (2001:505) argues that the rate of attrition in the education sector is much higher than in other sectors, but Harris and Adams (2007:1) claim that the attrition rate of teachers is not much higher than that of employees in other sectors.

In South Africa, there is a high level of teacher attrition as teachers enter and leave the teaching profession. According to Hofmeyr and Draper (2015:6), “many qualified teachers leave and fewer return”. They go on to state that the education system is comparable to a “leaky bucket” whereby a larger number of qualified teachers leave the teaching system than return (Hofmeyr & Draper, 2015:6).

Although the attrition rates across countries vary, they all have individuals who initially decide to become teachers. There are a variety of factors that motivate these individuals to pursue a career in teaching. For the purpose of this study, it is important to explore what prominent writers and researchers have discovered about why teaching is pursued as a career, possible causes of attrition, as well as common methods implemented to improve retention. Due to the open-endedness of this study, a wide range of attrition causes, as well as retention improving strategies, need to be explored and reported.

2.4.2 Why teachers pursue a career in teaching

According to Richardson and Watt (2005:481), factors such as employment security and having a good quality of life play a role in selecting teaching as a career. Studies have indicated that some of the most common reasons for pursuing a career in teaching are “wanting to work with children, wanting to contribute to society and the enjoyment of teaching” (Kyriacou, Hultgren & Stephens, 1999:373). Other factors such as the high probability of immediately being employed after graduation; being provided with job security (Watt & Richardson, 2007:169); the perceived status of the teaching

profession; and the lack of other employment also contribute to teaching being a career of choice (Kyriacou et al., 1999:374). In a study conducted by Latterell and Wilson (2016:281), it was found that many respondents stated that they were motivated to pursue teaching as a career because the teachers who taught them inspired them and they felt good when helping other people. However, a problem arises when teachers who have entered the workforce and taken up a teaching position, then decide that they no longer want to teach, consequently leaving the teaching profession in search of a different occupation.

2.4.3 Teacher burnout and exhaustion

Teachers experience professional dissatisfaction and exhaustion when they are feeling burnt out (Visotskaya, Cherkashina, Katcin & Lisina, 2015:770). Akbaba (2014:1253) defines burnout as feelings of long-lasting exhaustion, depression and hopelessness, and a negative self-concept. Studies have shown that in many countries in the western world, up to 30% of teachers suffer burnout early in their career, particularly within the first three to five years (Ewing & Manuel, 2005). Teachers suffering from burnout may have a negative attitude towards their job, life and other people, as well as suffering from “emotional exhaustion, low feelings of personal accomplishment and de-personalisation” (Akbaba, 2014:1253).

When a person suffers from emotional exhaustion, they become extremely tired due to having to deal with emotions. This may manifest physically, psychologically, or both (Hock, 1988:173). Burnout can occur because of issues such as having uncertainty about the profession, problems with health, poor working environment, having to teach learners who are not motivated, time pressure and a large workload, issues with having to cope with change, fear of failure and poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues (Akbaba, 2014:1254). As burnout increases, job satisfaction decreases, eventually leading to the abandonment of the teaching profession (Kelly, Cespedes, Clara & Danaher, 2019:93).

2.4.4 Teaching attrition and why it is a problem

Attrition rates across the world vary, but for many it is one of the greatest problems that schools face (Wushishi, Fooi, Basri & Baki, 2014:11). In the USA, approximately 40 to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their career (Riggs, 2013). In the UK approximately 18% of teachers leave the profession within the first three years of entering it (Smithers & Robinson, 2015:2). Smithers and Robinson (2015:2) found that 57.8% of secondary school teachers cited workload as a reason for leaving the profession, while 45.1% stated learner behaviour problems as the main contributing factor. Further, 37.2% cited government initiatives or a lack thereof as a contributing factor, as well as salary (24.5%), stress (21.6%), their perceived status (19.6%), future career prospects (17.6%), poor resources and a lack of facilities (14.7%), and problems with dealing with learners' parents (10.8%). Countries such as the Netherlands, Australia, Norway, Israel and Sweden also struggle, to varying degrees, with teacher attrition (Craig, 2017:2; Lindqvist, Nordanger & Carlsson, 2014:95).

Teacher attrition is a problem in schools due to the costs associated with drafting, hiring, training and providing professional development to new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003:2). Not only does attrition have financial implications for the school, but it also influences the learners in that there is a stronger probability that learners will be taught by inexperienced teachers (DeCesare et al., 2014:1). Research indicates that, in general, teachers with less experience are less effective than more experienced teachers (Rice, 2010:1).

As stated above, there are various factors, or a combination of factors, that may lead to teachers leaving the profession. The causes leading to attrition all have a relationship with self-efficacy and/or Maslow's needs hierarchy in varying degrees. The first of these factors is salary.

2.4.5 Causes of teaching attrition

2.4.5.1 Salary

Although research shows that salary is not a primary factor leading to attrition early in teachers' careers, the effect thereof is important. More specifically, salary, as a contributing factor, in combination with other factors leading to attrition (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019:16), cannot be ignored.

To teach at a school, a degree or diploma is required. Many teachers need to repay student loans and cannot foresee doing this whilst receiving a teaching salary (Yeado & Henken, 2016:16). In the state of Wisconsin in the USA, a starting teacher's salary ranges from \$30 000 to \$40 000 per annum. According to guidelines in the USA, an annual income of below \$44 863 qualifies children for the country's Free and Reduced Lunch Program. A teacher who needs to support his or her child/ren will be in a position of poverty, which requires assistance from the government (Yeado & Henken, 2016:16).

In the USA, school districts have attempted to lure prospective, already qualified, teachers by offering signing bonuses and giving teachers already present at the schools, financial incentives to remain. The attempt was short-lived as teachers continued to leave the workforce and the issue of teacher shortage remained (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018:50).

In South Africa, Armstrong (2009) conducted a study comparing the remuneration of working as a teacher versus working in the private sector. A number of conclusions were drawn, namely that the longer teachers remain in the teaching profession, the worse off they are (financially) as opposed to professionals working as non-teachers (Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018:18). This is due to the lack of financial recognition of teachers' years of experience, hence making the financial incentives for teachers smaller the longer they remain in the profession (Armstrong, 2009:26).

When teachers initially enter the profession, if they enter the profession directly after completing their studies, and up until the age of 28, they appear to earn more than their counterparts in non-teaching professions do. This

may make teaching appear attractive initially, but this attraction dissipates with age (Armstrong, 2009:27).

Armstrong (2009:27) also found that the most highly qualified individuals would receive a higher salary in non-teaching professions as opposed to the teaching profession. This means that, although the possibility exists of earning a higher initial salary, there is very little incentive for the most highly qualified individuals to join the teaching profession. However, in a study conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019:14) it was found that teacher salaries at the beginning of their careers was not predictive of teacher attrition in their model.

2.4.5.2 Family obligations

In some countries, women comprise approximately 75% of the teacher workforce (Yeado & Henken, 2016:17). When women have children, the demands placed on them by their schools may be too constraining, resulting in them leaving the profession to care for their children (Yeado & Henken, 2016:17; Latham, Mertens & Hamann, 2015:80).

Due to the high cost of childcare and possibly inadequate salaries, it may make more sense financially for teachers to leave the teaching profession to take care of their own children (Yeado & Henken, 2016:17). They may also pursue better-paying jobs outside of teaching (Armstrong, 2009:26).

2.4.5.3 Poor facilities

Working in poor facilities often destroys the morale of teachers. In addition to this, it also creates uncomfortable teaching environments, sometimes to the extent that teachers do not want to continue working in such environments (Darling-Hammond, 2010:16).

According to Ingersoll (2002:2), a teacher's plans to stay or leave the profession are strongly associated with, amongst others, the resources available to them for teaching. Teachers who teach in more advantaged schools experience better working conditions than teachers who teach in poorer areas (Darling-Hammond, 2010:21). The result could be that teachers

working in impoverished schools are two times more likely to leave the profession than teachers in advantaged schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997:21). A lack of availability of textbooks and teaching supplies also contributes to teacher attrition (Darling-Hammond, 2010:21).

2.4.5.4 New teachers feeling isolated

The feeling of isolation that teachers report experiencing is a paradox (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992:14). According to Gaikwad and Brantley (1992:14), it is difficult to imagine how teachers can feel alone when learners surround them the entire day. Yet, this is the case for many teachers. This feeling of isolation relates to increased stress, stagnation and feeling burnt out (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992:14; Cancio et al., 2018:452).

Gaikwad and Brantley (1992:15) coined a number of forms of isolation. The first form they termed “egg-crate” isolation. This type of isolation occurs when teachers do not see or deal with other teachers on a regular basis. The teachers meet with learners in their classroom and do not often interact with other teachers. This phenomenon may also occur when teachers work in smaller schools far away from neighbouring schools, making it difficult to interact with other teachers (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992:15).

The second type of isolation is “psychological isolation”. This type of isolation occurs when teachers perceive themselves as isolated. They feel that they have no influence on decisions that are made at school level and may also feel that they do not receive support from peers. According to Gaikwad and Brantley (1992:15), the possibility exists that teachers feel that they do not receive support from their peers because they do not ask for it (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992:15).

Thirdly, one finds “adaptive isolation”. This occurs when teachers struggle to adapt to their environment or changes that have been made. Teachers may feel completely overwhelmed by their situation, resulting in a feeling of isolation (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992:15).

All three of the preceding types of isolation occur in schools. According to Hadar and Brody (2010:2), “one cannot learn in a vacuum, and an expert in

isolation has limited capacities”. When teachers exist within a community it is possible for them to collaborate, which in turn promotes further learning. Professional development and the existence of professional learning communities (PLC) contribute to the prevention of teacher isolation.

2.4.5.5 Teacher workload

The Department for Education Workload Survey in the UK (Higton et al., 2016:3) found that teachers work 54.4 hours a week on average, which is often listed as one of the contributing factors for why teachers leave the profession. According to Green (2018:1), teachers in their first five years of teaching often work longer hours than more experienced teachers. There has also been an increase in demands placed on teachers concerning marking, data entry and paperwork (Scutt, 2017). The ability of novice teachers to manage their workload has an influence on their intention to pursue a career in teaching as excessive workload may reduce energy levels, which in turn may lead to burnout and a decline in commitment to the profession (Cancio et al., 2018:452).

2.4.5.6 Teacher training and preparation

Teacher preparation goes hand in hand with the certification that teachers in the profession have attained (Baines, 2010:152). According to Baines (2010:152), a teacher is classified as being highly qualified when he/she possesses a bachelor’s degree, is certified to teach, and has proven knowledge of the subject he/she teaches.

According to the Darling-Hammond (1996:2), nearly a quarter of secondary school teachers need extra training because they lack adequate preparation in the subject they teach. This manifests in poor content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018:17). Consequently, learners often do not have quality teachers (Bayar, 2014:320). Teachers who are unprepared may struggle to succeed initially, which may affect their self-efficacy.

Latham et al. (2015:79) argue that poor teacher preparation has an effect on how teachers handle issues such as discipline problems, lack of resources

and classroom management problems. According to Van der Berg and Hofmeyr (2018:17), not only does poor teacher preparation affect the quality of teaching, but also the ability of teachers to accurately judge their learners' performance. If teachers cannot accurately judge the level of their learners, they also cannot improve the outcomes of their learners. Teachers who are unprepared also feel they are unable to deal with discipline and classroom management issues (Gourneau, 2014:300).

Classroom discipline or a lack thereof, as well as classroom management issues, are of the leading causes of teacher stress (Lewis, 1999:157). Kyriacou (2001:28) defines teacher stress as "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher." Teachers' performance in their working environment may suffer due to stress, which in turn may negatively affect learners' learning (Brown, Ralph & Brember, 2002:2). Along with the effect on learner performance, teacher stress may also have an influence on teacher absenteeism and illnesses related to work, which may increase attrition (Ferguson, Mang & Frost, 2017:63). Teachers could develop negative attitudes towards their work (Spector & Jex, 1998:359) and their level of commitment may decline due to stress (Ferguson et al., 2017:64).

Poor teacher preparation has an influence on novice teachers' stress level, by having a direct influence on their classroom management skills. As stated by Gourneau (2014:300), unprepared teachers may struggle with maintaining classroom discipline, which in turn may result in stress, absenteeism and, possibly, attrition.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) estimates that in 30% of all countries, less than three-quarters of teachers were trained according to standards set nationally in 2013 (Bokova, 2012:122). In South Africa in 2017, there were 5 139 unqualified or under-qualified teachers employed by the Department of Education (DoE). These teachers possessed only a matric certificate or had completed their

matriculation certificates and attended one or two years of formal teacher training (Savides, 2017).

Even though qualified teachers may have content knowledge, there is a broad consensus that during the process of obtaining a teaching qualification, students do not receive adequate opportunities to practice pedagogy. Specifically, they do not experience enough teaching practice under supervision, which often leads to poor performance by the novice teachers once they enter the profession (Vumilia & Semali, 2016:2). As stated earlier, when teachers do not have the opportunity to experience success early in their careers, thus increasing self-efficacy, they may struggle when exposed to failure (Bandura, 1994:2). There are a few ways to increase self-efficacy and possibly improve retention of teachers in the profession.

2.4.6 Improving teacher retention

2.4.6.1 The value of pre-service training

According to Darling-Hammond (2003:9), teachers who receive adequate initial preparation or pre-service training are more likely to remain in the profession than teachers who do not. In South Africa in 2000, the DoE introduced policy that stated that upon entering the profession, new teachers had to hold a four-year teaching qualification. Teacher training was relocated from training colleges to universities and teachers already in the field were given opportunities to upgrade their qualifications (De Wet, 2016:144). Although there has been an increase in the proportion of qualified teachers since 1990 and the end of apartheid, the performance of learners has not improved (Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018:17). The fact that most teachers are qualified to teach, but still lack the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge to do so effectively, suggests that much of the pre-service training provided is not effective (Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018:17). The South African Government's 2011 Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development aimed to improve the quality of teaching by improving the quality of teacher education. The problem, however, was that there was a lack of attention given to teacher professional

development once these teachers had entered the teaching profession (Hofmeyr & Draper, 2015:2).

Immersing teachers in a school culture whilst they attend education programmes may have the potential to better prepare them for the challenges they may face upon entering the teaching profession (Latham et al., 2015:79). In Tanzania, pre-service teachers have a mentor who is a more experienced teacher. One of the primary goals is for pre-service teachers to learn how to teach and mentors help them in this regard. Pre-service teachers get opportunities to make links between theory and practice. These opportunities occur during periods of placement in schools (Vumilia & Semali, 2016:2).

When student teachers are in the field, there are various activities that typically take place. The prospective teachers may observe mentor teachers, interact with learners and other staff members, and observe their classroom management. They develop their own lessons and are provided with opportunities to experiment with various teaching methods under the guidance of their mentor teachers (Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers, 2014:246).

By providing prospective teachers with adequate pre-service training through time spent in the classroom under the supervision of a mentor, the probability increases that they will have “mastery experiences”. These form the foundation of their teaching career and will provide them with past success to refer back to when faced with challenging situations (Ritchie, 2016:3), consequently increasing their self-efficacy. Mentor teachers may provide prospective teachers with feedback, which may be classified as social persuasion. This, in turn, increases the prospective teachers’ self-efficacy (McKim & Velez, 2017:174).

