

**EXPLORING THE CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN  
SOME LESOTHO HIGH SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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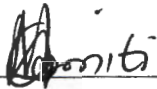


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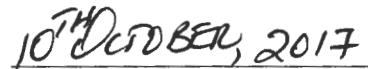
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## DECLARATION

I, MOIKABI CLEMENTINA KOMITI, declare that this dissertation titled EXPLORING THE CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN SOME LESOTHO HIGH SCHOOLS is my own original work in design and execution and has not previously submitted, in its entirety or part, to another University for a degree, and that all the materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.



Signed



Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my late parents, Mr Peter Malefetsane Komiti and Mrs Theresia 'Mabosielo Komiti, who have always wanted the best for me, especially a good quality education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to:

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the nature of career paths of female principals in some Lesotho High Schools in order to understand opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. The key theories that underpinned the study were career development (Super, 1992) used in combination with Ribbin's (2008) stages of becoming a principal. The study made use of qualitative approaches within a narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry was a preferred methodology because it is the best to tell a story where the voices and perspectives of women could be gleaned. Data collection involved the gathering of personal and professional stories of eight women principals through semi-structured interview questions, which afforded the researcher an opportunity to probe for clarification in order to collect rich primary data from the participants. The findings of the study revealed that most women in the study were influenced by their families to choose a career in teaching. Barriers to female principals' career progression such as gender discrimination and lack of support and respect for female principals' authority by teachers were identified. Female principals' career progression were delayed because they sacrificed to take care of their families and professionally progressed only at later stages when the family, especially the children, had grown up. Self-confidence, self-drive, experience and qualifications were identified as enabling motors for women who actively sought promotion. Female principals who qualified for the principalship positions were reluctant to apply for the positions due to lack of confidence. The study concludes that a review of the current policies is done; proper implementation strategies be adopted for equal opportunities for career advancement and employment for both men and women in Lesotho schools. The study recommends that similar studies should be conducted in other districts in Lesotho in order to understand and appreciate the nature of female teachers' career progression.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Career paths, career advancement, career transition, female principal and high school principalship.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACL	Anglican Church of Lesotho
ACL	Anglican Church of Lesotho
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
APTC	Advanced Primary Teacher's Certificate
ATC	Agricultural Training Centre
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
DP	Deputy Principal
GAD	Gender and Development Policy
HOD	Head of Department
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
ILO	International Labour Organizations
JC	Junior Certificate
KEMI	Kenya Education Management Institute
LCE	Lesotho College of Education
LDHS	Lesotho Demographic Health Survey
LEC	Lesotho Evangelical Church

LGCSE	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education
LPTC	Lower Primary Teacher's Certificate
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NHTC	National Health Training Centre
NUL	National University of Lesotho
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STC	Secondary Teacher's Certificate
TSD	Teacher's Service Department
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated and explored career paths of female teachers in becoming principals of high schools in Lesotho. In Lesotho, the presence of women in decision-making positions does not reflect their educational attainment. It is believed that Basotho women are more educated than Basotho men, (International Labour Organization (ILO) 1994 cited in Moseitse, 2006:25), and it is known that women dominate the teaching profession (Khaahloe, 2011), yet they do not sit in high school leadership positions compared to men (Khaahloe, 2011:125). Matsie (2009:4) considers that what contributed to this might have been the ascribed traditional gender roles that positioned women in the roles of assistants instead of leadership. In a patriarchal society like Lesotho, cultural practices and norms have ascribed women to subordinate roles to their husbands and that seems to have extended to workplaces.

Some gender roles ascribed to boys in Lesotho have hindered their chances of being as much educated as girls. According to Matsie (2009:4), traditional gender roles of herding animals are associated with boys at a very young age, and this has led them to regularly missing school while girls attend school more consistently. This is a historical and cultural trait that contributed to Basotho women being more educated than men. Due to irregular attendance, boys performed badly at school and some of them ended up dropping out of school to permanently look after the animals or family properties at the expense of attending school (Morojele, 2011:679). However, despite the advantage of attending school more regularly, which Basotho women have over men, they still do not enjoy the privileges of holding senior positions at workplaces. In the same light, Posholi (2012:12) reveals that problems that surround women's career development lie in the history, social attitudes and adverse experiences at work.

Educational institutions such as the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lesotho College of Education (LCE), the only two institutions that train teachers in the country, have experienced a high enrolment of female students in the field of education, resulting in an overwhelming 80 percent representation of women in teaching (Khaahloe, 2011:118). The qualifications acquired from these institutions permit teachers to teach at both primary and high schools, but reports

indicate that there is a higher concentration of women in primary school teaching positions (Khaahloe, 2011:120). A statistical breakdown shows that women teachers constitute an average of 78 percent in primary schools and an average of 54 percent in high schools (Khaahloe, 2011:119). Given the high enrolment of female students in teacher training institutions, one would expect that there would be an equally high number of female teachers who have advanced from being classroom teachers to high school principalship positions. Posholi (2012:80) shows the exact opposite to be true. Women are still under-represented in the positions of principals of high schools in Lesotho regardless of their training and achievements in education studies, the teaching profession and primary school headship (Posholi, 2012; Khaahloe, 2011).

The promotion of women to senior positions such as a principal of a high school is provided for in the Lesotho Constitution of 1993 as amended in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2001. Section 30 (c) of the constitution stipulates, “equal opportunit[ies] for men and women to be promoted in their employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no consideration other than those of seniority and competence” (Lesotho Constitution 1993:28). It seems that there is a gap between this legislative stipulation and its translation into practice. Despite their dominance in the field of education, women are not equally progressing into the higher echelons of leadership in high schools. The study therefore investigated and explored this discrepancy experienced in school leadership from the career route and career development perspectives of currently practicing female principals.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to explore female principals' career paths in order to understand opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. If Basotho women dominate the field of education and are more educated than men as studies suggest, it does not follow logic that they are not enjoying the same privileges in holding senior positions at high schools. It seems that despite all the efforts made, including the introduction of legislation by the government to advance equality of men and women at workplaces, and despite their dominance in the teaching profession, women continue to be under-represented in principalship of high schools in Lesotho. This initiated this investigation into their career paths in order to understand where the gaps and opportunities lie, so that necessary recommendations could be made for the improvement of policy and practice in Lesotho.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to address the problem stated above, the study posed the following questions. The main research question for this study was:

- What is the nature of female principals' career paths in Lesotho high schools?

To unpack the question above, the following sub-questions were developed for further interrogation:

- What inspired female principals to choose a career in teaching? (Beginning of career)
- How do female teaching careers transition into principalship? (Middle of career).
- What factors have promoted and hindered female principals' career advancement?

### 1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to:

- Investigate the nature of female principals' career paths in Lesotho high schools.

The main aim was divided into the following sub aims:

- Find out what inspired female principals to choose a career in teaching.
- Determine how female teaching careers transition into principalship.
- Identify factors that either promoted or hindered female principal's success in their career advancement.

### 1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research provided an avenue for Basotho female principals to voice their perspectives and experiences on their career paths from being teachers to becoming high school principals. Moreover, the study might benefit other Basotho women who aspire to become principals by providing them with a roadmap to the high school principalship. It might also inform the government, especially senior personnel in education and policy-makers, through the study's findings and the recommendations provided by participants of the study. The study might help the government to evaluate if the policies intended to promote gender equality from home to workplaces in Lesotho have been put into practice and thereafter make adjustments to ensure that

women enjoy the same privileges in education and employment through equal utilization of resources.

## 1.6 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.6.1 The historical overview of the role of women in Lesotho

The role of gender is deeply rooted in the Basotho tradition. According to Matsie (2009:6). Basotho women were traditionally expected to look after households and were therefore regarded as primary caregivers in their homes, while men were expected to protect and provide for their families (Posholi, 2012:2). Men were leaders of their families and solely responsible for decision-making as heads of families, even decisions that concerned women. Eldredge (1991) in Matsie (2009:6) avers that “under traditional law, Basotho women were jurally minors. They had rights of access to property, support, and the courts only through their male relations - fathers or husbands”. This shows that women were treated like children, and Maloka (1997:103) confirms that “women had no role in the public domain; they were regarded as minors, and denied any participation in the political affairs of the country”. Maloka further asserts that women were allowed to enter the chief’s courts only as witnesses or when accused in a case, otherwise village matters and court cases were discussed by men. Women’s responsibility in a chief’s court was to bring food and beer for the chief and the men. This is an indication of the subjugated position of Basotho women.

The oppressive situation of women remained the same under the introduction of Roman Dutch Law in the nineteenth century. The Roman Dutch Law supported activities and practices that discriminated against women in Lesotho in several areas by making it difficult for an abused woman to lay any charges against her abusive husband (Posholi 2012:30). A woman could not protect or defend herself because women had no legal capacity except being at the mercy of the husband’s relatives (Schapera, 1984 cited in Posholi, 2012:31). Amongst other things, Roman Dutch Law stipulated that:

- a) The husband is the head of the family and possesses the decisive voice in all matters affecting the common life of a spouse.
- b) Women cannot enter into a contract or take up gainful employment without their husbands’ prior authorization; and

- c) A woman does not possess *locus standi in iudicio* (the right to address the court or to be heard in court), to participate in legal proceedings unassisted by her husband, whether as a plaintiff or defendant (Posholi, 2012:30-31).

This blatant barring of women to seek employment without their husband's consent indicates that it was impossible for women to make decisions about their own lives, since the rules made them dependent on men in most aspects of their lives if not entirely.

The situation of women improved slightly upon the arrival of the Christian missionaries in Lesotho in 1833. According to Khaahloe (2011:16), significant changes were made regarding the minority status of women. It is reported that missionaries took interest in the domestic and religious lives of people, which paved a way for women to live self-reliant lifestyles. Christian missionary churches introduced western set ideas such as personal autonomy, individualism, education, opportunities for leadership and self-expression (Walker, 1990:16). It was after these radical changes that women were slowly employed in lower positions, and as they got more educated, they got recognized through certain policies and were trusted and given some positions of responsibility in the civil service. However, there was still some discrimination against women. For example, according to Francis (1997:9), apart from Roman Dutch Law, there were other policies which gave men power over women that emanated from colonial governments. Even though women had started working, employment benefits and social welfare programmes discriminated against them. For example, only men were entitled to pension upon retirement to the exclusion of women.



It was only when Lesotho gained its independence in 1966 that the country introduced its own laws, including those that were aimed at promoting equality and prohibiting gender discrimination, such as Gender and Development Policy (GAD) 2003 (CEDAW 2010:25). Several laws were promulgated with Lesotho collaborating in other international initiatives to achieve gender equality. For example, as a signatory to CEDAW, it became Lesotho's constitutional duty to see to the promotion and elevation of women into higher civil service and corporate positions. As a result, Lesotho's increased women's representation in Parliament from 27.5 percent in 2005 to 29 percent in 2012 (GAD 2014-2024: 26) was seen as an achievement even though it signified a rather slow progression. Improvements in other sectors may not be documented, but it is worth mentioning that an attempt to promote gender equality in Lesotho

has been made on policy level. However, the extent to which these attempts have led to tangible change in practice is still not known.

#### 1.6.2 Demographic profile of Lesotho

Lesotho is a small mountainous kingdom (popularly known as the Mountain Kingdom because of its high altitude), situated in the southern part of Africa where it is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Less than 10 percent of the land is arable. The country is divided into ten (10) administrative districts with a total area of 30, 355 square kilometres, urban and rural, and further subdivided into four ecological zones: Lowlands, Foothills, Mountains and Senqu River Valley (Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey, LDHS, 2009:26). Figure 1.1 below shows the geographical map of Lesotho and the ten administrative districts that it is divided into and the greener coloured part indicates the Maseru district where the study was conducted.

## District Map of Lesotho



Figure 1.1: Map of Lesotho

Source: World Atlas (2011)

According to the Bureau of Statistics 2006 Population and Housing Census, in Lebona (2012:4), the population of Lesotho was 2.2 million in 2006, where 23 percent live in the urban areas where this study was conducted. According to UNICEF (2003:1), Lesotho is a very poor country heavily dependent on South Africa and about 40 percent of the male labour force who have worked as migrant's labourers mainly in the mines and quarries of South Africa have been retrenched. This has resulted in a high unemployment rate estimated at 45 percent and it is reported that the country primarily depends on subsistence farming. The country's major agricultural products are wheat, sorghum, corn and livestock. Other industries include mining,

electricity, water and construction (LDHS, 2009:1). Khaahloe (2011:116) adds that “currently Lesotho’s economic success stems mainly from water runoff from the mountains. This is the only important natural resource that results in Lesotho earning about 30 billion dollars a year.” This shows that economically, Lesotho is mostly sustained by water. Lebona (2012:6) and CEDAW (2010:15) report that Lesotho’s population is 80 percent Christian with the Roman Catholics being the majority sect, and its official languages are Sesotho and English whereas IsiZulu and IsiXhosa are among other languages spoken.

### 1.6.3 Ownership and management of schools in Lesotho

In Lesotho, the Catholic and Protestant churches have built and own most of the schools. The government’s role has been limited to policy development and implementation, in tandem with financing schools that were built by the churches. The government also pays teachers’ and other non-academic staff’s salaries in schools. It also allocates teaching grants to church schools registered with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), and supplements teachers’ salaries where orphaned and other vulnerable children are enrolled (Ntho 2013; Lebona 2012). Churches that have been central to these developments are the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL). Education Statistics Bulletin (2010:31) reports that high schools which are fully owned by the Lesotho government are 26.2 percent of the total educational sites. In addition, Khaahloe (2011:117) asserts that the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is responsible for disbursement of finances and control of academic activities of all these formal schools. Basically, the schools in Lesotho are owned in a partnership between the government and the churches or with the community while an insignificant few are private schools. The following is the table showing ownership/partnership of the registered high schools in Lesotho between the government, churches and the community

Table 1.1 Number of registered high schools by district and agency.

Districts	ACL	AME	Community	Government	Government & Community	LEC	Others	Private	RCM	Total
Butha-Buthe	4	1	1	3	0	6	1	0	5	21
Leribe	10	1	3	13	0	18	3	1	16	65
Berea	4	1	1	7	0	10	3	1	11	38
Maseru	7	1	2	16	1	15	1	2	20	65
Mafeteng	5	1	2	9	0	10	1	0	6	34
Mohale'shoek	2	0	2	8	0	5	0	0	7	24
Quthing	3	0	1	6	0	7	0	0	3	20
Qacha'snek	1	0	1	8	0	4	0	0	6	20
Mokhotlong	1	0	1	6	0	5	0	0	3	16
Thaba-Tseka	0	0	1	8	0	3	0	0	6	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>321</b>
Percent	11.5	1.6	4.1	26.2	0.3	25.9	2.8	1.2	25.9	100

Source: Education Statistics Bulletin (2010)

Table 1.1 above shows ownership of high schools in the ten administrative districts of Lesotho and it provides an understanding of the partnership by government, community and churches. The total number of high schools in Lesotho is three hundred and twenty-one (321) with the Maseru district and Leribe district sharing the highest numbers of schools and Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts having fewer high schools. The different churches in Lesotho own two hundred and thirty-five (235) high schools whereas the government owns eighty-four (84) high schools and one (1) school that is government and community owned.

In high school leadership, there is a higher representation of female leadership in Lesotho primary schools than in high schools. Confirming this, Khaahloe (2011:125) explains that there are more female principals in Lesotho primary schools than male principals with the exception of only two amongst the ten districts. The following is a table showing high school principal positions as compared to primary school leadership positions in Lesotho.

Table 1.2 High and Primary Principals by district by gender.

Districts	High School Principals					Primary School Principals				
	Total	Male	%	Female	%	Total	Male	%	Female	%
Berea	31	16	52	15	48	123	23	19	100	81
Butha-Buthe	18	6	33	12	67	63	7	11	56	89
Leribe	50	19	38	31	62	98	26	27	72	73
Mafeteng	20	9	45	11	55	110	33	30	77	70
Mohale'shoek	23	16	70	7	30	-	-	-	-	-
Quthing	19	18	95	1	65	8	0	0	8	100
Qacha'snek	13	6	46	7	54	30	15	50	15	50
Mokhotlong	15	10	67	5	33	62	20	32	42	68
Thaba-Tseka	13	8	62	5	38	51	30	59	21	41

Source: Khaahloe (2011)

The above table shows that there are more female principals in primary schools than in high schools in the entire Lesotho with the exception of two districts, namely Qacha'snek and Thaba-Tseka with a gender distribution of 50:50 and 59:41 principals respectively. Khaahloe (2011:125) observes that the two districts with more male principals are located in the mountainous areas of Lesotho.

The table also shows that male principals dominate high school leadership positions in Lesotho; although it seems that female principals are steadily increasing as it is shown that they at least lead four (4) high schools amongst the ten (10). The Maseru district statistics were not available at the time that Khaahloe study was conducted in 2011 and in this study, the researcher failed to

get the statistics, showing a great need for further studies so as to determine the statistics of the Maseru district.

#### 1.6.4 Education of women in Lesotho

According to Nicola (2002:93), in Lesotho, where girls outnumber and outperform boys in school, gender is seldom considered important. She further reports that amongst several factors which account for girls' predominance in school is the gendered labour market which facilitates employment of minimally educated men. Khaahloe (2011:120) revealed that gender representation for male primary teachers ranges between 20 and 24 percent with an average representation of 22 percent whereas male representation in high schools ranges between 27 and 46 percent.

Statistics show that even at the higher education institutions in Lesotho, women are still under-represented in leadership positions regardless of their educational status. According to Khaahloe (2011:121), LCE has a representative percentage of 57 percent in favour of women. She further explains that despite the large numbers of women teachers, and the fact that women staff also constitutes 59 percent, female managers comprise only 40 percent of the senior management team at LCE. At the NUL, lists of graduating prospective teachers in 2010 were also a concern in respect of gender representation. According to Khaahloe (2011:128), the situation at NUL was not much different from LCE's in terms of gender representation. She reports that higher numbers of females were seen in almost all teacher education programmes for the graduating students. The literature on Basotho women especially principals is very scarce.

### 1.7 CURRENT LEGISLATION IN LESOTHO AGAINST GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Lesotho, like many other countries is said to be still far from achieving gender equality. However, after gaining its independence, in an attempt to improve the position of women at home, in the society and at workplace, Lesotho government implemented laws which were also aimed at promoting gender equality and stop gender inequality. Some of those laws and policies are briefly discussed below;

#### a) Gender and Development Policy 2003

According to the Lesotho Report on CEDAW (2010:21, 25-26), Gender and Development Policy calls for non-discrimination towards women, men, girls and boys in the following ten priority areas: gender, poverty and economic empowerment, gender and education and training, gender and youth, gender and power, gender and politics and decision making, gender and health, gender-based violence, gender and civil society organizations, gender and the media, gender and environment and gender and Science and technology.

It is clearly highlighted in this policy that all the stakeholders mentioned (women, men, girls and boys) should receive fair treatment at school, at work and at home. The policy serves as a guiding tool to the Government of Lesotho in its efforts to achieve gender equality and protect the interests of vulnerable groups such as women. It is also utilized as a guide in gender mainstreaming process for all government ministries, which will serve to address gender concerns in a wide spectrum of developmental issues.

According to CEDAW (2010:21), the gender and development policy provides an important analysis of the situation of women in Lesotho highlighting the following key trends since its implementation:

- Lesotho is unique amongst sub-Saharan African countries in having higher proportion of educated women than men and, its female literacy rate at 93 percent is twice the African average. However, these academic achievements have not wholly brought about equality in opportunities to both men and women.
- With respect to women's marginalization: key legislations have been passed in order to empower and protect women. An example is the Deeds Registry Act 1967; certain aspects which were amended by the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006 to the effect that women married in community of property are no longer perpetual minors without *locus standi in judicio*.

- Socio-cultural norms have however not kept up with legal advancements. Gender and Development Policy notes that gender roles and stereotypes continue to be facilitated by patriarchy, a system based on an ideology which supports and justifies the subordination of women by men, regulates relations between them and allows men to control women both through economic dependence and the threat of violence.
- In the 2007 general elections, 26 percent of elected parliamentarians were women. This figure is before the 50 percent stipulated in the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa 2004, as well as SADC. At the local government level, women made up 58 percent of community councillors elected in the 2005 local government elections.

Thus, the Gender and Development Policy has brought some positive changes to accommodate women into decision-making positions in different spheres of their lives and even though the progress might seem slow, it is of great benefit to the country which was dominantly guided by the traditional laws in the past which did not recognize women's rights as important.

#### b) Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No.9 of 2006

According to Beijing Platform for Action +20 Report (2014:6), the enactment of the policy was aimed at abolishing marriage power thereof by equalizing status of spouses. This in effect has equalized power of spouses married in community of property, and insists on mutual consent in decisions that bind the joint estate.

- The Administration of Estates Proclamation 1935; women married in community of property could not be administrators of deceased's estate.
- The Deeds Registry Act 1967; women married in community of property could not hold title to land or be appointed as curators
- The Marriage Act 1974; treated women as perpetual minors.

□ Lesotho Bank Savings and Development Act No 8 of 1971: did not allow women to open their own bank accounts and ask for loans without requiring the consent of the husband.

□ Companies Act (1967) did not allow women married in community of property to be directors of companies without the consent of their husband (Beijing Platform for Action +20 Report 2014:6)

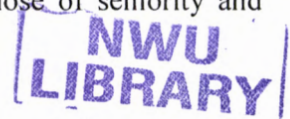
This Act has recognized the right of women to claiming their independence and be able to make decisions about their lives as compared to being considered minors or children with no right to exercise their rights in the past. Women were oppressed and had to be represented by a male figure to take important decisions about their lives on their behalf.

c) The Constitution of Lesotho 1993 (amended in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001)

The Constitution defines discrimination as “affording different treatment to different persons on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (CEDAW 2010:19).

The Constitution Section 30 (a) (i) provides that women in particular, be “guaranteed conditions of work, including pension or retirement benefits, not inferior to those of men, with equal pay for equal work”.

Section 30 (c) offers “equal opportunity for men and women to be promoted in their employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no consideration other than those of seniority and competence”



Section 30 (d) provides for “the protection of women who are in employment during reasonable period before and after childbirth” (Lesotho Constitution 2016:28).

Section 29 (1) also offers “the protection of women who are in employment during a reasonable period before and after childbirth” (CEDAW 2010:58).

The constitution in relation to the study about female principals who are seen in small numbers at high school leadership makes provision for every person to be treated equally at workplace and

to be promoted on merit, not based on anything else like gender or race etc. The constitution however does not provide the basis for what should be done in cases where this constitution is not observed or is ignored. Therefore this need to be looked into and revised so that people will understand the implications of not abiding by it and therefore respect it.

According to Ntho (2013:41), the Education Act 2010 is one of the recent milestones in the education sector. Similar to the Education Act 1995, this Act draws its mandate from the Dakar Framework of Action of 2000, which identified measurable education goals aimed at meeting the learning needs of children, youth and adults by 2015. The Act repealed the Education Act 1995 and provides for free and compulsory primary education. Parents are now obliged to ensure that children of school-going age (ages 6-13) stay in the education system and failure to do so under this law invites a M 1000.00 (one thousand rand) fine or a performance bond with the magistrate's court. The Act is complimented by the Child Welfare Protection Act 2011, which compels everybody the right of children, including the right to education. Furthermore the Act abolishes the use of corporal punishment in schools and anybody contravening this provision is guilty of a criminal offence.

This legislation is expected to maintain Lesotho's high female literacy levels, which are currently at 94%. Furthermore, the Act serves to rectify the 1995 Act which did not protect pregnant teenagers from being expelled from school. The Education Act 1995 contributed to teenage girls dropping out of school as it did not protect them from being expelled from school once they fell pregnant but the Act now protects teenage girls from being expelled from schooling and affords them an opportunity to continue with their education after giving birth (Mabusela, 2014:1270).

d) Local Government Election Act No.6 of 1997 (Amended in 2004)

The above Act paved a way for women to participate in political arenas. The Act afforded them a platform to stand up for being elected into public offices. This Act has therefore played a crucial role in the elimination of discrimination against women; by introducing measures aimed at ensuring that women have equal access and full participation in decision-making processes. The local government election Act 2004, addresses promotion of women in politics. It reserves a 30

percent of constituencies to women to increase their participation in politics and decision-making positions. It is reported that this resulted in Lesotho achieving 58 percent women representation and becoming on top of the list of SADC states with regard to women's representation at the local government, (CEDAW, 2010:33).

Other Acts that contributed positively in women's development are land Act 2010 and Sexual Offence Act 2003. The Land Act ensures that application is based on specifics and gives women space by specifically making provision for joint title deed for couples married in community of property. The Act also aims at ensuring that land allocation is made on the basis of merit and need. The enactment of sexual offence Act 2003 has brought about changes to women's lives. As mentioned earlier Basotho women did not have the right to report or take any legal actions against their husbands when they raped them. The Act offers protection and recourse against sexual offence/ violence and the Act also recognizes rape as an offence under the prescribed circumstances of which the law did not recognize before (CEDAW, 2010:20).

The above-mentioned Acts and policies show that the government of Lesotho has taken action in addressing human's rights and promoting gender equality among men and women at home and workplaces, as well as boys and girls, however the extent to which they have made a difference in women advancement is not known. In agreement with this is CEDAW Report (2010:28) as it explains that,

Lesotho has put in place policies and other mechanisms, including laws and has ratified a number of human rights instruments including CEDAW. It also complied with the recommendations of the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), the Beijing Platform for Actions (BPA) and its Declaration and MDGs. Lesotho is yet to assess their impact on the advancement of women.