Besides enough pre-service training, there are other methods to equip and assist teachers already in the profession. Teacher orientation, INSET, PD, and mentoring are potential methods used to improve teacher retention.

2.4.6.2 Teacher orientation and in-service education and training (INSET)

INSET differs from teacher orientation/induction as it entails training when teachers have already entered the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004:3). According to De Wet (2016:145), teachers often require extensive additional training upon entering the profession. Akcadag (2012:195) states that teachers need in-service training for a variety of reasons, namely, they may have begun their careers with inadequate skills, technology may have advanced and they need to be updated on the developments, the curriculum may have been modified and adapted, and teachers could possibly want to improve their approach to teaching. Teacher orientation, on the other hand, may serve as a means to familiarise teachers with their new working environments as well as to filter out teachers who lack the required skills and knowledge to perform their duties (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008:110). Orientation programmes are often viewed as a bridge between formal pre-service studies and the taking up of teaching in the classroom (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004:3).

Arslan et al. (2014:2484) further describe INSET as any activities that have the purpose of increasing teachers' efficiency by improving their content knowledge, teaching skills and the necessary experiences to empower them to accomplish their duties competently. In the USA Department of Education, a randomised controlled study of the influence of comprehensive teacher induction indicated that even when teachers continue teaching for a few years, they might still struggle with classroom management or pedagogy if they do not receive sufficient support during the first few years of their careers (Glazerman et al., 2008:1).

A study conducted by Latouche and Gascoigne (2017:7), found that providing teachers with INSET increased their levels of self-efficacy as well as knowledge on the focus areas of the training provided. Along with INSET, PD is also used as a possible means to increase teacher self-efficacy (McKim & Velez, 2017:175), and possibly, retention.

2.4.6.3 Professional Development (PD)

The education system, as well as what is expected of teachers, has evolved and changed over the ages. Initially, education systems all over the world were not well-developed and teachers merely transferred knowledge and skills. As education systems have evolved, the focus has shifted towards innovation and technology. The continued evolution of education to meet the needs of the generation it serves requires teachers to be professional (Wardoyo, Herdiani & Sulikah, 2017:91).

a) What is a Professional Teacher?

According to Slabbert, De Kock and Hattingh (2009:129), professional teachers have various characteristics. A professional teacher should possess an expert set of knowledge and expertise and should submit to a professional body and acquiesce to a particular chosen code of conduct. Professional teachers also implement a “professional practice” and devise their own teaching practices from a combination of their body of knowledge and expertise and their hands-on experience in the field. They are both able and willing to reflect on their performance in terms of successes achieved, failures and areas of uncertainty. As a result, they are then able to keenly seek a solution or way to improve upon their area of weakness. What Slabbert et al. (2009) describe as being a ‘professional teacher’ strongly correlates to Bandura’s definition of what it means to possess self-efficacy. Both rely upon having experienced initial success, which assists novice teachers to overcome possible future failures effectively.

Professional teachers aspire to remain up-to-date with the latest available knowledge and technology in their field and seek opportunities and possibilities to incorporate these into their lessons. They seek to continually improve upon their teaching practice and take responsibility for their own careers. Professional teachers are viewed as being professional because “no one else but the professional can do the job of that particular profession” (Slabbert et al., 2009:129).

According to Carl (2012:4), teacher empowerment leads to the development of greater “professionalisation”. This leads to having more authority and the likelihood of greater individual growth. He further states that empowerment needs to lead to learning that is more effective. If it does not, then it has no value. “The improvement of learning should be the goal of empowerment” (Carl, 2012:5) and, in turn, the goal of greater professionalism.

b) Professional Development (PD)

According to Slabbert et al. (2009:129) there has been a shift in the view of what teacher education should be. This shift has been towards the viewpoint that teacher education commences with formal teacher training, continuing all the way through their careers and ultimately the termination thereof. This continuous teacher education is professional development offered to teachers in a school or district setting.

Professional development (PD) in the areas of content knowledge and the various ways in which learners learn, helps teachers assist learners to understand various concepts (Mundry, 2005:2). According to Nishimura (2014:21), the goal of PD is to increase teachers’ knowledge and encourage the incorporation of the knowledge into their daily teaching practice. A study conducted by the Wellcome Trust found that when science teachers had been given the opportunity to participate in subject-specific, continued PD, it increased the probability of retaining the teachers in the profession (Scutt, 2017). Research also suggests that PD can increase teachers’ self-efficacy levels (McKim & Velez, 2017:175).

Bayar (2014:319) states that effective PD is comprised of various components. One component is that the PD offered meets the teachers’ needs. PD needs to cater to teachers’ needs, as it is widely believed that activities that are generalised have limited potential to foster teacher learning (Bautista, Toh & Wong, 2018:1). This is ensured by allowing teachers to determine what they need to learn or improve upon (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2018). Bayar (2014:323) states that the most effective type of professional development programmes are programmes that directly meet the teachers’

needs and have been created in response to their own preferences and motivations (Bautista et al., 2018:2).

Along with meeting the teachers' needs, PD also needs to meet the needs of the school. Not all schools cater to the same parts of the population, meaning that teachers at different schools require different PD activities (Bayar, 2014:323). When the teachers meet, they form part of a professional learning community (PLC) (Stewart, 2014:29). The purpose of the PLCs, where PD takes place, should be to gain a better understanding of how learners learn and then consequently gain a better understanding and more skills on how to better teach learners (Stewart, 2014:29). As mentioned earlier, PLCs assist in reducing teacher isolation. PLCs also play a role in social persuasion, as these communities seek solutions to problems and in so doing increase teacher self-efficacy.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) typically exist within schools. When PD takes place within a school setting it allows teachers to solve specific challenges by having problem-solving sessions during which teachers work together to strategize on how to use available resources to meet learner needs (Nishimura, 2014:21). In a school setting collaborative planning may occur, which takes the form of a meeting every week or two during which teachers are provided with a safe environment to share their concerns and queries. These sessions allow teachers to assist one another to develop professionally as teachers (Nishimura, 2014:22). Once the school needs have been determined, teacher involvement in devising the PD activities needs to be encouraged.

There has been an increase in the PD activities, not only presented, but also designed by teachers (Boylan, 2018:88). According to Boylan (2018:90) there is an international trend emphasising the "importance of teachers' involvement in setting the agenda for development, interacting with peers, and evolving and testing their own responses to pedagogic challenges". This assists in ensuring that the PD offered to teachers is relevant.

Professional development activities can be classified as either traditional or non-traditional. Conferences and workshops are examples of traditional PD.

Non-traditional PD takes place in the form of mentoring or observing other teachers (Bayar 2014:321). As mentioned previously, mentoring takes place when an experienced teacher coaches a novice teacher (Bayar, 2014:321).

2.4.6.4 Teacher mentoring

a) What is mentoring?

Mentoring is defined by Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009:207) as the support provided to a new teacher, by a more experienced teacher, with the purpose of assisting the new teacher to adapt to the new environment, as well as to develop his/her expertise. Vumilia and Semali (2016:3) consider mentoring as a relationship between an experienced and less experienced teacher, whereby the more experienced teacher guides, coaches and acts as a role model to the less experienced teacher (Hobson et al., 2009:207). The inexperienced teacher receives encouragement, knowledge and support. According to Bandura (1994:2), self-efficacy increases through “vicarious experiences provided by social models”. People seek models who possess qualities or capabilities to which they aspire. This ties in with mentorship, which by definition is very similar to the role of social models. In Anafarta and Apaydin’s (2016:22) definition, they call the mentor the role model and the mentee the protégé. The mentor or role model prepares the protégé for diverse situations and gives assistance to further his/her career path.

Mentoring is used to guide and support teachers through the transition of education student to teacher and may be used to build self-confidence and to provide direction, support and instruction (Salleh & Tan, 2013:152). Mentoring has benefits such as assisting teachers in becoming successful in their profession as well as improving retention (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004:14, Hudson & Hudson 2016:49). Claims have been made that mentoring not only improves retention of teachers in the profession, but also increases job satisfaction and has been linked to an improvement in learner achievement (Vumilia & Semali, 2016:3, DeCesare et al., 2014:2).

Researchers claim that if teachers receive adequate mentorship during their first few years of teaching, it would have a positive effect on novice teachers and should increase retention (Darling-Hammond, 2003:4). Furthermore, when teachers are properly mentored they tend to be more effective and committed; they become better at teaching learners and thus their learners perform better, resulting in the teachers feeling more satisfied with their own performance (Vumilia & Semali, 2016:3, Anafarta & Apaydin, 2016:22). A number of countries use mentoring to introduce new teachers to the workforce.

b) International trends in teacher mentorship

Since the 1980's, there has been an increase in the number of schools that make use of formal programmes for mentoring novice teachers. In England, this was initiated by making teachers spend at least 60 per cent of their postgraduate teacher courses in schools where they receive support, in the form of mentoring, from established teachers. The reason behind this was to encourage retention by attempting to reduce the "reality shock" experienced by new teachers entering the field (Hobson et al., 2009:208). Another reason for the introduction of mentorship was to use the mentor relationships as a way to reward and retain the more experienced teachers who would take up the roles of mentors (Little, 1990:300).

In countries such as Tanzania, mentoring is an integral part of teacher training. Beginner teachers are obliged to interact with more experienced teachers who provide guidance and monitor their progress (Vumilia & Semali 2016:1). In Guatemala, mentorship programmes are run in schools to increase teacher retention. Mentors monitor and visit the novice teachers regularly. The novice teachers view their mentors as people who assist them and provide them with support in their classrooms. They also learn from their mentors by cooperating with them to improve their instructional skills (De La Garza, 2016:48).

Mentoring, as a form of professional development, has been used in China for some time (Salleh & Tan, 2013:154). Two forms of mentoring exist in China, namely one-on-one mentoring and group mentoring. One-on-one

mentoring is a structured system whereby beginner teachers are assigned a mentor. The mentoring relationship addresses various issues such as learning materials, the observation and critiquing of lessons and the mastering of teaching skills. The mentor and mentee should work closely together, to the extent that the mentor is accountable for the development of his or her mentee (Salleh & Tan, 2013:155). Group mentoring, on the other hand, occurs when beginner teachers learn from more experienced teachers through daily interactions and lesson observation. Teachers are part of subject groups as well as lesson preparation groups. Through these groups, novice teachers receive guidance from the more experienced teachers in the group (Salleh & Tan, 2013:155).

Canada also makes use of mentoring in the form of an Induction Program (ID) that runs during the first two years of a teacher's career. The programme is funded by the government. Beginning teachers are assigned a mentor and both mentor and mentee are allocated time off to engage in collaborative planning and classroom observation, with the focus being on enhancing teachers' skills and encouraging continuous professional learning. Potential mentors are identified and provided with training. Their role is to provide the mentee with coaching and feedback, to offer advice on issues such as classroom management and teaching strategies, as well as to offer emotional support. A priority of the mentor-mentee relationship is to help the new teachers manage professional relationships as well as to learn how to identify and find the necessary resources to further their own ongoing growth and development. Twice a year, during the programme, principals conduct performance appraisals. New teachers have two years to show improvement, with the goal being to assist them in becoming experts and retaining them in the profession (Darling-Hammond, Burns, Campbell, Goodwin & Low, 2018:340).

Similarly, in Singapore an effort is made to retain teachers by encouraging all newly qualified teachers to participate in a Beginning Teachers Induction Program, also for a period of two years. A structured mentoring programme takes place within the school setting and is managed by the "School Staff Developer" (SSD). The role of the SSD is to mentor the mentors and

organise the professional development activities that occur in the school. New teachers have a mentor in their subject area. The mentor is a senior teacher who provides the new teacher with professional support, offers technical assistance, provides emotional support and shares resources. The new teachers also observe lessons, both their mentor's and teachers in other subject areas. The belief is that each subject teacher offers strengths in different areas and uses different pedagogical methods. New teachers initially receive an 80% workload, to provide them with the time to observe lessons and attend in-service training catered especially to their needs, including topics on how to manage their classroom, foster teacher-learner relationships and assessment literacy training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018:343).

2.4.6.5 Concluding remarks

Research shows that adequate pre-service training as well as INSET, PD and mentorship play a role in increased self-efficacy by providing the foundation for the occurrence of mastery and vicarious experiences and social persuasion, which foster the development of self-efficacy (McKim & Velez, 2017:181). This, in turn, increases teachers' confidence and commitment to the profession (Chestnut & Burley, 2015:5).

When student teachers receive training that emphasises mastery and vicarious experiences and social persuasion, they get a platform of self-efficacy to begin their careers (McKim & Velez, 2017:181). As mentioned in the preceding section, a number of countries have a variety of formal programmes to ease the transition from being student to being a teacher in the profession. Whether or not one of the devised goals of these programmes is to increase self-efficacy is unknown. However, the possibility exists that the self-efficacy level of the teachers increases. In these programmes, the novice teachers are mentored and provided with professional development, which in turn provides them with social persuasion and explicit experiences (McKim & Velez, 2017:181).

The DoE in South Africa will benefit by re-evaluating the current level of pre-service training provided, with emphasis on providing a platform of self-

efficacy on which teachers can start their careers. The connection between self-efficacy and career commitment was discussed in section 2.2.3. Furthermore, much knowledge is to be gained from the implementation of INSET, PD and mentorship in other countries, as tools to attempt to improve retention (Hobson et al., 2009:208; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018:340), as well as to possibly, simultaneously, increase self-efficacy.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter of the research report, the study was positioned within a conceptual framework. The Self-Efficacy Theory and Maslow's Needs Hierarchy were introduced and used as a lens through which literature pertaining to the study was reviewed.

Literature sources were reviewed as deemed relevant to the study objectives, namely, why teachers leave the profession and whether or not there are possible ways to not only prevent attrition, but to entice teachers who have left to return to the profession. Several reasons why individuals initially decide upon teaching as a career of choice were explored and the leading causes of attrition were introduced and discussed. Following this was the study of possible methods of improving retention. The next chapter describes the chosen research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is not only concerned with causes of teacher attrition, but also with whether teachers who have left the teaching profession will consider returning to the profession if conditions that contributed to their departure are changed. This is done by describing, and to an extent, interpreting the experiences of former teachers, who taught in urban schools in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa and have left the teaching profession. In this chapter of the study, justification will be provided for the use of the phenomenological design type for this study given its specific purposes.

In the previous chapter, the researcher mentioned that the study makes use of the qualitative approach and positioned the study within the constructivist paradigm. Furthermore, the researcher framed the study by placing it within a suitable conceptual framework, highlighting relationships between the study and the chosen research theory. Brief mention was made of interviews as a data collection method, as well as the use of phenomenology as the research design. This section of the study aims to elaborate on and clarify the chosen research design and methodology and in so doing to uphold trustworthiness and credibility of the data. The methodology is elaborated upon by discussing the researcher's decision to use the qualitative approach, and more specifically, interpretative phenomenology.

3.2 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The researcher opted to conduct a generic qualitative study, with a strong element of phenomenology. Although qualitative research has been used since the early 1900's, it only gained momentum in the 1960's when, in American sociology, case studies and descriptive methods were used. There was criticism of the use of quantifying standard methods in social research. By the 1970's the discussion was adopted by German researchers, which then led to a renaissance of qualitative research (Flick, 2018:9).

Although quantitative research produces valuable findings, it may be viewed as limited by qualitative researchers. This is due to the neglect of the participants' perspectives and contexts whilst gathering data. The result is that the interest in qualitative research has increased over the last few decades. Researchers are confronted with a variety of ever-changing social contexts, resulting from rapid social change and diversification of life worlds. Consequently, traditional deductive methods of conducting research may not be applicable and are replaced by inductive methods (Flick, 2009:11).

The qualitative approach involves taking an "interpretative, naturalistic approach" to what is being studied (Golafshani, 2003:600). Conducting qualitative research entails studying complex social interactions as well as the meaning these interactions have for study participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:2). The researcher studies the interactions by becoming immersed in the phenomenon being studied (Hathaway, 1995:544). According to Golafshani (2003:600), whilst quantitative research seeks to determine causes of phenomena and to predict and be able to generalise results, qualitative research tries to provide understanding and interpretation of the chosen phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) state that "qualitative researchers study things in their actual settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them", as is the case in this particular study.

During this study, teachers who have left the profession were interviewed. The participants, who experienced complex social interactions, made the decision to leave the teaching profession. The researcher tried to determine and interpret their reasons for leaving the profession. Furthermore, the researcher also determined possible links to self-efficacy - whether the participants' self-efficacy was affected during their social interactions, as well as whether this may or may not have contributed to their departure from the profession.

The main aim of this study, which seeks to determine the cause of teacher attrition, focuses on attempting to understand why teachers leave the profession and to gain valuable information from their subjective experiences. This, in

essence, is qualitative research. Attrition is the primary phenomenon being studied.

Creswell and Poth (2018:75) broadly define phenomenology as seeking to understand what individuals experience and how they experience those things. In essence, to comprehend phenomena from the perspective of a subjective reality, phenomenology is employed (Qutoshi, 2018:2150). According to Van Manen (2017:776) the aim of phenomenology is that the outcomes produced are insightful, meaningful, and attempt to find meaning in individuals' experiences instead of merely accessing their knowledge. During this study, the researcher will attempt to interpret the phenomenon of attrition from the perspective of multiple participants' realities (Webb & Welsh, 2019:170). Albert Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, encouraged the "turning away from the external objective world as source of knowledge, reversing the perspective to that of the subject's experience of reality" (Schutte, 2007:3401; Webb & Welsh, 2019:170). One uses phenomenology to broaden the way one sees the world as well as to study individuals' experiences in greater depth (Qutoshi, 2018:216). There are two phenomenological approaches, namely descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. This study makes use of the latter approach.

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, originated the interpretive approach to phenomenology. When using the interpretive approach, the focus is on the interaction between the participants and their "life world". An individual's "life world" is the notion that one's sense of reality is impacted by the world in which one lives (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:94). According to Heidegger, individuals are incapable of experiencing a phenomenon without being influenced by one's consciousness and one's consciousness is shaped by one's experiences as well as one's culture. Interpretive phenomenology seeks to comprehend and interpret how individuals' "life worlds" or daily lives impact their experiences. The participants in this study experienced being teachers in a school. Their experiences were impacted by their "life worlds". These experiences contributed to their decision to leave the profession and were investigated. Heidegger also argued that even though individuals have freedom of choice, their "life worlds" impact their freedom. A fundamental purpose of

interpretive phenomenology in this study is therefore to interpret the research participants' experiences in relation to their specific contexts in order to understand how and why they made the decisions they did (Neubauer et al., 2019:94).

By using the phenomenological paradigm in this study, the researcher will attempt to describe the chosen phenomenon, namely the participants' actions and experiences concerning attrition, as accurately as possible whilst remaining true to the information provided by the participants. According to Webb and Welsh (2019:171), interpretive phenomenology is concerned with exploring each participant's experience of the same, shared phenomenon, whilst seeking to identify and describe similarities and differences in their experiences of the phenomenon. The researcher needs to be primarily concerned with comprehending the phenomenon being studied, namely attrition, from the perspectives of the participants (Groenewald, 2004:42) whilst being conscious of the effects of self-efficacy on the decisions made by the participants. In addition to this, the researcher used her own knowledge and experience of the phenomenon to guide the study (Webb & Welsh, 2019:171-172).

Van Manen (2017) provided some guidelines that the researcher considered whilst conducting this interpretative phenomenological research. The first of these guidelines is that one selects a phenomenon that interests you, in this case, teacher attrition. After selecting teacher attrition as the phenomenon, the participants' experience of having lived the phenomenon needs to be investigated, after which the researcher will need to spend time reflecting on the themes that are central and important to the study. After completing the preceding steps, the researcher provides a written description of the phenomenon, based on the participants' lived experiences, continuing to remain focused on the chosen phenomenon. Whilst it is not vital that each of the steps follow one another, it is important to consider all the steps (Webb & Welsh, 2019:172).

Researchers using interpretive phenomenology to conduct research need to reflect on their own experiences with the phenomenon being investigated throughout study. Before the study commences, the researcher "purposefully

opens herself to the phenomenon in its own right with its own meaning” (Groenewald, 2004:50), which assists in not taking a position for or against the phenomenon being studied. In this study the researcher reflected on her own experience in the teaching profession as well as her own experience with attrition and used this reflection, as well as research conducted on the phenomenon, as tools to guide the study. Due to the researcher’s own experience as a novice teacher and her own departure from the teaching profession, she may hold preconceived ideas about the nature of the research topic. Although her reasons for leaving teaching, namely emigration and starting a family, are more than likely not primary factors influencing the participants’ attrition, the researcher does have opinions based on her experiences during her first five years of teaching. She observed and/or experienced unwanted activities, lesson rosters and sports teams being given to new teachers; saw new teachers struggle to handle difficult learners; new teachers struggling to cope with the workload and receiving little support from fellow, more senior, staff members. It is this experience that provided the researcher with some guidance whilst conducting her study, and simultaneously, being aware of her own subjectivity due to her preconceived ideas about the study’s objectives (Neubauer et al., 2019:95). Prior to data collection, the researcher’s supervisor analysed the data collection tool to determine if there were any vague or leading questions, which could potentially lead to biased answers. The researcher further attempted to avoid bias by making detailed recordings and field notes to refer back to. The researcher shared transcripts of the interviews, as well as the interpretation of the data, with the participants, to reduce the risk of the researcher’s subjectivity having too great an effect on the interpretation of the data. To gather data on the experiences of having lived the phenomenon of teacher attrition, participants were selected who had left the profession.

3.3 STUDY POPULATION

A study population is the population from which the potential participants of the study are drawn. The potential participants were assessed and measured against various inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study were selected and identified to ensure ‘sensitivity to context’, which increases validity. Sensitivity to context was ensured by having a well-defined

sample universe. This prevents unjustified generalisation as well as locating the study within a specific area, time and group (Robinson, 2014:26).

The area from which the participants were drawn constitutes the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa. This is largely because the researcher spent a few years teaching in both provinces and has contact with several teachers in urban schools located in these provinces. This made the chosen method of sampling, namely purposeful and snowball sampling, easier to perform. The researcher has contact with some of the 'gatekeepers' who, for the purpose of this study, are not necessarily "individuals who have control over the subjects of interest" (Frankel & Devers, 2000:266), but rather individuals whom the researcher contacted initially to provide access to the participants, by validating the purpose of the research or creating contact between the researcher and possible participants (Crowhurst, 2013:464). For this study, the gatekeepers are also individuals who have access to information regarding teachers who have left the profession after teaching at said schools. The gatekeepers provided the researcher with permission to communicate with the teachers still teaching in the schools to locate their peers who have left the teaching profession and who possess the necessary inclusion criteria.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are criteria devised to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate participants (Tongco, 2007:151). Inclusion criteria were applied by specifying certain attributes that potential participants needed to possess to meet the requirements to participate in the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018:84). For this research, the first inclusion criterion was that the participants had left the teaching profession. The second inclusion criterion was that they had left the teaching profession within their first ten years of teaching and that the participants taught in urban schools in the Western Cape or Gauteng provinces. Thirdly, the participants needed to be qualified teachers; more specifically, they at least had to have either a Bachelor of Education, or a bachelor's degree followed by a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Besides inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria were also considered.

Exclusion criteria are criteria that disqualify possible participants from participating in the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018:84). For the purpose of this

study, potential participants were excluded if they had already made the decision to return to the profession or left the profession after teaching for more than ten years. In order to locate and identify participants, the researcher applied sampling techniques.

3.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

As mentioned previously, snowball and purposeful sampling were used in this study. The researcher desired to locate participants who met specific criteria. Purposeful sampling is a technique used when participants who meet certain criteria are purposefully located and included in the study and not because “they are demographically representative of the larger population” (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:8). Selected participants possessed information and/or experiences about teacher attrition, which consequently promoted the discovery of relevant information (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016:1-2).

Purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of a participant because he/she possesses qualities or information needed to provide answers to the questions the study asks (Koerber & McMichael, 2008:459; Tongco, 2007:147; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006:61). The researcher had to apply caution when using purposeful sampling as she had to ensure that she included a variety of participants who have a range of possibly different perspectives. According to Tongco (2007:147), the researcher needed to be aware that purposeful sampling may be biased, as the participants were chosen through referrals by other individuals, as well as convenience. The researcher also attempted to ensure that the participants were both capable and reliable (Tongco, 2007:147). This was done by ensuring that the participants met the inclusion criteria and by remaining aware that participants may provide unreliable data as they may be eager to please or provide answers that they think the researcher wants to hear.

It is common for snowball sampling to follow on purposeful sampling (Tongco, 2007:152). Snowball sampling was used by locating participants based on the information provided or a referral by someone who knows the participant (Koerber & McMichael, 2008:459; Noy, 2008:330; McIntosh & Morse, 2015:8). According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981:141), by using snowball sampling the researcher makes use of participants who have been acquired through referrals

provided by individuals who know of others who possess information valuable to the study and meet the inclusion criteria.

Snowball sampling locates participants that are considered “hidden” or challenging to locate. Teachers who left the profession may be difficult to locate, as they may have relocated to different provinces. The “hidden” participants can only be located through referral by other participants, teachers still in the profession or gatekeepers. Snowball sampling is effective in locating and accessing “hidden” participants (Noy, 2008:330). This is largely because information is provided by gatekeepers and teachers still in the profession, or participants who are already part of the study, to locate the participants. Once participants for the study were selected, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were conducted to gather data.

3.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (SSIs)

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are interviews that are guided by predetermined questions that cover the topics of the study. Although the interviews are guided by the questions, they are not followed strictly but rather serve as a guide for conversation (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016:2959). As discussed previously, purposeful sampling was used to identify participants. The use of this sampling method is essential when using SSIs to gather data as it increases the probability of producing findings that are valid (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:8). Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000:94) state that the information gathered through the interaction between the researcher and her participants leads to greater comprehension of the human experience. SSIs were used to gather information on the experience of the participants from their perspectives. The participants possess unique, subjective knowledge of attrition as it pertains to their experience in the teaching profession, which will add to the existing objective knowledge about the phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015:8). Not only do the participants possess knowledge about attrition, but they also have opinions on whether they will return to the profession and under which circumstances they will do so. The researcher attempted to gain a maximum amount of information from a variety of participants by using SSIs as a research tool.

It took the researcher approximately four months to complete all the interviews and follow-up interviews. A few participants had relocated and were interviewed online. The online SSI's were conducted using WhatsApp® video call, which made it possible for the researcher to observe visual cues as well as voice record the interviews, on her laptop. WhatsApp® video call was used because all the participants had access to WhatsApp®, and the quality of the video and audio were good. Most of the participants were at home when they participated in the online interviews, as it suited them to be interviewed in the evening in the comfort of their own homes. This assisted the participants to relax and engage more freely in the interviews. Similarly, the in-person interviews took place at the participants' homes, at agreed-upon times. This, too, assisted the researcher to ensure that the participants were relaxed and willing to speak more openly about their experiences. The researcher did not experience any remarkable differences in the quality of the in-person interviews as opposed to the online interviews, barring that the participants being interviewed online were more flexible in their scheduling and seemed more eager to participate in the research. The duration of the online and in-person interviews ranged from 35 to 50 minutes.

During the data analysis phase of the study, the researcher had to conduct a few follow-up interviews to clarify some of her findings. Apart from one follow-up interview being conducted in person, the follow-up interviews took place on Whatsapp Video Call. The duration of the follow-up interviews ranged between five and ten minutes.

The SSI that was conducted is comprised of a number of closed- and open-ended questions (Appendix A) that were asked to all participants in a similar order (Adams, 2015:493). Initially a few questions were asked that, when necessary, were followed by probing questions with the purpose of encouraging discussion and elaboration, specifically on topics pertaining to the study objectives. Some participants were more open in their responses, whilst others required further probing questions.

The data collection instrument used in this study was designed by the researcher and consists of nine questions and a few sub-questions as well as

probing questions. The first two questions enquire about the participants' motivation to enter the profession and aspects they possibly enjoyed. In some instances, additional sub-questions were asked by the researcher, depending on the need and based upon the participant's responsiveness. The purpose of these questions was to attempt to provide possible links between teacher attrition and ways to retain teachers in the profession and to provide context for the participants' decision to leave the profession.

The subsequent questions address the research questions. The questions seek to determine reasons for attrition, possible links to self-efficacy, as well as whether or not the participants' will, under any circumstances, return to the profession. Before the participants were interviewed, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the research tool and to ensure that there were no ambiguous questions. The pilot study participants were sourced by the researcher through social media. After completion of the pilot study, the researcher altered a few questions in her research tool, to enhance their clarity. The data collected during the pilot study was not included in the final sample. Participants from the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa were interviewed. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms are used.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS

3.6.1 Gauteng province of South Africa

3.6.1.1 Cuan

Cuan reached out to the researcher after hearing about her study from a former colleague. He offered to participate in the study. Cuan has a bachelor's degree and a PGCE and spent six years in the teaching profession.

3.6.1.2 Messon

A former colleague referred the researcher to Messon. The researcher contacted Messon, who was eager to participate in the study. She has a Bachelor's in Education degree and spent five years in the teaching profession.

3.6.1.3 Candace

Candace was tagged, by an acquaintance of the researcher, in a post on social media. She responded to the post and agreed to participate in the study. She has a bachelor's degree and a PGCE. Candace spent six years in the profession.

3.6.1.4 Bronwyn

Bronwyn's sister studied with the researcher. She was referred to the researcher by her sister and agreed to participate in the study. She has a bachelor's and an honours degree and taught for four years before leaving the profession.

3.6.1.5 Kiara

Kiara responded to the researcher's post on social media. She has a bachelor's and an honours degree as well as a PGCE. She taught for five years before leaving the teaching profession.

3.6.1.6 Jane

Jane is an acquaintance of the researcher. She was, however, referred to the researcher by an individual who read the researcher's post on social media. She has a Bachelor's in Education and taught for two years before leaving the profession.

3.6.1.7 Micah

Micah was referred to the researcher by Candace. She has a bachelor's degree and a PGCE. She spent one year in the teaching profession.

3.6.2 The Western Cape province of South Africa

3.6.2.1 Kate

Kate was a former colleague of the researcher. A mutual acquaintance, and gatekeeper, informed the researcher of Kate's decision to leave the profession and the researcher subsequently contacted her to enquire whether she had done so or not. It emerged that she had indeed left the profession and agreed to

participate in the study. Kate has a bachelor's degree, a PGCE, as well as an honours degree, and spent five and a half years in the teaching profession.