It is clear that the established frameworks have strengthened women positions in societies and at workplaces, as also evidenced around the world, which Tanga 2008 cited in Posholi (2012:35) explains as a rapid change on a global scene in favor of women. Women in education are no different, they seem to be slowly getting into school leadership positions especially in high

schools because they already dominate primary headship and, this was made possible by the policies introduced in different countries so as to empower and promote women participation in senior position.

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts are central to the study and their definitions are provided hereunder: career path, career advancement, career transition, female principal high schools.

### 1.8.1 Career Path

It traditionally implies vertical growth or advancement to higher level positions but they can also entail lateral movement within or across industries. The average person changes jobs ten to fifteen times during their career (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 2014). For the purpose of this study, a career path refers to any professional job that was undertaken by female principals in their lives from the first job they had to the principalship job.

### 1.8.2 Career advancement

It is a way of capturing things that one needs to do in order to grow and learn either in a current role or a new one (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2011). For the purpose of this study, career advancement refers to the career progression of female principals, developing from teachers and every step of the way until they became principals. This refers to how the careers developed overtime in the teaching profession.

### 1.8.3 Career transition

Louis (1980) defines “career transition as a period during which an individual is changing roles or changing their orientation to a role already held.” In this study, career transition means the transitioning from being mere teachers to becoming high school principalship.

### 1.8.4 Female Principal

A woman who has executive authority for a school (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2011). In this study, female principals are women leaders who are leading high schools of Lesotho.

### 1.8.5 High School Principalship

High school principalship refers to someone who supervises and facilitates the daily operations of private or public high schools. Their duties include working with other school district and state education officials, establishing and implementing academic goals and curricula and allocating financial resources (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2014). For the purpose of this study, high school principalship refers to an administrator, someone who manages human and material resources of the school and is responsible for the daily running of the school.

## 1.9 PRELIMINARY STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

### Chapter 1: Orientation and problem statement

In this chapter, the topic is introduced and elaborated upon. It is highlighted that despite the dominance of Basotho women in education studies and the teaching profession, they are still under-represented in high school principalship from the statistics provided. The researcher highlights the history of Basotho women in relation to gender and tradition so as to show how far they have come. In this regard, it is shown that Basotho women did not have a right to employment unless approved by the husband if the woman was married or by a male relative if the woman was not married. Women have had rights after the introduction of legislation such as the Lesotho gender and development policy meant to promote women participation and eradicate gender discrimination against vulnerable women and children. The chapter covers some of the legislation introduced by the government and how they have contributed to women's development in Lesotho. The research problem statement, research questions and aims are mentioned as well, followed by the contribution of the study and definition of concepts.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter presents a review of literature where previous studies related to this study are looked into and discussed in order to compare and look for any gaps that might exist between the

studies. The chapter also addresses career development theory by Super (1992) and the stages of becoming a principal by Ribbins (2008) and the importance of their combination in the study.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter the methods employed in gathering information are outlined. Research design is also identified and mentioned, and its relevance to the study is made clear. Amongst other issues addressed in this chapter, the chapter explains how participants were selected and the researcher's role in the entire study. The chapter also indicates how ethics were observed in the process of data collection and in conducting the research.

### Chapter 4: Presenting and analyzing findings

In this chapter, the researcher presents findings by means of themes that emerged during data collection. As a tape recorder was used to collect data, data collected through this manner is transcribed and presented accordingly. In order to preserve the originality of participants' stories, the researcher uses direct quotations and summarizes some of their responses in more meaningful ways.

### Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

The researcher discusses the findings of the study and compares them with previous studies conducted on the same phenomenon. The discussion compares the new findings with the literature that the researcher reviewed in this study. The researcher also shows how career development theory was useful in explaining the career paths of the participants through their stories and experiences.

### Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

This is the closing chapter of the thesis. It provides a summary of findings and conclusions. The researcher draws conclusions and recommendations based on the evidence presented to her by the participants; and ultimately the researcher states her own views in this concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one focused on the background, problem statement and possible contribution of the study. In this chapter, the focus is placed on the review of literature related to career paths of female principals in high schools. Career pathways of female principals and the under-representation of females in senior positions at high schools, together with the opportunities and barriers that prevail in their career development is not a new concept in literature globally. However, in as much as many research studies have been conducted on the topic, very little has been done in Lesotho high schools. Literature review is explained as a roadmap for the development and implementation of the study (Burns and Grove, 2009:90).

In this literature review, the following topics are discussed: theoretical framework of female principals' career development, education and educational leadership, female principals' career paths and planning, female leadership styles, transitioning from teaching to principalship, factors inhibiting career advancement of female principals and factors promoting career advancement of female principals, leadership training and development.

### 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The research on female principals' career paths is informed by the theory of career development (Super, 1992) and stages of becoming a principal (Ribbins, 2008). Career development is defined as a life-long process combining different occupational roles starting from childhood to schooling that ultimately culminates in employment (Super, 1992). According to Super, a person's experiences and attitudes towards work and life vary across their career life cycle and developmental change processes are assumed to be differentiable into observable career stages (Super, 1992). Super identifies five stages of career development: Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance and Decline. The stages will be discussed thoroughly except the last stage of Super's career development known as Decline because declining takes place the end of one's career which is not within the scope of the current study.

He explains that during growth stage a person develops self-concept, attitudes, and needs that relate to the general world of work. This is similar to what Ribbins (2008) calls formation, where all the influences that socialize a female principal from childhood such as family, parents, school, teachers, peer groups and the society come into being. In their study of secondary school principals, Ribbins and Zhang (2006:80) found that the impact of societal and cultural influences on the formation of head teachers was greater than that of family, school and peer groups. In a study conducted by Inman (2011:233), she discovered that at the formation stage most of the participants were influenced by parents, extended family members and teachers from an early age and they have therefore carried the inner drive throughout their lives. In the same light, Bosch (2015:35) found that most female principal participants' decisions to become teachers were strongly influenced by family members, as they mentioned that their parents and relatives were teachers. Teaching was therefore something they were familiar with and exposed to at a very young age. Another participant was quoted saying "both my parents were teachers and I grew up in that environment." From these studies, it would seem that influences that socialized female principals from childhood follow the same pattern as they reveal that family and teachers at formation stage were greater than any other influence. Meszaros, Creamer, Burger and Matheson (2005:1) emphasize that family is very important in preparing young women for their career roles. In addition to family, the love for teaching displayed by teachers at schools where female principals studied seemed to have had an impact in influencing female principals to choose a career in teaching. Chaka (2011:38) adds that a study she conducted revealed that teachers were motivated by their own teachers to choose teaching as a career because they loved and executed it with so much passion and commitment.

The second stage of Super's career development is exploration, whereby people explore through classes, work, and hobbies and also develop tentative choices and skills. At this stage students explore which subjects they like the most or which jobs they prefer. They are basically trying out some careers before they find that special one at the end and go for training in order to obtain more knowledge and skills about it. Although this stage in Super's terms essentially means 'trying out', for some candidates it actually becomes the stage of accession (Ribbins, 2008) where they enter what would become their life-time career. Inman's (2011:235) study revealed

that participants went through different roles, gaining a range of experiences on the way. She also suggested three phases within the accession stage namely; the 'experiential' phase where the academics try out new jobs and roles, the 'developmental' second phase where leaders seem to develop their expertise in their roles. The third phase, 'consolidation' is whereby they begin to take on positions of responsibility and consolidate experience. In this sense, accession is not just about entering the profession, but entails role development and consolidation. This leads to super's third stage of establishment.

According to Super, the third stage of establishment is between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four and it is the entry level for skill development and stabilization through work experience. With its emphasis on skills development, it matches Ribbins' (2008) incumbency stage where the person becomes a leader after trying other possibilities and settling for teaching as a profession. At this stage the teachers look to develop their skills in order to advance in their career. Teachers look for leadership roles within the school. In due course, they then prepare for promotion to principalship. Candidates develop capacity and test their readiness in comparison to the existing principals. In that way, they develop networks of peers, mentors and learn to present themselves (Ribbins 2008). Teachers get experience and weigh their options and decide what to network and how to get there. Some are encouraged by their mentors to take their careers higher to principalship.

The last stage is maintenance, which involves continual adjustment to improve acumen in the position of being a principal (Ribbins, 2008). This stage focuses on the first appointment of a principal to the time she leaves. It is also during this last stage that principals are looking to adjust to their new roles and improve their managerial skills by making use of different strategies for better results as they get close to retirement. Super's career development theory is relevant to the proposed study as it explains the "interactive nature of the variety of roles constituting a career" (1980: 296), supplemented with Ribbins' career stages specific to the development of the principalship career. It is anticipated that the combination of these theoretical approaches enhances our understanding of women's career development as well as illuminate opportunities

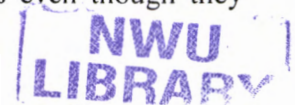
and gaps that could be addressed to improve the gender inequality gap in general, and Lesotho in particular.

### 2.3 GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The literature on gender in educational leadership reveals some imbalances. Many research studies that have been conducted show that women are under-represented in different areas, including in educational leadership, more especially of high schools in the world while men dominate leadership these positions (Bartling 2013; Chabaya, Rembe and Wadessango 2009; Schmidt and Mestry 2015). For example, the study conducted by Khaahloe (2011:25) revealed that high school leadership is dominated mostly by men in Lesotho whereas female dominate primary school leadership. This is despite the fact that in the field of education, enormous progress in the provision of education for women has been made as it is reported that Lesotho occupies a unique position in sub-Saharan Africa as the only country where women are more educated than men (Mosetse, 2006:25). The literature on gender and educational leadership in Lesotho is very scarce; very little research dealing with this topical issue been done.

In South Africa, Bosch (2015:11) reports that South African women had access to different levels of employment in the education system for a number of years, even though their participation in leadership and management positions is still a concern. In addition to this, Moorosi (2010: 548) mentions that in South Africa, female leaders experience more challenges along their career paths than male leaders actually do. In statistical terms, Moorosi (2008) cited in Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong and Holtam (2010:803) reports that in the South African educational system, women make up only 30 percent of school principals even though they represent more than 70 percent of the teaching population.

According to Chabaya et al (2009:239), Zimbabwean women are also under-represented in school leadership due to factors such as family attachment. This ties neatly with observations in Uwamahoro (2011:18), where in Rwandan secondary schools, women principals make up 22 percent in the whole country. She mentions that some of the factors that led to the situation of under-representation of women principals in the secondary schools include girls falling behind in tertiary and secondary education levels and also that teaching has not been perceived as a first



choice career for female aspirants. Kitele (2013:26) concurs and asserts that in Kenya female principals have been in charge of girls' schools only but recently that has changed as currently female principals now hold headship positions in mixed secondary schools. He reports that in Kangundo district out of the 45 secondary schools, 39 are mixed secondary schools and 10 out of the 45 schools are headed by female principals. On the contrary, according to Sperandio and Kagoda (2010:26), teaching is a male-dominated profession in Uganda, with women secondary teachers comprising, on average, only 20 percent of the secondary school teachers in every school district. They mention that lack of female role models among teachers of adolescent girls may have contributed to the unpopularity of teaching as a career choice for these girls in the past. With the exception of Uganda, the discussion above has shown that in many countries, female teachers dominate the teaching careers but are outnumbered by their male counterparts in heading the schools especially the secondary schools.

According to Kaparou and Bush (2007:223), in Greece, at the first stage of secondary education, where students attend from the ages of 12 to 14, women represent only 29 percent of principals, whereas they make up 63 percent of teaching staff. In upper secondary schools, where students attend from the ages of 15 to 17, women constitute 51 percent of the teaching force but they hold just 23 percent of principals' posts. Cheupalakit (2014:1) explains that in Thai educational settings at both lower and higher levels, women are confronted with a similar scenario. She reports that in 2006, women teachers significantly outnumbered their male counterparts, making up almost 66 percent of the entire teaching body. However, at the top positions, the proportion of women was much less, as out of the 31,323 school principals, only 7.36 percent were women. In Smith's study (2011:8), it was revealed that in England and Wales only 37 percent of secondary headships were occupied by women even though they made up 57 percent of the secondary school teaching workforce. The situation of under-representation of women in school leadership is a global phenomenon (Brown and Irby 2005; Celikten 2005; Coleman and Fitzgerald 2008). Confirming this anomaly, Coleman (2002:27) states, "women in educational management are in the minority in the UK but they are also in the minority in most other countries (including) those that constitute newly emerging economies." The possible explanation for this imbalance might

be the reluctance by qualified female candidates to apply for the positions due to hidden barriers for these leadership positions.

### 2.3.1 Female principals' career paths and planning

The majority of women seem to find it difficult to plan their careers, especially those in educational field. Literature has established that women's career paths to the principalship role are often unplanned and complex as well as very different from men's career paths, mainly due to personal, social and organizational factors (Bartosz, Stevens and Stevens 2006:10; Moorosi 2010:560)

According to Smith (2011:14), out of 40 female teachers she interviewed in her study, only six emerged as clear career planners who anticipated getting into managerial positions. Smith asserts that among the six, only one participant planned her approach to the high levels of personal agency as she took uncharacteristic responsibility for her own career development. She further found out that most teachers; precisely twenty (20) out of forty(40), were not clear planners as their decisions not to advance along their careers were based on the perceived satisfaction derivative from teaching compared to being principals which involves administrative work. On the other hand, Cheupalakit (2014:9) explains that Thai cultural barriers have directly contributed to women's poor career planning. In the study she conducted, one of the participants mentioned that she had never thought of herself being a high school principal due to cultural barriers so she did not have a career plan, to the extent that even when the opportunity was available, she was reluctant to take it.

Research studies have shown that most women do not plan their careers. Some of the reasons behind this include family needs and their supportive roles in family settings. With family needs, it is reported that most women consider roles such as mothers and wives as their first priorities and as a result they do not plan their careers because they wait for their children to grow up and then only seek career progression opportunities once they feel that their families are settled (Chabaya et al 2009; Coleman 2002 & 2005). However, Smith (2011:12) notes that this disadvantages women and they need to plan beyond the maternal and matrimonial roles in order to progress successfully in their careers. Smith observed this in her study in the UK where one

female participant was quoted as saying if she had not been a wife and a mother she could have become a head teacher (Smith, 2011:517). In addition to family needs, it is reported that women who are used to playing a supportive role to men usually do not project leadership in their career planning (Celikten 2005; Mathibe 2007; Uwamahoro, 2011) cited in Faulkner (2015:39). Women need to see themselves as leaders not helpers and they ought to seek opportunities for career advancement and always have a plan of action regardless of the other roles they perform as women. In essence those prescriptive roles should not be stumbling blocks to their career plans because women are capable of multi-tasking.

Several research Studies have revealed that male high school principals tend to plan their careers earlier than female high school principals. For example, Eckman (2004:203) reported that “men follow a more self-directed and earlier path to the high school principalship and received support from a network of male high school principals.” He explained that females delayed their careers due to family responsibilities and considered high school principalship only when “encouraged by others”. In addition to this, in Browne-Ferrino’s study (2003:485), men explained that they have planned to seek principalship immediately after completing their principalship preparation whereas most women said they would wait for their children to get older before they could seek principalship positions. Harris, Ballenger, and Jones (2007:15) attest to the opinion that men often enter the teaching profession with the main aim of becoming principals whereas women are mostly committed to teaching for several years before they can consider becoming school leaders. However, Coleman (2005:9) argues that “in a society where men are more likely to be leaders and where women have been stereotyped into playing a subordinate and supportive role, it is not entirely surprising that women are less likely to plan a career that includes leadership.” This may be discouraging female teachers from seeking promotion as they might see it completely a waste of time and something they cannot achieve. It is apparent therefore that most female principals do not seem to have clear plans of their careers as a result of different barriers which might be discouraging them to take their professional careers to the next level.

### 2.3.2 Female leadership styles

It would seem that women leadership styles are different from men's and might also be considered to be very effective in school leadership even though women are still under-represented in this domain. This in agreement with Bartling (2013:20) as she mentions that even though women normally lead in a way that seems advantageous for organizations lately, the number of women occupying secondary school principalship still remains low. It is therefore important to look at some of the leadership styles that women utilize to manage schools.

### 2.3.4 Nurturing

Jones, Ovando and High (2009:68) describe nurturing as "...the personal willingness to promote the development, growth or progress of others." These researchers found out that female leaders tend to exhibit qualities of compassion, empathy and care when dealing with students, teachers and others. For example, these researchers mention that during their observations, they witnessed female principals wiping tears from students, hugging teachers and students and even offering to fix a button on a student's clothing. In addition to this, Bartling (2013:71) revealed that all her participants used the term "nurturing" to describe their approach to interacting with the stakeholders and further explained that collaboration and nurturing gave their staff the ability to continue initiatives without the principal's present.

### 2.3.5 Democratic and collaborative leadership

Research studies have shown that women prefer to work collaboratively with others thereby creating a team approach to leadership with all the stakeholders involved (Bartling 2013; Jones et al 2009). In agreement to this is Bosch (2015:43), who studied female principal participants in his study and conclusively articulated that their leadership style was democratic or participative, in that they liked to bring all the voices into the room and discuss matters, by so doing they made decisions together with the staff so that they could feel a part of the decisions, instead of telling the staff how it should happen.

Women seem to share information and make decisions together with other stakeholders than men do. This is empowering others as women leaders tend to like more collaborative efforts in their leadership approach. According to Lee, Smith and Cioci (1993 cited in Jordan, 2012:38), the

study's findings revealed that women principals shared information more easily than their male counterparts. To sum up female principal's leadership styles, Coronel, Moreno and Carrasco (2010:155) state that "female principals promote greater peace of mind, show more flexibility, contextualize problems, encourage participation and find time for dialogue, they never seem to be in hurry, and their ability to listen appears to be limitless." Coronel et al (2010:155) also point out that this way of working is combined with a solid base of organizational and planning excellence. This is contrary to the assumptions that women's styles of leadership may be jeopardizing their chances of advancing their careers, especially in becoming high school principals. Sanchez and Thornton (2010:4) conclude that even though stereotypes work against women, more recently collaborative approaches have been adjudged more desirable within educational leadership settings and practices.

#### 2.4 TRANSITIONING FROM TEACHING TO PRINCIPALSHIP

There seems to be different motivations behind female teacher's decisions to transition from teaching to principalship in high schools. According to Coronel et al (2010:148), most women principals that participated in a study they conducted stated that their decision to become a principal was mainly motivated by a commitment to schooling, a concern for students and the overall functioning of the school in general. In other words, the desire to become principals did not influence the women principals to follow the path but rather the need to improve or enhance change within the schools. In addition, in a study by Young and McLeod (2001:471) female principals mentioned that they wanted to become principals because they envisaged seeing their ideas being put into action; they wanted to be agents of change concerning schooling and school work. They concluded that the women principals who obtained the principalship positions were influenced by the same reasons of becoming teachers in the first place (Young and McLeod 2001:471). Some female principals had the drive and the motivation to become principals from early in their careers and decided to work hard to make it happen. In Bosch's (2015:34) study, a female principal stated that she had always wanted to be a high school principal and knew that she had to work very hard to achieve that dream. It seems female principals who seek high school principalship are very confident and believe in their capabilities and abilities. In the study by Bartling (2013:91), a participant explains that she was a deputy principal for twelve years,

and also used to act as a principal until she finally decided to apply for the job and succeeded in getting it. In Bosch's study (2015:34), some female principals reported that they did not actively plan to progress. As to how participants' teaching careers transitioned from teachers into principalship, Bosch (2015: 34) reports that all participants in the study she conducted started out as teachers and gradually progressed to heads of departments. Then from heads of departments five of the participants became deputy principals and later principals whereas four of the participants moved from heads of departments straight to high school principals. It is clear that female teachers' career paths were influenced mostly by family and their transitions from teachers to principalship also differed. However what seemed to be a pattern in all female career paths provided in the discussion is that they all started their careers as teachers.

## 2.5 FACTORS INHIBITING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS

Although it has been established that successful advancements have been made regarding the status of women to access management positions, there are still certain factors, which inhibit women from pursuing their careers. The past research studies show that there are several factors contributing to failure of career advancement of female principals (Kaparou and Bush 2007; Hanson 2011; Mutunga 2015). However, it seems that female principals' challenges in school leadership are contingently experienced in their aspirations to seek promotions only but also exist even after their appointments. According to Moorosi (2010:555), at the performance phase where principals have now attained the principalship and have to execute their functions as managers, they are faced with challenges such as negative attitudes of colleagues and community. Therefore, challenges discussed below show how female principals' careers are impeded by barriers on their way to principalship and even after their appointments.

### 2.5.1 Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination still exists in workplaces and as a result this affects female principals' career advancement. In a study conducted by Posholi (2012:50), gender discrimination was one of the impeding factors to women's career development in Lesotho. On one hand, Faulkner (2015: 43-44) reports that four women principals in a study she conducted revealed that they were discriminated against after being overlooked for promotion on several occasions, and when

they finally made it to the interviews, the interview panel asked them questions that would never have been asked men such as their ability to maintain discipline with boys and family commitments. According to Coleman (2005:7), female principals in her study experienced gender discrimination mostly at the appointment stage as the panel of those who were making appointments were concerned about the impact of domestic responsibilities on the ability of women to carry out the principalship job. She further reports that women said the interviewing panel commented on the appearance of women, possibly displaying their discomfort to see women at the 'wrong place' because they were only expecting men to turn up for the principal' positions that the interviews were held for. In agreement, Moorosi (2010:551) alerts that some of the participants also experienced discrimination in their career route to principalship, as one of the participants mentioned that she was told directly at the interview that she was good but unfortunately the school was looking for a man to take the position of a principal, not a female. It seems women principals are discriminated against mostly at the appointment stage in different countries and contexts.

It is clear that women continue to be discriminated against even after their appointments as high school principals. According to Coleman (2007:393), one of the participants in the study she conducted was quoted as saying, "I was constantly challenged by male colleagues in the early years of headship and even described by the governor as a mere slip of a girl. Members of the local community expressed their doubts as to whether or not I would succeed in the headship." A lot still needs to be done to curb the outrageous discrimination of women at workplaces and in their route to leadership roles because good leaders are not dependent on one's gender but on qualifications and experience which should be the deciding elements on who gets the job. The job of a leader is very crucial; it cannot just be given to a person because their gender qualifies them: appointments must be on merit so that such schools could also grow.

### 2.5.2 Stereotypes

The traditional views of women's roles as home-makers and child-bearers are a great disadvantage to women in gaining leadership positions. Posholi (2012:56) reports that the results of the study she conducted on women in senior positions from different parastatals in Lesotho

revealed that most participants had the intention to study further in order to improve their qualifications and take up senior positions. However these aspirants were held back by being stereotyped into caring and gentle roles that were not seen as befitting for leadership. She concluded that those participants must have encountered negative stereotypes when trying to advance their careers. Coleman (2005:18) explains that one reason why women are not preferred as principals is the stereotype that women leaders are likely to be soft, unable to make stern decisions and generally unsuited to the demands of a role that is thought to require masculine qualities of being decisive and in control or in power. In agreement with this Bartling (2013:11) mentions that one factor inhibiting women's advancement to leadership positions is an assumed inability especially to deal with issues concerning decisive discipline in high schools.

According to Moorosi (2010:559), social barriers to women career advancement such as sex stereotypes are more problematic because they are deeply rooted in the patriarchal society and in the institutional cultures and as a result, it is not easy to eliminate them. Coleman (2003:5) reports that in the study she conducted most women felt that gender was relevant to proving their worth, and most of their comments were about the stereotyped views attached to a woman in a leadership position.

### 2.5.3 Family responsibilities and workload

Other factors which seem to hinder women's career progression are family responsibility and workload. The work that female principals do at school seems to take all their time and they find themselves left with no time for their families as they are expected to play their other roles as mothers and wives after long hours at work. Moorosi (2007: 8) found that female principals in South Africa were under pressure to perform well in their careers while the pressure from the traditional expectations of being a wife and of motherhood militates incorrigibly against them. According to Chabaya et al (2009:239), women in Zimbabwe are under-represented in school leadership due to factors such as family attachment. Women in Zimbabwe are reportedly reluctant to apply for the headship positions because they fear that they might be transferred to workplaces away from their families. Litmanovitz (2011: 27), found women to be less willing to make the sacrifices required of leaders than men as they feel that they need to be stay-at-home

parents. As a result, women delay in advancing their careers because they wait until their children have grown up before they can pursue their careers.

According to Posholi (2012:49), conflict between professional tasks and family responsibilities is a major constraint against women's career development as 59 percent of women in the study she conducted regarded their role in their families as their first priority. This means that they have had to prioritize their family responsibilities over employment and careers. Posholi asserts that this was mainly expressed by married women participants. The reason for this is that the responsibility of a manager-leader requires working for long hours and as a result they end up losing quality time with their families. She concludes that women try to balance success and struggle with work and family responsibilities hence they experience difficulties in their career progression. In agreement with this, Moorosi (2007 & 2010) put forward that younger women principals who were still raising children experienced lack of understanding and expectations from spouses who wanted them to perform culturally gendered chores in the home. She suggested that men as partners could play a crucial supporting role in helping their spouses to cope with the demands of their work as principals because without it, women found it very difficult to balance home and professional responsibilities. In a study conducted by Bosch (2015:36), women principals mentioned that as grateful as they were for having been given the opportunity to grow and progress, one complication that arose from this success and progression at work was a challenge to balance work with family responsibilities.

#### 2.5.4 Lack of support

According to Moorosi (2010:556), colleagues struggling to accept female's authority and lack of support from the community are some of the factors that stymied the progression of female teachers to principalship. She further reports that prevailing perceptions that principals should be male force women to work harder in a bid to earn respect of the community and to be accepted. Similarly, lack of support by families and the education system also were found to be impeding women's advancement to headship positions in Zimbabwe (Chabaya et al, 2009:242). Moorosi (2007:517) mentions that support from family is crucial and ensures sterling performance by female principals instead of being made to feel guilty as if they had neglected their families.



Lack of support continues to be experienced by female principals even after their appointments. According to Moorosi (2010:555) lack of institutional and professional support isolates women in the new positions which they are unfamiliar with and yet they are expected to perform their management tasks at their best. She further reports that female principals pointed out limited induction training due to lack of institutional and professional support. Women felt that the district office did not offer them enough support, especially in helping them to adapt to unfriendly environments which are dominated by men (Moorosi, 2010:557). According to Young and McLeod (2001:110), working women who seek careers in leadership have been successful due to the coping strategies they have, such as their personal and professional support systems. Young and Ki-Hak (2009:154) add that the main support systems come from one's husband, family and workplace. According to Allan, Satter and Chaudhary (2011:109), support systems from home and workplace have decreased levels of stress brought about by workload associated with high school female principals as working mothers. In addition to this, Bosch (2015:24), explains that having a supportive husband and family members to assist female principals with raising young children and having a mentor more especially a female one, to encourage them to pursue higher leadership positions is very helpful in their career advancement.

2.5.5 Lack of mentors

Another identified factor which contributes to inhibit female principal's career advancement is lack of mentors. According to Faulkner (2015:41), research studies previously have suggested that of those women who achieve principalship, few have had access to female role models and mentors in the workplace, and all have had to deal with the male standards upon which access to education management is largely defined. In agreement is, Sperandio and Kagoda (2010:26), attest that one of the factors, which may be discouraging for women considering leadership positions in schools, is the lack of women role models and mentors in educational leadership.

Emphasizing the critical role played by mentors in career development of female principals, Moorosi (2010:559) explains that networks and support from mentors are regarded as helpful forms of preparation and support for aspiring as well practicing principals and therefore women are significantly disadvantaged by not having access to them. The lack of female role models and

mentors has also been highlighted by Faulkner (2015:42) as a barrier for women in South Africa who are aspiring to the principalship role, and also for those newly appointed ones.

Mentorship is important for female teachers aspiring to be principals as it has been established that they encounter more difficulties in their career routes than men. According to McKenna (2007: 13), “one way of the ways to overcome the gender gap in leadership is to provide young women with access to mentors and role models in order to increase their knowledge about the historical and social roots of discrimination and also to help them understand the importance of mentoring and networking”. In keeping with this, Maryland (2008: 302) believes that leaders should recognize the need for continual mentoring.

In a study conducted by Bosch (2015:39), three of the participants reported that they had mentors who influenced their lives, and that those mentors were principals and they encouraged them to pursue a career in principalship. Mentors play a vital role in career development of principals, for example, some of the participants in Parylo, Zepeda and Bengtson (2013:575-576) said they never thought of themselves being principals until they got calls for a principal, a mentor or a friend encouraging them to consider pursuing leadership positions. The participants acknowledged that their career progressions were influenced by their principals and mentors who actually provided them with leadership opportunities and encouraged them to acquire a leadership certificate and to apply for assistant principal and principal positions (Parylo et al 2013:577).

Literature suggests that there are advantages of young aspiring female teachers in having mentors in their career paths because they need to be empowered to raise their voices and to boost their self-confidence (McKenna 2007; Maryland 2008). Posholi (2012:81) revealed that women who are not mentored tend to face obstacles such as a lack of equity in pay or training in their organizations, compared to those who have been through mentoring. Female role models and mentors had powerful impact on career advancement of female principals in a study conducted by Young and McLeod (2001:483), and one of female principals was quoted saying this about female role models and mentors “I had a female administrator for one of my internships, she was hard-working, intelligent, organized, and knew how to relate to people. . . .

We had many discussions about the possible roadblocks female administrators might run into". She later explained that this administrative supervisor "was one of the first to encourage me to seek the principal's endorsement". In yet, another study by Bartling (2013:84) on female principal's, it was revealed that participants had been motivated informally by the principals and their direct supervisors prior to being appointed into principalship positions. This suggests that female principals who have female role models and mentors have been pushed or motivated to the right direction to become principals. Kitele (2013:33) explains that female principals should be mentors to graduates who are entering the teaching profession. Therefore, it is very crucial that aspiring female teachers have either formal or informal mentors in their career advancement as lack of it might hinder their opportunities of becoming successful and confident school principals.

#### 2.5.6 Best candidate for the job

The best candidate for the job is the concept that is associated with the belief that high school leadership is suitable for men because they are strong compared to women who are perceived to be soft and unfit for the high school principalship. According to Moorosi (2010:559), the notion of "best candidate for the job" impedes the chances of progression for women in management especially female principals in South Africa where appointment of teachers/principals is encouraged by the School governing body (SGBs). She further contends that the SGB conception of 'best candidate' is linked to the belief in a strong man and this is the most "overt discriminatory practice" in the process of employment. The supposed requirement for a strong man results in female candidates being overlooked. She observes that the notion seems to imply that best candidates for the job mean the strong person for the job which in most cases would be a man. In agreement with this assertion is Kruger (2008:164), she mentions that the image that people have of a good leader is still that of a strong man, forgetting the fact that a woman cannot be a strong man. She further explains "if a woman bangs her fist down in the table she is a bitch and if she does not she cannot lead". She concludes that there is the truth in the saying which states that a woman has to be twice as good as a man. Best candidate for the job should be based on a person's intelligence, qualifications and experience and how well she or he did at the

interviews because that is what is going to develop the schools not the physical buildup of a person because school leadership's success does not entail physical strength.

#### 2.5.7 Lack of self confidence

Other factors that inhibit women's career advancement are identified as low self-esteem and lack of confidence (Chabaya et al 2009; Moorosi 2010; Faulkner 2015; Cubbilo and Brown 2003). According to Coleman (2007:387), women remain less likely to plan careers that include senior roles because they lack confidence to apply for promotions than their male colleagues. Coleman (2005:15) explains that lack of confidence might occur as a result of women having experienced failure and rejection than their male counterparts. It is difficult for women to develop confidence in the absence of necessary experiences such as experience in management as it is considered very important in the selection criteria for principalship. However it acts against women who have not been given any opportunities to act as managers (Moorosi 2010; Sanchez and Thornton 2010). This might lead to the reasons why women lack confidence to apply for principalship without the necessary experience. Smith (2011:11) argues that as much as it is important to consider the barriers that female teachers face in trying to progress their careers, it is also very critical to recognize that women exercise personal agency, make choices and defeat the factors limiting their freedom, in different ways at different life career stages.

Women should be encouraged to take control of their lives and make sound decisions about their careers. Faulkner (2015:31) explains that feminists' theory is grounded on women's lives, considering them to be capable and responsible for making their own decisions about their lives. This supports the view that woman can and should take control of their lives by availing themselves to opportunities that have been created through equity policies and redress (Faulkner 2015:30). Lack of leadership training is also identified as a challenge to female principals aspiring to be principals because experience in management is considered very important in the selection criterion of principalship.

## 2.6 FACTORS PROMOTING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS

As much as barriers to women's career advancement are enormous, there are also factors which promote career advancement of female principals. It is important in this study to investigate such factors in order to understand career paths and the opportunities presented to female teachers to go into principalship. Therefore some that have been identified by previous researchers are discussed below;

### 2.6.1 Delegating and on the job training

Delegation is a process that permits the transfer of authority and responsibility from superior to subordinate (Stroh 2002:67). According to Moorosi (2010:559), female principals reported that male principals informally gave them opportunities to act on their behalf and as a result, that boosted women's confidence because it showed a tremendous amount of trust. In addition, Bosch (2015:48) reports that the participants in her study acknowledged that they had been granted opportunities to grow and develop by acting in leadership positions and attending important meetings prior to their appointment as principals. She explains that some of the participants mentioned that their superiors at their past schools engaged them in various courses, for instance by giving them office obligation with the goal that they were associated into administration. Moreover, they mentioned that their school principals were very supportive and delegated them to act on their positions when they took leave from work. In the same manner, Coronel et al (2010:150) reports that female principals stated that before becoming principals, they were actively involved in the educational administration, such as a curriculum director and other things related to teacher co-ordination. The opportunities given to women principals showed that they played a critical part in their preparation for principalship.

### 2.6.2 Experience and familiarity

Selection criteria for principalship appointments differ according to countries. According to Moorosi (2010:555) participants who did not encounter problems in being promoted to the principalship were those who had worked in the same schools for many years and were familiar with the community. This was mostly motivated by the fact that the community and the school governing body knew them very well and that they were hard workers who deserved the

positions. This therefore might be an advantage to other female principals who have worked for a long time in the same school because they have rich local experience and they know the community very well and the community also trusts them and their work that they have shown over the years. However, using this as a selection criterion might mean that such principals get promotions after a long time whereas they deserved to get it earlier because they qualified for it on merit and nothing else. It might also disadvantage external candidates who are more qualified. In agreement with this Kanjere (2008:9) confirms that, “women principals find themselves fully accepted as leaders in the communities they work with after a lot of hard work and sacrifices. This is not the case with their male counter parts that are readily accepted as leaders in various communities”. It seems totally unfair that women principal’s career paths are more difficult than their male counterparts as they have to prove they are capable of principalship job by first spending many years in a teaching profession which does not apply to their male colleagues. And it seems as women principals have to work harder than their male colleagues in order to be accepted as fit to attain a principalship position which is not fair. At the end, women principals get the job when they are older and retire before they can explore other avenues in educational leadership because they had to work too hard and for too long to prove to communities that they deserve a principalship position. However, experience and familiarity would mean that despite the longer time it took female principals to get promotions, they will be working in a warm environment with no reasons to prove themselves as they will be working with the people who know their work and trust them to lead the schools.

## 2.7 LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Entry requirements for school leadership positions seem to differ from country to country, for example, according to the International Labour Organization, (ILO) (2005:13), school head teachers or principals are selected by school boards in Lesotho. The report further indicates that the selection is not always clear. Principals are required to have a qualification in school leadership and a certain minimum experience in teaching”. However, it further states that in rural schools, many of the principals do not meet the mentioned requirements.

In general or elsewhere in the world, a certificate in teaching has to be acquired as an entry point for a teacher to get into a professional teaching career. Moorosi (2010:550) reports that the initial teacher training qualification, as a certificate, a Diploma or a Degree in education is the starting point for entry into teaching profession and then afterward in becoming a principal. She emphasizes the importance of obtaining a qualification so as to have necessary credentials. Moorosi (2010:550), in a study she conducted in South Africa found out that a university degree was emphasized as a requirement for principalship by female principal's participants, even though it was not officially a requirement for the principalship. According to Moorosi (2010:550), there has never been a formal entry qualification for principals in South Africa. However, things seem to have changed or improved as the recent study by Kitele (2013:19), reports that in South Africa, new professional development initiatives for principals and aspiring principals are now covered in the policy framework for leadership Education and Management development. Kitele further explained that the department of Education has developed an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in collaboration with fourteen (14) universities, unions and the professionals to train aspirants' school principals and to also develop those in service already. It is reported that the main aim was to create a pool of trained school managers, so that this course would be made a requirement for one being short listed for the post of the principal.

Sperandio and Kagoda (2010:24) state that in Uganda, "women seeking leadership positions in the secondary schools must have training for, and experience in secondary school teaching. Current minimum requirements for a deputy head in a four-year secondary school include a university degree and a qualification in education at the diploma level from a recognized university or training institution. In addition, six years of teaching experience are required, of which two years must be in a position of responsibility in a secondary school". This shows that different educational qualifications and experiences that earn female principals that first appointment as a principal differ from country to country, however it all start with becoming a teacher.

According to Kitele (2013:22), "The national policy on appointment, development and training of school administrators and managers (1999) reports that in Kenya, principals have to be trained

before and after the appointment to school headship and they can only become principals if they have acquired a Certificate in Education Management from Kenya Education Management Institute” (KEMI). Coronel et al (2010:143) assert that requirements for principalship in Spain are the same for both men and women. They explain that in order for a teacher to apply for principalship, he or she has to have experience of five (5) years in the workplace, having completed an in- service course and also having a predefined placement. According to Sanchez and Thornton (2010:9) advanced degrees are entry requirements for leadership positions in the United States. Parylo et al (2013:566) adds that principals normally start their career administration by serving as assistant principals in the Unites States of America.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

This study aimed at investigating and exploring the career paths of female principals in Lesotho so as to understand opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. Therefore, in order to have an understanding of opportunities and barriers to female principal’s career advancement, the study examined existing female principals’ career paths, from their personal and professional backgrounds and rationale for their career choices, illuminating gaps in the knowledge about Lesotho female teachers’ career progression.

The literature reviewed reveals an under-representation of women in educational leadership globally, a fact that is more starkly evident in the Lesotho landscape. However, more countries have become aware of the worth of women in educational leadership through their leadership styles which are democratic and participatory in nature, making every stakeholder involved in the educational set up feel an important part of the education system. The literature suggests that barriers to women’s progression into educational leadership still exist and those include gender discrimination, family responsibility and work-load, lack of self-confidence, lack of support at home and undermining of female principals at workplaces. The literature shows that due to these barriers to women progression in educational leadership, it becomes difficult for women to plan their careers earlier, for example, a married woman delays her career because she takes priority in being a mother and a wife rather than being a career woman and as a result takes a decision to

advance her career at a very late stage. This explains why female career paths differ from their male counterparts as suggested in the literature reviewed.

The literature also suggests that opportunities for women's career progression are enhanced through mentoring and networking, improved qualifications, delegation or on the job training and their experience in the teaching profession. The chapter looked into two theoretical frameworks that describe the career paths of female principals: career development theory by Super and stages of becoming a principal by Ribbins which are combined to guide the study and to provide significant insight into women's career development. The next chapter deals with methods utilized to gather data and the research design is also identified and discussed thoroughly, focusing specifically on its relevance to the study.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to investigate and explore the nature of female principal's career paths in Lesotho High Schools in order to understand opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. In order to establish this, the following questions were asked: what inspired female teachers to choose a career in teaching? How do teaching careers transition into principalship? and lastly, what factors promote and hinder female's principal's success in their career advancement? Narrative inquiry was used to carry out the study with in-depth semi-structured questions. The sample comprised eight female principals in the Maseru district of Lesotho.

This chapter covers the research design and method that was used to identify, establish and describe career paths of Lesotho female high school principals. Therefore, the discussion is structured around the following headings and sub-headings: research design, narrative research approach, research paradigm, site setting and participant selection, data collection strategies, data analysis, trustworthiness, researcher's role, ethical considerations and contribution of the study and conclusion. In essence, the chapter provides an overall outline of the procedures that the researcher followed in collecting and analyzing data.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell and Clark (2007:4), a "research design refers to the plan of action that links the philosophical assumptions to specific methods." On a broader explanation of a research design, Babbie and Mouton (2009:72) assert that a research design is a plan for scientific inquiry where a strategy is developed on how the process should be undertaken in addressing the research problem. The underlying principle of a research design is that the researcher must outline what needs to be investigated and explain the way that the investigation is carried out. Basically, the researcher selects the research design which is appropriate to generate the kind of data required to answer the research problem under study. In this study, a narrative inquiry research design was utilized to describe career paths of female principals.



### 3.3 NARRATIVE RESEARCH INQUIRY

In order to satisfy the aims of the study, a narrative research approach to qualitative inquiry was followed. According to Meier and Stremmel (2010:249), narrative inquiry in qualitative research is a process of studying and understanding the experiences through storytelling and writing. Thus, the researcher worked in collaboration with the participants collecting their stories in order to understand their career paths more fully. Cladinin and Huber (in press) explain that there are three commonplaces that need to be explored simultaneously in narrative inquiry namely: temporality, sociality, and place and these dimensions serve as a conceptual framework. Attending to experiences through inquiry into all the three commonplaces is partly what makes narrative inquiry different from other methodologies.

Connely and Cladinin (2006:479) assert that temporality directs the attention temporally towards the past, present and future of people, agents, places, things and events under study. Basically, it guides inquirers to look into the past, present and future of the people or things that are being studied. In this study of female principals, each participant explained how her career unfolded from being a teacher to becoming a high school principal and the challenges and opportunities encountered along the way. They also revealed their plans for their futures in educational leadership positions as well as in their retirement. Their narratives covered their past, present as well as their futures. In essence, narrative inquiry through temporality guided the researcher to know what kind of questions they needed to ask in their inquiries in order to draw rich and relevant information from participants.

With regards sociality, it simply means that researchers attend to social conditions and personal conditions of the people under study. Connely and Cladinin (2006:480) posit, by personal conditions “we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions.” Social conditions refer to the conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding. The sociality commonplace directs attention to the relationship between the researcher and participants’ lives as narrative inquirers cannot separate themselves from the inquiry relationship. The researcher should respect and take into consideration feelings and cultural practices such as beliefs of the participants throughout the study so that good rapport can be built

between the researcher and the participants. In this study, the researcher reserved her comments whenever she felt they would be hurtful or judgmental to the participant's beliefs and morals. For example, one female principal mentioned that she expelled seven male teachers who used to intimidate her and made her uncomfortable in performing her duties properly. The researcher felt that expelling them was extremely harsh, and that there could have been other ways of dealing with their lack of support towards her as their principal. The researcher did not argue with the principal on that issue because she observed from the way the incidents were addressed by the participant that it was a sensitive matter and the participant was adamant that her verdict was the only solution. Therefore the researcher had to respect her because people have different beliefs and morals. After all, in qualitative research, the inquirer collects the participant's meanings not her own, therefore in order to observe that, the researcher reserved her comments and controlled herself thereby respecting the participant's beliefs and feelings.

Connely and Clandinin (2006:480) define places as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of places or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place." In this study participants were given an opportunity to choose the places for the interviews and they all chose offices in their schools so that they would also be able to attend to any emergencies that might need their attention. Andrew, Squire and Tambokou (2008), in Trahar (2009:1) explain that narrative inquiry is based on the principle that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through story. The participants in the study narrated their life stories in relation to their educational career paths and experiences as they transitioned from being teachers to becoming principals of secondary schools at their school offices, an environment linked with where they shared their experiences with the researcher.

The narrative inquiry was suitable to the study because the participants described their career paths in their own way and how they perceived them. In agreement, Josselson (2006:6) states that narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that involves the gathering of narratives-written, oral, visual-focusing on the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences, seeking to provide, "insight that (benefits) the complexity of human lives." Basically, only they could tell their stories better than anyone because they have gone through the experiences and therefore the

researcher collected the meanings of their experiences directly from them, not from anyone else. In this sense, participants were able to provide rich and detailed narratives as they were in control and in authority of what happened in their lives as they recounted the routes that their career paths took into high school principalship in their own voices.

### 3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Creswell (2014:6) defines a paradigm as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of the research that the researcher undertakes. This paradigm may arise from past research experience, discipline orientation or students' mentors' preference. Morrison (2012:19) states that in research we draw upon paradigms which she says are, "a set of beliefs or epistemological assumptions." Therefore, this life history research which looks into the personal and the professional pathways of eight female principals transitioning from teachers to becoming high school principals is positioned within the interpretive paradigm which, according to Nieuwenhuis (2007:48), "serves as a lens through which reality is interpreted."

Qualitative research is concerned with exploring, as well as describing, the phenomena of interest; its samples are always small and sometimes only a few individuals or a single setting is used. This is the case in the life history studies of this research where the primary purpose of the interpretive approach is to understand social phenomena from the participants' narratives. The participants described their personal and professional journeys to becoming high school principals to the researcher in the way they perceived and understood them. The researcher collected participants' meanings as described in their narratives. The researcher acted as audience, interpreted the narratives, analysed them and provided findings evinced from the participants' life stories (Goodson and Sikes 2001; McMillan and Schumacher 2006). Therefore the interpretive paradigm was found to be the most suitable to guide this study as it afforded the researcher an opportunity to interpret participants' stories.

### 3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:8) define methodology as a design whereby the researcher selects data collection and analysis procedures to investigate a specific problem. Therefore, the section below discusses methodological aspects, including site setting and participant selection, data collection strategies, data analysis, trustworthiness, researcher's role, ethical considerations, contribution of the research, limitations, and finally offers a conclusion.

#### 3.5.1 Site setting and participants selection

A selected site is a place where one or more individuals are available to study. The participants of the study should be "accessible, willing to provide information and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" (Creswell 2007:119). The study was carried out in the Maseru district in Lesotho. There are ten districts in Lesotho and Maseru district is the capital city that had a higher concentration of high schools and therefore provided the researcher with a number of possible female principals from which to select those who participated in the study. Moreover, the Maseru district was preferred to the other nine districts because it was the most accessible to the researcher. Creswell emphasises that the individuals (participants) for the study should be accessible, and Maseru district was within reach of the researcher.

Table 3.1 Number and Percentage Distribution of Registered High Schools by District

DISTRICT	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Butha-Buthe	21	6.5
Leribe	65	20.2
Berea	38	11.8
Maseru	65	20.2
Mafeteng	34	10.6
Mohale'shoek	24	7.7
Quthing	20	6.2
Qacha'snek	20	6.2
Mokhotlong	16	5.0
Thaba-Tseka	18	5.6
Total	321	100

Source: Education Statistics Bulletin (2010)

The table above shows that the Maseru district which was the selected site for the study has a higher concentration of high schools and provided the researcher with a range of schools headed by female principals essential for the study. The Leribe district had the same number (65) of high schools as the Maseru district; however, the capital city of Lesotho (Maseru district) was more reachable to the researcher and therefore became the best option as demarcation for the study.

Participant selection means sieving a portion of the population in the research area, which becomes a representation of the whole research population (Michael 2012:24), whereas research population is the entire group of people that is of interest to the researcher and meets the criteria for inclusion as study participants. According to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2013:94), research population is the group from which the researcher intends to gather information and draw conclusions upon. Therefore the target group was all female principals of Lesotho high schools, but for the purpose of this research, the selected participants were ten

female principals of different ages. Of the ten participants that the researcher contacted to participate in the study, only eight participants were able to. The ninth participant did not have time during the month that the researcher collected data whereas the tenth participant had a problem with the interview being tape recorded and preferred questionnaires. The researcher could not use questionnaires because the study was a qualitative study and not a quantitative study and it used narrative inquiry whereby the researcher listened to the participant's stories about their career paths in educational leadership and asked probing questions where necessary, so the method the participant preferred was not suitable for this study.

The participant selection process unfolded in the following manner: The Ministry of Education and Training provided the researcher with the names of all the high schools in the Maseru district that are led by female principals. The researcher randomly chose ten principals from the list and went to them at their work places to meet them, asked them for their consent to participate in the study. They all agreed and the schedules were set for the interviews.

### 3.5.2 Data Collection Strategies

According to Burns and Grove (2005:421), data collection is a systematic way of gathering information which is relevant to the research purpose or questions. There are several techniques involved in collecting data for qualitative approach. This study made use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to probe for more information from the participants.

The data collection was done through the recording of the personal narratives and stories that unfolded through the interaction with the participants. The exploration of the personal pathways and experiences of the selected high school female principals was conducted primarily through narrative inquiry.

#### 3.5.2.1 Face to Face Interviews

In this study, a face to face in-depth interview inquiry was employed. In-depth interviews were found suitable for the study because they allowed for explanations, clarifications and probing. Janesick (2004:72) states, "Interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information or ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of

meaning about a particular topic.” Therefore, the researcher in this study interviewed participants individually; one on one interview was suitable because people’s stories are different and also some participants may not feel comfortable discussing their life histories in front of more than one person.

Each interview began with introductions, an explanation of the study and its purpose. Explanations and request to record, confidentiality, anonymity, and other ethical protocols were addressed before the interview began. The researcher assured the participants that their names and the names of their schools would be kept confidential and also permission to record the interviews was obtained. At the time of the interview, each participant was provided with a list of questions (Appendix A) to guide the interview. The researcher also explained that additional questions would be used as the interview developed. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, it was important to add more questions so as to probe for more information during interviews, for example, participants were asked to narrate how their teaching careers transitioned into principalship, with probing questions such as, what can you say prepared you for a principalship position? These probes were meant to establish if, as aspiring female teachers, participants had any form of formal training preparing them for the position prior to their appointments or any other kind of preparation. Another probing question that was asked participants was who or what had a major influence on their career paths to principalship, and these questions gave the women the freedom to express their views succinctly, especially about the support networks they had on their journeys to becoming high schools principals.

The longest interview session lasted for two (2) hours whereas the shortest lasted for just over one (1) hour. Interview questions consisted of open-ended questions to gain participants’ trust and to establish each participant’s life-history on their career paths in educational leadership and their transitional journeys of becoming principals in Lesotho high schools. Follow-up phone calls were made by the researcher for the purpose of clarification.

The interviews were conducted in a place chosen by participants which in this case was at the schools in the principal’s office. The researcher took notes during interviews and conversations were recorded simultaneously so as to ensure accurate data collection that was later transcribed.

Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2011:43) explain that interviewers must take notes during the interview, regardless of whether it is being tape-recorded. They clarify that notes serve as a backup when recording fails, especially in capturing non-verbal information during discussion of particularly confidential information. Questions which were asked included, what inspired female principals to choose a career in teaching, and how their teaching careers transitioned into principalship. With the first question the researcher needed to find out which of the influences that socializes female principals from early stages such as family, parents, school, teachers, peer groups and the community have influenced female principals' decisions to become teachers. The researcher was also interested in knowing how each participant's teaching career transitioned into a principalship position, that is, the journey from being a teacher to becoming a principal, together with the challenges and opportunities. The researcher also sought to find out if the transition or advancement was intentionally sought by the participants. Findings from these research questions are addressed in depth in chapter four (4).