3.6.2.2 Joan

The researcher contacted a former colleague with the purpose of being referred to teachers who had left the profession. Her colleague referred her to Joan, who agreed to participate in the study. She has a bachelor's degree and a PGCE. Joan spent four years in the teaching profession.

3.6.2.3 Myra

Myra was contacted after the researcher was referred to her by a former colleague. Myra has a bachelor's degree with a PGCE and spent nine years in the teaching profession.

3.6.2.4 Nadia

Nadia was a former colleague of the researcher. Nadia had left the profession after 18 months, whilst the researcher was still teaching. Nadia was contacted to determine if she had returned to the teaching profession. She had not and agreed to participate in the study.

3.6.2.5 Sian

Joan (3.6.2.2) referred the researcher to Sian. She has a Bachelor's in Education and taught for seven years before leaving the profession.

3.8.2.6 Carol

Sian (3.6.2.5) referred the researcher to Carol. She has a Bachelor's in Education and spent five and a half years in the teaching profession.

3.8.2.7 Julie

A gatekeeper at a school where the researcher had taught referred the researcher to Julie. She has a Bachelor of Science and a PGCE. Julie spent one year in the profession.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is concerned with the degree of confidence the researcher has in the truth of the data produced based on the information provided by the participants within their context (Krefting, 1991:215). To ensure trustworthiness in this study the researcher described her own potential bias in both her own experience with the phenomenon, as well as possible bias in using purposeful sampling. Whilst remaining conscious of her own bias, the participants' perspectives were presented as accurately as possible (Noble & Smith, 2015:34).

The four tenets of trustworthiness are transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility (Shenton, 2004:64). Transferability is the possibility of practitioners to "relate the findings of the study to their own positions" (Shenton, 2004:69). To promote transferability in this study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the phenomenon of attrition so that the readers are enabled to compare the findings of this study with instances of the phenomenon they see in their own situations. The second tenet of trustworthiness is dependability.

According to Shenton (2004:71), dependability is the ability of readers of the study to repeat the study, not necessarily getting the same results. This was ensured by giving detailed descriptions of the processes followed whilst conducting the research, providing the readers with a "prototype model" to conduct their own research (Shenton, 2004:71).

Thirdly, confirmability, is defined as "the steps taken as far as possible to ensure that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants and not the researcher" (Shenton, 2004:72). The researcher ensured this by providing a detailed description of the methodology, as well as admitting her own biases. In so doing, the readers are enabled to determine for themselves to which degree they will accept the data that emerged from the study.

Credibility, the fourth tenet of trustworthiness, is defined by Bradley (1993:436) as the "adequate representation of the constructions of the social world under

study". To ensure credibility in this study, interviews with participants were electronically recorded and notes were made on visual cues. This was done so that data could be referred to during the interpretation process and to ensure that the data was adequately represented. Participants were interviewed until the point of saturation was reached. The saturation point is defined by Guest et al. (2006:65) as the moment in time when no novel information is provided by participants. According to Fusch and Ness (2015:1406), one reaches the point of data saturation when enough information is available to replicate the study and one is not obtaining any new information by interviewing more participants. Member checking was done by asking participants to review interpretations and conclusions drawn from interviews held with them. This was done by sending the participants electronic transcripts of interviews held with them to review. In so doing the researcher ensured that information was gathered and interpreted accurately (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002:14; Cope, 2014:89; Creswell & Miller, 2000:127).

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The audio-recorded interviews were manually transcribed. The transcriptions and field notes that were gathered during each interview were read to immerse the researcher in the life worlds of the participants and to identify possible emerging themes (Burnard, 1991:462).

The transcripts were read again, and categories and subheadings were formulated, after which the number of categories were reduced by grouping similar categories together (Burnard, 1991:463). Each interview transcript was then read and coded, based on the categories. Once all the interviews had been coded, the codes were placed under the correct categories, whilst remaining conscious of the context from which the codes were taken. Once all the codes were placed in their categories, under their suitable headings or subheadings, the findings were written up and interpreted. The researcher concluded her data analysis by producing summaries that reflected the context from which the categories emerged. This assisted the researcher to "transform the participants' everyday experiences into appropriate scientific discourse supporting research" (Groenewald, 2004:51).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the study a priority was to protect the participants (Orb et al., 2000:93). To protect the participants, the principles of autonomy and beneficence need to be adhered to. According to De Roubaix (2010:12), “the ability to grasp the essentials of an explanation, rationally deliberate and choose, is the central determinant of autonomy”. Beneficence is the aim to do good and to promote the welfare of the research participants (Shahian & Normand, 2012:2384).

Before data collection commenced, ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education at Unisa. The clearance certificate appears in Appendix C. During the study the participants had the right to be autonomous, to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study, as well as whether they opted to discontinue their participation in the study. Their participation was voluntary and relied upon their provision of informed consent. The participants were required to complete the consent form (Appendix B) before participating in the study.

After informed consent was provided and the data collection had begun, the principle of beneficence was considered and adhered to. This is the determination to do good and not to harm the participants (Orb et al., 2000:95). In this study, this was done by providing the participants with pseudonyms to hide their identity and protect confidentiality.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter of the study the researcher described and elaborated upon her chosen research design, clarified her decision of the selected study population of the study and described the method of selecting participants for the study. Her research tool was introduced in this chapter and was used to produce the data that will be presented and interpreted in the next chapter of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Purposeful and snowball sampling were used to select research participants from the Western Cape (WCP) and Gauteng provinces (GP) of South Africa. The researcher conducted and recorded online and in-person semi-structured interviews (SSIs) with 14 participants, seven from each province. The researcher made field notes during the interviews and the recordings were then manually transcribed. The researcher immersed herself in the data by reading the interviews and identifying themes and categories.

The identified themes were enjoyment factors in the profession, factors contributing to teacher attrition, and aspects prompting the return to the profession. The categories within enjoyment factors in the profession were relational, teaching and learning development. The categories within factors contributing to teacher attrition were identified as lack of support, burnout, workload, salary concerns, and curriculum issues. Within the final theme, namely aspects prompting a return to the profession, the categories were teacher support, salary, workload, curriculum, and resources.

The researcher transcribed the data identifying the themes and categories. Manual transcription allowed the researcher to fully engage with the data. The Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, were used to interpret the data gathered. Participants from both provinces mentioned the same issues concerning their departure and possible return to the profession. As the responses from these two provinces were similar, the findings from the provinces are not contrasted or discussed separately. As there were no distinguishable differences between the responses from participants from these two provinces, a corporate discussion of the findings is presented.

4.2 ENJOYMENT FACTORS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The first theme that emerged from the data was the enjoyment factor in the profession. The participants were asked questions regarding their decision to enter the teaching profession, as well as facets of the teaching profession that they enjoyed. The researcher analysed and interpreted the reasons provided by the participants.

The aspects of the teaching profession that the participants found fulfilling were coded and placed in their categories (3.8). The categories that emerged from the data, with regards to the aspects of the profession that provided satisfaction were: the relational factor, specifically relationships with learners, teaching, and learner development.

4.2.1 Relational factors

The most common factor mentioned by the participants about what was enjoyable about the teaching profession, was concerned with the relationships they had with their learners. These participants enjoyed the interactions with learners as well as bonding with them and having teacher-learner relationships with the learners. Kate, for instance, stated that she enjoyed the “really good in depth and intellectual conversations” that she had with her learners. She wanted to be a “positive influence in their lives” and enjoyed challenging their thoughts by “talking to them about big issues and challenging their ideas”. Kate enjoyed interacting with “teenagers” and thought that “they are a lot of fun when you know them”. Bronwyn, similarly, enjoyed the “connection she had with the children” through spending time with them. She taught 6-year-olds and enjoyed learning about their personalities. Since leaving the profession, Bronwyn completed her studies to become an educational psychologist and continues to work with children. Carol, too, loved “building those bonds with the kids” and said that it was a “special experience” being able to bond with her learners. She taught at a new school and had the opportunity to be the class teacher for the same group of learners for two years. She found it to be “very nice” having two years with the same learners in her class. Joan, on the other hand, wanted to be in a profession where she could serve people and particularly enjoyed

being part of “the learning process” and “engaging with the learners”, whilst Messon stated that “it was nice building a relationship with kids and having the opportunity to have an impact on their lives and also them on your life”. She maintained that the learners whom she taught and the relationships she had with them also had an impact on her life by “making the job rewarding by being able to see how you can change a child’s life”, as well broadening her view of the world by bringing her into contact with learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. Candace found helping “children who struggle to cope in the school situation” satisfying, in order to “prevent the learners from falling behind, especially in a larger school”. Since leaving the profession, she helps struggling learners one-on-one to prevent them from falling behind in mainstream school. She does this by tutoring learners with learning difficulties. Jane loved the part of teaching where, through the relationships she had with learners, she “learnt from them and they learnt from her”. According to her “there is a lot you can learn from children” and she thought “it was a win-win”. Finally, Julie enjoyed “learning how to work with the different personalities you encounter”. She also enjoyed how the various personalities impacted the class dynamics.

As stated in 2.2.2, the self-efficacy theory states that self-efficacy may develop through past performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological and emotional states. It is possible that the participants’ physiological and emotional states were altered when they had the opportunity to experience aspects of the profession that they enjoyed. In the satisfying relationships that the participants had with their learners, their emotional state was positive, whilst when they had moments of success, as was the case with Candace and Messon, for example, who enjoyed seeing growth through the relationships they had with learners, they produced past performance accomplishments. Altered physiological and emotional states, as well as past performance accomplishments, fostered self-efficacy.

When considering Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (2.3), the relational aspect of teaching may be correlated with social and esteem needs. The positive relationships between the participants and their learners could have provided

them with a feeling of belonging and, simultaneously, satisfied their esteem needs. Esteem needs are met when individuals feel successful and accomplished, both of which may have occurred when the participants experienced satisfaction in their relationships with learners. When these needs were met, their self-efficacy increased (2.3).

The second aspect of teaching that likely fostered self-efficacy in the participants, was teaching.

4.2.2 Enjoyment of teaching

Teaching, with specific reference to the facilitation of learning and the opportunity to teach a child content or skills, played quite a large role in a number of participants' decision to enter the profession and remained a large enjoyment factor once they were in the profession. Some participants stated that they loved the act of teaching whilst others enjoyed specific one-on-one teaching provided to struggling learners. Joan, for example, stated that she has "always loved teaching and the teaching aspect of the profession". She wanted to be part of the "learning process" and encouraged learners to be "excited to learn" and found it satisfying when her learners "found what they are learning about interesting and engaging". Similarly, Nadia stated that she not only loved working with people, but she "loved teaching". She found one-on-one teaching moments to be particularly satisfying to the extent that she began a career in tutoring upon her departure from the profession. Myra said that she "loved teaching and transferring knowledge" to her learners. Since leaving full-time teaching, Myra "work(s) with a lot of learners still when she goes and examines them". She is an examiner for the department of education and, on occasion, she teaches when the class teachers are on maternity leave. Kate, on the other hand, had the opportunity to "create the content" at the school where she taught. She really enjoyed the process and enjoyed teaching the content in the curriculum. Kate also enjoyed being able to challenge her learners' "thoughts and ideas" with what she taught and "the big issues" she had the opportunity to address during her Life Orientation lessons. Candace also taught Life Orientation and enjoyed "finding ways to make the content fun". The school she taught at had no school sport, so she

enjoyed being able to “expose them to something they don’t otherwise do”. Micah said that, after several years of home-schooling her own children, she could “give back to the world of education”. Her love of teaching, and teaching her own children, resulted in her home-schooling other children too. She then entered the teaching profession with the hope to give back to the education field. Also, she was not only “passionate about reading”, but “passionate about teaching children”. Julie enjoyed finding different ways to teach content. She mentioned a particular lesson where she taught a lesson on surface area and “she had to think on her feet and come up with another way for them to grasp the topic”. She found it satisfying when they understood what she taught. Jane, on the other hand, loved developing lessons that were “interactive, using technology and creativity” to teach her learners. She loved being able to “think outside the box” when planning the lessons she taught.

As stated previously, enjoyment factors increased self-efficacy in a few ways. During teaching, the participants produced past performance accomplishments by having the opportunity to see their learners respond to the lessons they taught. Their esteem needs were likely met, through having job satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment when they taught, thus altering their physiological and emotional states by making them feel more positive, consequently increasing their self-efficacy. The final aspect of teaching that likely contributed to the participants’ self-efficacy, was learner development.

4.2.3 Learner development

Several participants in the study stated that learner development was something they enjoyed in the profession. Cuan stated that “the idea of developing kids and helping them grow was what interested and motivated” him. He stated that, although he enjoyed assisting learners to understand content, he was more interested in their personal development. This led to him becoming involved in the school’s learner development camps which consisted of a “23-day hike that they do from the school. It’s like this whole developmental thing. Kids have to make their own choices throughout the

day. They need to navigate from where they start in the day to where they end". Micah similarly stated that she loves the "process of blossoming in the children". The 'blossoming process' refers to the learners' development. She loved seeing the learners learn and grow. Along with this she enjoyed "the creative parts" of teaching and having "the freedom to implement vision". Due to her love of the language and her love of teaching, Micah has taken up a voluntary position where she teaches English to adults since leaving the profession. Bronwyn stated that she loved seeing the learners grow and develop. She elaborated by saying that "it is like when you teach a child who has no confidence, and then all of a sudden the child is confident". Bronwyn enjoyed seeing, not only academic development, but personal development. As mentioned previously, Bronwyn has since become an educational psychologist to assist in learner development. Joan enjoyed seeing her learners "not necessarily excel in terms of really high marks but they wanted to better themselves". She stated that her focus was not on all learners attaining the same results, but learners reaching their own individual academic and personal potential, whilst Messon enjoyed developing lessons as well as being involved in growth and development and stated that "being able to have a one-on-one with a kid who is struggling really made me tick". Similarly, Jane enjoyed the interactions with learners and "seeing their development". Kiara stated that she "enjoyed working with kids and then seeing them develop especially in the way that they speak, for instance, in the beginning they really struggle to express themselves and then they express themselves really well".

The participants mentioned several aspects that they enjoyed in the teaching profession that had an influence on their self-efficacy. As an example, Bronwyn stated that she experienced satisfaction when she had the opportunity to grow a child's confidence in her class. Her experience of success in growing the child's confidence relates to a mastery experience, during which her belief in her own ability was increased (2.2.2). Similarly, Joan, as mentioned above, saw that her learners set out to achieve their own goals. This in turn provided her with a feeling of success and a mastery experience that served to possibly increase her self-efficacy. When the

participants, namely Cuan, Messon, Jane, Joan and Micah, had the opportunity to see their learners develop, they likely experienced and conjured their own past performance accomplishments, which served the purpose of increasing their self-efficacy. The learners' development, in many of the circumstances, had noticeable effects as mentioned, such as learners' performance or behaviour improving. When the participants witnessed the improvement in performance or behaviour, they consequently produced a performance accomplishment. By experiencing performance accomplishments, Maslow's fourth level of needs, were likely met (2.3). Esteem needs are related to job satisfaction and it is possible that during moments of having mastery experiences, the participants were satisfied with their jobs.