### 3.5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The recorded data collected from the female high school principals was transcribed by the researcher. The participants' life stories were transcribed from the voice recordings of conversations collected by the researcher during interviews. The researcher listened to the recordings and typed everything that was said by participants verbatim. Additional information which was written in the researcher's field notes during the interviews was also collated. The researcher transcribed participants' narratives word for word so as to preserve originality of their views. This was because there would not be time for the researcher to go back to the participants to confirm the interpretations by the researcher.

Each of the participants narratives were transcribed and typed separately under the same questions so that the researcher could recognize their similarities and differences in answering the prompting questions. The advantage of audio recording is that it provides an accessible source for clear data recollection when transcribing (Floyd, 2012:229). However, Elliot (2005:49) and Goodson and Sikes (2001:165) assert that it has problems and shortcomings of its

own. In this research, one participant refused the use of a tape recorder, providing reasons such as not being free to talk when being recorded. The recordings complement the notes for the researcher but can at the same time intimidate participants who are expected to speak into the machine and felt like third parties would listen to the recordings and recognize their voices and their identity would be compromised (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Goodson and Sikes 2001). Another problem encountered with the first interview was that the participant had visitors during the interview and the researcher tried to press the pause button on the voice recording but mistakenly deleted the whole conversation and only realized at the end of the interview when trying to play it for her. As Elliot (2005); Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest the use of recordings could create technical problems for the researcher. The researcher had notes that she took during the interview but they were not enough compared to data that was gathered through the recording. However, the participant was kind enough to allow the researcher to restart the interview as the problem was recognized before the researcher left, and everything went successfully in the second interview.

The research questions were utilized as a means of organizing data and the themes that emerged from participants' narratives on their life stories were used to develop codes and categories. Qualitative researchers utilize a coding system to organize raw data in order to make it more meaningful (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). The researcher used open coding to analyze data, which is defined as "a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Briggs and Coleman, 2007:360). In this study, the researcher made reference to Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003:2-5) who identified five steps of analyzing narratives in qualitative research data:

#### Step 1: Getting to know the data

According to Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003:3), good analysis depends on understanding the data. Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003:2) explain that in Qualitative analysis, the researcher has to read and re-read the text. The researcher listened to recordings several times and wrote down impressions as she went through the data. The researcher read the text more than once in order to gain a better understanding.

### Step 2: Focus the analysis

The researcher has to identify questions to be answered by the analysis and write them down. This helped the researcher on how to begin. Since the researcher analyzed data using research questions to guide her, it was important to focus the analysis by looking at how all individuals responded to each question in order to identify consistencies and differences.

### Step 3: Categorize information

This step involves reading and re-reading the text and identifying coherent categories. Renner and Taylor Powell (2003:2) in their steps identify two ways to categorize narrative data, which are using preset or emergent categories. In this study, the researcher made use of emergent categories which involved finding themes that recur in the data. Categories were defined after the researcher had worked with data.

### Step 4: Identify Patterns and Connections within and between Categories

As the researcher began to organize data into categories, she began to see patterns and connections both within and between the categories. To show which categories appeared more important, the researcher counted the number of times a particular theme surfaced, and this provided a rough estimate of the relative importance in the general patterns in the data.

### Step 5: Interpretation- Bringing it all together

In this final step, the researcher used themes and connections to explain her findings. A good place to start was developing a list of key points that the researcher discovered as a result of categorizing and sorting the data. Here the researcher stood back and thought of questions like; what were the major lessons learnt and what those who used the results would be most interested in knowing. The researcher then developed an outline to present the results.

## 3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this study, the researcher ensured trustworthiness of the study by taking notes during interviews correctly, truthfully and accurately and by also using a tape recorder during interviews

to ensure maximum trustworthiness. According to Harper and Cole (2012:510), member checking continues to be an important quality control process in qualitative research as during the course of conducting a study, participants receive the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy and, in so doing they may acquire a therapeutic benefit. Therefore, as a means of establishing trustworthiness, the researcher intended to take data transcripts back to the participants of the study so that they could confirm the credibility of the information and narrative accounts. However, the researcher had very limited time to conduct and complete the study and as a result, could not go back to the participants. Sensing (2011:221) explains that as much as member checking increases the value of the project and offers protection from possible misinterpretations, it is time-consuming. In confirmation to this assertion Creswell (2007:90) argues that member checking serves to decrease chances of incorrect information as well the incorrect interpretation of data, with an overall goal of producing authentic and original findings. One of the advantages of conducting member checks is that it affords the researcher an opportunity to verify the correctness and comprehensiveness of the findings which assist to improve the validity of the study (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006:15).

In this study, the researcher asked probing questions during interviews when participants expressed themselves too briefly in order to ensure credibility of the information. This was done as an attempt to ensure that the information recorded was clear and provided participants' views correctly as there would not be time to go back and seek clarifications, so the researcher had to make sure that everything was clarified and carried the true meaning of the participant's views during the interviews. At the end of each interview, the researcher played the audio recordings for participants so that they could listen and clarify some of the things which were not clear or which they thought they did not explain in-depth, and for this the researcher wrote down any additional information that came to surface when the participant was listening to the tape. Moreover, in order to determine validity and credibility of data provided by the participants, the researcher tried as much as possible to preserve the voices of the participants by mostly quoting them directly instead of summarizing their responses. The quoting was arranged in a way that short quotes appeared in quotation marks while the long quotes appeared in indented block

format. This was done to keep the originality and validity of the participant's narratives since they could not be reached after transcriptions were done.

### 3.7 THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

The researcher established rapport between the participants of the study and herself and ensured good relations of trust, respect and cooperation. As an outsider in the field, she had to be honest to the participants from the beginning about her own identity. The researcher declared who she was so that participants could feel free to express themselves knowing who they were talking to. This formed good relations between the researcher and the participants and respected her even though she was young and foreign to the field. The researcher also respected them and tried to remain true to their perceptions and views because she was not one of them.

The advantage of not being one of them was that the researcher did not come into the research setting with her own preconceived ideas and experiences; rather the researcher was eager to learn from all of them and that kept the interviews more interesting and the participants felt free because they knew they were not being judged or their ideas rejected or argued against. This is to say, if the researcher was in the same field with them, her own path or experiences could have been different and that might have led to the researcher arguing with them about certain narratives when they told their own stories. For example, the researcher grew up reading about some teacher training colleges which were long closed and she never thought she would meet people who actually studied at those colleges, so the researcher urged the participants to talk more about them as what was written about them was not much and the researcher learned a lot. In agreement with this view, Dwyer and Buckle (2009:57) emphasize that an outsider researcher does not claim to know participant's experiences but they learn from them. The researcher's interaction with them was a learning curve. That also pleased them as they realized that the researcher was impressed, appreciative of their career journeys.

As a researcher and a student, the researcher was aware of the position of authority and power of principals over her (Lebona 2012:31), but she remained in control of the research process even though one principal wanted to lead the interview. Since the researcher gave out copies of the interview questions to all the participants at the beginning of the interviews, this particular

principal wanted to take over by reading out a question and then answering it and when she was done she would move to the next one without giving the researcher an opportunity to say anything or even ask follow up questions where necessary, but the researcher asked her to let her ask the questions and if there were more questions that might arise after her answers she should let the researcher ask them and she agreed, so the interview went on successfully. The researcher gave the participants time to attend to urgent issues or visits during interviews as they were all conducted at schools in their offices. The researcher understood when they needed to attend to important issues because they are leaders of schools and interruptions were bound to occur. The researcher, in cases like that, stopped the recordings and left the office to allow privacy and then continued with the interview later when the participant was done.

The researcher gathered data for the study from the participants through interviews using the interview guide, probing questions were also added in order to collect rich data. The researcher was responsible for recording the interview discussions between her and the participants of the study at their own places of work. According to Creswell (2009:175) qualitative research is often conducted in the field, allowing direct interaction with the people being studied in their context. The researcher's role also included transcribing data after collecting it, analyzing, presenting and discussing recommendations and conclusions based on the findings of the study.

### 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to O'Leary (2010:41), ethics refer to the rules of behaviour that states what is acceptable in a profession. However, ethics in conducting a research differ from disciplines and institutions but there are generally acceptable guidelines. For the purpose of this study, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Faculty of Education, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus to conduct research, (see appendix G). The researcher submitted her own letter and the letter from the university faculty both requesting permission to conduct the research to the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, (see appendix B and appendix C) The Ministry of Education and Training through the Maseru district office as the location for the study, wrote the researcher a permission letter allowing her to enter the high schools she listed on her letter requesting permission to conduct the study, (see appendix D). Lastly, the researcher



obtained permission from the principals to take part in the study and they signed consent forms, (see appendix E).

### 3.8.1 Voluntary Consent

Nobody should be forced into participating in a research project as participation should always be voluntary. Harrison (2002:74) explains that the right to voluntary participation should be observed at all times, and even if the participants started participating in the study, they can withdraw at any time and for any reason. The researcher informed the participants about the study before they gave consent to participate in the study and advised them that they could withdraw at any stage of the data collection if they felt uncomfortable. The participants signed the informed consent forms provided by the researcher agreeing that they were willingly and voluntarily taking part in the study (see appendix E).

The participants were also informed that they could choose not to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable in answering as De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002:57) explain that subjects can be harmed either physically or emotionally. However, the researcher ensured that participants were comfortable, unharmed, not humiliated physically or psychology as even the research questions that the researcher used during data collection were first looked at and corrected and found suitable and credible by the researcher's supervisor as well as the ethics committee from the faculty. In this study, the researcher interviewed the participants at their convenient time and place so that they could feel free to talk to the researcher; as indicated by Creswell (2009:101) that in qualitative research participants are interviewed at their own natural places. The researcher also created a conducive environment between her and the participants by allowing them to use language of their choices during interviews so that they could feel free to express themselves and also to establish trust between her and the participants.

### 3.8.2 Confidentiality

The researcher assured the participants on the sensitive nature of the information they would provide, and that such information would by all means be protected from third parties. Participants' names were presented in pseudonyms and the identifying details were transformed to ensure confidentiality. The names of the schools they led were also protected and not

mentioned in the study as well as those of the colleges and universities they attended so that nothing could lead them to being easily identified

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the methodological approach of the study was discussed and its relevance to data collected. Again, the chapter explained the processes or procedures acquired in collecting data such as ethical procedures, the chapter looked into data collection strategy that was used to draw rich detailed data from participants which was face to face interviews with semi structured questions. The research design, a narrative inquiry was described at length, pointing out its advantages and differences from other methodologies. Interpretive research paradigm was found suitable and befitting to guide the study because of the exploratory nature of the study which sought to understand the meanings of participant's perspectives about their career paths in educational leadership. Other aspects such as researcher's role and ethical considerations were also covered in this chapter. The chapter that follows presents and analyses data.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to investigate and explore female principals' career paths in order to understand opportunities and barriers to their career progression from being teachers to becoming high school principals. The study focused on female principals of some Lesotho high schools, particularly in the Maseru area. This chapter presents the findings from data collected through individual interviews with the eight principals. The narratives provided the researcher with rich primary data on how each participant's career path to the principalship position unfolded.

### 4.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher provides demographic information for each participant. The narratives of the participants are honestly expressed through their own voices, and effort is made to preserve the voices of these women by quoting them directly. Quotes are in italics, short quotes appear in quotation marks within the text, whereas long quotes appear in indented block format. Data were analysed and organized into themes and categories presented in Table 4.2. The themes and categories were then used later as headings and sub-headings to present detailed findings. All participants are presented through pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Basic demographic information, such as age, length of time in principalship, previous roles and length of time in education is summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Participants' Demographic Data

Data gathered	Masemi	Malefu	Manepo	Mapita	Malerato	Maliau	Mapalesa	Maneo
Age	47	56	37	45	47	60	62	41
Time in Principal Role	8 months	9 years	1 year	8 years	9 years	6 years	5 years	7years
Previous Role	Deputy Principal	HOD	Deputy Principal	HOD	English language and Sesotho Teacher	HOD	Deputy Principal	Principal
Total no. of years in Education	22 years	31 years	12 years	19 years	21 years	37years	41 years	11 years

All eight participants are female principals of public high schools located in Maseru district, the capital city of Lesotho. They acquired different qualifications and experiences which led them to their current positions. They were all positive and happy with their career decisions despite all the challenges they met along their role transitions and after acquiring the positions.

Table 4.2 Themes and categories emerging from data

THEMES	CATEGORIES
Inspiration/Influences on female principals to choose a career in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Parents/ Family members</li> </ul>
When and why decision to become principals was made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unintentional journey/Encouraged by others</li> <li>➤ Intentionally sought promotions – readiness for the position, wanted to put ideas into practice, wanted to change leadership styles and implement collaboration styles</li> </ul>
Challenges in the transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lack of self-confidence</li> <li>➤ Gender discrimination</li> <li>➤ Family responsibilities</li> </ul>
Coping strategies/ Support Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Family</li> <li>➤ Colleagues</li> <li>➤ Experience from previous roles</li> </ul>
Challenges faced by female principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lack of support and respect for authority by teachers</li> <li>➤ Lack of parental engagement</li> <li>➤ Lack of support by Ministry of Education</li> <li>➤ Workload</li> </ul>
Opportunities for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Previous positions – Deputy Principals and HODs</li> <li>➤ Principals' association</li> <li>➤ The Ministry of Education- training principals</li> </ul>
Future aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Minister of education</li> <li>➤ Study further</li> <li>➤ Retire and do guidance and counselling for kids</li> </ul>

The table above summarizes the themes and categories emerging from the data. A more detailed presentation of these views and perceptions is made below.

### 4.3. EARLY LIFE CAREER INFLUENCES

Participants had similar influences which steered them in the direction of a teaching profession earlier in their lives. For all of the participants, family members played a great role in inspiring them to choose teaching as a career. Participants who entered the teaching world forty-seven and thirty-seven years ago had the same problem of limited career options. They explained that they had to choose a course from few options: nursing, agriculture and teaching; and they chose teaching from the encouragement of family members.

#### 4.3.1 Parents/ Family members

All eight participants in the study were influenced by family members to follow a career in teaching. One other thing that all the eight participants had in common was love and passion for teaching that they developed once they were in it.

Masemi is a forty-seven (47) year old single parent, separated from her husband and she has three children. Her mother is a retired teacher and her father a retired soldier. Her school has enrolment of five hundred and twenty (520) students and twenty-nine (29) teachers of which twenty-one (21) are female while eight (8) are male teachers. She is a holder of an Honours degree in Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Policy Studies and Governance.

Masemi's mother was a teacher and she encouraged her to do teaching as well. She had a different career path in mind but when that did not work out; her mother was there to convince her to get into teaching. This is how she puts it:

*The thing is, I did not plan to do teaching, and I actually wanted to pursue piloting because I liked sciences but unfortunately at the time the airport was dissolved and as a result I could not do it. Studying in South Africa was not so common and simple back then that is why I did not even think of going to South Africa for pilot training. My mother was concerned that some jobs are not professions except teaching and nursing, and she wanted me to have a profession, so I had to choose between the two and I chose teaching with her encouragement and because her being a teacher was something I was*

*familiar with, something I could relate to whereas nursing seemed more of a new thing and scary altogether as no one in the family has been a nurse.*

Masemi was asked if she ever developed interest in teaching or if she has never liked it and just did it to respect her mother's wishes she had this to say:

*Once I was involved in teaching, I learned to love it, I acquired the love for it and I enjoyed it so much. I started to want what was best for the students and I wanted them to perform at their best abilities and have good results. I really developed passion for teaching once I was in it and all I could think was how to help students perform at their level best. I also developed passion for sports, and I then appreciated the fact that our abilities are different. I honestly do not regret getting into teaching because it is in my blood... it is a huge part of my life.*

Manepo is the youngest female principal among the eight. She is thirty-seven (37) years old, and the second of five children - four girls and a boy. Her father is a retired policeman and her mother a retired teacher. The elder sister is a teacher by profession and the younger sister is a lecturer at a local university. Another sister is a nurse. This means that there are four teachers in the family, including their mother. She states, "*I was raised in the environment of teachers.*" She comes from a family of teachers and it was natural for her to choose teaching and she mentioned that she even attended high school where her mother used to teach. She has an enrolment of six hundred and twenty-six students (626) and twenty-nine teachers (29) of which twelve (12) are female teachers and seventeen (17) are male teachers. She is a holder of a Master's Degree in Inclusive Education.

Similar to Masemi, she had one profession that she wanted to follow which was law. She said she wanted to be a lawyer despite the strong background of growing up in a family of teachers. However, when she got to the University she ended up applying for education, and she was amazed at how she enjoyed it. She reported:

*I did not want to be a teacher at all, I really wanted to be a lawyer, but when I got to the university in my first year doing education, I started to doubt why I ever wanted to be a*

*lawyer in the first place because I grew to love teaching and I enjoyed it so much. I really grew to love it once I started getting into it, I thought it was something I could do and enjoy.*

Malefu is fifty-six (56) years old and she comes from a family of two girls, where she is the eldest. Her mother never went to school and she was a domestic worker in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). She explained, *“Fortunately she worked for the English family so she picked up English from there and she was a domestic worker up to the last day of her life. She worked away in RSA, which means she never raised us, we were raised by our grandmother.”* Malefu’s school has three hundred and eighty-one (381) students, thirteen (13) teachers; eight (8) female while the other five (5) are male. She is a holder of Master’s Degree in Education.

Malefu’s father was a teacher. *“My father told all of us, who were interested in learning, even my elder sisters that the only respected career back then was teaching and it was easy for us to follow in his footsteps because he was well respected and admired by everyone in our community.”* Malefu continued to talk about other people who might have had a positive influence on her such as teachers in her schooling days.

Another participant who was influenced to get into teaching by her family is Malerato. She is forty-seven (47) years old. Both her parents were not working; they were a family of three (3) children. She and her sister are teachers and her brother has never worked. Her student enrolment is one thousand and two hundred (1200) with twenty-nine (29) teachers, twelve (12) who are female and seventeen (17) are male. She is a holder of a Degree in Education. She did not want to be a teacher but an accountant instead yet her sister encouraged her to further her studies in education. She mentioned, *“My sister told me that since I like accounting so much, I should do teaching and specialize with accounting so that I could teach it at high school and suddenly she was making sense to me and I accepted the advice with greater joy.”*

Things did not turn as planned years down the line for her because she said that at university, accounting was cancelled and she had to transfer to Sesotho and English as her subjects of specialization.

Mapita is forty-five (45) years old. She comes from a family of five and she is the second born, coming after her elder brother; she also has two other brothers, one who passed away. So, there are now two (2) brothers and two (2) sisters. She said that her father also passed away and they are only survived by their mother. She has a total enrolment of five hundred (500) students and twenty-three (23) teachers thirteen (13) of whom are females are ten (10) are male. The highest qualification she holds is a Bachelor's degree in Education.

Mapita mentioned that both her mother and father were teachers. *"I grew up knowing only one profession which was teaching. My mother and father used to teach at the same school and I also went to school there even though they never taught me."* She explained that she did not really know which career to choose but all she remembers was that she felt strongly about education, that she wanted to study and have a profession, so when her parents told her to go to teacher training college after completing her high school education she did not argue.

Maneo is forty-one (41) years old. She comes from a family of seven (7), three girls and four (4) boys. Both she and her elder sister are nuns and are also teachers. Her mother is not working but she is raising her grandchildren. Her father was a farmer but is late. She has a total of six hundred and ten (610) and twenty-six (26) teaching staff of which thirteen (13) are females and thirteen are male. She is a holder of a Bachelor's degree in Education.

Maneo also found herself following in her sister's footsteps and becoming a professional teacher. She stated that both her parents were not working and the closest person she grew up with, her sister, was a teacher. She mentioned that she grew up envying her sister and hoping she would also have a profession but not necessarily a teaching one. She said she first wanted to be a farmer like her parents. However, she eventually followed her sister's footsteps, by not only becoming a teacher but also a nun. She is the one participant who developed passion and love for teaching at a very late stage in her career path. She did her degree in education majoring in Theology and English language and she thought she enjoyed it until she went for teaching practice in her last year at the university where she actually felt that she had chosen the wrong career.

The terrible experience she had during her teaching practice made her change her mind and all she wanted was to go back to her original plan to do Agriculture but again her sister and superiors at the nun's council advised against it. She mentioned that she would shiver and sweat standing in front of students and would not be able to speak a single word for some time. She had this to say:

*I thought I finally enjoyed education seeing how other students liked it, but later when I went to teaching practice in my fourth final year, it was so tough and I was so frustrated at the school, so bad that I thought I would change teaching at high school and teach at primary school, so I talked to my sister who is also a nun and my superior to allow me to change and go to Agriculture. I wanted to give up in education but they did not allow me to do so because we just do not control ourselves. I had to listen to my management. Eventually working with students or children made me feel the love for them. I developed passion and love for kids and I enjoyed working with them.*

Maliau was influenced by her father to have a profession which ended up in teaching. She is sixty (60) years old and she explained that her father was a primary school teacher and her mother did not work. They are a family of eight (8) children, the one Maliau came after died so only seven (7) of them remain. Of all four (4) girls, all teachers by profession including her, another girl is an auditor while the other one went to a Home Economics School but is not working and the last one is a nun at Good Shepherd. Maliau has a student roll of about five hundred (500) students, seventeen (17) teachers. Six (6) are female and eleven (11) are male teachers. She is a holder of a Bachelor's degree in Education.

Maliau explained how she chose a career in teaching, *"After I completed COSC, I did not qualify to study at the university, though I had a credit in English, so I had to choose between Agriculture and Education because back in my days, there were few career options to choose from so my father wanted me to have a profession, so I met the requirements to study education at the college."*

Mapalesa is sixty-two (62) years old. She had this to say about her family, *“My father was a miner and my mother a housewife, she never worked. My parents were farmers; they sold animals for my education. We are a family of six (6) and I was the first girl in the community to go to the training college.”* She has a total of one thousand one hundred and four (1104) students; forty-one (41) teachers of which twenty-six (26) are females and fifteen (15) are male. Mapalesa is a holder of a Master’s degree in Education. She explained that after she completed her standard 8, her mother advised her to go to college and she chose a teacher’s training college instead of Agricultural Training College (ATC) and National Health Training College (NHTC). She mentioned that the three colleges were the only ones available in their times. At the teacher’s training college, she luckily met the requirements to study at the teachers training college.

It is clear that the predominant career amongst family members was teaching and no other had a significant impact. Different family members such as mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters seem to have played a critical role in guiding the female principals to choose a career in teaching. Some of the participants mentioned that there were few career options to choose from when one wanted to pursue her studies but with the help and advice from their family members they found themselves in the teaching profession.

#### 4.4 TRANSITIONING FROM TEACHER TO PRINCIPAL

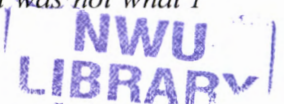
The participants in this study have had different career paths that led to school leadership. Some decided to seek promotion from being teachers to being principals whereas some did not even think of the move at all but were encouraged by other people or they were nominated into the positions. Moreover, some participants found themselves in principalship positions very early in their career stages without the necessary experience in teaching. For example, one participant became a principal after a mere six months of teaching experience. Those who actually sought principalship positions gave the following reasons: they felt that they were ready for the position, they wanted to see their ideas implemented, they had had enough experience with the classroom, they felt that the principals did not do well enough so they wanted to see a difference in student’s performance, including management styles such as collaborative style. Five participants did not

decide to become principals and three of the participants purposefully sought principalship positions.

#### 4.4.1 Unintentional Journey

Manepo is on her first principalship. She started her teaching career in 2004 as a senior teacher at a high school in her home area. She mentioned that the school was too small so there were no HODs but senior teachers instead. She taught English language, Literature and Development Studies. In 2007 she went back to school to further her studies. She went to one of South African Universities where she did an Honours and Master's in Inclusive Education. She however had this to say about the course:

*The course was not what I expected though, the person I talked to about the course as it was a new course said it had something to do with disabled students being integrated into normal schools and I thought it was very interesting, that I was going to learn sign language and braille but when I got there it was totally different. The course was a general overview on how to accommodate students with disabilities, so it was not what I expected, but I must say I enjoyed it, especially the psychology part of it.*



After completing her Master's degree in education she went back to the school she was teaching before she went to the university. She applied for deputy principal position when she went back to the school and she got the job in 2011. She then moved to the current school, working as a deputy principal in 2013. Then in May 2015, the principal of that school's contract expired and the school board did not renew his contract but asked her instead to act as a principal. When asked at what stage she decided to become a principal she said, "Never, I think it is a very stressful position, I never really wanted the position. I was hoping and planning to go to a higher institution when I came back from school (after doing Master's). I did not want to come and work at the high school when I came back from school, because when you advance your degree you want to advance your career and I wanted to work at tertiary institutions but it did not happen." It is clear that Manepo had different ambitions after studying further but as it turned out; she went back to high school and has since worked as a principal.

Maneo is at the second high school principalship and her career path is shorter and more successful than she expected. She was the only participant who was at her second high school principalship. She climbed the high school leadership ladder fast and within a very short space of time. Upon completion of her degree, in 2005, she secured her first teaching job at a high school as a Religion teacher. She explained that in January 2006, the principal of the school died and she was asked to take his position by the school board. She said she did not know what to say because she felt she was not ready and was scared that she might not do the job effectively as she had just recently graduated from the university and had not spent much time in teaching and none at all in an administrative role. She mentioned that she was just starting to enjoy teaching and wanted to enjoy the classroom and her students and did not think of anything else let alone taking such a huge position with tough responsibilities.

However, she said that at the end she accepted because as a nun she does not control herself but most decisions are made on her behalf and she has to oblige because she knows the management always want what is best for them (nuns). She worked as a principal of that school for two (2) years from 2006 to 2008 December. In 2009, she was given a new job which was to take care of school finances. She mentioned that the reason for this new role was brought by the fact that the lady who was a deputy principal of the school prior to her arrival at the school went to further her studies, then when she came back from the university she applied for the principalship position and got it. She then had to make way for her and was then taken to finances to take care of the school finances until 2011.

She was contacted in 2011 by the senior nuns, who asked her to take a principalship position at another school and she said to herself "*Oh my God here we go again.*" Apparently the principal who was also a nun was retiring from the position, so the school also belonged to the Catholic Church; the seniors said they could not find anyone befitting to take the position except her. She said she knew that complaining would not get her anywhere but she was a bit confident because of the experience she had got in her previous principalship. She explained that even though she was asked to be the principal at that school, the Teachers Service Department (TSD) asked her to apply and she did and went for an interview and got the job. She has been a principal since then

and said her performance contract is coming to an end in 2017. She would then have to apply like other candidates and see if she could get the job even though her aspiration is to further her studies when her contract comes to an end.

Another participant who did not really plan to become a principal is Maliau who said she was comfortable being a teacher but someone changed her perceptions one afternoon. She said one day she went to TSD to look for teaching vacancies and met an education officer there who told her that there was a vacancy for a principal at a new school whose construction was just about complete. He told her that it was going to be a boarding high school and she should apply for the headship position because all of the schools she had been working at were all boarding schools and also that it would 'not be nice at her age' to be answering to someone else.

She said she never really thought of becoming a principal; yes she had a lot of experience in teaching but was not ready for anything other than being a teacher. She said she told her husband who advised her to apply because she would not lose anything in case she was not selected. She applied for the job but to her it was just to test waters and she would not even get disappointed if she did not get it. She elaborated further: *"To my surprise, I was shortlisted and I went for an interview and I got the job. I could not believe it at first, it took time to sink in. The school was established in 2010, so I have been the principal here since then."*

Mapita was the most active and talkative participant among the eight. She was happy, full of life and answering questions directly without going astray. She is on her first principalship. She completed her degree in Education in 1993 and went to a South African church school to start her teaching in 1997 until 2000. In 2001, she was called to teach at the school she is currently a principal. She said that church superiors called her and told her that there was a shortage of teachers at the church school in Lesotho. She arrived at the school and worked as a teacher from 2001 till 2007 and in 2003 she became an HOD.

She also did not intend to become a principal and when it happened it was a complete shock to her. She explained that in 2008, the principal went to school to further his studies and the school board asked teachers to nominate a person they found befitting to be a principal and they

nominated her. She said she did not have confidence that she could do the job and she asked herself why they had nominated her, and it got to a point where she thought, “*Oh they do not like me, so they want to see me failing.*” That was how she became a principal, and she later even discovered that the principalship job was not that scary; she discovered that she had passion for administration once she was involved in the principalship position.

The last participant who had an unintentional journey to high school leadership was Mapalesa. She was also on her first principalship. She has been a principal for five years and in teaching for forty-one years. She, like the other four participants, did not plan to become a principal. She has a richer experience in teaching than any other participant in this study. She acquired Lower Primary Teacher’s Certificate (LPTC) in 1974 and started her teaching career in 1975 at a primary school. It was when she was teaching in this school that she decided to do secondary education privately and succeeded to complete it in 1979. She transferred to another primary school which was her husband’s home and taught there for two years. She then went back to teacher’s training college to do her Advanced Primary Teacher’s Certificate (APTC) which took two years to complete.

When she came back from college, she changed schools and upgraded to a high school, but she mentioned that she did not qualify to teach at high school because she had APTC which was a primary school teaching certificate, but she found the job because there was an acute shortage of qualified teachers then. She worked there for two years and left and furthered her studies at the university doing a degree in education majoring in English and African languages. She graduated in 1990 and got a job at a high school where she is the principal currently. However, in 2002, she said she went back to school to further her studies where she did a Master’s degree in education and on completion went back to the current school which was where she was teaching prior to university. In 2004, she was promoted to deputy principal; this is how she puts the way her promotion happened:

*I did not know about this promotion, I did not know a lot of things at school, my main focus was my work, I was a marker and I was out marking, then I was called by the school board and I had no idea why they wanted to see me. They asked me if I could be a*

*deputy principal of [the school] and I accepted, that is how the promotion came along. I did not apply for it.*

Like the deputy principal position, she did not apply for a principal position but she said she recalls that in 2011, Catholic sisters appointed her to the position. This was because the sisters (nuns) said they did not have anyone in mind who could lead the school except her. She accepted the offer and proudly told me; *“I am the first lay person to run the school. This school belongs to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). It has been led by sisters since it was established in 1965.”*

Most participants of this study did not plan to become high school principals, they mentioned that they were not expecting it, to some it came too soon after completing their studies at the university so they doubted themselves and felt they were not ready for the huge career change move. Others were nominated by other teachers because they had faith in their abilities and leadership skills. However, what is common among the female principals is that they ended up liking their new positions as they spoke passionately about it.

#### 4.4.2 Intentionally sought promotions

The principals in this category said they purposefully sought promotion from teacher to principal position. They actually applied and not once but many times. They were never discouraged when they did not succeed right away; they were determined to become principals and ended up achieving their dreams. Three participants Masemi, Malefu and Malerato knew when it was time to leave the classroom and move to principalship. They then planned their transitions from being teachers to becoming principals.

Masemi has never done any other job except teaching. She is on her first principalship. She started her career in teaching at the higher institution for one year, but she left because the salary was low, in fact she explained that teachers from high schools got more money than those who were teaching at higher institutions back then. She stated:

*My teaching career started in 1994 when I taught at a [technical college]. I taught there for only a year and left because the money teachers were paid there was little and teachers at high school got more. I started teaching English at a [local high school] in*

*1995 until 2012. At [this school], I became Head of department (HOD), the position which gave me experience and skills in leadership. In 2013, I applied for a principal position in this school and did not get it and I did not give up. I applied for the deputy principal position in another school where I successfully got the job. When I got here the principal was on suspension, so I acted as a principal for a while, then when he came back he took over as a principal and I went back to my position as a deputy principal. The school board decided to transfer him and I applied for the position and got it and since then I have been a principal of this school.*

Masemi was among those female principals who had a passion for principalship and knew that she was destined for bigger things and therefore worked hard to achieve her goals as she stated:

*I developed [a] passion for principalship when I was studying part-time while I was also teaching, so the new knowledge I acquired made me feel that I was ready and full of ideas for principalship position. I applied for the principalship in the same school because I thought the principal was not doing enough, he was not in charge and things were deteriorating at the school. I believed I could do better. My honours and postgraduate diploma helped me to see and understand that things should not be running like that and that there was a need for change in that school. The new knowledge and information I had made me want to put things into practice. I had so many ideas that I wanted to put into implementation. Finally, I got the position here because I did not stop pursuing my dream of becoming principal until I got it.*

Malefu was on her first principalship and hoped it was the last one. Her career did not start in teaching like the rest of the participants. She said she did a little bit of this and a little bit of that as a woman to survive, she said, *"I even worked at the factories, just everything that would bring money on the table."* She said she worked for a milling company as well as a cashier and credit controller, and then moved to another job where she was a teacher. She believed that it was there she developed interest in teaching but still she was not convinced it was a career she wanted to follow. She was teaching with her school leaving certificate which means she was not a qualified teacher. At the factory, she mentioned that she was the only one with the school leaving

certificate so she was training workers in office work and working on their payrolls and teaching them about almost everything involving office work. She resigned and decided to go to a teacher training college to pursue her teaching dream after being convinced that it was the right career for her. She obtained her Secondary Teachers Certificate (STC). Here is how she explained her teaching journey until she became a principal,

*I worked at a [high school] as an Accounting teacher in 1994 to 1995, and then in 1995 to 1996, I taught Accounting at another high school, from June 1996 till 2007. I taught at a private school and I became an HOD while working there. In between those years I went to [university], from 1997 to 2000 as a full time student, which is where I got my degree. When I came back from the university, I went back to the private school but left there in 2007 to come to this current school as a deputy principal. I applied for a deputy position in this school and I got it. After some time, I applied for the principal position and succeeded to get it and I have been a principal since.*

She explained why and at that stage she felt the need to seek a principalship position: *"I decided to become a principal when I was still at a private school because once I was from the university, I could not see anything standing in my way of becoming a principal, with my degree. I really looked around and wanted to do something different, so immediately after my graduation, I felt that I no longer belonged to the classroom."*



Malerato has been a principal of the current school for nine years and it was her first principalship. Malerato and Maliau, have both been the first principals of the schools they were working at. Malerato told how her teaching career transpired:

*In 1995 I started working as a teacher with STC qualifications. I taught business education at high school. In 1997 to 2001 I went to the university to further my studies and did a Diploma and Degree in education majoring in English and Sesotho. After graduating, I went back to the high school I had taught before and I continued working as a teacher. In 2002, I went to teach at another high school where I taught Sesotho and English language.*

When Malerato was asked why and at what stage she sought principalship she replied:

*When I was still teaching at the previous high between 2004 and 2005 I felt that I was ready to become a principal. I started looking for the vacancies for the position, then in 2006, I heard that this school was being upgraded from primary to high school, so I took a chance and applied. Fortunately I got the job. This is a government combined school. Meaning primary and high school combined in one compound. I started working as a principal in this school in 2007 up to now.*

All the participants, those who intentionally and unintentionally sought high school leadership, did not regret the path their careers took because they all expressed deep passion and commitment to the positions. Most of the participants said that they did not see themselves doing anything other than being involved with students when asked what they wanted to do in their retirement days. One participant said she has passion for vulnerable children because there are some vulnerable students who are brilliant but drop out of school due to being unable to pay school fees, therefore she would like to help such children in her retirement to contribute to their bright futures.

#### 4.5 BARRIERS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Participants talked about problems they met in their career routes which might have cost them their success as they felt like quitting at times. However, they did not give up and with the coping strategies they put in place, they were able to make it no matter the difficulties they met along the way. They all were challenged in different ways and the discussion below elaborates how each and every participant faced problems in their career journeys.

##### 4.5.1 Lack of confidence

Maneo's career path has been filled with self-doubt from her teaching practice until she became a principal for the first and second time. Teachers trained at the universities go for teaching practice in their final year of studies as opposed to those that are trained at colleges. As she trained at the university, Maneo went for her teaching practice in her final year and did not enjoy that time at all and considered giving up the teaching profession. She mentioned that her greatest

challenge was lack of self-confidence, she could not stomach standing in front of a large crowd (classroom) and talk. She explained, *“Standing in front of students was the greatest challenge for me, I would sweat, shiver and felt like running away. I was really miserable during my teaching practice and wanted to quit teaching and pursue Agriculture. I even discussed it with my superior at convent but she discouraged me to change careers at that stage.”*

As problematic as it was for Maneo to speak in front of a crowd, that experience did not end there for her but two years later she was given a role which would demand public speaking more often from her, the principal position. She was asked to take a principal position when she was still trying to get her foot in public speaking in classrooms and teaching students. She was scared and did not have self-confidence to do the job but she did not have any choice because it seems decisions for a nun are more instructional and they know they have to respect the decisions taken on their behalf no matter how difficult it might be. The same thing happened for the second principalship, where she felt it was a huge responsibility to head the school where she once was a learner, but fortunately she had experience from the first principalship even though she did not have the self-confidence to face people who had taught her in the same school and suddenly be their principal.

Malefu’s career could have advanced quicker if she had self-confidence in herself but she had to go the long route because of lack of self-confidence in her capabilities. She said that when she was at the teacher’s training college, she was performing exceptionally well and her lecturers asked her to apply to the university. She did not take their advice because she felt she would not do well at university. She regretted her decision later when she realized that her classmate applied to the university and was admitted and what hurt her more was that she performed way better than the person who took the chance.

The same thing happened where women principals doubted their capabilities in their career routes. Mapita, the high school principal who was nominated by other teachers to be a principal did not like it at all. Instead of being happy and recognizing that the other teachers believed in her capabilities and leadership, she lacked self-confidence in herself and even believed that they chose her because they did not like her and wanted to see her failing.

Most participants had low self-esteem or lacked self-confidence to take up a career change decision. They explained that they did not feel they were ready but the people around them saw potential in their abilities and capabilities. However, the participants said that they gained confidence as they progressed in their career paths.

#### 4.5.2 Gender Discrimination

Female principals talked about their capabilities and intelligence being undermined simply because they are women. As much as women faced gender discrimination in other stages of their lives when trying to advance their careers, Masemi faced this challenge in the selection process. This is to say she applied for a principalship post like everyone who has qualities and qualifications but here she reported what happened after her successful interview. She explained:

*I did not get the position because the school board at the time had [an] old mindset that the position was suitable for a strong man not a woman. I think that school has had one female principal so far since it has been established, so the school board looked at me, my stature, my age. And I felt so hurt because I really worked hard and long in that school and even school board members knew that I was capable of doing the principal's job efficiently and effectively but I was told that I was good but the school board was looking for a male principal.*

Malerato expressed herself about gender discrimination which simply means one cannot be trusted with certain roles because of gender or sex. She said, *"When you are a woman, people do not think you can do it because you are a female principal and there are males under you and those males undermine you thinking that you lack managerial skills just because you are a woman."* This was what she has experienced in the school where she is a principal.

Female principals did not only face gender discrimination from the school board members and teachers but also from parents. Maliau explained, *"I really work well with my staff so the only problem is that of parents when they do not want to pay school fees. They think because I am a woman they can walk all over me, they like passing remarks like if only this school was led by a man things would be great and I just ignore them."* Mapita also had the same problem of being

undermined by men just because she is a female principal. She reported, *"I have dismissed seven (7) men from this school since I became a principal, including a Pastor. They did not appreciate being led by a woman so they did not hide their feelings and thoughts in the meetings and they tortured me just for being a female principal. I used to lock myself in my office and cry until I told myself that enough was enough."*

Participants felt they were being misjudged because they were women and people did not trust their management skills and therefore undermined them on several occasions. They were made to feel like they were not good enough to hold a high school principal position because they were not tough enough like men. At the same time other participants were undermined because they were being tough on parents who did not want to pay school fees, which is every parent's responsibility. It is therefore confusing as to what is really expected from a female principal.

#### 4.5.3 Family responsibilities

Female principals mentioned that family responsibility was one of the problems that inhibit career advancement of women. Malerato had this to say:

*In most cases, you may find that women do not go to further their studies because they would be saying who is going to look after my children when I got to school, who is going to look after my husband when I go to school to further my studies. When you have got [a] first degree, you will stay more than five (5) years without doing anything to develop yourself because you will be saying who is going to look after my family, women care way too much for their families .I felt that I was ready to become a principal long before I could actually take a step to apply for it. I used to be worried because I always heard of vacancies in high schools which were far from my home's place where I stayed with my family and I did not see how I could stay away from my family until my husband convinced me to apply and try it for some time and see how it goes.*

One participant who knew this too well was Malefu because she went through the same thing. She found it impossible to leave her husband after getting married, worrying who was going to

take care of him in her absence and as a result, she delayed to go back to school to further her studies. She reported:

*I got married in 1981, which means for the past ten (10) years I had nothing to do with education because I went back to school to train for teaching in 1991 at a college. I did not want to think about anything which would take me away from my husband for a long time like going to school because we [had] just got married so with the jobs I did it was better because I came back to him every day after work. If I went back to school earlier, my career could have advanced quicker than it did but I have learned my lesson the hard way because that person I stopped my dreams for is now divorcing me, I guess it is life's lessons. (She laughs).*

Most of the participants mentioned this as a great weakness for women because naturally, women take care of the families and this makes them put family first at all times even when it comes to leaving it behind and going to school or to work in a different country or district. They advised future aspiring female principals to care for their families but not too much to let it distract them from reaching their goals. Many of the participants advised aspiring principals to find a way forward because their success is their family's success.

#### 4.6 COPING STRATEGIES

The previous section elaborated on the problems that these female principals faced along their career paths. This section explains how they coped with the problems they encountered along their way to the top. Most participants expressed their gratitude towards their families for keeping them strong and sane in the whole journey. Few participants mentioned that their principals in the schools they were teaching played a crucial role in supporting them and also by the support they had from their families and colleagues.

##### 4.6.1 Support from family

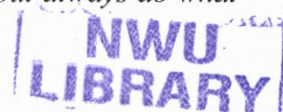
Maliau, Maneo, Manepo, Malefu and Masemi all expressed their gratitude for the support they had from their families throughout their career advancement journey. They have always had support from their parents and siblings whenever they met challenges they were there to listen, to

provide a shoulder to cry on and advised them. Malefu has always had support of her mother and brother and she even dedicated her achievements her mother and brother to them and lastly to herself. She was quoted saying, *“My mother was my everything, when I went up and down learning and working she used to stay with my son and it became a challenge when she died because I had to pick him up and we were even strangers because he could relate easily to my mother than me.”* Unfortunately Malefu lost her mother when she was graduating from college and decided to dedicate that certificate to her. All was not lost though as she was left with her brother who would constantly remind her that her mother wanted her to be a principal and if she did not do it for her the deceased would not be pleased with her.

Manepo said her mother and father were always there to comfort her and gave her advice whenever she needed it. She mentioned that they have always been there more especially her father. She talked of the time she became a principal, how her father used to advise her and here is how she put it:

*When I was already a deputy principal, my father became a Secondary Secretariat, so he always talked to me about what I should do, how to deal with people with different characters, especially people who seem to be very troublesome, how to approach people, what is the best way to deal with people. Communicating with people more often and listening to the people I work with, but always make sure you have your own stand. Always do what is right, do not do your work to satisfy other people but always do what is right for the school.*

Maneo also drew her strength from her mother who she said had always wanted to see all her children succeeding in life. In contrast, Maliau mentioned that she got support from her husband who is also a teacher and she puts it like this, *“My husband is also a teacher so he knows and understands when I am under pressure at work and have to bring work home and not be able to cook supper sometimes and he does it. He also has been very supportive throughout the whole journey because he understands the field very well and that one needs to seek opportunities and grow or develop.”* Masemi said she got support through her career journey from her parents



especially her mother. Mapita bought leadership books and used to read them a lot and she mentioned that they helped her.

#### 4.6.2 Support from colleagues

Masemi also mentioned that she was supported by her previous principals and reading books a lot on leadership. She said at the high school she was teaching, a principal of the school valued her input and ideas so much and she motivated her to always do her best and more. She also said that when she was thrown in the deep by being nominated to be the principal, she was so challenged and frustrated and looked for books on leadership skills which helped her to cope with the challenges of the position and became better every day through reading the books. Mapalesa and Maliau were also motivated by good results from their students and that urged them to do more. Maliau also said she used to look at other teachers who were excelling in their work despite challenges and then she would compete with them. She reported, *“I have always been in competition with the top achievers, so I did not let any problem coming my way stop me from my big dreams.”*

Malerato’s passion for vulnerable kids and hardworking teachers kept her going. She mentions that seeing the parents of these vulnerable kids being appreciative of every little thing she does for the children makes her want to do more. She elaborated:

*I am dealing with vulnerable parents, those parents are always appreciative of whatever a person is doing and that gives you courage and when somebody appreciates what you are doing, you feel you have to do more. And another thing, other teachers are working very hard, if you are in leadership and you feel that there are teachers who are working very hard and you as a leader dragging your feet, it is not good, you feel when you see other people working hard that you tell yourself that to encourage these people you have to also work together and give these vulnerable children quality education, that has quite motivated me positively. Money has never been my motivation for this position because the more the money the more problems but my passion for this career and students.*

One principal mentioned that she used to consult or call other female principals who have been in the position for a while and asked them how to handle certain situations and as a result she was able to cope with any problem that arose in the school. It seems that even though all female principals in the study had no formal mentorship as shown in Table 4.1, they had informal mentors who helped them in their career paths and the support they had sustained them to be where they are today, not forgetting their determination to succeed in life and passion for vulnerable kids.

#### 4.7 CHALLENGES FOR FEMALE PRINCIPALS

Female high school principals in this study mentioned that challenges did not only surface in their transitions to the principalship positions but also after they had been appointed into the positions they still faced different challenges. What also became clearly common among these women was the challenge they had with female teachers whom they described as uncooperative and not manageable. However, a few participants said they were troubled by male teachers. Others identified challenges such as lack of support from teachers, Ministry of Education and Training, lack of parental engagement and workload.

##### 4.7.1 Lack of support and respect for authority by teachers.

Most participants mentioned that it was very difficult for them to manage female teachers than male teachers. Masemi was one of the participants who really seemed to have problems with managing female teachers. Her emphasis on this issue showed that she really had problems with the way female teachers carried themselves and their duties at the school. She explained the situation in her own words, *“Male teachers are manageable and supportive but I struggle with teacher’s attitudes more than I struggle with students especially female teachers, because they see me as a friend and when I exercise my leadership roles I become their enemy.”* She further explained that teachers used this phrase a lot *“we are all teachers”*, they refused to understand that as much as they were all teachers, there was a hierarchy that needed to be respected. Malefu had this to say about female teachers:

*There are more challenges from female teachers. It is like we are in a competition, and male teachers can be so supportive unless you get teachers who are drunkards but I have*

*not really gone through such a challenge with my male teachers. I usually tell them in staff meetings that their problem is that they are here to be loved and not to work and I am here to work but because they like divisions and will say principal likes teacher A, B and C.*

Manepo expressed the same thing with female teachers, “...*female teachers are the most troublesome... there are few who are supportive but there are those who are the laziest and those are the ones who usually have a lot to say. I find working with male teachers better than female teachers.*” She also talked about teacher’s attitudes and explained that she spent most of the time thinking about people’s attitudes like how to handle them and let them know what they are doing is wrong instead of being thinking of developing the school. Mapalesa told her situation with female teachers as well, “...*female teachers are problematic but male teachers are very supportive and they are the youngest ones and are very cooperative.*” As for Maneo, the nun female principal explains in depth how she suffered at the first school where she was a principal due to lack of support from teachers:

*When I first got into office or became a principal, students were failing so much that even at COSC, the school leaving level; there would not be one student who had passed examinations. So the Ministry of Education was concerned about that. Inspectors used to visit the school and talked to teachers who would tell the Inspectors that students are failing because the principal is just a child who has just come out of the University and lacks leadership skills.*

She said this lack of respect from teachers went as far as students seeing it and they took advantage of the situation and that they used to disrespect her in meetings when she addressed them and it was just a hurtful period of her life. Malerato explained her ordeal with teachers, both female and male: “*One would expect that female teachers would give a woman leader 100 percent support but here that is not the case.*” And in the case of male teachers she reported, “*Male teachers who do not appreciate being led by a woman gives a person a headache for no proper reason.*” Mapita had the same problem with teachers but with her case it was male teachers that gave her problems. She stated:

*I was being undermined by men. I have dismissed seven (7) men from this school since I became a principal, including a Pastor. I demoted two and I expelled two, one of them took me to DDP and I won the case, so there is this thing of being undermined by men but I think I have overcome it now, when it is time to be serious I can be very serious. These ones remaining know that we are here to work. Female teachers are very cooperative.”*

There seemed to be different views about lack of support and respect for authority by teachers as some female principals felt that female teachers were disrespectful while others thought that the male teachers lacked respect for authority. However, female teachers were mostly identified to be the most troublesome than male teachers as only few female principals mentioned that they had problems with male teachers.

#### 4.7.2 Lack of support by Ministry of Education and Training

With the Ministry of education, female principals singled it out because it is the one which deals with education in Lesotho. The Ministry provides schools with teachers and their salaries even if the schools are church owned.

All the female principals mentioned that their schools were understaffed and when they addressed the problem to the Ministry of Education and Training, they were always told that the government did not have money to employ more teachers. This, as they explained, hindered children from getting quality education because the teachers were few and students were just too many. They mentioned that they tried to employ teachers themselves who they paid but the Ministry did not allow that. The principals indicated that they were forced to do it because the situation was bad, and they did it even though they knew that if the ministry found out it would be a huge problem. They also mentioned that should the ministry find out they were prepared to defend their actions because it was for the good of the students.

Some female principals said they did not have enough classes for students, so students were stuffed into one classroom with a high number that was not manageable to teach and also there

were shortages of resources such as tables, chairs and computers. For example, Malerato explained,

*Another challenge we are facing here at the school is lack of resources, we do not have buildings, because in one class right now we have one hundred and fourteen (114) students in Form A1, one hundred and fifteen (115), whereas in Form A2 and in Form A3, there are one hundred and fourteen students (114). There are large numbers in one class and in Form E, we have eighty-eight (88) students in one class and such students are not manageable, we have two classes each with eighty-eight students meaning in all we have one hundred and seventy-six (176) students in Form E or COSC.*

Mapalesa shared her views as follows, *“The Ministry of Education and Training does not want to provide us with teachers. We are understaffed and when we raise this issue they always say there is no money to pay teachers, so we have employed more teachers who are paid by the school and also the Ministry fight[s] us if we do that but what are we supposed to do when there are few teachers and too many students?”*

Lack of resources human and material at the high schools led by the female principals was identified as a real problem which affected performance of the students because it is very important to have resources to enhance teaching and learning at schools. This made participant’s work very difficult because they had to compromise the money they collected for the school to pay teachers’ salaries.