Most participants, however, although having experienced situations that could have fostered their self-efficacy, left the profession with low self-efficacy. Myra stated that by the time she left the profession she was "demoralized". Similarly, Bronwyn stated that by the end of her career she "felt defeated", as she "could not make a difference". According to Micah, her self-efficacy had declined and she "had absolutely no desire to go back into education", whilst Nadia stated that "my self-efficacy wasn't that great" by the time she left the profession. Similarly, Messon stated that her "self-efficacy deteriorated with time". Several reasons were provided as factors contributing to their decision to leave the profession.

4.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TEACHING ATTRITION

The participants provided a variety of factors that contributed to their decision to leave the teaching profession. Only one participant (Sian) offered a single factor that led to her decision to leave the teaching profession. The remainder of the participants identified issues that contributed to their departure. The reasons that were provided were grouped into categories, in order of most frequently mentioned to least mentioned: lack of support, burnout, discipline, salary, and curriculum issues.

4.3.1 Lack of support

The lack of support from superiors or co-teachers was the most commonly cited reason for teacher attrition. Most participants mentioned that a lack of support in a variety of forms contributed to their decision to leave the teaching profession. The lack of support experienced by participants was grouped into support from management, as well as the support provided by fellow teachers.

4.3.1.1 Inadequate support from management

Several participants pointed out that they were not supported by their principals and/or the Department of Education subject facilitators. Micah, for instance, maintained that “the principal actually didn’t know what was going on in the school and he was out of touch”. She stated: “When I got there, there was just not a net to hold me. They didn’t give me lesson plans, they gave me nothing to work with. It was also a new principal and he didn’t have a hold on the class or school, so I didn’t have much respect for him”. Micah struggled to produce past performance accomplishments due to the lack of support, in the form of resources, provided by her superiors. Along with this, she stated that she could not rely on her superiors, largely because she perceived that they did not provide her with the necessary environment to foster her development as a new teacher. Maslow’s third level of needs, namely social needs, which relate to her feeling that she belonged and was encouraged, were not met. This may have contributed to a decline in self-efficacy. Micah home-schooled children before entering the teaching profession and maintained that she had the “skill-set to make a difference” but upon her arrival at the school she realised that they had not provided the “tools for me to do the basics of the job”. As a result, she started to feel depressed a few months after she started teaching. Consequently, her self-efficacy declined, and she concluded that if it wasn’t for her personality she “would have been totally burnt out within a year”. Although Micah had high self-efficacy at the beginning of her time in the profession due to her mastery experiences during her time home-schooling numerous children, she experienced a decline in self-efficacy. The decline was due to a lack of

vicarious experiences, namely a shortage of social models who inspired her, and social persuasion, in this instance encouragement and motivation, whilst in the profession (2.2.2).

Similarly, Myra stated that, not only did “management treat teachers like children, very top down”, she was also “not supported by management”. She stated that the way management spoke to the staff was bad for staff morale. Her opinion about her subject advisors was that “the demands that they would give and the expectations versus the actual resources” did not align. According to her, the subject advisors used “some bullying tactics” and their method of “delivering feedback was not good”. At times she perceived that the demands that were placed on her were unrealistic. Myra did, however, have a supportive subject head and mentor during the first few years of her career but with the implementation of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), her mentor also retired. A combination of factors, along with an unsupportive environment, as mentioned, led to her feeling that being in that school environment caused her to doubt her own abilities. By the end of her career, she was “demoralized” and led to believe that she was failing. According to Myra, her self-efficacy started high at the beginning of her profession and remained so due to her mentor, and then decreased up to the point of her eventual departure from the profession. As mentioned, it is possible that her decrease in self-efficacy was related, amongst others, to a decline in support from her superiors. As stated, a lack of support from management relates to Maslow’s third level of needs, as well as insufficient social persuasion and vicarious experiences, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. She has since become an examiner for the Department of Education in her field and asserts that the environment she was in led to her decreased self-efficacy, as she now feels more confident in her ability than when she was in a full-time position at a school.

Bronwyn stated that her principal looked “tired” and that when she resigned, he did not try to provide any incentive for her to stay. She received no support from senior staff when she struggled and was disappointed by the lack of training offered to her. The lack of encouragement, specifically social persuasion, led to a decline in self-efficacy. Bronwyn’s primary challenges in

the profession were discipline issues and an absence of support. She received little support with her classroom discipline issues and believed “nobody could give a solution”.

At the beginning of Cuan’s teaching career, he taught in a school for a year where he had very little support. According to him, he had low self-efficacy when he left that school. He then took up a position at another school and stated that his self-efficacy grew in his first few years there as he had a good mentor teacher and he grew in confidence. As stated in paragraph 2.2.2, vicarious experiences aid in increasing self-efficacy as was the case with Cuan, when he had a good mentor. In the last year of his career, his mentor left and was replaced by someone else. He experienced less support and eventually felt that his superiors conspired to replace him. Cuan stated that he was so let down by his superiors that he even believed that they were “obviously trying to get rid of me”. His experience with his superiors was, in his opinion, related to his refusal to coach traditional sport in the school where he taught. The ‘traditional sport’ he referred to are sport types offered at most schools, such as soccer, rugby, cricket, athletics and hockey. He perceived that the senior staff members and superiors wanted to replace him with someone who was willing to coach ‘traditional sport’. He then left the profession but states that his belief in his ability to teach was not affected, but his desire to be a full-time teacher was.

After two years in the teaching profession, the school at which Messon taught acquired a new governing body. She had hoped that “new people have new ways to deal with things and maybe they’ll have more realistic deadlines”. Her experience, however, was that “it just became worse and worse”. She claimed that that was the moment when she decided to leave the profession. Messon’s failure to meet deadlines set by her superiors, was related to her challenge with being who she envisioned herself to be, which, ultimately contributed to her decline in self-efficacy. She stated that when the new governing body failed to produce more realistic deadlines, it resulted in a feeling of failure in that she was not who she envisioned herself to be and consequently led to her decline in self-efficacy. In this instance, her self-efficacy decline was likely because of her physiological and emotional states,

namely that she perceived that she was failing along with suffering from “stress related depression”.

Congruently, Candace believed the “support we got from the top was minimal”. She particularly struggled with discipline and maintained that particularly the principal, was out of touch with what happened in the classrooms. She stated that it was as if management “would try to find fault with the teachers” instead of offering to help them. This may have led to Maslow’s fourth level of needs not being met, namely esteem needs, whereby motivation and encouragement failed to occur, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. She also said that support was provided to some teachers and not to others and there was little consistency in how they were treated. According to Candace, her self-efficacy declined because of the lack of support, namely social persuasion and vicarious experiences, as well as the discipline issues in her class.

Kate stated that at the beginning of her time in the profession, she taught at a school where there was “not enough support”. It was her experience that “management were not listening and understanding the realities” of what her “average week would look like”. Her reference was to the assignment of classes and subjects to teachers when creating the timetable for the following year. The lack of support correlated with the challenges she faced regarding her workload, as well as her level of self-efficacy. Due to her experiencing a shortage of social persuasion, it resulted in an increased workload, and culminated in her stating that she “actually can’t do this”. This resulted in her concluding that she “can’t carry on like this” and at that stage realised she “will burn out in this profession”. Consequently, she left the school and taught at a smaller school, where, according to her, she had “a lot more hope about staying in the profession”. She pointed out that she had a lot of support at her last school. “It was a really small staff and we were very close knit and our principal was incredible. She was supportive and really good at making sure we had the time we needed to do what we needed to do”. The main difference between the two experiences, with regards to self-efficacy, lay in the vicarious experiences. Kate’s self-efficacy declined at the first school where she experienced a lack of support, amongst other issues, and

increased at the second school where she was supported. Her eventual departure from the profession, though, was mainly due to her frustration with the curriculum (4.3.5).

Although Nadia mentioned that her superiors “believed in her”, she also pointed out that they thought they could throw her in the deep end and that she “would swim and be fine”. Her reference was to “them maybe having too much faith” in her ability. The support she received was, in her opinion, “more passive than active”. Although she could ask questions when she had problems, there was very little active commitment to providing support. This may have led to Maslow’s fourth level of needs, namely esteem needs, not being met, resulting in self-doubt (2.3) and a decline in self-efficacy. As was the case with Bronwyn, Nadia’s self-efficacy decline was related primarily to a lack of support and discipline issues (section 4.3.1.2).

Although Carol did not mention that a lack of support from superiors was a factor that led to her leaving the profession, she did state that her subject head “was just checking that something constructive was being done”. She had to “figure out the rest. It was hard.” Her reference was to the beginning of her time in the profession, when she had to “sit with the booklet and it said what the outcomes were”, after which she “had to work backwards and try figure out what had to be done”. Every term and then every week and every day. So, it was a bit hectic.” Carol decided to leave the profession when she had children (4.3.4.1) as she could not see herself simultaneously teaching and raising children.

Julie taught at a high school where, in her opinion, the “management took the learners’ side instead of the teachers’”. She stated that there was a lack of support for teachers and that the vice-principal would call her in when she “had one bad lesson then the children would complain to him and he would call me in about it”. Consequently, she experienced that she had to “defend herself when they take the child’s side”, which resulted in her feeling unsupported by her superiors. Julie’s lack of support from management was related to her struggle with classroom discipline and will be elaborated upon in 4.3.3.

Finally, Jane experienced that there was a “lack of support from the subject head and principal” in the school where she taught. Along with that she pointed out that they were “disinterested in helping her” and was of the opinion that classroom discipline issues, as well as a lack of support in that area specifically, “was too much for me”. Jane stated that she “repeatedly asked for help” but received very little. When she sent difficult learners to the principal’s office, the principal would “send them back after a few minutes”. In her experience, the principal was “missing in action. You could speak to her, but she never actually took any action against actual problems. She was very passive”. Jane’s opinion of her self-efficacy towards the end of her time in the profession was that she believed that she “will never do this again” and that she believed she would “never end up in the teaching profession again”, due to the discipline and support problems she faced at the school where she taught. The lack of support from her principal meant that Maslow’s third and/or fourth level of needs, namely social and esteem needs, were not met, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. Congruently, there was a shortage of vicarious experiences, in that her superiors seemed to lack qualities to which she aspired, which may have led to a decline in self-efficacy.

There was a clear relationship between a lack of support from management and poor self-efficacy, as was the case for Micah, Myra, Bronwyn, Messon, Kate, Candace, Nadia and Jane. Similarly, a lack of support meant that Maslow’s third and/or fourth level of needs, namely social and esteem needs, were not met, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. It was apparent that when supportive management was present, as was the case for Cuan and Kate at certain times in their careers, self-efficacy increased.

Along with the relationship between self-efficacy and lack of support from management, was the relationship between lack of support and classroom discipline issues. Micah, Bronwyn, Candace, Nadia, Julie and Jane cited a lack of support and discipline issues as primary factors contributing to, not only a decline in self-efficacy, but to their departure from the profession. Cuan and Melanie were the exceptions in that, although having experienced a lack of support from management, neither of them doubted their ability to teach effectively. Along with issues related to poor support from

management, was the inadequate support provided by fellow staff members and mentors.

4.3.1.2 Mentors/colleagues

The prevalence of a negative atmosphere in the staffroom or a lack of support from peers was mentioned by several participants. Nadia experienced that the degree to which learners were disciplined varied, depending on the teacher involved. This led her to feel that the teachers were not acting as “a unit” and did not support one another. She stated that the staff body of the school was too “compartmentalised” in how they functioned and that they should have worked more as “one organism”. Nadia indicated that the lack of unity in the staffroom and how discipline was handled in the school led to her struggle with classroom discipline. On a number of occasions, she would leave her class to cry. According to her, she maintained that she “can’t do this”. She stated that she struggled with self-efficacy when she entered the profession as she was unprepared for dealing with the issues at hand. This, in combination with the lack of support (vicarious experiences) and unity in the staff (Maslow’s social needs), meant that she struggled with classroom discipline, the other factor contributing to her departure from the profession, as well as her decline in self-efficacy.

Similarly, Bronwyn stated that she had no support from her colleagues and said there was no one she could speak to about matters she was concerned about. She maintained that she was unsupported and isolated and perceived the other teachers as being “tired” all the time. Bronwyn indicated that her self-efficacy started to decline when she could not “win over two of the learners” in her class. She spoke to her colleagues about it, who in turn replied, “ah well, they are difficult children”. This led to her feeling that she was not supported and resulted in her opinion that “nobody could give a solution”. The preceding statement is indicative of a lack of vicarious experiences in that she had a shortage of teachers she could learn from. Along with this was a lack of social persuasion, manifesting in insufficient encouragement and support from her peers, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. Maslow’s third level of needs, social needs, were not met,

contributing to her decline in self-efficacy. According to Bronwyn, she “became angry at school and at home”. As stated previously, she left the profession due to a lack of support and classroom discipline challenges (4.3.3).

Several of Cuan’s colleagues started to complain about his unwillingness to coach sport. He indicated that “there were tensions” due to this, whilst Myra said that the environment she worked in was not very healthy and that the “teachers were depressed”. She stated that a few of her colleagues were booked into clinics for depression and that 15 other teachers left the school where she taught the same year she left. Her superiors “spoke down” to staff in front of other staff, which contributed to a negative environment in the staffroom. In both Cuan and Myra’s situations, Maslow’s social needs were not met, possibly contributing to their self-efficacy decline. This, along with a lack of support from their superiors, contributed to their decision to leave the teaching profession.

Candace, likewise, struggled with a lack of support from her colleagues. She stated that some of the older members of staff would report her to her superiors if they saw a child outside her class. According to her she “wouldn’t even know the child was outside the class and would then get called in to the headmaster”. In her experience, she pointed out that the older staff were afraid that the “younger staff were doing too little”. Candace’s self-efficacy decline was related to the combination of a lack of support and discipline issues and will be discussed in 4.3.3.

Jane’s opinion of her assigned mentor was that she was almost her age and “was also trying to keep her head above water”. She stated that there was a “general bad mood and dynamic amongst the teachers” at the school. According to her there were “only women there who would gossip and try to get at each other”. She stated that she “had no relationships with any of the staff members except for one”. Her self-efficacy declined, not only due to a lack of support from her superiors (4.3.1.1) (vicarious experiences) and fellow staff members (social persuasion) that left her feeling overwhelmed, but also due to her social needs not being met. This was apparent when she stated

that she felt that she only had one person on the entire staff who supported her.

Although Kiara never had first-hand experience of unsupportive colleagues, she was influenced by the experiences of friends, to the point that it had an influence on her decision to become a psychologist as opposed to remaining a teacher. She mentioned that she believed that when she is a psychologist she will be her own boss and would “not have to deal with potentially bad colleagues”. Along with this she heard her friends, who are teachers, talk about their problems with colleagues at the schools where they teach, contributing to her decision to leave the profession.

Finally, Messon mentioned that when she “saw teachers who were older than her still experiencing the same problems as she did”, she “just gave up”. She stated that “they have been doing this for so long and are emotionally at the same place (as her)”. She reached this point during her third year of teaching, when she also started to take “antidepressants”, due to “stress-related depression”. As mentioned previously (4.3.1.1), Messon’s self-efficacy decline and ultimate departure from the profession, were related, primarily, to a lack of support from management and a heavy workload.

The presence of an unsupportive staff environment meant that Maslow’s third level of needs, namely social needs, were not met. That also made it difficult for the participants to experience job satisfaction, which is related to Maslow’s fourth level of needs, both resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. Along with this, an unsupportive staff environment manifested in a shortage of vicarious experiences and social persuasion, which possibly resulted in a lack of past performance accomplishments when participants struggled to succeed in the classroom. The consequence of the preceding was a decline in self-efficacy. The second most often mentioned factor that influenced self-efficacy and contributed to teacher attrition, was burnout and stress.

4.3.2 Burnout and stress

Nearly half the participants indicated that they experienced feeling burnt out to various degrees. The burnout experienced by the participants manifested

in hospitalisation, depression, extreme fatigue and eventual attrition. The causes of their burnout were related to their academic responsibilities, extramural activities and administrative tasks. Phrases like “feeling tired”, “feeling burnt out”, “feeling depressed”, “frazzled out, it was just too much”, were used by most of the participants who suffered from burnout.

Micah, for instance, reached a point where she was depressed and where she was feeling overwhelmed. She stated that she “got out just in time”. It took her a few months to recover from her near burnout after she left the profession. Joan’s experience of being the only teacher to teach her subject, led her to feel tired, drained and burnt out. Similarly, Myra’s time as a full-time teacher culminated in her feeling that she was “overloaded and exhausted” and started to suffer “mini-strokes”. Messon’s burnout resulted in her needing to take antidepressants, whilst Candace stated that she “started to feel burnt out” at the end of her time in the profession. As stated previously, the causes of the participants’ burnout were academic responsibilities, administrative tasks and extramural activities, which be subsequently discussed.

4.3.2.1 Academic responsibilities

Academic workload, and the number of lessons and learners in classes, was a factor that led to burnout in almost half of the participants, i.e. Myra, Joan, Nadia, Carol, Micah and Messon. These participants stated that academic responsibilities, in the form of the teaching workload, the number of learners in classes, and challenges associated with academic teaching contributed to their departure from the profession. Myra said that she “never had any off periods; was working every single day without a period off and teaching way over the recommended number of periods”. She stated, as mentioned previously, that she experienced “overload, exhaustion” and had “almost like mini strokes from over exhaustion”. She had to be hospitalised twice due to exhaustion and by the end of her time in the profession decided that it was “just too much”. According to her, her superiors would say that Dance was “an easy subject, not taking into account that it is practical or an accredited subject” when she inquired about the number of lessons she had to teach. As

mentioned in 4.3.1.1, she experienced a decline in self-efficacy when she got no support from management. This coincided with the implementation of CAPS and a subsequent increase in the number of lessons and learners she had to teach. This resulted in her decline in self-efficacy and in her burnout, which ultimately led to her departure from the profession. As stated in 2.2.3, research suggests that there is a relationship between low self-efficacy and burnout, as was the case with Myra.

Similarly, Joan stated that the workload in the CAPS curriculum was too large and “content heavy” for the time provided. According to Joan, she would “attend department meetings for EMS (Economic and Management Studies) and they would tell us to focus on the accounting and let the kids self-study the economics and business side”. To her it seemed as if “even at those meetings they understood there was not enough time in the curriculum to reinforce a concept like accounting”. Joan mentioned that the subject advisors from the Department of Basic Education also said that the curriculum contained too much content. Along with this, her school did not allow the learners to take textbooks home, which meant that she “spent a lot of time getting notes into books or giving them notes to study from”. This resulted in her feeling that “using more interesting and engaging ways of making the subject real for them, was taken away”. Her self-efficacy decline was related to a lack of mastery experiences in that she did not know if she could her “head around how to teach that volume and content in a way that was actually enriching their lives”. Joan stated that she was pressurised to complete the curriculum, without feeling that she was enriching their lives, which in turn left her feeling tired and burnt out.

Carol, on the other hand, maintained that “teaching all day was draining” and that she did not see how she could teach all day and still be a “nice mom” to her own children. She pointed out that she could not manage both her teaching workload and parenting. She stated that she just “saw a few ... friends battling (to parent and teach) and thought maybe that’s not such a good idea (to have small children and be a teacher)”. Carol, however, did not experience burnout, but left when she had children to possibly avoid burnout. As self-efficacy was defined by the researcher as “the belief you have that

you can succeed in the teaching profession”, Carol did not believe that she could simultaneously succeed in the profession and as a parent, and therefore possibly had low self-efficacy with regards to her belief that she could succeed as a teacher, whilst being a parent.

Nadia’s challenge was that she struggled to “get through the work” and mentioned that numerous learners in her classes were disinterested. As mentioned before she had to leave the classroom on a few occasions to go and “cry with the librarian” because she thought that the learners did not like her. She also struggled as she mentioned that she was a perfectionist and took the poor results learners attained personally. She stated: “When they would come back with these bad grades I would think that it was because I was doing something wrong”. This made her believe that she “was not making the difference that she thought she would make”. Although Nadia never experienced burnout because of the challenges related to teaching, she did find that her self-efficacy declined because of the challenges she faced. Her struggles with learners producing poor results meant that she likely had insufficient mastery experiences. As stated in 2.2.2, mastery experiences are related to success experienced in one’s classroom. When Nadia stated that she “was not making the difference she thought she would” nor helping students in the way she envisioned, the researcher interpreted that she had insufficient mastery experiences, resulting in a self-efficacy decline. This coupled with a lack of support (4.3.1) and classroom discipline issues, contributed to her decision to leave the profession.

Candace suffered from burnout that was caused, in her opinion, by several factors. One of these factors involved the fact that the number of learners she “actually made a difference for were only a few” and that she would make a big effort to produce interesting lessons without much response from the learners. She would struggle to provide term marks for some of the learners as they would not complete their work. Candace’s decline in self-efficacy was related to a combination of feeling that she was not getting results from her learners due to discipline issues that, she said, were because of a lack of support (4.3.1.1). Her struggle to obtain work from her learners, due to

discipline issues, possibly resulted in a lack of past performance accomplishments, leading to a decline in self-efficacy.

Messon, on the other hand, struggled with the workload in the curriculum and with finding ways to cover the content. She stated that “one year the whole class didn’t get a concept” and she “just had to move on”. Her fellow teachers just told her to move on, because she was not going to get through the work. “That was so unfair to me. I was like, the whole class doesn't understand a concept we can't just move on.” She was frustrated by the time pressure and the amount of content she had to cover. Messon’s self-efficacy declined due to, amongst other aspects, her struggling to “meet deadlines”. Her failure to meet deadlines meant that she struggled to produce past performance accomplishments to increase her self-efficacy.

Lastly, Micah mentioned that she ultimately stopped preparing for lessons after a few months of teaching as “there was no learning happening in class”. Consequently, she would “just try to cope” with her learners, who had learning- and behaviour disorders. As mentioned previously, Micah complained that she “didn’t get any lesson plans” or the “tools to do the basics of job”. This contributed to her “being depressed” and “losing vision”. Micah, consequently, struggled with depression and burnout. At the end of her career she stated that she had “failed” and “lost vision”. Although she entered the profession with a high level of self-efficacy, the issues in her school, involving workload, amongst others, led to her decline in self-efficacy and, ultimately, leaving the profession before being burnt out. In her opinion she “got out just in time”. When she entered the profession after her time as a home-school teacher, she said that she “entered the school environment with great confidence” and possessed high self-efficacy. Her own mastery experiences during her time as a home-school teacher were insufficient to provide enough self-efficacy for her to feel that she could succeed in the profession at the school in which she taught. She said: “For the first three or four months I was on a high as I had all these lessons planned and workstations in the class and then I guess I started seeing all the difficulties”. She realised that not much learning was taking place and faced challenges

related to classroom discipline (4.3.3) which then led to a decline in self-efficacy.

Academic workload resulted in burnout for most of the participants who stated it was a factor contributing to their decision to leave the profession. Research suggests (2.3.1) that poor self-efficacy may result in eventual burnout, which was the case for many of the participants who stated that they had problems with the academic workload. All the participants mentioned above, with the exception of Nadia and Carol, suffered various degrees of burnout. The second factor that contributed to some participants' burnout was the administrative tasks of the job.

4.3.2.2 Administrative tasks

Some of the participants found the administrative tasks of teaching to be too time consuming. Myra, Jane, Cuan, and Messon said that administrative tasks were not only time consuming but contributed to their decision to leave the profession. Myra stated that she enjoyed teaching, but she “didn’t enjoy anything else, none of the politics and the admin, specifically the unnecessary admin”. She elaborated and stated that although she enjoys completing administrative tasks, she did not enjoy the tasks she deemed unnecessary. Since leaving the teaching profession, she does the administration for her husband’s business, amongst other things. Administrative tasks, along with academic workload, contributed to her eventual burnout and decline in self-efficacy.

Jane found many of her administrative tasks challenging and stated that “the admin was overwhelming” and specifically thought that “meetings, marking and extra assessments” took up much of her time. According to Jane, the administration related to teaching Grade 3’s was “astronomical (a large amount)” and that she “sat with marking, getting marks, parent evenings, discipline meetings and just had no life”. Although Jane never suffered from burnout, she found the demands of administrative tasks placed on her, to be challenging and a contributing factor that led to her departure from the profession.

According to Cuan, the “admin that surrounds teaching is very annoying”, whilst Messon found the time to complete her administrative tasks to be very time consuming. She said that the deadlines associated with the administrative tasks were difficult to meet and this placed pressure on her and resulted in her experiencing stress. Messon’s self-efficacy decreased over time due to her physiological and emotional states, as her stress levels increased, resulting in her starting “to doubt her abilities”. As mentioned previously, her fatigue, depression, burnout and ultimate feeling of wanting to be who she envisioned herself to be and constantly feeling she was not that led to her departure from the profession.

Administrative tasks, and the time concerned with their completion, contributed to Messon and Myra’s burnout, and although neither Cuan nor Jane suffered from burnout, they indicated that administrative tasks contributed to their decision to leave the profession. The final factor that led to burnout or stress in participants and their consequent departure from the profession, were the extramural activities they were required to offer.

4.3.2.3 Extramural activities

Extramural activities, specifically school sport and the time spent in the afternoons or weekends at school, was stated as being a contributing factor to a few participants’ burnout or contributed to their decision to leave the profession. Cuan did not experience burnout but did experience a large amount of pressure placed on him to coach school sport (4.3.1.1). He mentioned that he was not supported by his peers or superiors even though he was “running the e-sports club of the school, getting involved with the rock-climbing at the school and trying to organise scuba diving trips”.

Messon, on the other hand, stated that she had “crazy deadlines and crazy hours where it just feels like you never have a break” and that the activities outside of lesson times kept her so busy that she struggled to prepare properly for lessons. She further stated that it “feels like you never have a break because even in school holidays you’re working the whole time”, which resulted in her feeling stressed. She was diagnosed with “stress related depression” by a psychologist who then placed her on anti-depressants. This,

along with feeling that she never had a break, meant that she struggled to be who she envisioned herself to be. She attributed her decline in self-efficacy to not being who she envisioned herself to be, which is indicative of a lack of past performance accomplishments, whilst her stress and depression was indicative of physiological and emotional states, also resulting in a decline in self-efficacy.

Likewise, Carol not only struggled with the time concerned with “planning and prepping”, but also with the time she had to spend on extramural activities. She stated that when she began her career she expected that it would “be a half day job and you go to school, and you interact with kids and then it’s done”. Instead she said that “it just takes up so much more time than you thought”. Although Carol did not experience burnout, she did reach the conclusion that she would not be able to teach whilst simultaneously raising her children in the way she wanted to.

For Messon, extramural activities and the pressure that the time constraints placed on her, played a primary role in her self-efficacy decline, burnout and departure from the profession. Neither Cuan nor Carol experienced burnout although both mentioned extramural activities as a factor that contributed to their departure from the profession. Similarly, discipline and problems related to a lack of training in managing discipline, was also a contributing factor to teacher attrition for some of the participants.

4.3.3 Classroom discipline

A few of the participants stated that discipline, and the feeling of not being adequately trained to deal with classroom discipline, was a contributing factor to their decision to leave the profession. Myra had to teach classes with 40 learners in each. She felt that due to their size, the classes were “unmanageable”, whilst Nadia (mentioned in 4.3.1) stated that she “struggled with the discipline and then getting through the work”. She pointed out that there were learners who were just “pushing her buttons” and, on a few occasions, resulted in her crying. Nadia cited that she was not tough enough to “stick it out” and that the degrees of discipline used to enforce a school rule, differed, depending on the teacher involved. Her struggle with discipline

and lack of support resulted in her stating that she did not feel like she was making the difference that she thought she would make. An unsupportive and inconsistent staff with regards to handling discipline issues contributed to her decline in self-efficacy and led her to doubt her “skills and ability to teach properly or to guide the children through the learning process”. Along with this, an unsupportive staff likely meant that Maslow’s third level of needs – social needs – were not met, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy.

Bronwyn, similarly, said that discipline was a real problem for her, and that she did not have the tools to deal with the situations. This led to outbursts and culminated in the feeling that she was starting to change. Bronwyn further explained that her colleagues also seemed to struggle with similar issues, and themselves looked fatigued. She experienced a decline in self-efficacy when discipline issues arose. She stated that her self-efficacy was high when she entered the profession and when the first discipline challenge arose with two challenging learners, she sought ways to solve the problem. When the same challenge arose a second time, with the same learners, she realised that she did not have the tools to deal with the issue. There was a decline in self-efficacy and she was “defeated” in the end when “she saw no progress”. Bronwyn had inadequate mastery experiences to rely upon to face the challenges at hand and stated that training in problem areas was not offered to her, indicating a lack of vicarious experiences and social persuasion, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy.

Candace stated that the “school’s discipline started to decline” and that it is not “something you get back easily”. She was of the opinion that, as time went on, the “learners’ behaviour got worse” as a result of, amongst other reasons, a “lack of consequences for unacceptable behaviour”. This was related to her feeling of not having adequate support from her superiors who did not provide her with help to manage classroom discipline. Along with this, she said that she had to “fight with the learners every day just so that they do what they need to do”. Her struggle with classroom discipline, she believes, was related to the ‘gap’ she experienced between “the things that had been developed” since she attended school herself. She mentioned that she “could not connect with the learners”. This led to her doubting her own ability as she

decided that it was possible that her “methods don’t work for everyone”. She struggled most with the junior classes (grade eight and grade nine) and started to experience that she had “less and less control” in her classes. As a result, she began to doubt her own ability and claimed that her self-efficacy decline was because of the discipline issues combined with a lack of support. The lack of support, in the form of vicarious experiences, contributed to her decline in self-efficacy. Due to the discipline issues in her class, she may have struggled to experience past performance accomplishments to foster her self-efficacy.

Jane decided that she wanted to leave the profession when she “had a bad experience a few times with the same learner”. She stated that he “had lots of behaviour problems and came out of terrible circumstances”. Her struggle with managing discipline, as well as the lack of support she received in this regard (4.3.1.1), “was too much” for her. She stated that, not only did the learner swear at her when she told him he had to work, but the other teachers in the school would “speak badly about him, in front of him”. Her self-efficacy declined, due to a lack of support coupled with discipline issues, as well as a shortage of vicarious experiences. She believes that she “would never end up in the teaching profession again”.

Julie left the profession due to struggles with classroom discipline that she partly attributed to a lack of support from management. She stated that many of her learners were “rude with no respect for older people”. Julie had to commute to work and said that she had to “wake up at 5am, to be at school just after 6am, only to be called a bitch by a learner during the first lesson”. She left the profession after her first year of teaching as she “bombed out (could not carry on) after a year”. Although, in her opinion, her ability to teach grew during her time in the profession, her self-efficacy did not improve, because of issues with classroom discipline. She stated that the vice-principal of the school taught all the top Mathematics classes of each grade, leaving the remainder of the learners to the rest of the teachers. Julie struggled to produce past performance achievements to increase her self-efficacy. This coupled with a lack of vicarious experiences and social

persuasion due to a lack of support, meant that her self-efficacy likely struggled to develop.

Micah likewise struggled to increase her self-efficacy once she entered the profession. She taught learning- and behaviour disordered learners and faced discipline issues in her classroom. Her discipline issues culminated when a learner assaulted her in class. Shortly after the assault, Micah decided to leave the teaching profession.

The participants who mentioned discipline issues as a factor contributing to their departure, did so in conjunction with a lack of support. They attributed, wholly, or in part, their issues with classroom discipline to a lack of support provided by school management. This correlates with the struggle to reach Maslow's third and fourth level of needs, namely social and esteem needs. Social needs, specifically, are met by feeling encouraged, which was not the case when the participants struggled with not only classroom discipline, but also a lack of support in this area. Esteem needs, on the other hand, are associated with experiencing job satisfaction, which, by the end of their time in the profession, was not the case. All the above-mentioned participants struggled with self-efficacy at the end of their time in the profession, indicating a relationship between discipline issues, a lack of support from management, and poor self-efficacy leading to attrition. Remuneration also contributed, in varying degrees, to a few participants' decision to leave the profession.

4.3.4 Remuneration

A few participants stated that salary, as well as unsatisfactory maternity benefits, played a role in their decision to leave the profession. Sian was the only participant who gave merely one reason for her departure from the profession, namely remuneration. As stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, physiological needs have to be met in order for an individual to be able to move on to the next level of needs. Sian mentioned that her physiological needs were not met and so she left the profession.

Joan, on the other hand, considered remuneration as a contributing factor to her decision to leave the profession. Although she stated that she was not in the profession for financial reasons, salary became an issue when she struggled to “meet expenses”. She taught at a private school that paid lower salaries than public schools. Kiara stated that “finances are a big thing. As a teacher you quite quickly hit the ceiling”. She mentioned that she has since completed her master’s degree in Psychology and will earn more as a counselling psychologist.

Salary was not a primary cause for leaving the profession though it was a contributing factor for a small number of participants. This does not coincide with the literature in 2.4.5.1. It does, however, to a greater degree, support Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, in that nearly all the participants’ physiological needs were met. Consequently, the primary cause of teacher attrition, for almost all participants, was not salary.

4.3.4.1 Maternity benefits

Kate and Carol left the profession when their children were born, as they received little to no maternity leave benefits. The participants stated that either their maternity leave was too short, or they received little to no compensation during their maternity leave. Kate stated that she received nothing during her maternity leave. Kate pointed out that the lack of maternity benefits left her feeling that the school did not value her. Carol said that her maternity leave made her decide to stay at home with her children as she mentioned this would benefit them more. Although Carol stated that if she had not stopped teaching to have children, she is sure she would have succeeded, but her self-efficacy was not high with regards to her belief in her ability to succeed in the profession, whilst being a mother.

The final contributing factor to the participants’ decision to leave the profession involved curricular issues.

4.3.5 Curricular issues

The majority of the participants who were interviewed taught at schools that followed the CAPS curriculum. Several participants stated that they had

become frustrated with the South African Education System and mentioned either the workload or excessive content, or both, as reasons for terminating their teaching careers. Joan stated that she had become “disillusioned with the system” and that it was very hard to be a part of a system she perceived as “unjust” because it felt like she “was contributing to the system”. She believed that the education system benefited learners who had resources and disadvantaged poorer learners. Similarly, Kate stated that she had started to “doubt the system”. She stated that the education system was focused on “preparing learners for office jobs or quite traditional kind of things”. Kate was frustrated by the education system and its lack of innovation. Messon, on the other hand, believed she had to “push the curriculum a lot of times” and that she “just needed to cover the work and to finish the curriculum instead of actually teaching them the concept”. She reiterated by stating that she had to “make sure that they know the five facts they are going to be assessed on instead of actually teaching them and helping them understand the concept”. Her challenge related to the amount of content in the curriculum and the challenge to cover all the content in the time available.

The participants who mentioned curriculum as a factor contributing to attrition, likely struggled to produce past performance accomplishments. This may have been due to their challenge with having to follow said curriculum. This likely led to a loss in confidence and belief in the success of the curriculum and education system. This contributed in varying degrees to their decision to leave the profession.

After the participants provided reasons for their decision to leave the profession, the possibility of their return was investigated.

4.4 ASPECTS ENCOURAGING A RETURN TO TEACHING

Four categories (3.8) emerged as aspects that would encourage the participants to return to the profession. One participant mentioned a single requirement for her to return to the profession, whilst the remainder of the participants mentioned a number of requirements. The most frequently mentioned condition was the school environment.

4.4.1 School environment

The prevalence of a positive school environment, particularly the staff environment being supportive, offering training in problem areas and the provision of a mentor, are needs that would have to be met for the majority of the participants to return to the profession. More than half of the participants stated that the school environment itself was an important factor to consider if returning to the profession. One of Myra's requirements to return to the profession was that there would be "a more positive morale in the school environment", in reference to a supportive staff. She mentioned that a positive staff environment would be a requirement for her to return to the profession. As stated in 4.3.1.1, a negative staff or unsupportive environment may lead to a decrease in self-efficacy. It is therefore possible that a positive staff environment could foster self-efficacy by improving the participants' physiological and emotional states, as well as possibly satisfying Maslow's third level of needs, namely social needs, by providing participants with encouragement and acceptance. According to Nadia, this could be achieved when the "staff and the head of discipline's disciplinary methods work more in unison". As stated in 4.3.3, Nadia struggled to maintain discipline in her classes. Her requirement to return to the profession was that staff members and management worked together to improve the school's discipline.

Bronwyn said that she would require a "healthier and more positive environment" where she would feel supported and had access to opportunities for her to get help when she struggles. Kate, similarly, would require a "more supportive environment that dealt with her concerns" if she would ever return to the profession. According to her she will return to a position where she feels "like a valued person" and where her "concerns are taken seriously".

Candace, on the other hand, cited that the school she would return to would need to have "clearly stated discipline guidelines that could be implemented" as opposed to her making empty threats to attempt to maintain discipline in her classes, whilst Jane also said that a "discipline system" would need to be in place and that they would need to "provide guidelines on what works, even

if it is just 70% of the time”. Micah stated that she would return to a school that was “really functional, with a library and support”, whereas Joan required a supportive environment, specifically the opportunity to “de-brief on certain things, to a subject head”.

A supportive environment could improve individuals' self-efficacy by providing them with social persuasion and vicarious experiences. As stated in 2.2.2., self-efficacy may be increased by social models, who serve the purpose of being possible role models or mentors. A supportive environment may be viewed as a competent environment, whereby self-efficacy may increase as well as meeting Maslow's third level of needs, namely social needs. Social needs are related to a feeling of belonging and acceptance. Once the third level of needs is met, the probability of experiencing job satisfaction, associated with Maslow's fourth level of needs, increases. What was noted was that the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely physiological (salary) and safety needs, that need to be met to progress to the next levels of needs (2.3), were not the most mentioned requirements to return to the profession.

4.4.1.1 Mentoring

Throughout the course of the SSIs, mentorship was mentioned, either as something participants appreciated at a school where they taught, or something they lacked. Several participants mentioned that returning to the profession would be easier if a mentor was present. Bronwyn stated that she would require someone who would support her by identifying what she needs assistance with, and then try to help. She elaborated by adding that her departure from the profession could have possibly been prevented if her principal had sent her to someone who has been through something similar. She was referring to her struggle with managing classroom discipline. Joan similarly believed that having a “co teacher, or mentor, someone to relieve time to an extent and having someone else to bounce ideas off” would make a return to the profession easier, whilst Nadia likewise mentioned that a school that offered a mentor would encourage her to return to the profession. Myra said that an understanding mentor would encourage her to return to the

profession. She stated that a mentor could assist her in “reading less into things” and clarifying expectations, whilst Jane stated that she would need a mentor, someone “who could just be a backup, even if it was just for emotional support”, before she would consider returning to the profession. Julie stated that she would require a mentor who, according to her, would be a “teacher who would not only be there to give advice, but someone to offload to. Someone who knows what it is like being in a similar position”.

Cuan’s self-efficacy increased when he had a mentor at the school where he taught (4.3.1.1). Mentoring plays a role in fostering self-efficacy (2.2.2) by providing vicarious experiences and social persuasion. Cuan stated: “I started out with quite low confidence in my abilities and then I had good mentors at that school and I grew a lot in confidence”. Myra similarly stated that she had a mentor for the first two years of her time at the school where she taught. According to her the mentor “guided and helped” her during those years, before her mentor retired (4.3.1.1). Messon stated that she had a mentor who would meet with her and another teacher once a week. According to her, her mentor helped her “grow as a professional teacher” during her first year in the profession. Based on the participants’ experiences, it is possible that the participants’ self-efficacy may increase if they receive mentors upon returning to the profession but may not remain if they are left without a mentor, as was the case for Messon and Myra.

4.4.1.2 Training

Along with a positive working environment is the need for the provision of training and professional development, as was mentioned by Carol, Nadia, Bronwyn and Candace, as a condition to return to the profession. Carol, who was out of the profession for a number of years, stated that she would need CAPS training if she was to return to the profession. Participants who mentioned that discipline was a contributing factor to their departure, said that training in classroom management would be required. Nadia, who struggled with classroom discipline, said: “If the school were to offer extra training, I definitely would consider it (returning to the profession) if I could get those skills”. As mentioned previously, Bronwyn, who struggled with

classroom management and discipline, mentioned the importance of an environment where training was offered in areas where teachers have trouble. Similarly, Candace stated that training in “alternative methods” or training “to apply technology better” would be required. By offering participants training, their self-efficacy could increase through social persuasion (2.4.6.2), in that they would be provided with coaching to improve their knowledge and skills. However, Joan was unsure whether professional development or in-service training would make a difference. She said that training would probably add to her workload and tire her even more. However, most participants were keen on training which would increase the probability of providing them with mastery experiences, serving the purpose of increasing their self-efficacy.

4.4.2 Remuneration

Sian’s only requirement to return to the profession was a higher salary. The rest of the participants who mentioned salary, did so in conjunction with other issues. It therefore appears as though salary was not the main reason for teacher attrition. Half of the participants did however mention that they would need to have their salaries adjusted before they would consider returning to the profession. Carol added that “well-paid maternity leave or something that would actually encourage one to want to come back” may have prevented her from leaving the profession. Joan indicated that she would require a salary that would meet her needs, although it would not be a determining factor for her to return to the profession whilst Bronwyn and Myra both mentioned that they would have salary requirements that would need to be met to return to the profession. Kiara stated: “If teachers get paid what they should get paid, I would most likely keep on teaching”. She was referring to teachers’ salaries that do not increase as much as working in the private sector.

The third matter that needs to be addressed to encourage a return to the profession, is workload.

4.4.3 Workload

Workload was a prevalent issue among the participants. Nearly half of the participants had workload requirements for returning to the profession. The workload requirements ranged from less administrative duties, to fewer extramural activities and smaller classes. Kate stated that along with a flexible curriculum and having her salary concerns met, that “having more time to get through things like marking” would encourage her return to the profession. Carol said that her return to the profession relied on the number of evenings and Saturdays she would need to work whilst Cuan stated that he would return to the profession if the school was to eliminate much of the administrative duties, stating: “Give me the classroom and the content I need to teach and at a reasonable pace”. Joan, too, would require more time to “get through things like marking”, if she were to return to the profession. Messon indicated that she would return if she could “go back and teach and that is the only role, to be a teacher, not to be an advertiser and coach”. Similarly, Julie stated that, as she has become a mother since leaving the profession, she would return if she could do so “without any extra murals”. As workload is related to burnout, as mentioned in 4.3.2, a decreased workload could decrease the risk of burnout, thereby decreasing the risk of a decline in self-efficacy.

4.4.4 Curriculum

The South African Education system and CAPS was criticised by Myra, Joan, Messon and Kate. These participants mentioned possibly returning to a school teaching a different curriculum or teaching in a different country. Kate stated that the primary factor determining her return to the profession was that the school was “going to be a little more innovative in their approaches and sort of be willing to challenge traditional ways of teaching”. She elaborated by explaining: “Innovation is saying we’re not going to have desks in the classroom. There will be a couple of desks on the side and changing the way subjects are designated, like cross curricular learning”. Joan similarly stated that she would need to not feel like she was “part of a system” that she thought was “unjust to the vast majority of this country”. Her requirement was

related to the curriculum disadvantaging the poor learners, whereas Bronwyn pointed out that she would need to “buy into the philosophy of the school” to return to the profession. She stated that she would need to believe in the school’s vision before considering a return to teaching. Lastly, Messon said that she would return to a school where “there is more space, where it’s not as rigid”. Her requirement was related to the amount of content and time constraints in the curriculum.

The participants’ requirements regarding the curriculum varied. Innovation, equality and less content or more time, were the requirements provided by the participants. The requirements may relate to self-efficacy in that the desire to achieve, what said participants deem as success, becomes more probable when they are confident in the curriculum they need to teach. This may increase past performance accomplishments which in turn increases self-efficacy.

The final requirement provided as a factor determining participants’ decision to return to the profession, is resources.

4.4.5 Resources

Most of the participants taught in schools where they had the necessary resources. A few participants, however, stated that they would need to be provided with more resources to encourage a return to the profession. The resources required were related to training on offer as well as physical resources. Joan in particular did not have the necessary physical resources when she was teaching. Her learners were not allowed to take the textbooks home to study for their tests and exams, which meant that learners spent a lot of time getting notes into their books for them to study from. Although a lack of resources was not a factor that directly led to her departure, it will determine whether she would return to the profession. Myra, a Dance teacher, indicated that she would require “proper facilities, resources and equipment”. For both Joan and Myra, physical resources are a pre-requisite to return to the profession. It is likely that the presence of said resources may increase mastery experiences and lead to an increase of self-efficacy. For Joan, for example, having enough textbooks means that she would have

more time to present more innovative lessons. She stated that not having textbooks meant that “actually being able to use interesting and engaging ways of making the subject real for them, was taken away”. Having textbooks will provide her with the opportunity to teach in more “interesting and engaging” ways, as she will have more time during lessons.

Nadia and Bronwyn would both require the necessary resources to attend training to improve their classroom management skills. The training cited by both participants was related to managing classroom discipline, hence possibly increasing mastery experiences that could improve self-efficacy. As stated in 2.4.5.6, classroom discipline issues may lead to stress, and consequently to attrition. It is possible, therefore, that the resources to attend training to improve classroom management, may increase retention.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter of the research report, the data was presented and analysed by the researcher immersing herself in the data in order to identify themes, coding the data and placing it in categories and sub-categories. The Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, formed the lens through which the data was interpreted.

The categories of enjoyment factors in the profession were presented, analysed and interpreted using the theories. Following this, the categories for teacher attrition that emerged, namely, support, burnout and stress, poor discipline, remuneration, and curriculum were analysed, interpreted and presented. This was followed by the aspects that would encourage the return of the participants to the profession. The categories that emerged for the return to the profession were school environment, salary, workload, resources and a revised curriculum. In the following chapter the study will be summarised, conclusions made, and recommendations proposed.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher introduced the main aim of the study in the first chapter, as well as the main and subsequent research questions. The aim of the study was to determine why teachers leave the profession and subsequently to investigate if there are possible ways to reverse the process. The study was guided by the main research question namely: “Why do teachers leave the teaching profession?”, followed by three sub-questions. The sub-questions sought to determine what the prevalent causes of teacher attrition are, as well as what needs to be changed to improve the working conditions of teachers, and finally, whether teachers who have left the profession would return if changes are implemented. The second chapter introduced the Self-Efficacy Theory, with a consideration of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, as the theory through which the study developed. The focus fell on why selected teachers who taught in urban schools in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa left the profession.

Literature was reviewed, outlining the leading causes of attrition, namely burnout and workload, teacher preparation, salary, family obligations, poor facilities, and feelings of isolation. The review of literature was concluded by discussing possible methods of retaining teachers in the profession, namely pre-service training, INSET, PD, and mentoring.

The researcher introduced the research method in the subsequent chapter, specifically the use of the phenomenological design within the constructivist paradigm. As mentioned previously, the chosen study population was drawn from the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces using purposeful and snowball sampling. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews (SSIs) with the participants using the research instrument to guide the interviews.

5.2 LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

There was a shortage of recent literature on attrition of teachers in South Africa, specifically the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces. There was, however, enough literature available on the causes of teacher attrition globally. The causes differed between countries and thus left a gap regarding the specific causes of attrition in the provinces of the Western Cape and Gauteng. Congruently there is a scarcity of literature on the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher attrition.

Literature indicated the relationship between several potential causal factors of attrition and self-efficacy, such as the relationship between poor self-efficacy and burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010:1060), or self-efficacy and classroom management (Stanton, Cawthon & Dawson, 2018:5), for example, but not many indicating a relationship between self-efficacy and teacher attrition. Ample literature exists on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (2.3), addressing topics such as job satisfaction and its relationship with esteem needs. There is, however, a shortage of literature on the relationship between Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. Inferences were therefore made, based on the literature available, on the link between the two theories, as well as their relationship with teacher attrition and retention.

There is abundant literature on possible methods of increasing retention (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers, 2014; McKim & Velez, 2017), suggesting methods such as enough pre-service training, PD, INSET and mentoring, whilst there is a shortage of literature on methods to increase retention in South Africa, specifically from the perspective of teachers who have vacated the profession.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

The participants provided factors that contributed to their decision to leave the teaching profession. The factor that was mentioned most frequently was a lack of support (4.3.1). For more than half of the participants, there was a relationship between lack of support, decline in self-efficacy and the decision

to leave the profession. This was likely due to inadequate social persuasion and vicarious experiences, as well as a failure to meet Maslow's third level of needs - social needs - resulting in a decline in self-efficacy. More than half the participants, who mentioned a lack of support as a factor contributing to attrition, also mentioned discipline issues.

The second most frequently mentioned factor was burnout and stress (4.3.2). Academic responsibilities, administrative tasks and extramural activities contributed to the participants' burnout and stress. As stated in literature (Yu et al., 2014:702), and substantiated by the findings in this study, there was a relationship between a decline in self-efficacy and burnout for most of the participants who suffered from burnout. Along with this was the relationship that existed between academic responsibilities, administrative tasks, extramural activities, and burnout, which ultimately contributed to their departure from the profession.

Discipline issues was the third most mentioned factor contributing to the participants' decision to leave the profession (4.3.3). The participants who mentioned discipline, did so in conjunction with a lack of support, as contributing factors to their decision to leave the profession. There was a relationship between classroom discipline issues and a decrease in self-efficacy, as all the participants who mentioned discipline issues as a factor also experienced a decline in self-efficacy. This was possibly due to a shortage of mastery experiences, because of their struggle with classroom discipline. Along with this, the participants' social and esteem needs were likely not met, contributing to a decline in self-efficacy.

The fourth most mentioned factor was remuneration (4.3.4). Maslow's first level of needs, physiological needs, were not met for a few of the participants. However, remuneration was not a major factor that influenced participants' decision to leave the profession. This agrees with what research (Smithers & Robinson, 2015:2) that suggests that remuneration is not the main factor causing teachers to leave the profession.

The last factor that contributed to some participants' decision to leave the profession, was the curriculum, specifically that it was unjust, lacked

innovation and was too content heavy (4.3.5). Their struggle to believe in the curriculum they taught, likely meant that they battled to foster self-efficacy as there may have been a shortage of past performance accomplishments.

After reasons were proffered for leaving the teaching profession, participants were requested to identify issues that need to be addressed that would encourage them to return to the profession. The most frequently mentioned condition was a change in the school environment, with emphasis on mentoring and the provision of training (4.4.1). A supportive school environment could increase self-efficacy by improving physiological and emotional states as well as satisfying Maslow's third level of needs.

The second most frequently mentioned prerequisite was remuneration (4.4.2). Even though remuneration was not the most common reason for leaving the profession, half of the participants mentioned improved remuneration may persuade them to return to the profession. This is in accordance with Maslow's first level of needs, namely physiological needs. There was, however, a discrepancy in that more participants mentioned increased salary as an aspect determining their return to the profession, but not as a factor determining their departure from the profession.

Workload was the third most frequently mentioned issue that could influence a decision to return to the profession (4.4.3). As workload is related to burnout and a decrease in self-efficacy, a decreased workload could potentially reduce burnout and improve self-efficacy.

Addressing issues related to the current curriculum was the fourth most frequently mentioned requirement as a factor that could encourage a return to teaching (4.4.4). In this regard the participants' requirements regarding curriculum varied, with emphasis being placed on an innovative curriculum, a curriculum that does not discriminate, and a curriculum with fewer time constraints. The likelihood that participants would achieve what they deem as success would increase if they are confident in the curriculum they teach. This would increase their past performance accomplishments and likely increase self-efficacy.

The final aspect that would encourage the return of participants to the profession was resources, namely physical resources and training resources (4.4.5). Both would likely serve the purpose of increasing mastery experiences, thereby increasing self-efficacy.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Implications

The implications of this study arise from the predominant factors contributing to teacher attrition, as well as the discrepancy with much of the literature regarding methods to prevent attrition.

- The study findings revealed that a lack of support, both from management and fellow teachers, played a leading role in the decline of the majority of participants' self-efficacy as well as in their decision to leave the teaching profession. The implication thereof is that the support provided by schools to new teachers is not only insufficient, but a major factor contributing to teacher attrition.
- Classroom discipline issues are often coupled with a lack of support, meaning that increased support may assist in reducing teachers' attrition due to discipline issues, by potentially increasing self-efficacy and meeting individuals' social needs.
- Aside from improved pre-service training, the method mentioned most often to improve retention from the methods discussed during the literature review, was mentoring. Methods, such as professional development and INSET, were only mentioned when they specifically focused on problem areas aligned with the participants' struggles.
- The discrepancy regarding remuneration implies that most individuals in the teaching profession are satisfied with their income. The challenge, however, arises when attempting to entice teachers back to the profession, as their remuneration requirements would then be higher.

5.4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and implications of the study:

Recommendation 1: Support in the form of mentoring

As a lack of support was the main contributing factor to the participants' decision to leave the profession, support, in the form of the provision of a mentor (4.4.1.1), is a key recommendation that would encourage a return to the profession. Mentoring is described as a relationship between an experienced and less experienced teacher, whereby the more experienced teacher guides, coaches and acts as a role model to the less experienced teacher (Hobson et al., 2009:207; Vumilia & Semali, 2016:3). Although there were schools that provided some participants (Cuan and Myra) with mentors, there seemed to be a constant lack of supply of effective mentors, in that there were periods where they had no mentors at all. When mentors were present, the participants experienced greater support. It is therefore recommended that mentoring be applied in schools on a much larger scale, as is the case in several countries (2.4.6.4b) elsewhere, to increase support and in so doing increase self-efficacy and possibly contribute to teacher retention.

Recommendation 2: Classroom management support

The second recommendation is that greater support be provided to teachers to enable them to maintain classroom discipline. A few of the participants mentioned that if afforded the opportunity to receive training with regards to classroom management, as well as being provided with practical discipline management guidelines, this would encourage them to return to the profession. It is recommended that school management bodies should support their staff by providing assistance to implement the discipline guidelines, by providing opportunities for training and being consistent in the implementation of the school's discipline guidelines. It is a great concern that several participants entered the profession feeling unprepared to deal with discipline issues. Van der Berg and Hofmeyr (2018:17) reached the

conclusion that much of the pre-service training provided is not effective. It is therefore important that pre-service training, with regards to practical classroom management, be evaluated and addressed. Along with this is the role that a mentor can play in providing guidance with regards to handling discipline issues, as well as increasing self-efficacy in the process.

Recommendation 3: Workload support

The third recommendation is that teachers be provided with support in managing their workloads. Although not financially viable for all schools, a possible recommendation could be the hiring of support teachers or teacher assistants - who may be teachers in training - to assist teachers with marking or other delegated tasks. Employing part-time student teachers as support teachers may not only provide support to teachers, but also ease prospective teachers into the profession. This could increase both the qualified and student teachers' self-efficacy by decreasing the qualified teachers' workload and burnout risk, whilst simultaneously providing the studying teacher with a mentor and past performance accomplishments.

Recommendation 4: Holistic pre-service training

Poor self-efficacy plays a role in teacher attrition, as indicated in the literature (2.2.1), as well as in the findings of this study. It is therefore recommended that pre-service training includes a focus on students' self-efficacy levels. This may be done by providing longer periods of practical teaching at schools during training, to increase the likelihood of producing past performance accomplishments that increase self-efficacy (2.4.6.1). Time spent at schools observing teachers and practicing their own teaching skills, gives the students the opportunity to learn from other teachers and to make the link between theory and practice (Vumilia & Semali, 2016:2).

Recommendation 5: Re-evaluation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements

Issues with the curriculum were provided as a contributing factor to some of participants' decision to leave the teaching profession. Not only the curriculum *per se*, but the workload within the curriculum and the associated

time constraints, were provided as factors contributing to attrition. It is therefore recommended that the curriculum be assessed with regards to the way it meets the needs of a diverse nation, as well as the content overload. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted on the time constraints and workload within the curriculum, from the perspective of teachers teaching the curriculum.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The first limitation of the study is that it did not determine the self-efficacy levels of individuals who are still in the profession. The possibility exists that teachers still in the profession may have poor self-efficacy but have chosen to remain in the profession nonetheless.

A second limitation is that due to the nature of the study, it is challenging to determine if the participants' self-efficacy would improve if they returned to the profession once conditions for their return are met. Only upon their return, with follow up research, could the effect thereof be determined.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

Following this study, there are several possibilities for future research.

- Investigating the effect on retention if pre-service training included enough information on mentoring and the role thereof, as well as practical guidelines on its implementation.
- Investigating (within a South African context) the effect of schools providing new teachers with mentors to ease integration into the school. As the study indicated (4.4.1.1), mentorship programmes may aid in increasing self-efficacy and in so doing possibly increase teacher retention.
- As discipline was a predominant factor leading to attrition, it is recommended that practical, up-to-date training with regards to managing classroom discipline be included in pre-service training as well as offered to new teachers in schools and the effect thereof investigated. In a similar vein, it is also recommended that the effect of training offered to individuals who struggle with classroom

management, as well as the provision of clearly detailed discipline guidelines to new staff members upon commencement, be investigated.

- An investigation on the implementation of student-teachers as support teachers would be of value. It is recommended that the effect on the qualified teacher as well as support teacher be investigated.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study highlighted the leading causes of teacher attrition of selected participants who taught in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa and indicated a relationship between said causes and poor self-efficacy, as well as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The participants provided conditions related to self-efficacy, for their possible return to the profession. The data collected during the study may assist in not only preventing teacher attrition, but possibly providing a starting point for a strategy to attract teachers who have left the profession to return.

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Each interview will be guided by the following questions:

- 1) Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- 2) What elements of teaching did you enjoy?
- 3) Why did you leave the teaching profession?

This is a question that may require further probing questions.

- 4) Please describe what the concept 'self-efficacy' is.

If the participant is unclear on the meaning, the researcher will provide the following: Self-efficacy is the belief you have in your own ability to complete a certain task or your belief that you will succeed in the teaching profession.

- 5) How did you envision your career as a teacher when you entered the profession?
- 6) At what point in time did you begin to doubt your future in the teaching profession?
- 7) When you decided to leave the teaching profession, how would you describe your level of self-efficacy?
- 8) Is there anything that could be changed that would have prevented you from leaving the profession?
- 9) What would convince you to go back?

The researcher may probe by mentioning the provision of PD, INSET and mentorship; whether or not the provision thereof could have prevented their departure/cause them to return to the profession.

CONSENT FORM

Date:

Title: **A study of teacher attrition and retention in selected urban schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Alice Palm and I am doing research under the supervision of JG Ferreira, a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards an M Ed at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "A study of teacher attrition and retention in selected urban schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape".

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could determine reasons for teacher attrition and if there are possible ways to reverse the process.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are a qualified teacher who left the teaching profession. I obtained your contact details from a response to a post on Facebook/a participant in the study/a former colleague. There are approximately 20 participants in the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves a semi-structured interview that will be audio recorded for my own transcription purposes. Questions will be asked regarding your decision to leave the teaching profession as well as possible ways to retain teachers in the teaching profession. The duration of the interview will be approximately 40 minutes

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits of your participation in this study is that you are afforded the opportunity to shed light on the subject of teacher attrition and can contribute to finding possible methods to prevent teachers leaving the profession in the future.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no foreseeable negative consequences for your participation in this research project.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

The data you provide may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, during which your identity will be protected using a pseudonym.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the Netherlands, where the researcher resides, for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies of the information will be shredded and electronic information will be permanently deleted.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in this study is voluntary and no payment is provided to the participants.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Alice Palm on +31621362712 or email 48017361@mylife.unisa.ac.za The findings are accessible for 3 months after the research project has been completed and assessed.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher at +31621362712.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor, Prof JG Ferreira at 012 429 4540 or ferrejg@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.
Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alice Palm', written in a cursive style.

Signature: Alice Palm



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/08/14

Ref: **2019/08/14/48017361/14/MC**

Dear Mrs Palm

Name: Mrs AN Palm

Student No.: 48017361

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2019/08/14 to 2022/08/14

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs AN Palm
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Title of research:

A study of teacher attrition and retention in selected urban schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape

Qualification: M. Ed 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 2019/08/14 to 2022/08/14.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/08/14 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.
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.



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Statement by language editor

I hereby declare that I language edited a Master's dissertation authored by Alice Palm with the title:

“CAUSES OF TEACHER ATTRITION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED TEACHERS WHO LEFT THE PROFESSION”.

Jennifer Lake

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

Accredited Professional Text Editor, SATI (APEd)
Membership no: 1002099
M. St. Linguistics (OXON)

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PUBLICATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

uir.unisa.ac.za

Internet Source

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Submitted to Grand Canyon University

Student Paper

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Submitted to Argosy University

Student Paper

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scholarworks.waldenu.edu

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