#### 4.7.3 Lack of parental engagement

All the eight female principals agreed on the above challenge as a great challenge. They mentioned that parents do not want to pay school fees for their children yet at the end of the year they expect good results from the school. Some did not want to put it as parents not wanting to pay school fees for their children’s education but referred to it as poverty and explained that most of the parents do not work and as a result are not able to pay for their children’s school fees. This was a very sensitive issue for all eight principals and here are the examples of quotes from other principals as they tried to express their mixed feelings about this issue,

One principal said,

*“Parents do not pay school fees, they will come and tell me about their problems, so now do I also have to tell them about the problems of running a school without money?”*

Another one said, *“Poverty is a problem, most parents do not work and students fail to pay school fees and end up dropping out of school.”*

The other one said, *“Parents do not want to pay school fees; it’s a battle between me and them to pay for their children’s education.”* Whereas the other one expressed herself in this manner on the issue,

*We are dealing with vulnerable children who do not have anything, some of them cannot be able even to buy books and that is very difficult for students to learn when they don’t have books. this is because most of parents are not working, since I have mentioned that this is a government school, when it was established in 2005, fees were very low, parents had to pay 500, so many parents managed to bring their children to school because the fees were very low but it’s a problem now parents are failing to pay school fees. Parents do not find it important to pay school fees, you will chase the children home to them and they don’t mind they just stay with them and we have decided not to expel students for school fees because we saw that parents were not bothered by that but instead we hold results if they don’t pay they will have to pay to get their children’s results.*

Maneo’s comment on the issue was couched in the following terms: *“Parents do not find it important to pay school fees, you will chase the children home to them and they don’t mind. They ... they just stay with them and we have decided not to expel students for school fees because we saw that parents were not bothered by that but instead we [with]hold results if they don’t pay they will have to pay to get their children’s results.”*

All in all, female principals were concerned about the issue of parents failing to pay the school fees, the only difference that could be observed from the principal’s voices was the way they felt

about the situation but the issue was all the same which was that parents were failing to pay for their children's education.

#### 4.7.4 Workload

This was a concern for all the participants. They explained that a principal's job is too complex and demanding. Their concern was that one person is expected to execute so many duties single handedly and succeed which was too difficult. They mentioned that in the past, high school principals did not teach due to high demand of administrative work and it was better because they could concentrate on how to develop schools but lately the government changed and said principals must all teach. They said they were told that they could not expect teachers to do what they were not doing themselves, so they should also teach.

However, principals did not seem angry about the fact that they have to teach because they said teaching was their passion but the problem was that the tasks performed by the principals were too many and that left them no room for their families.

The following verbal quotes reflected the above idea from Mapalesa:

*I demand 100 percent pass from my teachers without saying much to them because I make sure that the subject that I teach which is English, I get 100 percent pass, and because we put every teacher's performance on the school board, teachers work hard to avoid embarrassment of her/his students failing because I make sure I set the standard for them. Then ... then when I say I want to see 100 percent pass from them I should be able to achieve it as well, so I always make sure I get it and this being a good performing school everyone is under pressure to produce good results. The problem is that as a principal you do a lot of things and that can be stressful and straining but I enjoy teaching more than anything.*

Manepo was concerned about the amount of work expected from high school principals and she explained, "...the job is too demanding, as principals we teach and on top of that we are

*overseers of everything, making sure teachers and students do their work and then there are administrative issues. It is really too much for a person, you are the first person to come to school and the last person to leave, you do not have time for yourself and for your family.”* Similarly, Mapita believed a principal’s job was a lot and stressful as she stated,

*The principal's job is too demanding and stressful, we teach and monitor that everyone do their jobs and then we also take care of school finances, it is a lot to do successfully because at the end of the every person wants to have a successful school. When the school is doing great, people sing your praises and if it is not, they complain about the principal, so you as the principal need to be tough at all times even if it means you step on teachers toes to ensure they are doing their work because and the end of the day results matters even if you become enemy number one to your teachers at least you will get results.*

Maliau expressed how hard it was to ensure that the school runs smoothly as a principal of a boarding school, “...there is a lot that a principal does, she takes care of the finances, plan what to buy with the little money and has to teach, the school board expect you to run after parents to make them pay school fees for their children, it is just too much, worst part is that this is a boarding school and the principal need money to run the boarding and the school but parents always bring problems instead of money.”

All the female principals expressed their feelings about the workload aspect; however they have proved to be very good leaders of these schools as some of them (schools) are top performers especially the two high schools that have been led by the same female principals since their establishment in the Maseru district regardless of the challenges.

#### 4.8 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

This section covers the opportunities/roles that prepared female principals in becoming high schools principals. They were involved in leadership roles that exposed them to leadership skills and helped them to adjust easily once they were appointed high school principals. The female principals were also given the opportunities to improve their skills and were equipped with new

knowledge on how to do their jobs effectively after they were promoted to high school principalship.

Female principals were grateful that they got opportunities to work as Deputy Principals and HODs because the experience they got from these positions prepared them for principalship role. The positions provided them with leadership skills. One could deduce from participant's narratives that those who got the chance to get these leadership roles prior to becoming principals did not struggle to adjust to their new roles as principals' as much as female teachers who jumped from being teachers to becoming principals.

Moreover, principals explained that in as much as a high school principal's job was demanding, it had advantages of its own and those advantages were experienced or enjoyed by only principals and that they were really motivating. Most female principals appreciated the high school principals association and the Ministry of education in making sure that they developed them and their skills to become better managers in their schools, and this would be explained thoroughly below. Only one female principal said she has not taken advantage of these opportunities but was planning to do that in the nearer future.



#### 4.8.1 Deputy Principals

The participants who got an opportunity to work as deputy principals mentioned that the experience they had in the position prepared them personally and professionally. Manepo, Masemi and Mapalesa were the participants that worked as deputy principals before they were appointed as permanent and pensionable high school principals. Masemi explained how HOD and Deputy Principal Positions developed her skills:

*The HOD position that I held developed me and prepared me for the principalship because of the leadership skills I learned in the position as well as the course that I did with university of Free State, Postgraduate Diploma in Policy Studies and Governance. Moreover, being a deputy Principal stretched my horizons and my skills in preparing me for the principalship position. Whenever I came across a certain challenge in this*

*position I incorporate the skills I acquired from these positions and what I have learned from school and come up with a solution which will work best for the situation.*

#### 4.8.2 Head of Department – HOD

Masemi, Malefu, Mapita and Maliau got an opportunity to work as HODs. The experience they got from this position helped them more especially the challenges except Maliau. For example, Mapita clarified, *“HOD position prepared me especially the challenges that came with the job prepared me on how to handle such problems in future and new challenges and provided me with leadership skills and now I am able to solve problems that I come across”*. On one hand, Maliau says, *“HOD was a new thing and people were not familiar with the roles and duties that were expected to be performed by the HODs so it really did not prepare me for this principalship”*. What worked successfully for her was her collaborative leadership style whereby they work collaboratively as a team with her teachers to equip one another with necessary skills, she reported, *“I had a lot of support from my teachers because I told them that I was not a know it all, I used everyone where he/she was an expert in order to get good results from their different skills and knowledge.”*

Most participants reported that HOD position guided them on how to handle challenges as leaders of other teachers in their different departments, so when it came to being the leaders of the schools, they were familiar with how to handle certain challenges.

#### 4.8.3 High School Principal’s Association and the Ministry of Education and Training

Manepo was grateful about some of the opportunities that were made available for principals and she said, *“I think one of the things that is good about being a principal is that one get to know a lot of important people, networking is very important in this job.”* She went on to elaborate and explained that principals have principal’s association, which find information for them, like how to go to overseas and do degrees for free, she continued, *“...you find opportunities like that once you are in the position, you get to know what is out there, they also hold or organize workshops for us, seminars and conferences so we improve a lot in our work.”* Malefu explained how the two institutions help them and their teachers,

*In this position, you get to develop your own teachers, by sending them to workshops, seminars; you call them to retreats as this is a church owned school. I also call Ethics coaches to talk to them. One gets the opportunity to develop her teachers as much as you develop yourself. Sometimes we go to African conferences and international conference in Australia to network because it is important to network in this kind of work so as to find out how best can you deal with situations in the position that you are in, so our principal association and ministry of education take care of all that.*

In the same but broader sense Maneo explained activities that were involved in these meetings or workshops:

*We are divided into sections and this centre has made me grow or develop because they used to hold workshops a lot, other principals used to share their experiences with us new principals back then, they even gave me materials about leadership skills, how to keep records, format lesson plans etc. furthermore, the ministry have workshops where we are taught about code of good conduct, how to keep school records. The workshop is hold once a year for all the principals in the country where we also talk of our challenges and give one another advices on how to handle different situations or problems that arise in our schools.*

Mapalesa was one of the principals who knew about the great work that was done by the principals association but has never made use of them lately, she explains,

*Principals have an association which organizes workshops, seminars for all principals in the country. We meet and share experiences, challenges, excitements and how to handle conflicts at workplaces, best or latest ways of doing things like making a lesson plan etc., these meetings help you grow or develop as a person and at the end you are able to impart this knowledge to your teachers. I have not joined them lately because I have been too busy but they are very helpful and I am planning to go next year there is a seminars in Australia.*

Malerato was the only one who knew about the great work that was done by the ministry of education and training and principals association but confessed that she has never made use of them at all but is planning to in the nearer future. For Mapita, it was different in a sense that she taught in a church owned school so she did not talk of the ministry of education and training and principals association but nonetheless she still got to develop as a person, the following quote stated how she achieved this, *“I also got the chance to develop in a sense that I attend principal’s seminars organized by the church, there was also an Africa convention of principals in 2010 at one of the local hotels, I also went to Brazil for benchmarking in 2015, so these really make me happy.”*

It was clear that these positions and associations played a critical role in preparing the female principals to execute their jobs effectively and efficiently. The deputy principal (DP) and Head of department (HODs) positions prepared the female principals for the principalship positions prior to their appointments whereas the principal association and the Ministry of education and training developed principal’s skills as a way of helping them to excel in doing their jobs and provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills on how to do their jobs to their best abilities after they were being appointed principal positions.

#### 4.9 FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

This might be out of the study’s scope, but it was worth mentioning that most female principals talked with so much anticipation about where they want to see themselves in the next few years. Female principals mentioned the following dreams that they still have to pursue before they retire. The participants mentioned that they are aspiring for the following in the nearer future:

- Study further
- Become Minister of education and Training
- Become an Advisor at the Ministry of education and Training
- Own a research Consultancy
- High school principal in another school

For example, Masemi, when asked about her future aspirations, she said that she would like to pursue her studies and become a Minister of education and training in future but not through politics but through the work that she would do to transform the school she worked at, she stated, *“I will transform this school so much [so] that my work will speak for me, when I am done with this school, everyone will want to know who I am.”* The principal did not look forward to retire but she still had dreams to fulfill before she could retire and she mentioned that during her retirement she would do something in relation to children’s development because she is passionate about helping children to succeed in life.

This shows that these female principals still have dreams to fulfill and would not stop until they have achieved them. One participant mentioned that her passion was to help kids, so maybe she will be involved in guidance and counseling during her retirement days to show the kids how to go on about being a success in life. The passion for all the principals in their jobs was shown through their facial expressions like smiles and laughter as they narrated how their teaching careers unfolded into high schools principalship. It was a great experience to see people talking so fondly and passionately about teaching and principalship, and one participant in her final remarks said something that really touched me. She said *“being a principal is more of a dedication work than money as a benefit, so anyone who wants to become a principal should have that at heart, and that they are going to run a family rather than any other thing.”*

#### 4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on presentation of findings after collection of data. The participants were supposed to be ten female principals from Lesotho High Schools but unfortunately only eight participants were able to take a part in the study. Drawing themes that emerged from data, the researcher discussed early influences that shaped participants careers and played a crucial role in making them the people they are today. Family was found to be the most dominating influence for the study participants to have chosen teaching. For most participants, they were happy with a teaching position and if their journeys to principalship were unintentional, these were mostly encouraged by people who saw potential in them. Only a few of the participants consciously sought promotion to principalship from being teachers.

There were barriers along the way, mostly lack of confidence which they overcame through support networks that they had especially that of family and colleagues. The greater challenge that female principals experienced after being appointed principals was lack of support and respect for authority or hierarchy by female teachers. Female principals also got a chance to develop their skills through a series of workshops, seminars and conferences organized by the ministry of education and training and the high schools principals association which they appreciated. Female principals had dreams such as furthering their studies so that they could achieve their dreams which were mostly to hold senior positions at the Ministry of Education and Training and also to go into professions such as guidance and counselling.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the presentation of findings of the study on interviews conducted to unravel the opportunities and barriers surrounding female career development to principalship in Lesotho high schools. These findings were analyzed and presented with direct quotes extracted from the data for illustrative purposes. This chapter presents discussions on these findings. Discussions seek to explain the findings comparing with the literature, thereby providing answers to the research questions of the study. These answers are provided from the responses of the participants through cross-case analyses that compare responses between participants. The chapter ends with a general summary of the answers to the research questions.

### 5.2 EARLY LIFE CAREER INFLUENCES

The study looked into influences that shaped the early careers of female principals. This was done to determine factors that led female principals to choose a career in teaching early in their lives. Most women in the study were found to have been influenced by their families from early ages. According to Meszaros et al (2005:1), the influence of family is very important for preparing young women for their career roles. Some parents of the women in this study were teachers by profession whereas some had role models such as their own siblings. Some were groomed to understand the dignity and respect that came with a teaching profession and as a result they envied getting the same kind of respect and ended up becoming teachers. Moreover, teaching was a common career choice for the female principals in Lesotho because there were limited career choices in the nineteenth century, teaching and nursing were the most common and popular professions. According to Ambrose (2007:76), there were seven teachers' training colleges in the country which were meant to accommodate the higher number of students who were being trained to be professional teachers.

Masemi, Manepo and Mapalesa were influenced by their mothers to choose a career in teaching. This was similar to the findings in Kriveteri (2004:4); Creamer and Laughlin (2005:19) studies where mothers had more influence on women's career decisions showing the strength of mother-

daughter bond. Masemi and Manepo both came from families where their mothers were teachers and had direct influence on their choice of a career in teaching. However, the study by Creamer and Laughlin (2005:19) revealed that even though mothers had a greater influence in their daughters' career decisions they themselves were not educated or in the same profession that they encouraged their daughters to follow or take up. This tells us that regardless of their own status, parents and especially mothers in these cases, do want the best for their offspring.

Mapita's case was uniquely different in that both of her parents were teachers and as such, she was largely influenced in this direction. This means she could not escape the only profession she grew up knowing as she also mentioned that both her parents taught at the same school that she attended although they themselves were not her teachers. This result concurs with the findings of Bosch (2011:35) where most of the participants identified that they were strongly influenced by their families to choose a career in teaching, particularly family members who themselves had a career in teaching. Mapita, like participants in Bosch's study, was psychologically endeared towards the only profession she grew up knowing - teaching. Maliau's career choice might have been influenced by her father - she and Mapalesa did not have teaching as their first choice, but ended up in teaching partly because of limited career choices in their days. The same could be argued for other participants that they were naturally attracted to teaching as it was the only career they grew up seeing. This is in line with the study findings of Bosch (2015:35). The women had few career options to choose from in their days.

Malefu and Maliau both had fathers who were professional teachers and played a huge role in encouraging them to be professional teachers as well. This was similar to the findings in Kniveton (2004:4) study where fathers had been second after mothers in influencing women's careers as opposite sex parents. For Malefu, it was an easy path to follow because her father was well respected by everyone in the community as a teacher and she admired that. Maliau's father like Mapalesa's mother wanted her daughter to have a profession, and with his encouragement she chose education. According to Jungen (2008:11) children and adolescents pay much attention to what their parents expect of them, especially when it comes to choosing a career. Six women in the study followed their parents' advice to the teeth, no participant did things her own

way; they all listened to their parents and from an early age until they had turned into successful career women themselves. This means parental influences was very strong in influencing the female principals in choosing a career in teaching regardless of their educational level because even the parents who were not educated succeeded to persuade their children to have a profession. Parental support was therefore very instrumental in shaping careers of the female principals. Upon reflection on these findings on parental approval, one can agree with Taylor, Harris and Taylor (2004:1) who maintain that without parental approval, children are reluctant to pursue, or even explore certain careers. Other women principals were influenced by their own siblings. Malerato and Maneo had siblings who were teachers and encouraged and helped them to see a future in teaching. According to Kniveton (2004:9) younger children are usually more influenced by their siblings than their parents. In the families of these women participants, the elder sisters were the only ones working and it was natural that younger sisters admired them because they also wanted to have professions and their sisters were good examples that assured them that it was possible. Their sisters were their role models as the only ones working in their families, they grew up dreaming to be just like them and with their support and encouragement they successfully achieved their dreams. Thus, parents and older siblings played a significant role in influencing career choices of the participants.

The results from this study show that women were mostly influenced by family members to choose a career in teaching from their childhood and these findings concur with the findings by Inman (2011:233) as she discovered that, at the formation stage most participant's decisions or career choices were influenced by parents, extended families and teachers. However, the result contradicts with the findings of Ribbins and Zhang (2006:80) which indicated that the influence of society and cultural practices were greater than that of family among secondary school principals at formation stage. Ribbins and Zhang (2006:85) argued in their Chinese school leaders' study that, "the impact of societal and cultural influences...may be as great, and may even be greater than that of family, school, college, peer group and local community". The difference might be brought by the fact that, Ribbins and Zhang studied the lives of 40 head teachers whereas in the current study, only eight female principals were studied. While the latter enabled the researcher to get into the participants' deeper stories, it could not draw broader

patterns that could be allowed by larger study samples such as the survey conducted by Ribbins and Zhang. Nonetheless, it is significant that family influenced all the eight women's careers.

At this stage Super's (1992) career development theory helps to understand the early influences that socialize female principals from childhood as very important in determining their career choices. It is in this growth/formation stage where family was significant in helping the women develop the initial concept of self, attitudes and needs to relate to the general world of work and influences that socializes female principals come to being (Ribbins, 2008). This shows that female principals had role models coming from their own families who were present even along the duration of their career progression journeys. They still showed them support even when they wanted to quit following challenges they faced along their career progression. For these women participants' early career influences, social class does not seem to have played a role as women who came from a background of successful families in terms of educational attainment equally had successful career paths with those who had parents who were not educated and not working. It can therefore be concluded that family played a major role in guiding and influencing career choices and paths of all the women in the study regardless of their family backgrounds and parents' educational levels which usually determines a level of social standing that in turn tends to have more influence on children's career choices.

### 5.3 TRANSITIONING FROM TEACHER TO PRINCIPAL

The main finding in this section indicated that attaining principalship for some participants entailed actively seeking promotion while for others it came naturally either in the form of nomination or selection. In other words, the women rising to top leadership could be categorized into unintentional journeys or intentionally sought promotion. Again, while some of the participants became school leaders early in their career, others rose to the position later in their teaching career. This section addressed the second research question of this study, which sought to establish how teaching career transitioned into principalship. Women's transitional journeys are grouped and discussed under two categories, unintentional and intentional journeys.

### 5.3.1 Unintentional journey

Women under this category did not actively look for promotions; they were encouraged by those who saw potential in them. They were already on a progression route since they were holding middle leadership roles such as HODs and Deputy Principals at the time of their promotions to principalship but did not actively seek promotion to the top echelon positions. Four women; Manepo, Maneo, Mapita and Mapalesa were nominated into the principalship positions by church seniors, teachers and school boards and they accepted. This could mean that women did not have ambitions to pursue principalship positions as yet because they felt they had not developed the confidence and were not ready for the responsibilities that come with the position. This result correlates with the findings of the study by Coleman (2007:387) where it was reported that women are less likely to plan their careers for the most senior positions because they lack confidence to apply for promotions.

Manepo started her teaching career as a senior teacher, teaching various subjects and bagging further academic qualifications, paving way for her accession into the leadership position. Although she did not apply or seek a principalship position, going back to school three years after employment implied that she was covertly preparing herself and securing the necessary qualifications that would later benefit her. Her statement during the interview indicated that she intended to explore a new area and upgrade to higher institutions of learning, which she found interesting.

The fifth participant, Maliau's decision to seek promotion was informed by advice she got from other people who believed she was ready for the job. She applied, was shortlisted, interviewed and got the job. This means that Maliau applied for the high school principalship after she was encouraged and advised to do so and she got it. This trait seems to be common with female principals in the literature as this concurs with the findings of Kruse and Krumm (2016:35) where female principals were encouraged by other people to step out of the classroom and seek promotion into principalship. Bosch (2015:36) reports that most of the participants were asked and advised by various people to apply for promotion posts of principalship. The women need to recognise their potential and make use of availing opportunities specially because Maliau had a very rich experience of 31 years in teaching and also became HOD and the women who are

usually advised to apply for principalship end up getting it. Maliau's lack of a focused career strategy parallels the women in Hansen (2014:85) who were also invited into the administrative positions when they least expected it.

The study revealed that five female principals did not actively seek principalship positions, becoming high school principals was not in their plans until they were nominated and encouraged to do so by the people who saw potential in them. Mapita, Maneo, Manepo, Mapalesa and Maliau explained that they were happy with their teaching positions not thinking about principalship at all. They mentioned that their passion for classroom and students satisfied them so much that they did not even for once think of applying for principalship positions except for Manepo who mentioned that she had an eye on higher education leadership role not high school when she was nominated. This result concurs with the findings of the study of Eckman (2004:203) who found that women only considered high school principalship when they were encouraged to apply for the position. All the women accepted nominations and advice to advance their careers to principalship positions as Eckman (2004:198) suggests "without direct encouragement these women may have never considered educational leadership, particularly the high school principals as a career option." Research studies have suggested that women's career paths to principalship are always unplanned, complex and very different from men's career paths to principalships (Bartosz, et al 2006; Moorosi 2010). Most women in the study did not plan to advance their careers, they were happy and fulfilled in being teachers and in their different roles as HODs and deputy principals. Similarly, the women in Hansen (2014:86) were reported to have been holding leadership positions and happy with them and not looking for promotions as yet when they were encouraged to. The study by Mudede (2015:78) reported similar results that women do not apply for principalship even when they qualify, this was confirmed by all five participants in Mudede's study by mentioning that when vacancies were advertised, they always gave the information to the teachers but in most cases female teachers did not apply even if they qualified.

The female principals all started their careers with teaching and transitioned into high school principalship gradually and differently and also had different qualifications. This result concurs with the findings of the study by (Bosch 2015:34; Moorosi 2010:550; Wickham 2007:18). The

significant difference that is observed in this study is that the two women (Manepo and Mapalesa) moved from being mere teachers to directly becoming principals while others had a long journey which gave them experience in leadership. The latter went through different transitional phases such as HODs, deputy principals and principals and only one participant was on her second principalship at the time of the interviews.

Manepo and Mapalesa did not use or take advantage of the experience they had to apply for principalship positions but instead those who nominated them saw potential in their capabilities due to their acquired experience and qualifications. This finding is similar to that observed by Chabaya et al (2009:245) women do not apply to be principals even when they are qualified as their male counterparts because they have negative self-perceptions and lack of confidence even though they have qualifications and experience. What these findings tell us is the nominations may have pushed the women in the right direction when they were otherwise not considering or reluctant to apply. Although they claim they were not actively seeking promotion, Maneo, Mapalesa and Mapita accepted their nominations without much resistance. Mapita for example said she lacked the confidence to take the job when she was asked as she revealed in the interview that she had not applied for the job before because she felt that she was not ready to take up such enormous responsibility. However, the nomination gave her the confidence that somebody thought she could do it. While it is arguable that the participants may have been powerless against the superiority of the bodies or individuals that nominated them, the literature has suggested that nurturing and encouraging women to apply for promotion may be the necessary step to take, particularly in contexts where women have traditionally not held senior leadership positions (Chabaya, 2009; Moorosi, 2010). The lack of confidence has been explained as the lack of exposure to leadership roles. Female principals seem to have been hesitant to apply for principalship positions even when they qualify for the position. This might be associated with the fact that high school leadership has been defined as a male's territory because of their assumed authority and power emanating from their masculinity as compared to women's femininity. Therefore, a lot need to be done to boost women's confidence so that they can acknowledge their worth and have confidence to apply for high school principalship.

### 5.3.2 Intentionally sought promotion

From the sub-heading above, women in this category went all out to pursue and effect the transition into principalship. In other words, they did not wait to be nominated to become principals, but rather they individually facilitated the process of their own transition. The findings revealed that female principals have always known that they wanted to become high school principals once they have chosen a career in teaching. Masemi, Malefu and Malerato have always known that they were destined for bigger things and being a high school principal has always been their dream. They explained that they also knew that in order to achieve that dream they needed to work hard. The results concur with the findings of the study by Bosch (2015:34) where female principals knew from the beginning of their careers that they wanted to become high school principals, they did not see themselves satisfied with just being teachers.

Masemi's decision to actively seek promotion was influenced by the rich experience she gathered during her profession in teaching, her credentials that she acquired during her teaching career. She worked as a teacher, later promoted to an HOD and then a deputy principal. These leadership roles provided her with enough leadership skills and experience that prepared her for the principalship position. Masemi also had the relevant qualifications – a Degree in Education, Honours Degree in Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Policy studies and governance; which she actively pursued so that she could improve her career advancement. She indicated that with all the experience and qualifications, she did not see any reason stopping her to take her career to the next level of seeking principalship promotion.

The study revealed that experience and credentials motivated female principals to seek promotions. Confirming this, is Faulkner (2015:88), in the study she conducted where she revealed that participants felt confident that nothing could stop them from becoming principals after getting experience and necessary qualifications. One participant in Faulkner's study similarly like Masemi applied for the principalship several times before they succeeded but they were not discouraged by the barriers which prevailed. Both Masemi and Amelia (a participant in Faulkner's study) were faced with the same barrier, with Masemi the school board members who she mentioned were "old-minded" and believed a man is a better option for the position whereas

Amelia explained that boards, district officials and governors obviously did not want a woman for principalship position.

Masemi's aspiration to become a principal after gaining experience and qualifications was to implement her own ideas and bring about change in the school she applied to and had worked for so long as an HoD. This is in line with the findings of the study of Young and McLeod (2001:437) where female teachers were reported to have been driven to pursue a principalship path so that they can enhance change and implement various ideas they had to improve teaching and learning in the schools they used to work at. Similarly, women principals in Coronel et al (2010:148) study were mostly motivated to seek a principalship position because they perceived themselves as change agents in education and needed to boost change within the schools.

The findings also indicate that management courses are very important if one is aspiring to be a high school principal. This result concurs with the studies of Faulkner (2015:139; Parylo et al 2013:577) which revealed that women participants who actively sought promotion did a management course and upon graduating, had courage and confidence to seek promotion to a principalship position. This shows that leadership and management qualifications are an added advantage when one is seeking a principalship positions. Two women in this study; Masemi and Malefu out of three who intentionally sought principalship have leadership and management certificates and Masemi indicated that the course in leadership and management opened her eyes and she realised that it was not possible to run the school with only a degree in education. Supporting this result, Wickhum (2007:16), in the study exploring women's career paths into leadership, notes that education and self-determination are perceived to be at the top for women seeking a career in leadership. Women who sought promotions felt prepared and ready when their dreams to become high school principals finally became a reality, this was similar to the study by Hanson (2011: 95) as one participant stated, "*If I had come to this job earlier, I may not have had the wisdom, fortitude, and self-confidence.*" This shows that women feel comfortable and confident to take their careers to the next level once they have rich experience and feel ready unlike when it happens without one expecting it. However, even when it happens unexpectedly like being nominated to the position, women in this study showed that they gave it their all and enjoyed it and never regretted the career move no matter how it came about.

Malefu, unlike other women in the study developed passion for teaching at a later stage than any of the female principals. This was because her career did not start with teaching; she worked for different companies before she worked as an unprofessional teacher which is where she picked that she enjoyed and liked it and then decided to go to a teacher training college to be trained as a professional teacher. Super (1992) in his theory of career development, suggests that this stage is a second stage called the exploration stage. He explains that at this stage female principals explore and find out about other careers before they can settle for the one they desire. In this study, Malefu is the only one who went through the exploration stage in Super's terms as compared to other seven women who started their careers as teachers.

However, the explanation that fits the majority of the participants' experience is the stage of accession by Ribbins (2008), where the rest of the women entered into their life-time careers in teaching. For Ribbins, working in the education environment prepares leadership aspirants for the principalship role as they experience and observe what the role requires. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) considers this observation period as an essential one for principalship role learning. Thus, women who chose and entered the teaching career earlier rather than later, develop consciousness and awareness about the principalship role much sooner, and this helps them with earlier preparation.

Malerato's journey to principalship differ from Masemi's and Malefu's in the sense that she moved from being a teacher to being the principal, she did not hold any leadership roles before she was appointed a principal position. However, she had rich experience in teaching and her passion for vulnerable children, for whom she wanted to get quality education kept alive, her dream of becoming a principal. Malefu and Malerato's appointments differ from that of Masemi in the sense that they got the principalship position the first time they applied while Masemi had to try several times to get it.

The commonality in these three women was the determination and the fighting spirit to get what they wanted, they worked very hard and upgraded their academics in order to make sure that at the end they got what they wanted, this showed similar qualities of strong willed women in the

study of Faulkner (2015:140) who even went to the lengths of volunteering to do some leadership roles like helping the principal by performing their duties in their schools in order to gain the necessary skills and experience that would prepare them to take up a principalship position and by also furthering their studies. Furthermore, the results obtained from the study concur with the study of Bosch (2015: 34) where participants mentioned that they consciously wanted to become principals and worked hard towards that goal and at the end got the position. In addition, the passionate desire exhibited by the three women in the study, resonates with the findings of Smith (2011:420). This means that when women are confident and believe in themselves, they can achieve anything and the views or stories of these women show that the sky is the limit for the women in school leadership, their attitudes and passion towards attaining what they believed in was amazing and encouraging for the future aspiring female teachers.

In relation to career development theory guiding the study, this is the establishment stage, where some female principals have gained work experience after being in different leadership roles within the schools and felt ready to seek principalship positions. Super (1992), in his theory of career development, explains that this is whereby teachers have gained experience to take their careers to the next level of principalship. The female principals discussed above, felt that with the experience they have gained through the years, and the qualifications they have obtained, they were ready and capable to enact leadership as required by the principalship positions and therefore applied and were successful.

#### 5.4 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT

This section discusses the various barriers faced by the women along their career routes to principalship and challenges that they experience after being promoted to the positions. It provides detailed answers to the third research question of this study. These challenges were grouped into themes that are discussed on individual basis but certain comparisons and contrasts on some challenges are also presented in the discussion.

##### 5.4.1 Lack of confidence

The findings of this study revealed that women's career advancement was inhibited by lack of confidence which nearly destroyed their careers. Their lack of self-confidence, self-belief and

low self-esteem were major problems in their journeys to becoming high school principals. These factors were identified as hindering women's career progression in the studies by Cubbillo and Brown (2003); Chabaya et al (2009); Moorosi (2010) and Faulkner (2015). These research studies highlighted lack of confidence as a barrier to women's access to leadership roles. In this study, Maneo's lack of confidence haunted her whenever she stood up to teach to the point where she even considered leaving teaching and changing careers. She also did not believe in herself and capabilities when she was asked to be a principal for a church school by her seniors from the church. Her crippling stage fright almost pushed her out of the teaching career let alone apply for the principalship. She did not feel she was ready for the responsibilities that came with the job hence why she did not even think of applying for the position.

Mapita's did not believe in herself and her capabilities to do the job when she was nominated to the principal's position. For Malefu, she lacked the confidence to face the challenges of university education, which she perceived as a higher challenge and chose to study at the college first then later went to the university. These findings show that women suffered from low self-esteem at different stages in their career paths. However, in this study lack of confidence did not stop any of the women from transiting; theirs appeared to be first instance fears that they had to deal with at the beginning of their new roles but they overcame that in due time. This result is in line with the findings by Uwamahoro (2011:73) who reported that female participants said they lacked self-confidence at the initial stages of their leadership roles but gained momentum after some time in the position. This was because they were happy with their contributions, that is, changes they brought to the schools such as positive students outcomes which they mentioned as their first priority. The relationships they have managed to build amongst teachers which brought good working relations among staff even though they were still those who were not so supportive and cooperative but they majority was fully behind them and these boosted their confidence. Thus, as previous studies showed, lack of confidence was merely a fear of the unknown. Many of them built confidence overtime, overcoming their initial fears as they acquired more experience.

#### 5.4.2 Gender discrimination

At every level of their careers, women are faced with different forms and levels of discrimination on account of gender. The findings of the study as well as the literature show that gender discrimination is a barrier to women's advancement (Posholi 2012; Faulkner 2015). Masemi, Maliau and Mapita identified gender discrimination as one of the factors that affected their career progression success.

Masemi paid the price with the position she was qualified for. Her crime remained that she is a woman and by virtue of this gender, according to the school board at that time, she was not suitable for the job which they said were for the male folk. During the interview, she decried such myopic idea exhibited by the members of the school board. She explained that the school board members told her that she was good but regrettably the school was looking for a male principal. This result concurs with the findings of the study by Moorosi (2010:551) where the same exact words were told to one of the women in her study at the appointment stage. It was also revealed by (Coleman 2005) who found out that most female principals experience gender discrimination at the appointment stage whereby the recruitment panel doubts women's capabilities of being high school principals. This is relevant to this study, as the application and appointment process for principals' vacancies in Lesotho is dependent upon the support and recommendations of the school boards working with the schools.

Similar discriminatory attitude was also meted on Malerato. Male teachers under her leadership did not trust her managerial skills, did not take her instructions seriously and made comments that suggested she was not good enough to be a high school leader as a woman. This was evidenced in a study by Kanjere (2008: 8) where women principals revealed that male educators found it difficult to submit to their authority as women. While Malerato suffered discrimination from hard headed male teachers, Maliau had to deal with discriminatory behaviour from the parents and the school board. Because Maliau is a woman, her performance as the principal was not recognised nor appreciated by parents who blindly believed there could have been a better leadership under a male principal as they deliberately made such comments to Maliau on more than one occasion. The results concur with the findings of the study conducted by Kanjere

(2008:8) where it was discovered that the community that work with women principals did not fully accept them.

Parents did not see Maliau's contribution and efficiency towards developing the school, their judgment was based completely on her gender and not on how effective she was in her position. The findings of the study in this regard is in line with the study findings of Coleman (2007:397) where she discovered that the community did not give women in her study an opportunity to proof themselves and their capabilities but instead they doubted them and did not support them because of their gender. Like Masemi, who was denied the job because her efforts and contributions were not recognised as a woman, Maliau's contributions were not recognised either by parents on the same reason as well as Mapita who was undermined by male teachers who hated the idea of being led by a woman with supposedly no managerial skills. However, according to Mudede (2015:78), society is gradually accepting women leaders in schools, and although based on a different context, at the time when the study was conducted, participants were no longer experiencing such blatant acts of gender discrimination. It should be noted nonetheless, that the study comprised women from the urban part of the capital town of Maseru. The study can therefore not speak for what women in the rural and more outlying areas are experiencing, calling for further research. It is clear that communities need to be made to understand that good leadership does not necessarily depend on gender.

It is important to note that, although they were forced to feel bad on account of their gender, their performance remained generally stable, efficient and effective in the face of the discrimination challenge. The positive side of it was, such discrimination did not destroy nor diminish the fighting spirits of these women even though it worried them to a certain point. They achieved what they wanted because they had self-belief, self-confidence and were assertive strong women. This shows that when women believe in themselves and their capabilities more and more, it can only bring positive results for young female teachers who might be principals in the future, it gives hope for more female principals in high schools as the women in this study showed that

gender discrimination did not affect them or their goals no matter how hard it became at times. Indeed women have arrived.

#### 5.4.3 Family responsibility

Combining family and work responsibilities is one of the most challenging aspects of many career women. The challenges that come with it affect their jobs as well their families in different ways. Malerato and Malefu were faced with the challenge of dual responsibilities in being principals and family women. Striking the balance proved to be a great challenge to both of them in their career progression.

Malerato hesitated to apply for principalship position that she had long longed for because all the vacant posts were always far away from where she used to stay with her family. As a result, she was more concerned about taking care of her family than abandoning them for a principalship far away from them. This finding concurs with those of studies by Litmanovitz (2011); Posholi (2012); Kaparou and Bush (2007) where women leaders were found to be less willing to make sacrifices that required them to leave their families and stay far from them because they considered their first priority to be their families. Women principals in Mudede (2015:78) justified that women's unwillingness to apply for jobs which would place them far away from their families especially their husbands, as fear that their husbands might be promiscuous which would consequently affect their marriages negatively.

It means that the dilemma of family responsibilities exposes female principals to the challenge of choosing between their careers and their families. Whichever they choose usually stands at the expense of the other. For instance, Malerato chose her family at the expense of her career and decided not to apply for principalship vacancies due to their locations. This result corresponds with the results of the study conducted by Kruse and Krumm (2016:33) which revealed that a female principal refused a job offer or promotion to the principalship because of her family. The female principal participant in Kruse and Krumm's study explained that she did not choose the job at the expense of her family and that she needed to take care of her family first. Similarly, Malerato's attachment to the family could not allow her to effectively pursue her dreams until the family agreed it was time to let go. This was also evidenced in Mudede 2015:72 study where married status and family role prevented women from taking leadership positions in education as

they would rather take care of their families. Malefu did not pursue her studies for ten years after getting married in fear of leaving her husband alone to go far and study. She regrets that decision today as she mentioned that she is being divorced by the same person that she put her career plans on hold for.

The study's findings correlates with the findings of the study conducted by Chabaya et al (2009:62) where female participants reported that they did not seek promotions in school leadership because they were scared they were going to be transferred and they did not want to leave their families behind especially their husbands who might be tempted to go after other women and end up contracting HIV/AIDS. This means that women's attachment to their families delay their career advancement because they consider their families as their first priorities and only think of advancing their careers at a very late stage when their children have grown which is not the case with their male counterparts.

Malerato mentioned that she was really tired and wanted to quit the principalship position and go back to being a teacher until she retires because the responsibilities of principalship role and a family role were just too much. Similarly, female head teachers in Kiteli's (2013:50) study felt that school work was so demanding and conflicted with domestic roles and as a result, a lot of time is dedicated to the students and little time for the family and doubling as a mother and a career woman which is not the case with male principals.

For Manepo and Mapita, the work load of principalship is cumbersome, stressful and demanding. It means they have to work over time to make sure they meet up with the goals of their offices. And they complained that they did not have time to be with their families because they are the first ones to arrive at schools and the last ones to leave the schools. This result concurs with the findings of the study by Bosch (2015:36), she discovered that women in her study struggled to balance work responsibilities with family responsibilities as the demands of the jobs or principalship positions were too much.

It is evident from the discussion above that female principals struggle to strike a balance between their jobs and taking care of their families which would arguably not be the case with their male counterparts. With pressures of taking care of the family and their jobs simultaneously, women opt to take a break from advancing their careers and take care of their families first and only

continue with their careers once they feel their families are stable or taken care of, and that delay women's career progression. Men unlike women do not have to juggle domestic responsibilities and professional responsibilities because they do not take care of their families like women do. Women are expected to perform their culturally gendered chores at home especially those who are married on top of their administrative work without any help especially from their partners. This might be discouraging for other female teachers to seek promotions as they see how female principals struggle to balance the two demanding jobs without any support or with little support. Women need support from their families and colleagues so as to minimise their workload and help them cope better with their dual responsibilities

#### 5.4.4 Lack of support and respect for authority by teachers

Lack of support and respect for authority was a significant challenge that was expressed by female principals in this study. For most participants, female teachers were more troublesome and difficult to manage than their male counterparts. Dana and Bourisaw 2006 cited in Buchanan 2006: 304) also addressed the dilemma of women to be non-supportive of other women which at times sabotages the women who eventually rise to the position of the leader. Women seem to purposely sabotage other women. Dana and Bourisaw (2006b:172) describe this phenomena as horizontal violence. It seems as though low self-esteem creates situations where women attack other women. Dana and Bourisaw (2006b:187) assert that threatened women make comments that bring successful women to their own lack of self-confidence level. Masemi and Manepo stating that they dealt more with female teacher's bad attitudes than they dealt with developing schools said it all.

Masemi stressed that the female teachers exhibited certain negative attitude towards her and their work which made it difficult for her to function optimally. They directly and indirectly disobeyed her and the order of her office as their principal. This significant and surprising hindrance was also identified by female principals in the studies of Hanson (2011:94; Coronel et al 2010:156) where female teachers did not support their fellow women but gave them grief instead. Similarly, Malefu explained that female teachers liked divisions amongst teachers in the school, they concentrated more on how she treated teacher A, B or C more than doing their individual and collective duties. She found it easier to manage male teachers as opposed to their

female counterparts. Kanjere (2008:9) asserts that female teachers who prefer to work with male principals do not support female principals. It follows a call for women to stop the “women pulling down syndrome” and support one another so that their male counterparts would follow suit when they see that women stick/work together as a team. Moreover, it would set good examples for younger women who are aspiring for the leadership.

It was different with Malerato because she was being disrespected by both female and male teachers whereas Mapita was supported by female teachers and undermined by male teachers who she had to release from work because they were making her life miserable as a principal. This was similar in Mudede (2015:79) where it was found that male teachers displayed negative attitudes towards female principals when they tried to be firm with them. They further stated that some male teachers felt threatened by women who were holding top leadership positions and that created unnecessary conflicts between female principals and male teachers (Mudede, 2015:80). According to Coronel et al (2010:156), male teachers fail to acknowledge female principal’s authority which leads to women working too hard to obtain recognition and legitimacy in the decisions they take.

All in all, the main challenge for currently practising female principals was lack of support and respect for authority from teachers. It is evident that female principals were more troubled by female teachers who failed to follow instructions and maintain peace and good relations with their principals.

#### 5.4.5 Workload

This was a very serious concern to all the women. Like they have complained of shortage of teachers in their various schools, the workload of subsisting teachers would definitely be much. In the light of this, performance under such situation is reduced and efficiency retarded. This situation forced most principals into more classrooms taking up few subjects in addition to their own subjects so as to assist with teaching. This on their part is in addition to their primary duties or functions of administration. This was similar to the results of the study conducted by Coronel et al (2010:156) where female head teachers encountered problems in balancing teaching and administration.

The workload notwithstanding, some of the principals like Mapalesa would not compromise the performance level of her school. For her it must be 100 per cent pass rate from the teachers or nothing. She equally led by example by setting the standard in the subjects she taught. However, teaching and managing made things difficult for her. This shows that juggling two important roles of teaching and administrative work makes things difficult for female principals and that lead to individuals concentrating more on the one while neglecting the other, which might explain why many women do not aspire to become high school principals.

## 5.5 COPING STRATEGIES

It is clear from the discussions of the above section which detailed difficulties women were faced with in their journeys to becoming high schools principals, they needed some coping strategies in order to achieve their goals and the study revealed that they were helped and motivated by their families and colleagues. Also the love and desire to see vulnerable students acquiring quality education encouraged them to look beyond the barriers and pressed on no matter how difficult it was.



### 5.5.1 Support from family

The study revealed that the five women, Maliau, Maneo, Manepo, Malefu and Masemi had strong support systems from their families in their career journey and it was evident that they appreciated it a great deal. They spoke of such support as a coping strategy, which they adopted or was provided by their families to reduce their work stress. According to Young and Macleod (2001:32), women who seek careers in leadership position have succeeded because of coping strategies they had such as their personal and professional support systems. The result adds to the study conducted by Allan et al (2011:109), where they mentioned that support systems at home and at work have shown to have decreased levels of stress brought by workload associated with high schools female principals as working mothers.

Apart from a holistic family support they expressed, they equally acknowledged specific individual contributions from family members. Malefu for instance was specific about her mothers' support. In this line she expressed gratitude to the effort of her mother in looking after

her son while her professional journey lasted. Despite her mother's death, she remained grateful to her for her contributions. It means such specifically mentioned support gave her time to make maximum use of the opportunities that presented themselves to her in climbing to the position of leadership.

Manepo particularly appreciated her father whom she insisted consistently gave her the advice that assisted her in performing optimally. She stressed that such support made her work easier more especially in dealing with managing people from different backgrounds. In other words, the support from her parents and her father in particular were very effective coping strategy that assisted in cushioning the challenges of her work. Thus, like Malefu, Manepo's coping strategy came directly from their parents. While it was Malefu's mother, it was Manepo's father in her case. According to Moorosi (2007) support from family is crucial and ensures good performance by female principals.

Manepo just like Malefu was supported by her mother as well. To Manepo, her mother was her role model who wanted all of her children to succeed. Hence, when she had the opportunity, such desires of her mother strengthened her and propelled her to the level of leadership. For Maliau, her husband was also instrumental to her success. She insisted that he was supportive particularly when she was under pressure. She explained that she and her husband are in the same teaching profession and that worked to her advantage because her husband understood what the job entailed and gave her his full support even when she would bring work home and fail to cook he would do it himself. Similarly, in a study by Faulkner (2015:125), a female principal explained that she was supported by her husband throughout her career path to principalship but unlike Maliau, her husband was not a teacher. According to Young and Ki-Hak (2009) and Bosch (2015), the main support systems stem from husband, workplace and family. Family has played an important role in supporting female principals throughout their career journeys. It is not surprising that most women were influenced by their families to choose a career in teaching and continued to support them in their journey to accessing leadership roles in the field that they encouraged and inspired them to follow.

### 5.5.2 Support from colleagues and other strategies

Mapita, Maneo and Malerato received a great deal of support from their colleagues. This was similar to the study by Bosch (2015:42) whereby practising female principals were strongly supported by their colleagues. Mapita was specific about the previous principal whom she maintained provided her with support. Likewise, Maneo had the similar experience of her former principals supporting her in her career advancement. The useful advice of these principals helped her to effectively manage the challenges of her leadership position. She valued their experiences in the positions and used to call them for advice whenever she needed one and they supported her and was proud to say she has become a good and confident in her position because of their help and guidance. This is in agreement with the study by Bartling (2013:49) as the results of the study she conducted revealed that female principals were supported and motivated by their principals and supervisors in their career advancement journeys. Moreover, support by colleagues was evident where they were seen nominating Mapita for the principalship position.

For Maliau, she drew her courage from the point of view that if one person can do this she too can do it. To this end, she continuously reminded herself that if other teachers could face the challenges of the office of a principal, she could do it as well. This was similar to the study by Hanson (2011:89) where participants mentioned that they watched female principals executing their roles and knew that they also would do it successfully and that inspired them to advance their careers in teaching. This motivation kept Maliau moving in to the position she is today. The indirect influence of her colleagues as teachers from other institutions inspired her not to lose hope of pursuing her goal or desire.

Malerato's coping strategy was drawn from hard-working teachers and her love for vulnerable students. For her, the appreciation of their parents was enough encouragement to face the challenges of her work. However, behind all these, she maintained that the crown of her coping strategy was her passion for her career and the students which is similar to what was revealed by the study of Coronel et al (2010:148) where female principals said that their desire to become principals was their concern for students to succeed and do well in their learning. This means that there were several strategies that were used by female principals in order to cope in their

career paths and these strategies kept them going and focused in aiming and achieving for their goals.

Support from colleagues more especially former principals of the participants played a crucial role in motivating the female principals in their career advancement. Moreover, they were encouraged by the determination and commitment that they experienced from other successful female principals and that made them believe that they could also succeed. This means that the female principal's career advancement was motivated by their colleagues who became their role models and gave them hope that they would also make it to the high school principalship.

#### 5.6 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Preparatory grounds for female principals in this study were HODs and Deputy Principals positions. Having the experience by working in these positions was important to facilitate their transition into principalship which is also in connection with Super's third stage of career development theory, the establishment stage and Ribbin's incumbency stage whereby both stages explain that at these stages, teachers look for leadership roles within the schools. These leadership roles developed them personally and professionally. Even though some of them struggled when they were made principals because they were not fully prepared, they however relied on the experiences of these positions to apply for the new positions, to learn and also adjust faster into these positions. Again, at this stage, the importance of mentors comes to surface, that is, with the experience gathered, some were encouraged by their informal mentors to take their careers to the next higher level which is the principalship.

Apart from these, they were also exposed to certain incentives enjoyed only by principals as motivation to sustain them in their demanding jobs. Most of the women explained that these incentives usually came from the Ministry of Education and Training to ensure that they performed optimally to develop their schools. To achieve this, the Ministry of education and training provided the principals with training in forms of workshops and seminars that they arranged for them in order to update them with new managerial skills so that their performance can improve.

### 5.7.1. Deputy Principals

The Deputy Principal position was found to have played a crucial role in preparing female principals for the principalship positions. The opportunity of serving in the position of deputy principal exposed Manepo, Masemi and Mapalesa to some important leadership skills. The women explained that they gained experience from the deputy principal positions and felt they were ready and confident to apply for the principalship positions. This is similar to how women in Faulkner (2015:88) felt after they have served as deputy principals. Apart from the experience they got from deputy principal positions, women in this study indicated that their former principals used to ask them to act on their behalf in their absence and this enhanced their self-esteem and confidence and paved their way to the principalship positions. This result supports the findings by Moorosi (2010); Mudede (2015) where participants acknowledged that male principals informally gave them opportunities to act on their behalf and that boosted female principal's confidence. Similarly, Bosch (2015) found that female participants learned a lot from the opportunities they were given to act on behalf of senior officers and in meetings in their absence. This shows that acting as principals and deputy principal position are very instrumental in preparing female principals to becoming principals. The experience they got from these leadership roles played a crucial role in principalship positions as they already knew how to handle some of the challenges they came across in the period they were serving as deputy principals.

### 5.7.2 Head of Departments (HODs)

Like Masemi, three other women; Malefu, Mapita and Maliau were also HODs first before transiting into principalship. Their difference from the case of Masemi is that they were appointed principals from HoDs positions. These women expressed clearly that the experience of HoD assisted them to settle and to deal faster with issues when they eventually became principals. The results commensurate with the findings of the study by Faulkner (2015: 121) as it revealed that a particular female principal was motivated and encouraged to apply for the position of principalship once she was appointed or promoted to the HoD. It is evident from her statement that the position was a significant step on her journey to principalship. It is clear that

serving in the positions of HoDs provided most of the women with necessary leadership and managerial skills needed for the position of principalship.

### 5.7.3. High School Principal's Association and the Ministry Of Education and Training

The two bodies, High School Principalship's Association and the Ministry of education and Training provided female principals with development opportunities. They organise workshops, seminars and conferences where principals share ideas about how to improve their skills in order to be effective leaders of the schools.

In this study, it is worth mentioning that some female principals self-developed themselves by studying further and obtaining Master's Degrees and Leadership certificates and that helped them to improve their skills and knowledge about the position. Other different forms of opportunities for female principals to improve their managerial skills in their new roles came from High School Principal's Association and the Ministry of Education and Training. In most cases, the benefits of these bodies came directly to the principals to enable them to develop as principals as well as to develop the schools whereas some principals also used the opportunities to develop their own teachers, the identified different ways or opportunities provided for female principals were local and international seminars and workshops. Only few principals have not attended the programmes but they spoke passionately about them and said they have been very busy and failed to attend but promised to attend them very soon.

The study revealed that the two institutions organised workshops and seminars for principals whereby they polish their managerial skills and are given an opportunity to share among themselves the best way of doing things such as record keeping, lesson plans, budgeting and making financial reports because principals are chief accounting officers in their schools and should have financial management knowledge.

In summary, directly and indirectly, it is clear that High School Principal's Association and the Ministry of education and training were fundamental as well as instrumental in the development of female principals in both public and church owned schools. It availed the women principals the opportunity to develop themselves by acquiring new teaching and managerial skills which made them better managers of their various schools. Women who also furthered their studies had an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills on leadership and management.

On the reflection of the theory which underpinned the study, career development theory by Super (1992), helped with the understanding of career development of female principals in Lesotho. However, it does not explain fully the experiences of these women. It is notable that Super's theory is silent on only women issues, For example, it does not necessarily explain women only related experiences in their career development such as the women in this study whom their career progression were delayed due to having to take care of their families first before they could advance their careers. Confirming this is, Bimrose, Watson, McMahon, Haasler, Tomassini and Suzanne (2014:79), by explaining that current career theories fail to adequately address the complex and relational nature of women's career development that is different from that of men. It is also noticeable that the way Super's theory is packed; the stages assume that career development is an easy straight forward process whose stages occur in a linear way. Stages suggest that principals go through their career development in a smooth process stage after stage, however, in this study, not all women principals in their career development went through stages as they appear. It was uniquely different how women's career development unfolded until they became high school principals. Although used in complementarity as opposed to comparison, Ribbins' (2008) stages come closest to explaining the experiences of women principals. Perhaps it is because the stages were originally framed using experiences in principalship and not any other career. This suggests the need for more locally developed explanations of women's career development experiences so that further models can be relevant. Having said that, it was also noticeable that the way most female principals told their stories reflected less on gender. It was primarily about them as school principals and secondarily as women. Similar experiences or results were reported from the study by Jacky Lumby (2008) where she conducted a study on women leaders in educational settings from England and South Africa, and women did not see their experiences as gendered. Perhaps this is an indication of a need for more work that will help with finding ways to fully explain women leader's stories.

## 5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a comprehensive discussion of the findings of the study. The discussions revealed that family influence featured prominently as an important factor that shaped the

choices of careers made by these women. The transition of the women from teachers into leadership positions revealed two dimensions, unintentional and intentionally sought promotions. Challenges such as lack of confidence and gender discrimination were identified as major hindrances for women's career advancement.

The chapter equally discussed some of the coping strategies these women adopted as home and colleagues support for dealing with the challenges of their transitional journeys. The opportunities that were instrumental in developing these women in preparing them for their positions of high schools leadership and after their promotions were discussed thoroughly. The next chapter presents conclusions and recommendations for this last chapter of the study.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided discussion of findings of the study derived from the eight female principals' stories which were gathered through narrative inquiry. The chapter was structured around the six themes emerging from data analysis. Chapter six, as the concluding chapter, addresses the research questions so as to show how they have been answered. The chapter presents conclusions and recommendations in general. Conclusions were drawn on the basis of the findings and recommendations are directed at the educational leadership bodies so that these could steer, accommodate and promote participation and representation of women in high school leadership.

The study was underpinned by the following aims: to find out what inspired the female principals to become secondary/high school principals, determine how teachers transition to principalship and to identify factors that either promoted or hindered female's principal's success in their career advancement. To achieve these aims, the study explored the personal and professional experiences of eight Basotho female principals, through the telling of their life stories using narrative inquiry and qualitative methodological approach. As envisaged, this study contributes to the body of knowledge of gender and leadership in the Lesotho educational context, and more specifically, it contributes to an understanding of the nature of career paths for female principals and the motivating factors which draw women to this role, given the under-representation of female principals nationally and internationally in high schools.

### 6.2 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focused on the following questions:

Main question: What is the nature of career paths for female principals in Lesotho high schools?

There were three sub-questions:

1. What inspired female principals to choose a career in teaching?
2. How do female teaching careers transition into principalship?

### 3. What factors have promoted and hindered female principals' career advancement?

To answer the main question of the study, sub questions are answered based on the responses extracted from the narratives of eight female principals of Lesotho high schools.

#### 6.2.1 Sub question 1: What inspired female principals to choose a career in teaching?

With regard to the above sub question, the researcher asked women what or who influenced their decisions to choose a career in teaching. The study revealed that most women were inspired by parents and siblings to choose a career in teaching. Most of the women had one or more members of the family who were teachers and as a result, they grew up in a family of teachers and that triggered their love for teaching at a very young age. For some, the respect associated with a teaching profession experienced by these women made it the ultimate career. In general, family members who were teachers at the time were role models for the women in the study and they wanted to follow in their footsteps, which they did and all participants did not regret choosing a teaching career because they grew to love it even more once they were in it. Few women chose a career in teaching due to limited career choices at the time. The only careers they could choose from back then were nursing, agriculture and teaching but they ended up opting for teaching because they qualified for the training requirements that were essential for one to pursue her studies at the teacher's training college at the time.

The researcher found that amongst the parents, mothers were more influential in convincing their daughters to choose a career in teaching or to have a profession followed by their fathers and lastly their siblings. Some of the parents had careers in teaching whereas some had never worked but more or less wanted their children to have education that they did not have themselves. The siblings (sisters) who influenced their sisters were senior sisters who were all teachers and role models to their younger sisters. Moreover, students enrolling in the educational field as well as the lecturers in teachers' training colleges/universities influenced some of the female principals' choice of a teaching career even more. They mentioned that they saw how students and teachers were passionate and enjoyed teaching lessons and they also ended up liking it for certain. Based on these findings, the researcher concludes that more than anything, family played a crucial role in shaping the futures of the women in the study and that goes to show that when one has a

strong family support-base, she can succeed no matter how hard the choices might get along the way. This is because there were barriers in female principal's career progression and some felt like quitting from this teaching career but families offered them support and made it possible for them to see their dreams through.

#### 6.2.2 Sub question 2: How do teaching careers transition into principalship?

All the women in this study initially started their teaching careers as professional teachers with a certificate or Diploma in teaching or education. In their career journeys to principalship, they managed to upgrade their qualifications by going to universities full time or part time so as to get qualifications that would pave way for their aspirations towards leadership positions in high schools.

It was found that the female principals transitioned from teachers to becoming principals either intentionally or unintentionally. However, either way female principals were all happy and satisfied with their transitions. They were at the pinnacle of their careers and therefore did not regret decisions they took to become principals, even those who were encouraged to seek promotion and subsequently appointed. Women in the study had different routes to principalship; some went straight from being teachers to becoming principals while some worked as teachers for a few years and then got promoted to HODs and deputy principals before they could rise to principalship.

The research also found that female principals drew their intrinsic motivation from their self-confidence, determination to succeed and self-belief while their extrinsic motivation came from their passion for a teaching career and students, including support from informal mentors who played a crucial role in motivating the transitions of female principals to principalship. This is because the study identified that the transitions were sought so that female principals could bring about multifarious changes to the schools in relation to teaching and learning and they had good ideas that they felt were worthy to be put in place. It emerged that most of the transitions had nothing to do with the financial gains that came with the promotions. Experience and qualifications were also instrumental in encouraging transition of female principals to the positions they are holding today, even though the findings of the study on the same aspect

revealed that some female principals did not apply for the principalship positions in as much as they had experience and qualifications that qualified them for the position. This means that some female principals lacked the confidence to apply for principalship positions as they did not believe in their capability to do the job very well which is why they needed mentors in their careers.

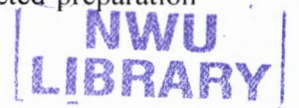
It is therefore concluded that female principals' career transitions were facilitated by self-drive, acquisition of the necessary experience and credentials. Even the female principals who lacked confidence to apply for principalship had the courage and self-belief to take on the principalship positions once they were nominated, they did their jobs successfully because they were determined to succeed and not disappoint the people who saw potential in them and also to prove to themselves that they could do it.

6.2.3 Sub question 3: What factors have promoted or hindered the success of female principals' career advancement?

This sub question addressed two questions, firstly, what contributed positively to promote career advancement of the female principals, and in this regard, support systems and opportunities they came across in their career paths were identified and were briefly discussed. Secondly, the sub question addressed the barriers to female career advancement.

In terms of factors that promoted career advancement, it was found that, along their career progression journeys, support from family and colleagues contributed positively towards successful career advancement of female principals. It was further discovered that female principals relied mostly on their families for support when the context and workmates got tough at times. Colleagues working with the female principals, especially former principals, were also instrumental in encouraging career advancement of the women in this study. Dedication and passion for vulnerable children and the urge to want to bring about change in schools and put new ideas into practice inspired the female principals to work hard and succeed so that they could effect positive change in the schools. These were enabling motors in the career advancement of female principals to their current positions.

Female principals also enjoyed privileges that were meant for principals only after their appointments. They were provided with opportunities to develop as principals through different programmes organized by the Ministry of Education and Training and the high schools' principal association. Female principals attended workshops, seminars and retreats meant to develop and sharpen their leadership and management skills in order to become better managers. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the MOET is doing well in providing female principals with the necessary skills and knowledge relevant to their jobs so that they can lead their schools successfully. Although this initiative seems limited to principals only, it could actually benefit young female aspirants as well. This initiative could boost their morale and trigger aspirations for career advancement because if knowledge is power according to the dictum, this investment could encourage them to look beyond a teaching career and serve as more targeted preparation for the principalship.



With regard to the barriers that hindered female principals' success in their career advancement, factors that were identified included lack of confidence, family responsibilities, gender discrimination and workload. Women were found to have lacked confidence at some point in their careers; they did not believe in their capabilities, especially when they had to apply for principalship and at the initial stages after their appointments. Some of the women put their dreams on hold for their families. The study revealed that family responsibilities were first priority for some of the women in the study. As a result, this delayed their career advancement because they felt their families needed them more. These women eventually gathered the strength to wean their families and pursued their dreams but after a long time of uncertainty.

The study deduced that women's career advancement is delayed more than men's because they are expected to cater for the families as mothers, wives and daughters-in-law. From the traditional point of view, a woman is viewed as insane if she talks of going back to school to further her studies or to even consider working far away from the family because the husband might go astray in his wife's absence and by the time they gather strength to advance their careers it is very late, close to the women's retirement and as a result, they talk more of retirement than advancing their careers beyond principalship. The researcher suggests that

women should be given the opportunities to advance their careers without being made to feel guilty of abandoning their families if they want to advance their careers.

The study also revealed that gender discrimination still exists even after the Lesotho government has put so much effort into implementing gender equality frameworks. This was experienced at the appointment stage by school board members who are often elderly people from the churches and still hold the inane belief that male principals are the only suitable candidates for high school principalship and not female principals. This remotely juridical view about masculinities has nothing to do with leadership. Again, after female principal's appointments, parents and teachers discriminated against female principals as they did not hold back their sexist comments about female principal's inabilities to do the job and compared them to male principals who they undoubtedly believed could do a great job in leading the schools. Female principals also complained about workload, mentioning that principals did not teach before but recently they were expected to teach on top of their administrative work.

The study found that female principals had to deal with teacher's bad attitudes, especially female teachers who seemed to be out of control by deliberately defying female authority and lacked respect for female principals. Few of the female principals had to deal with male teachers who also were not manageable but this problem was more prominent with female teachers. Another problem which made it impossible for female principals to do their jobs effectively was that parents were not involved in their children's education, failed to pay school fees and did not attend parents' meetings but at the end of the year expect good results. MOET has also failed to provide female principals with enough teachers and that was a great challenge because it was evident that most schools had a lot of students but few teachers which made it difficult for effective teaching and learning as the ratios were quite skewed. Lack of infrastructure such as classrooms, chairs, tables, libraries and computers exacerbated the challenges faced by the female principals. It was therefore concluded that out of control teachers made the female principal's job difficult as well as lack of necessary resources from MOET.

## 6.3 RECOMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study above. They are intended to address the problems that were pointed out in the problem statement of the study as well as those that emerged from the study.

### 6.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Female principals struggled with lack of confidence after their appointments mainly because of lack of experience. It is recommended that preparation courses or programmes be made available for newly promoted principals where principals are enlightened on the expectations of their new roles. MOET should also support female principals with adequate human and material resources to make their jobs easier.
- All the stakeholders in education, such as the school board members, the community members and the teachers should be sensitized on gender issues. MOET should organize workshops regularly because a largely patriarchal society tends to forget quickly if there is one workshop per year about important issues such as gender, therefore there should be regular workshops at schools to educate the above mentioned stakeholders about gender equality and sensitivity. This is because the study revealed that most stakeholders were insensitively disrespectful and inconsiderate of female principal's feelings merely because they were women and did not trust that they were capable of being high school principals as they were heard passing sexist comments directly and indirectly to the female principals.
- Female principals, having been through a lot of challenges to get where they are, should be role models for young female teachers who aspire to be female principals in the future but are hesitant due to some barriers that they encountered along the arduous journey to headship. These female principals who have made it should recruit more women into school leadership positions so as to eliminate the under-representation of female

principals in high schools. They could do this in the schools that they are heading as they are in the position to see every teacher's weakness and strength.

- Education should not involve teachers and students only but even the parents should participate in their children's education. Teachers struggle with parents who do not want to be involved in their children's learning; they have tried to involve them by asking them to sign their children's assignments to show that they have helped them to no avail. The government should make it a requirement for parents to take responsibility for their children's education just like they did with free education policy where parents who do not allow children to go to school are found guilty legally and must pay a fine. This is because the study revealed that parents refuse to attend parent's meetings, do not timeously pay school fees if at all and refuse to discipline their children when they are reported of wrong-doing at schools.
- MOET should make an effort to implement a policy which accommodates transfers of teachers who are married, such as, a wife ought to be transferred to the district where her husband is working, and the same procedure should apply for the husband. The current scenario is that other government ministries have already implemented this policy and strategy when they transfer married couples in an attempt to keep sustained marital relationships. This would encourage female teachers to apply for promotions at earlier stages of their careers without fear of abandoning their families.

### 6.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In a patriarchal society such as Lesotho, there is a need for further research on a larger scale which would focus on factors that enable women to achieve career success. Most gender studies have focused on the barriers to women's progression which seek to explain why women do not apply for principalship. There is still so much that is not known about why women seek principalship regardless of those barriers. In this study, we have moved a bit closer to an understanding of why they pursue it and further studies could provide more robust answers.

Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted focusing on enablers of women's career success and the impact of personal agency. This may yield positive outcomes for young female teachers aspiring to high school leadership. In this study, narrative inquiry enabled women's voices to be heard; therefore it is recommended that studies in the future also use this approach to collect data. It is very suitable to draw significant and in-depth data that would make it easier to understand why women still seek promotions to high school principalship despite challenges that have been thoroughly investigated in the current study.

It would be interesting also to conduct a study on social and cultural factors that hinder women's career advancement and how these could be overcome. There is a need for solutions to the problems that inhibit women's career advancement not just to discover the problems and leave them unsolved. Moreover, the same study is recommended for other districts within the country so as to generalize the findings.

#### 6.4 REFLECTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has facilitated some depth of insight into addressing the main research question on the career paths for female principals in some Lesotho high schools. Reflecting on their career paths, women gained a better understanding of why and how they have taken the decisions and career choices they have and what they have experienced as women in their societies and at their places of work. One participant in her final remarks said:

*“You have made me realize things I did not even think about, how significant my career path has been, I feel I can write a book about it, but honestly, I was not aware I had so much to tell about my career journey, and that it can actually inspire someone, thank you for making me reflect back on my career journey and see that I have come a long way personally and professionally and by the grace of God I have made it”.*

This re-assured the researcher that the study was worth being conducted and that a narrative inquiry was best suited approach for the study because it unpacked deep-seated sentiments that the researcher and the participants did not anticipate.

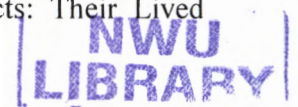
The “conversation with a purpose” Ribbins (2007) in (Faulkner 2015:13) which the researcher had with the eight women evoked responses that have provided significant and in-depth data; however, it is crucial to acknowledge that the limitations of a small-scale study imply that findings are not generalizable nor was intended to be as it is not the purpose of the narrative inquiry. Thus, this study was limited to only eight female principals and looked into their career paths to high school principalship. It focused on their experiences and gave voice to the eight of them only, therefore themes and insights presented in Chapter Four cannot be generalized to all female principals in Lesotho high schools or career paths.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

The study aimed at exploring career paths of female principals in Lesotho high schools, particularly in the Maseru district so as to understand opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. It discovered that female principals had opportunities afforded to them for their career development in a teaching profession and as much as barriers to their career advancement were greater, they did not allow them to define who they are but were determined and committed to see their dreams come true and they succeeded. It recommends that more studies addressing the same issue be conducted in another district. Even though the research was conducted with eight female principals from the Maseru district of Lesotho, the researcher believes that the findings are globally acceptable and applicable because at the end, national and international research studies have reflected the same problem of minority representation of women principals in high schools even though there is a slight improvement. The researcher is of the opinion that if studies of this nature are conducted on a regular basis, they might encourage young female teachers aspiring to become future high school principals and the gender gap that is experienced globally in high school leadership can be overcome.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – Interview schedule

1. Please tell me about your personal background (where you were born, family, parents and siblings and what they did/do for a living, influences)
2. Tell me about your educational background (first school & experiences; secondary and roles of responsibility, teachers you admired, influences, etc.).
3. Tell me about the community and what was important back then (e.g. what people admired, values, influences, etc.)
4. Tell me about your tertiary education (Prompts; when, where, what, any memorable experiences?).
5. Have you always wanted to be a teacher? Explain how you developed an interest in teaching.
6. Tell me about your teaching career to the current position (first post and others, experiences, leadership roles, influences, etc.)
7. When did you decide to become a principal? (at what stage in your career, any memorable experiences, opportunities for leadership, opportunities for training, any other roles and responsibilities that could have prepared you for principalship?).
8. Tell me about your current principalship (high and low points i.e. challenges and excitements, opportunities for development)
9. What factors would you say contributed positively to your career advancement and how?
10. What factors would you say were more challenging in your career journey and how?  
How did you overcome these challenges?
11. What advice would you give to female teachers who are aspiring to be future principals of secondary schools?
12. Are there any specific challenges facing women aspiring to leadership in education?
13. Where do you see yourself in the next few years? (Any aspirations for promotion, and if so, where to? What do you intend doing in retirement, etc.)
14. As closing remarks, any general comment about what we have discussed today?

## APPENDIX B - Letter requesting permission to conduct research from NWU University



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho  
South Africa, 2735

Tel: 018 389-2111  
Fax: 018 392-5775  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

The Secondary School Secretariat  
Ministry of Education and Training (Headquarters)  
Maseru 100  
Lesotho

Education Leadership Development  
Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)  
Email: [eliza.senne@nwu.ac.za](mailto:eliza.senne@nwu.ac.za)

Date 28/07/2016

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Ms M.C Komiti (Student No: 26841142) is a Masters student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Exploring the career paths of female principals in Lesotho Secondary Schools.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Maseru district to collect data from the female principals. Data collection will be by way of interviews.

Collection of data will occur outside school contact time so as not to interfere with teaching and assessment processes or office duties. The dates and times of data collection are to be agreed upon by the principal and the researcher.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the school and district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the District/school in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about academic results or teachers' teaching performance in specific schools.

Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project. Prof Moorosi at +44 7964101637.

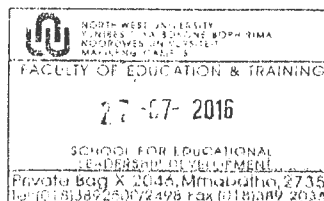
Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district, It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Prof P du Toit

Director: School for Education Leadership Development (School in which the Masters and PhD programme is registered)

Mafikeng Campus



## APPENDIX C – Letter requesting permission to conduct research from the researcher

School for Education Leadership Development

North – West University Mafikeng Campus

Private Bag X 2046

South Africa, 2735

9<sup>th</sup> August, 2016

The Senior Education Officer

Maseru 100

Lesotho

Dear Sir;

I am **Moikabi Komiti**, a Master of Education Management, Law and Systems student at North – West University (Mafikeng Campus) and as part of my studies I am expected to conduct a research project. My choice of research is concerning the Lesotho High Schools leadership. The main aim is to investigate the nature of female principal's career paths in order to understand the opportunities and barriers to their career advancement.

I thus kindly request you to grant me permission to utilize ten high schools in the Maseru district to collect data for my research project entitled: Exploring Career Paths of female principals in Lesotho High Schools. Please also allow me to interview the female principals from the following high schools: Mazenod High School, Qoaling High school, Phuthiatsana High School, St James High School, Mabathana High School, Adventville High School, Boqate High School, Leqele High School, Masianokeng High School and Masowe High School. The interviews are scheduled to take 60 minutes (1 hour) each.

Please note that there will be no health, emotional or any kind of risk that any of the participants will incur as a result of taking part in the study. Also kindly note that, participation in this study

is totally voluntary and that any of them is free to withdraw from participation any time during the course of the study, and I give guarantee that none of them will be victimized in any way if they choose not to take part in the study.

Please be ensured that the researcher will maintain absolute confidentiality with regard to the names of the participants, that is, all participants will be referred to anonymously throughout the study. And also note that the final written document of my written report will be made available to you to reflect on.

For further information please contact me at this cell no. +27733498075/ +26662063111 or email me at this address; berengmakuena@yahoo.com. And should you want to lodge any complaint, please contact my research supervisor; Prof Moorosi at this phone number and email address respectively; +44 7964101637 and p.c.moorosi@warwick.ac.uk.

Yours Faithfully,

Moikabi Komiti

APPENDIX D – Letter granting permission to conduct research from education regional Office



**THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
MASERU DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE  
P.O. BOX 47, MASERU 100.  
22 313 709 / 22 322 755**

09/08/ 2016

The Principal

-----  
Maseru 100

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: RESEARCH**

**Exploring Career Paths of Female Principals in Lesotho  
High Schools**

**Ms. Moikabi Komiti is** a student who is conducting a research on the above stated topic. She therefore wishes to carry out a research at your school.

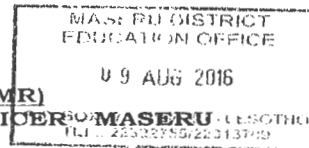
You are kindly requested to provide her with the information that he may require.

Thanking you in advance for your usual support.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lepekola Ralibakha'.

**LEPEKOLA RALIBAKHA (MR)**  
**SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER**



APPENDIX E – Letter granting permission to conduct research from female principals

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I, ..... (participant's name), agree to be a participant in Moikabi Komiti's study in which she wants to explore the nature of career paths of Lesotho High School's female Principals in order to understand the opportunities and barriers to their career advancement. I willingly allow her to interview me for one hour.

I fully understand and agree with the following terms and conditions: 1. There are no risks entailed in taking part in this study. 2. The results of the study will be made available for me if I so make a request. 3. Participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw anytime I want to. 4. I am not getting any reward or payment for participation. 5. Neither my name will be mentioned anywhere or at any time during the course of the study. 6. The audio recording can be used to conduct the interview.

I willingly give her my contact details so she can refer back to me should she need some kind of clarification regarding my contribution in the study.

Signature;

Date;



APPENDIX F – Certificate of language editing



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
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Cell: 0729118600  
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School of Teacher Education and Training  
Tel: +2718 389 2451  
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Email: 22055215@nwu.ac.za

2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**CERTIFICATE OF EDITING**

I, **Muchatlvugwa Liberty Hove**, confirm and certify that I have read and edited the entire dissertation: **EXPLORING THE CAREER PATHS OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN LESOTHO HIGH SCHOOLS** by **MOIKABI CLEMENTINA KOMITI**, student number **26841142**, dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Education Management** in the **Faculty of Education and Training**, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus.

**Mokabi Clementina Komiti** was supervised by **PROFESSOR PONTSHO MOOROSI** of the North-West University.

I hold a PhD in English Language and Literature in English and am qualified to edit academic work of such nature for cohesion and coherence.

The views and research procedures detailed and expressed in the thesis remain those of the researcher/s.

Yours sincerely

Dr M.L.Hove

Original details: Dr M.L.Hove (22055215) C:\Users\2205215\Desktop\CERTIFICATE OF EDITING  
2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017

starts here™



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

## APPENDIX G– Approval by Ethics Committee



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
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**Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee**

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)

### ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSREC) on 02/11/2016, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Project title:</b> Career paths of women in educational leadership: The transition from teaching to principalship in Lesotho Secondary Schools.	
<b>Project Leader/Supervisor:</b> Prof P Moorosi & Dr A Bechuke	
<b>Student:</b> MC Komiti	
<b>Ethics number:</b>	N W U - 0 0 4 8 5 - 1 6 - A 9
<b>Application Type:</b> Master's application	
<b>Commencement date:</b> 2016-10-21	<b>Expiry date:</b> 2019-10-21
<b>Risk:</b>	N/A

#### Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HSREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HSREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

#### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HSREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the HSREC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via HSREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HSREC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- HSREC can be contacted for further information via [Estip.Cmitch@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Estip.Cmitch@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 2673.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HSREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA Du Plessis  
Digitally signed by  
Prof LA Du Plessis  
Date: 2016.11.18  
08:25:18 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis  
Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

APPENDIX H- Originality Report

Moikabi Komiti Research

ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>% 10</b>	<b>% 6</b>	<b>% 3</b>	<b>% 4</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>www2.ohchr.org</b> Internet Source	<b>% 1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>www.afrimap.org</b> Internet Source	<b>% 1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>uir.unisa.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;% 1</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>www.academicjournals.org</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;% 1</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Submitted to University of Cape Town</b> Student Paper	<b>&lt;% 1</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Submitted to Kenyatta University</b> Student Paper	<b>&lt;% 1</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Moorosi, P.. "South African Female Principals' Career Paths: Understanding the Gender Gap in Secondary School Management", Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership, 2010.</b> Publication	<b>&lt;% 1</b>

Jose Coronel. "Beyond obstacles and problems: