

**TEACHER ATTRITION: EXPERIENCES OF FOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN
THE UMLAZI DISTRICT**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Nompumelelo Priscilla Meyiwa, declare that this research report, “Teacher attrition: Experiences of four school principals in the Umlazi district” is my own work. All sources consulted and quoted have been acknowledged.

Signed.....

Nompumelelo P. Meyiwa

Date

SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation has been submitted with/ without my approval

Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late parents Jabulani and Fikile Ndokweni.

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My gratitude goes to the Almighty God for providing me with strength, perseverance and hope throughout my study.

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ABSTRACT

Teacher attrition is common in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. School principals are tasked with a responsibility to oversee that teaching and learning takes place as smoothly and efficiently as possible and to handle whatever disturbance that takes place in a school including teacher. Teacher attrition affects them directly as it interferes with planning and daily routine in the school. There are many factors which influence teacher attrition such as poor working conditions, poor pay, stress, pursuit of “greener pastures” and many others. This study seeks to explore and document the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition. It is a case study of four school principals from Umlazi district. The main research question is: What are the experiences of school principals with regards to teacher attrition? The purpose is to document the experiences of school principals and; to identify factors which influence teacher attrition. I intend to examine challenges experienced by principals with regards to teacher attrition and to find out how principals manage these challenges.

This is a qualitative study from an interpretive approach. It explores the experiences of school principals after a teacher transfers, resigns or even dies. Case study is used because of the nature of the study (small scale). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. These recorded and transcriptions were done personally. Data was coded according to emerging themes during analysis then interpreted in order to make meaning. Sampling is purposeful and school principals both at Primary and Secondary school level are the respondents as I believed their experiences would not be the same. The findings revealed that the common experiences of school principals during teacher attrition were frustration and stress; disruption of learning and compromised student performance and lack of support of the Department of Education. Resignations were influenced by job dissatisfaction and job-related stress. These forced teachers to pursue “greener pastures” in the business sector as well as private sector. It also emerged that school principals were experiencing a lot of frustrating and stressful challenges during teacher attrition and most of them found it hard to cope with these challenges. They also complained about the lack of support from the education department. The findings are based only on data collected during interviews.

These findings are going to help the Department of Education to devise new strategies that will help school principals cope better with teacher attrition and also find ways of speeding up the teacher replacement process in order to prevent loss of contact time. Principals also got a platform to voice their concerns whilst they shared their experiences.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

Schools are faced with a challenge of teacher attrition due to various reasons. Among these reasons is retirement due to ageing, death, early retirement, resigning for the pursuit of greener pastures and/ or poor health, death. All of the reasons listed above are referred to as teacher attrition in this study. Teacher attrition affects schools across the globe irrespective of the economic status of a country. When teachers leave, the schools are disrupted, learners become disadvantaged and school principals are the ones that are affected most. From my observations of such challenges arose questions like: What are the school principals' feelings of the teacher resignation? In what ways does teacher attrition affect school principals' role and the school performance as a whole? How then do school principals cope with teacher attrition? It is for this reason that my study focuses on the experiences of school principals since I believe on their shoulders rests the responsibility of ensuring that the school runs smoothly and efficiently.

1.2 Background of the study

The study seeks to explore and document the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition. In South Africa teachers retire, resign and take transfers voluntarily whilst others are forced by Rationalization and Redeployment (R&R) to move to other schools because they are in excess in their schools. This could impact either positively or negatively on the school and the teachers concerned. Xaba (2003) is of the view that teacher turnover results in teacher shortage, poor performance in learners because of the disruption it brings about especially in terms of planning in schools. This made me wonder what impact all of the above had on the school principals.

Report by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2003) stated that many teachers were leaving the profession as compared to those entering it whilst others were not properly deployed. I was reminded of the scarcity of Mathematics and Science teachers in our country especially in high schools where there is specialisation. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (2003), there is a looming imbalance between educator demand and supply. The report blamed all this on the HIV and AIDS epidemic, failure of administrators to control teacher training capacity and lack of enthusiasm from young people to join the teaching

profession. It is the same conditions and job dissatisfaction that influence most teachers to quit the profession including myself.

The Mobile Task Team conducted a study for the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in 2005 which revealed that teacher attrition fluctuated between 2003 and 2004. The national rate of 9.3 % in 1997/ 98 dropped to 5.5% in 2000/1 and rose again to 5.9% between 2002 and 2003. The study further advocated that the total of teacher deaths had a 30% increase. Education International (2007) made a report on a survey conducted in the six African countries. These were Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. According to the report, 4% was the average in the rate of teacher attrition those countries. Most of the attrition is attributed to retirement, resignations; death and dismissals. The above statistics show the challenge of teacher attrition as experienced by other African countries and schools. These made me to think about what school principals go through during teacher attrition, their experiences and the challenges they face even how they cope with those challenges.

Many respondents who participated in the survey believed that HIV/Aids and its related illnesses contributed to teacher attrition being rife particularly in Zambia and Lesotho (Education International, 2007). Most teachers who left the profession in Zambian secondary schools were said to suffer from stress. Similar kinds of issues preoccupied my mind such that I began to wonder what school principals' experiences were when there was teacher attrition in their schools. In this study I want to find out what the school principals' experiences are with regards to teacher attrition and how they address the problem. This also made me realise that teacher attrition was a challenge not only in South Africa. Boe, Bobbit and Cook (1993) perceive teacher attrition as a form teacher turnover which includes teachers quitting their profession or even changing the fields within the profession. Changing fields, according to these authors, could be changing from special education to general education or school. In South Africa, what these authors say would be related to Rationalisation and Redeployment, where teachers move from one school to another where their services are more needed. This also affects the functionality of a school and causes a lot of disruption since it takes place anytime during the year.

1.3 Rationale

Although I was not in a management position in my school but I was exposed to most management tasks to the extent that I noticed a gap with regards to matters on teacher attrition. When I was still at school I was tasked with time- tabling for the Intermediate and Senior phases. There was only grade seven as a senior phase class. This meant that before the end of each year, I would have to ensure that the time table was ready for the following year. If, for some reason, a teacher left the school, this meant that I had to redo the whole thing so as to accommodate whoever was replacing them. I found this to be quite disorganising and stressful. Being an educational leadership and management student also prompted me to approach this study from an angle of the school principals. This study has been chosen because other studies on teacher attrition have focused mainly on reasons or causes of teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is a challenge facing education in most countries and is influenced by various factors. In determining these factors various studies drew from teacher experiences but school principals were left out. This gives the impression that researchers are not interested in their experiences as if their experiences do not count. Macdonald (1999), whilst reviewing literature on teacher attrition found that teachers' working conditions were linked to their decision to continue with their work. Teacher stress was found to a major source of teacher attrition. More studies are discussed in detail in chapter two of this study.

I noticed that not much focus has put to the experiences of school principals as heads of schools, to ascertain how teacher attrition affects their role and the performance of schools as a whole. When a teacher takes a transfer, retires, resigns, is redeployed or dies, disruption is bound to take place in a school. Various conditions determine the extent of this disruption, like the amount of time it takes to replace that teacher or even whether there will be a replacement or not. This affects school principals directly therefore I felt their experiences are also important and well worth researching. As a researcher in this study, I was motivated by my own experiences as a teacher who has also resigned from the profession due to teacher stress and therefore feel suitable to conduct the study. Terms such as school principals and school managers are used interchangeably in this study.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This is an interpretive study that draws from educational leadership theory and the organizational theory. The organisational theory is appropriate for this study because teacher attrition affects the central issues in an organisational. According to the organizational theory, negative organisational conditions lead to teacher turnover which in turn leads to staffing problems and decrease in school performance (Ingersoll, 2001). This theory also draws from a supply and demand theory which claims that if the demand is greater than the supply, there is bound to be a shortage. Teacher attrition contributes to this crisis. Ingersoll (2001) further argues that there is a chance that recruitment of teachers could worsen the problem on top of failing to solve it. His concern is that allowing working conditions to corrode; lowering salaries and teacher standards in an attempt to recruit more teachers could aggravate staffing problems and that is teacher attrition. I believe that teacher attrition could be a negative organisational condition, if not well addressed.

In addition, contemporary education theory states that increase in student enrolment and increase in teacher attrition result in staffing problems and consequently a decrease in performance (Ingersoll, 2001). This theory further maintains teacher shortages emanate from such staffing problems owing to recent teacher retirements and student enrolments. The results of the survey by National Centre for Education showed that these teacher shortages were due to excess demand ensuing from a “revolving door” where large numbers of qualified teachers quit their jobs not just because of retirement but for various other reasons. These reasons included job dissatisfaction and teachers pursuing other jobs. This is what my study refers to as teacher attrition. This impacts directly on school principals who are accountable hence my choice to tackle teacher attrition from the principals’ point of view. It also used Mintzberg’s theory of organizational structure and the roles he defines as the manager’s role in an organisation. These were discussed in detail in chapter two.

1.5 Research Aims

This study aims to explore and document the experiences of school principals with regards to teacher attrition. The purpose is to find out the challenges the principals face and learn more about their feeling and frustrations and how they manage them.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify factors which influence teacher attrition
- To examine challenges experienced by principals with regards to attrition, if any
- To find out how principals manage these challenges

1.7 Research Questions

What are the experiences of school principals with regards to teacher attrition?

- What factors influence teacher attrition?
- What challenges face school principals with regards to teacher attrition (e.g. disruption of teaching and learning, disruption of school planning, impact on learner performance, reputation of the school etc.)?
- How do school principals respond to these challenges, their coping strategies?

1.8 Concepts

The concepts relating to this study are clarified in Chapter Two under the review of literature. Among these concepts is teacher attrition which scholars like Smithers (1999) equate with „wastage’, referring to the teachers exiting the profession before time. Macdonald (1999) is of the view that teacher attrition in research often addresses teacher shortage, the wastage in resources and proficiency; and also teachers’ poor remuneration and working conditions. Teacher turnover and teacher retention; teacher shortage; leadership and school principals were also among these concepts. For the purposes of this study, the terms school principals, leaders and managers will be used interchangeably.

1.9 Research design and methodology

This study used the qualitative interpretive paradigm. Researchers in the interpretive paradigm believe that reality is socially constructed, that means that there are many ways of seeing the world, multiple realities (Mertens, 1998). Case study was used as a design. Mertens (1998) and Robson (2002) claim that methods widely used in qualitative research are observations, interviews and document reviews. This study used semi-structured interviews. The researcher was able to obtain rich data as participants related their experiences in detail, which yielded greater insights into personal experiences of respondents (Drew, Raymond and Weinberg, 2006).

In this study data is collected to explore the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition. Semi-structured interviews are used as a data collection strategy and these are recorded. Back up notes were taken. The participants were observed for their behaviours and as well as contextual aspects of the interview as part of the field notes as Woodsong, McQueen, Guest and Namey (2005) believe that is what an interviewer should do. Guion (2006) advocates that in-depth interview is an open-ended, discovery-orientated method that is well suited for describing both program processes and outcomes from the perspectives of the target audience. The study used a case study since it is a small scale study and the semi-structured interviews ensured that the research questions are answered. More information on how I collected data will be elaborated on in Chapter Three.

1.10 Sampling

School principals of four schools in the Umlazi district were purposively used as a sample for this study. They were identified in four schools in the Umlazi district, two principals from primary schools and another two from secondary schools. The reason being that mostly in primary schools a teacher teaches all learning areas, there is no specialisation. When one teacher leaves the school or dies, nine learning areas are without a teacher whilst in secondary schools there is specialisation. I felt the experiences of the principals will not be the same.

Two of them were from primary school and two were from secondary schools. They were all part of a cluster to which my former school also belonged. I used purposeful sampling to select these participants. Patton (1990) explains that in purposive sampling participants are selected because of some characteristics and in this study participants were school principals only, which justifies my choice of sampling. Having worked in a primary school in the

Umlazi district for 12 years, it was easy for me to identify participants because I knew them even though we were not close. Also, working as clusters in the district ensured we secured a close network as teachers. I also had an opportunity to gather some data through informal discussions with some school principals even though I did not intend having them as part of the sample since I knew them personally. I avoided using the principals that I knew personally as I was concerned it might interfere with my study by compromising its validity and reliability.

The research sites were all schools from the same cluster. One primary school is a feeder school for the secondary school also used in the study and they have both experienced teacher attrition. This made access easier for me. The other primary school had lost a number of teachers through death and it made me wonder what the school principal's experiences would be. The last school is an old school although it now has new buildings and it had also experienced teacher attrition. Both sampling and the research sites are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

1.11 Data analysis

Since this is a qualitative study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews which were recorded using a dicta-phone. The transcriptions were done personally to ensure that data does not go missing since I was the one doing the interviews. These interviews were later transcribed and coded according to emerging themes. Data was then interpreted to make meaning. Data analysis is an ongoing process. This section was dealt with in detail in Chapter Four.

1.12 Limitations

I acknowledged that things might not go according to plan therefore I anticipated some limitations for an example I could have a technological problem with the dicta phone. The principal might be too busy on the day of the interview or have an unforeseen meeting and fail to notify me in advance. The principal might not be willing to answer some questions even though they may not be threatening in any way.

1.13 Ethical considerations

When conducting a study, it is imperative that your sample is not subjected to any physical harm, discomfort and stress. I ensured that participants were not asked questions which might have caused them embarrassment. Henning, Rensburg and Smit (2004) advocate that respondents should be informed when giving consent to participate in a study and must be provided full information about the research in which the interview is used. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) add that participants should be assured that there will be no infringement upon their privacy and their sensitivity will be observed. As a researcher I made sure to get written consent from the Department of Education (DoE) to conduct the study and also to apply for ethical clearance from the university. I wrote to the participants requesting them to be part of the study and made sure I got their written consent. I made participants aware of the purpose of my study as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Their anonymity and confidentiality were observed by using pseudonyms throughout the study. In fact, I did everything possible to safeguard the privacy of participants.

1.14 Conclusion

This chapter provided the background to my study and the rationale for the study which justified the need for the study. The entire study was introduced in Chapter One. It gave a brief outline of what is going to unfold as the study progressed. Chapter Two focused on the review of literature relating to the study and the theoretical framework from which the study draws. Teacher attrition was therein discussed at length including factors influencing it. These factors included teacher stress; poor working conditions; poor school leadership; lack of support; poor student-teacher relationship; time pressure and role conflict. Other terms like teacher turnover and teacher retention; teacher shortage; school principals and leadership were also mentioned defined and discussed since they also relate to the study. Different authors were used to define terms and various studies consulted to support my argument.

Research design and methodology of the study was tackled in Chapter Three. Methodology in educational research plays a vital role as it describes approaches to kinds of paradigms of research (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2004). The research paradigm, research approach, research design and data collection strategy were all covered in this aspect. The location of the study; sampling; data collection; data analysis; limitations; validity and reliability as well as ethical consideration also formed part of this chapter. Chapter Four dealt with the presentation of data and discussion thereof. After transcription, the findings were

presented and emerging themes were identified and discussed. The study is concluded in Chapter Five where a summary of chapters was given, conclusions drawn and recommendations made. Reflections on the whole study were also made. The following chapter reviewed literature and discussed the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was an introduction of the study. It gave the study's outline, briefly touching on all the study's aspects. This chapter reviewed literature relating to the study and discussed the theoretical framework relevant to the study. Teacher attrition is common in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. The focus of this study is the experiences of school principals with regards to teacher attrition, the factors which influence teacher attrition, the challenges principals face during attrition as well as their coping strategies. Xaba (2003) contends that teacher attrition causes a lot of disruption in school planning since teachers abandon whatever projects they had when they quit. Teacher attrition and teacher turnover influence each other, some authors believe that teacher attrition is an element of teacher turnover whilst others believe visa versa. According to Boe, Cook and Sunderland (2008) teacher turnover could mean a change in teacher assignment each year. It could be teachers exiting employment (also known as attrition); those transferring to other schools and teaching area transfer. Ingersoll (2002) believes that this turnover has a bearing on student performance and the school's effectiveness as an organisation. The school has a production processes requiring extensive interaction among educators and is therefore prone to suffer when subjected to high rates of turnover and teacher attrition.

2.2 Teacher attrition

Teacher attrition seems to be a problem not just to the teachers directly affected by it but also to the learners, the districts of education but to all stakeholders. For Smithers (1999), teacher attrition is equal to wastage in that teachers exit while their services are still required and their departure is often unexpected. Macdonald (1999) in his study focuses on patterns of attrition, factors which influence it, its impact as well as strategies to decrease attrition. This is done through attempting to pull together research in contemporary international attrition.

Changying (2007) reveals that in Liaoning province, China, more than 6,300 or 50% of the teachers either took early retirement or changed careers between 1979 and 1985. He further states that as a result, secondary and elementary schools in some regions have not been able to run classes in the normal way. His study is quantitative using a survey to make an analysis

of teacher attrition. The survey is aimed to ascertain the causes for teacher attrition and its effects in China. The study later seeks to find a solution to teacher attrition. This is done by drawing from Japanese experience. The Japanese passed a „law to safeguard talent’ and talent being the teachers. Statistics are used as a sample, as the study revolves around them. In this study, teacher attrition would be teachers leaving the profession for „greener pastures’, those leaving it because of illness like HIV/AIDS, the retiring teachers and those exiting because of teacher stress but not sure where they are going and some who resign just to take a break only to come back.

In the study by Croasmum, Hampton and Hermann (2002), the purpose was to address the problem of teacher attrition. It made reference to previous research on teacher attrition and also current research. It studied the significance of the problem and forces driving the issue. Among these forces are salaries, level of education, marital status, increasing experience, beginning teachers and special education. The study uses the results of the survey to point out the implications for education and to speculate where the issue is going. It finally makes suggestions as how education leaders could plan ahead. Another study by the National Centre for Education Statistics (2007) showed that 8% of public schoolteachers and 20% of those with fulltime teaching experience left the classroom in 2004-2005 school -year. These teachers were asked for comment and shared their own stories about their departure from the profession. The findings were that reasons cited by these teachers job dissatisfaction, poor working conditions, work overload among others.

In Ghana, a study on teacher attrition was conducted by Ghana National Association of Teacher (GNAT) and Teachers Educational Workers Union (TEWU) of Ghana Trades Union Congress in 2009 (Ingersoll and Smit, 2003). The study uses a questionnaire survey as a research tool. It had a purpose to examine teacher attrition in Ghana and these organisations felt that the teachers whom they regard to be the core of education are „othered’, they are „voiceless’. They further state that it is the advice of the so-called experts that is taken into consideration even though they know they were not well- versed with challenges facing the Ghana’s education system. This is contrary to what is happening in other countries like Australia, New Zealand and even South Africa where the teachers’ experiences are considered although they also shun away from those of school principals, managers, school-heads and leaders.

The critical question in the Ghanaian study was: Why are teachers leaving the classroom? The participants were teachers both male and female of different marital status and educational qualifications. It was found that in Ghana teaching is looked down upon as a profession due mainly to the low salary and poor socioeconomic standards among teachers. The findings of the survey showed that 72% of the respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their job as a teacher and 73% said they will not recommend the teaching profession to their children or relatives (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Findings also showed that whilst the education authorities in Ghana were successful, in attracting young teachers by offering payment to student teachers and paid study leave, it did very little to ensure they were retained in class.

In South Africa, Rationalisation and Redeployment; fear of being retrenched; resignations are attributes of teacher turnover and attrition. According to de Villiers (2007) in his case study of South African teachers migrating to the United Kingdom (UK), poor planning by industrialised countries which have means like UK, is forcing them to buy human resources from abroad. This teacher migration, he concludes, is a major source of teacher attrition in South Africa (SA). This in turn causes teacher shortages in SA. Appleton, Morgan and Sives (2006) believe this teacher migration has „creamed off” the most needed teachers in SA, the mathematics and science teachers. I believe this puts strain on the school principals who have to find means of coping whilst waiting for the Education Department to provide them with a replacement.

Mangxamba (2007) reports that at least 6000 schools in SA do not have qualified maths and science teachers and this has led to SA government recruiting foreign teachers to teach these subjects. Forde (2007) believes this might only be a short-term solution as these foreign teachers are not trained in our outcomes-based education. Again, when such situations arise, school principals are expected to manage them hence my study aims to explore and document their experiences. Rademeyer (2005) points out that research showed that SA will need about 22 000 new teachers annually. When there is a shortage of teachers in a school, the management of the school with principal as the head is greatly affected and that is why this study focuses on the experiences of school principals on teacher attrition.

Samodien (2008) writes that teachers are leaving the country in large numbers and this was an area of great concern since these teachers had high skills that the country requires so much. Literature shows that these have a great influence on teacher attrition. Spokesperson

for the Education Department in the Western Cape Paddy Artwell said that the province has since lost 595 teachers through resignation since the beginning of 2008 (Samodien, 2008). According to Samodien (2008) Dr Rian de Villiers of the University of Pretoria, a teacher migration specialist, estimated between 25% and 30% of all graduating teachers left annually to teach abroad. He said reports showed that between July 1997 and July 2006; more than 10 000 teachers from South Africa had migrated to the UK more than any other country (Samodien, 2008). This clearly shows that teacher attrition is a crisis in South Africa. Literature talks about the severity of teacher attrition, its causes and sometimes even looks into how it can be remedied as well as teachers' perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon. There is very little said or written on the school principals' experiences or even challenges they face regarding the issue and this study seeks to explore exactly that.

2.3 Factors which influence teacher attrition

As a researcher I felt it was important to briefly discuss the factors which influence teacher attrition even though the study focused on the experiences of school principals. I believed this was important for this study because without these factors, there will not be this teacher attrition which the school principals experience. Macdonald (1999) is of the view that a discussion could be held as to the reasons for teachers to exit their jobs. He further claims this discussion emerges from literature which links working conditions of teachers and whether they would stay in the profession or not. Much of this literature links to teacher stress which Kyriocou (1989) describes as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression resulting from work.

2.3.1 Stress

Stress is described by Niekerk (2002) as "some kind of response, physical or psychological, to an external event or situation that imposes special physical or psychological demands on a person and causes a deviation from his or her normal functioning". Kyriacou (1999) agrees defining teacher stress as "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions, such as tension, frustration, anxiety anger and depression resulting from his work as a teacher". When school principals are faced with teacher attrition they often go through these emotions and it affects them. Squelch and Lemmer (1994) sees it as the mobilisation of bodily resources in response to some kind of stimulus. These bodily responses may include various physical,

emotional and chemical changes. Seyle (1956) defines stress as the rate of wear and tear caused by life.

2.3.1.1 Sources of stress

Studies have found that there is a relationship between personality and stress. These have been carried out to find the characteristics that might identify a person prone to stress (Crawford, 1997). Crawford (1997) classified personality traits into two, Type A and Type B. Type A are very competitive, devoted to work, have a strong sense of time urgency, show a high need for power and easily exhibit aggression, anger and hostility under pressure. Type B are less competitive, less devoted, have a weaker sense of time urgency, show less need for power and are more relaxed and less anxious. Type A people are more prone to stress and heart attack (Niekerk, 2002). I am convinced that this has an influence on the school principal's ability to cope during teacher attrition.

Most studies conducted such as the study by Croasmum, Hampton and Hermann (2002) on teacher attrition have used teacher experiences to determine reasons for teacher attrition, and work related stress has always been cited as a major one. There are a number of factors that constitute this kind of stress. These will be discussed in hereunder. When there are not enough facilities and resources; the school is situated in a noisy environment or even unhealthy and hazardous environment working conditions may become unbearable for teachers and force them to resign. Amount of work that teachers have to do affect their morale (Norton, 1999). When teachers are given too much work to do or assigned to least attractive schools, they are sometimes frustrated or stressed out. If a teacher is redeployed to a school that they find less attractive or too far away from home they get frustrated. When they find it hard to adapt and tend to underperform. Their underperformance has a direct bearing on student performance and the school principals who have to account in the end.

Denning (2002) is convinced that when the workload is reduced for novice teachers, their stress level will decrease. Rowden (2002) is of the view that planning for lesson takes time since this has to be written. There are also standardised tests like Annual National Assessments in SA early this year. Some teachers find these stressful. These can affect teacher morale as many are subjected to a lot of anxiety during this time. (Gilman and Gilman, 2003).

Teachers often blame each other for low scores thus resulting in conflict and stress. This could result in teacher attrition when some teachers quit or request to be moved to other schools (Gilman and Gilman, 2003). When the school is geographically isolated it can also cause a challenge. All these are stressful for teachers and those who cannot cope resort to resignation which is a form of attrition whilst others even fall ill due to these. The burden is even doubled for school principals who still have to see to it that teaching and learning still takes place effectively no matter what.

Lack of motivation and respect for teachers can lead to classroom problems. Diversity in culture; ethnicity and class between teachers and their learners may lead to lack of harmony can prove to be quite stressful for all involved especially teachers (Kyriacou, 2001). A survey conducted in 1999 in Texas showed that forty percent of teachers felt that student behaviours and attitudes attributed towards low teacher morale (Pisciotta, 2001). Teachers' stress levels rise when their students portray ill discipline in the classroom (Borg and Riding, 1991; Boyle, Borg, Falzon, and Baglioni, 1995; Byrne, 1994). Teachers said various factors contributed to their stress including lack of commitment by students, laziness, bad behaviour inconsistent attendance (Friedman, 1995).

Teachers need adequate time for preparation therefore imposition of unrealistic demands and deadlines by their superiors, subjects them to stress which is known to be one of the reasons for teacher attrition (Dinham 1993, Punch and Tuettenman 1996, Pithers and Soden 1999, Kyriacou 2001). Inman and Marlow (2000) believe that time is another reason that causes teachers to leave the profession. They say that sometimes teachers have ground duties during students' playtime and do not have enough time for a rest or even to do their own work. This frustration in turn might lead to teacher stress and eventually attrition (Inman and Marlow, 2000).

The Education Department keeps formulating policies and these changes often mean new roles are taken without adequate training. Subject teachers are faced with a lot of administrative work which they do not have time for. This reminds me of the teachers who resigned with the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). They found it to be too demanding with increased paperwork and resorted to quitting the profession, another form of attrition. Another reason why teachers leave their profession is poor remuneration. Many people respect teachers but have a low regard for the profession (Egger, 2004). One study on teacher attrition in Ghana revealed that teachers were lowly paid. In South Africa teachers are

dissatisfied with the conditions they work under and pay and this has led to some of them migrating to developed countries like the United Kingdom (UK). Egger (2004) states that many teachers have had to find supplementary jobs in order to get more income and make up for their poor salaries. Most of these factors are covered in chapter four in the presentation of data and discussion of the findings.

2.3.1.2 Poor school leadership

When teachers are not involved in decision making due to poor leadership, attrition of teachers particularly novice teachers becomes imminent (Ingersoll, 2003). Dissatisfaction with the administration, lack of support and motivation from administration also contributed. Teachers tend to become rebellious and difficult to lead if decisions are imposed on them all the time. School leaders ought to consult with their teachers so they will not feel like they are instruction takers but part of the organisation's decision making (Woods and Weasmer, 2004). Again when there is lack of trust and team spirit among staff members and teachers view each other as competition, this gives rise to stress among them. Some teachers resign or take early retirement because they are unhappy in their schools. If a principal displays favouritism and lacks support for his staff, teachers feel unvalued and this can lead to teacher attrition when teachers want to resign or leave that particular school.

Woods and Weasmer (2004) believe that support has a positive effect in retaining teachers and boosting their morale. This means support from all stakeholders including the community. Forty percent of teachers quitting cite lack of support from the leaders (Ingersoll, 2004). When teachers feel they are taken for granted no matter how much effort they put into their work, they are demotivated and want to leave. Feiman-Nemser (2003) is of the opinion that for novice teachers to achieve competency, their experienced colleagues ought to support them. This also applies to teachers newly appointed to senior positions, they require the same support. If this does not happen, they might be frustrated and this frustration might lead to attrition.

It is difficult to talk about leadership and not mention management as there is a thin line between the two. Management is mainly about getting things done and it does not bother much about what people think whilst leadership focuses on people's ideas, how they feel and how they relate to their work environment (Nicholls, 1987). The concept management overlaps with leadership and administration. Dimmock (1999) differentiates between these

concepts. He argues that school leaders are faced with a dilemma when it comes to balancing leadership, management and administration. What is clear from this argument is that school leaders have a major role to play in ensuring that the culture of teaching and learning is observed in schools and teacher attrition definitely does interfere with this culture. For the purposes of this study, school principals, leaders and managers will be used interchangeably.

2.4 Illness and death

Teacher attrition is likely to have a disastrous impact on teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is asserted that teachers themselves are comparatively high-risk group with respect to HIV/AIDS. Among the seriously affected by the pandemic are South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (Bennell and Kadzamira, 2003). Bennell (2005) made an update on teacher mortality in Sub Saharan Africa. According to his report, in Botswana the mortality rate for primary school teachers increased slightly from 0.71% in 1999 to 0.88% in 2002. In secondary school in the respective years it increased from 0.37% to 0.46%. Teacher deaths accounted for 20% of total attrition and 5% of total turnover in both years. He continues to state that in 2004 Kenya reported between 4 and 6 teachers a day were dying of Aids related illnesses. In Lesotho a small survey of 10 primary schools reported an annual teacher mortality rate at 1.6% and total attrition and turnover at 4.8%.

This update by Bennell (2005) further stated that in Swaziland, primary and secondary school teacher deaths increased from 40 in 2001 to 100 in 2004, probably around 80-85% of the 2004 deaths were aids related. In South Africa there are no recent statistics on teacher mortality. However, teacher HIV prevalence is projected to increase from 12.5% in 2000 to 30% by 2015 and annual mortality rates are projected to increase eightfold from 0.5% to 4% during the same period. A third of teachers employed in 2000 are expected to have died by 2015. Whatever the magnitude of the impact, it is apparent that the epidemic does influence working environment of teachers drastically (Boler, 2003). With this amount of teacher attrition one can deduce that the people mostly affected are the school principals because they have to ensure that in spite of it all, teaching and learning is taking place and effectively. This could only mean frustration on their part.

2.5 Leadership- A brief historical background

Having discussed factors which influence teacher attrition above, as a researcher I was convinced that it was appropriate to then look into the concept of leadership since the study's focus was the school principals, who are leaders in their schools. This was done by firstly proving the historical background of the concept in order to highlight the qualities which were expected of leaders before. These qualities would have a contribution on how they experience and cope with teacher attrition. Leadership is viewed by Coleman and Glover (2010) as particularly associated with setting the values and the vision of an organization or a group. This is difficult when a leader is faced with teacher attrition. School principals may have a vision for their institutions but when teachers resign during the course of the year, all their plans are disrupted including their vision.

Leithwood (1999) defines transformational leaders as people who have an ability to plan, in advance, in preparation for how to address anticipated constraints and respond more adaptively and flexibly to unforeseen constraints. Teacher attrition can be referred to as one of the constraints which Leithwood (1999) talks about. But the circumstances which unfolded in the findings make it almost impossible for school principals to prepare in advance as the findings of my study revealed that sometimes the departure of a teacher is sudden. The first significant research into the issue of leadership began after the second world-war and that research was based mostly on an analysis of the successful leaders associated with that conflict (Clarke, 2007). He goes on to mention that prior to that, most thinking about leadership was based on the identification of the character traits of great historical leaders, mostly men and mostly military.

This thinking gave birth to the 'Great man' model or Qualities theory popularised by Thomas Carlye around the 1840's. According to this theory, based on research into the qualities (behaviour and character traits) of historical leaders, particularly military and political leaders were born and not made (Clarke, 2007). Those who aspired to take positions of leadership needed to emulate the personality traits, behaviours and values of the heroes of history. Leaders needed to be visionary, inspirational, courageous, loyal, steadfast and stoical, continues Clarke (2007). He further states that it is interesting to note that military leaders operate in strongly hierarchical structures and that the majority of historical political leaders who rose to power through military means and then maintained power and dispensed

authority by imposing strongly hierarchical structures on their subjects. He is not the only one sharing that opinion.

To Looock (2003) authority refers to the lawful right of a person to carry out and complete certain actions, which is linked to both person and position. According to Looock (2003), an education leader can execute his or her authority because he or she has the necessary power or power base. During teacher attrition this is not always possible. When a teacher resigns, take early retirement or dies the principal is often left destitute in that finding a replacement as quickly as they would want to, is often beyond their control. While it seems they have the power to do so but they do not have the authority and have to rely on the Department of Education for assistance. Whether they get that assistance or not is another issue. Looock (2003) defines power as the ability with which an educational leader executes her authority, whilst leadership determines the quality of the desired outcomes whenever power is executed.

Clarke (2007) writes that the first systematic research of the leadership concept and an attempt to develop a coherent theory of leadership occurred after the second world-war. Situational leadership seeks to draw a link between situational needs and the ability of the leader to respond appropriately (Clarke, 2007). This author points out the shortcomings of this model as suggesting that different situations require different leaders and that an individual who is suitable for one situation would not necessarily suit another different situation. I disagree with this model as I believe that a leader should possess an ability to cope with various situations. That would mean that schools change their leadership each time a certain situation arises and for me that would result in absolute chaos. Clarke (2007) also feels that a valid model of leadership needs to accommodate this reality.

Another model is the behaviourist model which looks into behavioural patterns of successful leaders. It looks at behaviours of current leaders within the context of their work. It is sometimes called the Contextual theory of leadership (Clarke, 2007). With this model it is easy to measure the extent to which an individual is task or people-orientated and that these two attributes exist in a state of dynamic tension in most contexts. Clarke (2007) declares that leaders with strong task-orientations often neglect the people component of leadership, while those with strong people-orientation appear less concerned at meeting task-based goals. I partially agree with him as I believe that there are few leaders out there who can balance both. This was just a brief history on the emergence of leadership theories.

According to Bush (1999), most theories of educational leadership and management possess three major characteristics. Firstly, they tend to be normative in that they reflect the beliefs about the nature of educational institutions and the behaviour of individuals within them. Simkins (1999) argues that there should be a distinction between descriptive and normative uses of theory. He strongly feels that this is a distinction often not clearly made. He further explains that descriptive describe the nature of organizations and their working procedure including their nature. The normative tend to prescribe how organizations should or might be managed for them to be effective. Secondly, according to Bush (1999), theories tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasize certain aspects of the institution at the expense of other elements. When only one theory is adopted, the others are neglected. I believe this is true as I strongly believe that no one theory is perfect or fully effective on its own but a leader needs a symphony of all theories in order to manage change effectively. With challenges like teacher attrition, a principal may not rely on one leadership theory to help him manage and cope with the situation.

2.6 Teacher turnover and teacher retention

It is of utmost importance for schools to have high quality teacher if they are to improve student performance. Thus far, poverty- stricken communities in America still have a shortage of qualified teachers (Lewis, 1999). Recruitment of capable individuals to the teaching profession and retention of the good teachers might eliminate this shortage (Hasselkom and Fiedler, 1999). Whilst recruiting teachers may seem difficult, keeping them in the profession proves to be even more difficult. Teacher attrition makes teacher retention to be almost impossible. With the working environment in schools nowadays, it is not easy to benefit from the money and endeavour invested in the recruitment; hiring; induction and mentoring of teachers because of teacher attrition (Hasselkom and Fiedler, 1999). Teacher retention refers to keeping the teachers who are in the profession in it. This shows the amount of responsibility that rests upon school principals and attrition makes it difficult regarding attrition and justifies the focus of this study which of the experiences of school principals.

2.7 Teacher shortage

In many countries there is no balance between supply and demand. The state of affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa has been deemed a crisis (Dladla and Moon, 2006) and Burkina Faso has officially declared the supply of teachers a national crisis. Tanzanian representative to the

first meeting of national co-ordinators for UNESCO's Teacher Training Initiative for Sub Saharan Africa reported that teaching in Tanzania was in crisis (Mhando, 2006). Studies have shown that South Africa faces a similar challenge. With teacher attrition, it is clear that South Africa has a long way to go in addressing teacher shortage. This crisis is not for developing countries only even California is in crisis where thousands of unqualified teachers are employed in elementary schools. In Europe shortages of specialist mathematics and science teachers is acute. In Nigeria the proportion of trained primary teachers fell from 97% to 72% between 1999 and 2002 as a direct consequent of government policy to increase provision and keep costs low through the recruitment of volunteer teachers (UNESCO, 2006). This cannot be easy for the school principals hence study aims to find out how school principals experience this situation.

2.8 Theoretical framework

This study draws from educational leadership theory named the organizational theory. Bush (1999) states that theories of educational leadership are usually based on or supported by observation of practice in educational institutions. English (2002) concurs stating that observation may be followed by the development of concepts, which then become theoretical frames. Such perspectives, English (2002) further declares, based on data from systematic observation are sometimes called 'grounded theories'. Because such approaches are derived from empirical inquiry in schools and colleges, practitioners perceive them as relevant (English, 2002). This researcher also believes that researchers may use specific theoretical frame to select concepts to be tested through observation. The research is then used to 'prove' or 'verify' the efficacy of the theory.

2.8.1 Organisational theory

Ingersoll (2001) advocates that employee supply; demand and turnover are central issues in organizational theory and such are school staffing problems and teacher turnover in educational research and policy. This study seeks to explore and document the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition and this theory is appropriate. The study is about the school principals' experiences of teacher attrition, which also has to do with employee supply; demand and turnover. School principals as managers are expected to oversee the day-to-day running of the school. Any situation, like teacher attrition, which interferes with this

employee supply; demand and turnover is bound to affect them. It is for that reason that the researcher found this theory befitting the study.

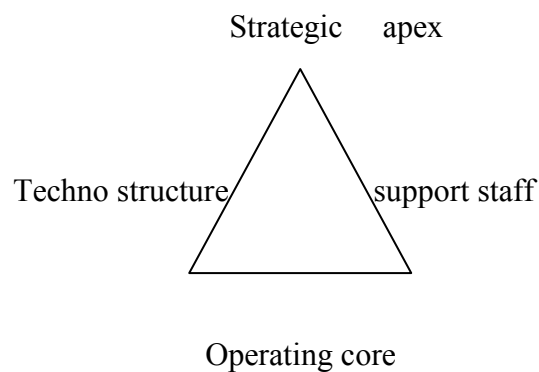
Ingersoll (2001) again states that it is important to understand the employee turnover because of its connection to the organization's performance and effectiveness. Findings of his study showed that the teacher turnover is responsible for the ineffectiveness and poor performance in organisations. Teacher attrition contributes to the ineffectiveness and poor performance in schools which affects school principals in their responsibility to oversee that learning and teaching take place as efficiently as possible. According to organizational theories, negative organisational conditions lead to teacher turnover which in turn leads to staffing problems and decrease in school performance (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher attrition is influenced by negative factors as discussed earlier on.

Contemporary education theory states that increase in student enrolment and increase in teacher attrition result in staffing problems and consequently a decrease in performance (Ingersoll, 2001). When the school enrolment grows and teachers are leaving in that particular school, there is going to a shortage of teachers. This impacts directly on school principals who are accountable hence my choice to tackle teacher attrition from their angle.

2.8.2 Mintzberg's model of organisational structure

According to Mullins (1988), Mintzberg's model of organisational structure, which is a triangular, hierarchical structure, the strategic apex is at the top. It comprises of the school management team.

Figure 1



(Mintzberg's model of organisational structure adapted from Mullins: 1988))

At the centre is the middle line consisting of the school's Heads of Department (H.O.D's) and subject heads. On the left is the techno structure, those are the external examiners. On the right is the support staff and in a school that would be the secretary and the caretakers. At the bottom of this triangular structure is the operating core, which is the teaching staff in a school. I believe that when teachers as the operating core resign, take an early transfer or even die, this affects the principals at the strategic apex directly. It is for that reason that my study seeks to explore and document their experiences regarding teacher attrition. It focuses on the experiences of the strategic apex regarding attrition of the operating core.

2.8.3 Mintzberg's role of managers

Mintzberg (1990) identified ten roles of managers as **figurehead** that performs the ceremonial and symbolic duties as head of the organisation, **leader** who fosters a proper work atmosphere and motivates and develops subordinates. A manager is **liaison** person that develops and maintains a network of external contacts to gather information, and a **monitor** that gathers internal and external information relevant to the organisation. A **disseminator** who transmits factual and value-based information to subordinates a **spokesperson** who communicates to the outside world on performance and policies. An **entrepreneur** who designs and initiates change in the organisation, a **disturbance handler** who deals with unexpected events and operational breakdowns like teacher attrition. He or she is a **resource allocator** who controls and authorises the use of organisational resources and a **negotiator** that participates in negotiation activities with other organisations and individuals. Clearly if a school principal has these roles to play as a manager, teacher attrition is a setback for them as it interferes with the school's performance and their performance as well.

My study focuses on the challenges experienced by school principals with regards to teacher attrition. Whilst the focus of most studies on teacher attrition have mainly been on the reasons for teacher attrition and teachers' experiences, my study seeks to explore and understand what challenges these principals are faced with, how they experience and manage them as Mintzberg (1990) has identified their roles. It is also a qualitative, interpretive study. It seeks to gather the multiple realities and socially constructed truth from the participants through semi-structured interviews. It is a case study of four school principals in the Umlazi district.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on teacher attrition, looking into teacher attrition itself and factors influencing it. It is in this chapter that gap in the research is highlighted. It showed how studies conducted in the past have been focusing on the reasons for teacher attrition; teachers' experiences of teacher attrition neglecting the school principals' experiences. It became clear that school principals have never been given a platform to voice their experiences, their feelings, frustrations and challenges they face or even how they cope during attrition. It has also discussed concepts that seem inseparable from teacher attrition such as teacher turnover and teacher retention as well as teacher shortages. It is clear that these cannot be left out when tackling teacher attrition. The chapter also looked at the school principals giving a brief historical background on leadership theories. Theoretical framework underpinning the study was also discussed linking its relation to my study. The next chapter will focus on methodology and the research method for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature related to the study. It also discussed the theoretical framework which underpins the study. Concepts such as teacher such as teacher turnover and retention as well as teacher shortage discussed as these are not easy to leave out when touching on teacher attrition. The focus of this chapter is on research design and methodology. It is going to cover the research methodology including the interpretive paradigm, qualitative research, case study and interviews as a data collection tool. It will also touch on the location of the study specifying how access will be gained to the research sites. Sampling will also be discussed justifying the choice of participants. The following will again be covered: ethical considerations, data collection plan, limitations, reliability and validity as well as the data collection plan. A conclusion in the end sums up what has been discussed in the entire chapter.

3.2 Research Methodology

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004) refer to methodology as the coherent group of methods that complement one another and have the “goodness of fit” to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and benefit the research purpose. They continue to state that the group of methods of data collection and analysis will also be rational because the researcher has philosophised in a certain way about them and has made sure that they are well-suited. Methodology in educational research plays a vital role as it describes approaches to kinds of paradigms of research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) claim that the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible term not only the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself. The appropriateness of methodology is important in achieving what the study aims to achieve. This study is qualitative drawing from the interpretive paradigm.

3.3 Research Paradigm

This study draws from the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivist perspective is based on the assumption that human life can only be understood from within and therefore focuses on people's subjective experiences (Maree, 2007). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) share a similar sentiment, stating that qualitative research is concerned with understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives which is achieved by analysing the many contexts of the participants and by narrating participants' meanings for these situations and events. In this study the experiences of each of the participants were analysed thematically. These themes emerged from the findings of the study. This is presented in Chapter Four. According to Merriam (1988) it is primarily concerned with making meaning of how people make perceive their lives, experiences and their structures of the world. The study aims to explore and document the experiences of school principals hence my choice of the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivists use qualitative methods in order to gauge perceptions and experiences of the participants.

Researchers from an interpretive approach believe that there are multiple realities of a single event (Mertens, 1998). Epistemologically, Mertens (1998) advocates that knowledge is socially constructed by those in the research process and that the researcher should be sensitive to the complex experience from the participants' perspective. It aims to „give voice” to those whose accounts tend to be marginalised or discounted (Willig, 2001 p.12). My study seeks to explore and understand the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition therefore data was collected directly from them thus ensuring their point of view is taken into account. Cohen *et al* (2007) argue that the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for the being. It aims to understand the prejudiced world of human experience. To preserve the veracity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the persons and understand from the inside unlike the positivist paradigm where people are reduced to numbers and only concerned with the law and formulas that are not relevant to the actual lives of people (Cohen *et al*, 2000).

Researchers commence with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of their setting (Cohen *et al*, 2007). This study, the researcher aims to understand the individuals (school principals)' interpretation of their world (their experiences of teacher attrition). In the interpretive paradigm, researchers use qualitative methods of gathering data from participants. These include interviews, observations and document reviews (Mertens, 1998

and Robson, 2002). This study uses interviews as a way of interaction between and among respondents as Mertens (1998) would argue.

3.4 The Qualitative Approach

This study is qualitative in design. Qualitative research allowed me to conduct the research my participants (the school principals) in their natural settings (their schools) as Holloway and Wheeler (1996) would advocate. As a researcher, qualitative approach allowed me to be a primary research instrument in this study (Jewnarain, 2008). This afforded me an opportunity to have a face to face conversation with my participants through semi- structured interviews. By so doing, I could read their body language as they answered questions. According to Willig (2001), ontologically, qualitative research maintains that the world is made up of structures and objects that have a cause- effect relationship with one another. I believe that teacher attrition has an effect on school principals as individuals and also on the school as a whole.

3.5 Case study

The study uses a case study since it is a small scale study and the semi-structured interviews will ensure that the research question is answered. Mertens (1998) and Robson (2002) claim that methods widely used in qualitative research are observations, interviews and document reviews. Because of the nature of the study (small scale), it is relevant, adequate and feasible. Bassey (1999) contends that case studies recognise the „embeddedness’ of the truth. Jupp (2006) argues that a case study can be an individual, a person, an event, an institution or an organisation. This study is a case study of school principals of four schools in the Umlazi district. Although the school principals’ experiences were the case in this study, they got this experience in the school setting. If they were not in the school, they would not experience teacher attrition as leaders. It is when teachers resign from their profession; take early retirement; fall ill and get medical boarding or even die that the school has a problem. These problems constitute the experiences of school principals. The main focus is on their experiences of teacher attrition as individuals and ultimately on how these experiences affect them, the school and even learner performance. However, some authors like Yin (1998) argue that case study has its own limitations. He believes that it relies on the personal interpretation of data and lacks objectivity and rigour. Inherent subjectivity is bound to take place therefore

to minimise it, I will verify data. This will be done by sending transcripts back to the participants for correction or omissions if any.

Although this is a case study has an element of phenomenology since its focus is on experiences. Dash (1993) defines phenomenology as both a philosophy and a research method. He states that its purpose is to describe experiences as they are lived in phenomenological terms for instance, to capture the „lived experiences’ of study participants. Dash (1993) continues to state that the focus of phenomenological research is people’s experience in relation to a phenomenon and their personal interpretations of their experiences. My study is about the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition. The principals were the participants and during the interviews they were talking about their own experiences. These were lived experiences and they also got an opportunity to express their feelings. Whilst most studies have focused on the reasons for teacher attrition through surveys, my study seeks to explore and document principals experiences and what challenges these leaders are faced with and how they manage them.

3.6 Data collection method

3.6.1 Interviews

Since my study is a qualitative, it uses interviews as a research tool and such are in-depth. Guion (2006) advocates that in-depth interview is an open-ended, discovery-orientated method that is well suited for describing both program processes and outcomes from the perspectives of the target audience.

Such interviews are in-depth, open-ended and discovery-orientated. The goal of the interview is to deeply explore the participant’s point of view, feelings and perspectives as it yields information (Robson, 2002). The aim of this study is to explore the experiences by the school principals regarding teacher attrition. What are their experiences, their feelings, do they find it frustrating, if so, why? In what way does it affect them, positively or negatively? Does it affect their performance as principals (e.g. disruption of teaching and learning, disruption of school planning, impact on learner performance, reputation of the school, etc), if so, how? How do school principals respond to challenges on teacher attrition? Do they rely on personal experience, policies or management and leadership theories?

The interviews were held in the principal’s office for all the four participants. These were recorded using a voice recorder and were later transcribed. This was done to preserve the

voices of the participants. The research questions were used as a guide and since they were semi-structured I managed to ask probing questions as well so as to gather more data from them. These questions helped me to answer all the questions I had regarding their experiences. Semi-structured interviews helped to yield this kind of information because of their in-depth nature. However, Mason (2002) warns that it is important not to treat understandings generated in an interview as though they are direct reflection of understandings “already existing” outside of the interview interaction, as though you were simply excavating facts. I took the transcripts back to the participants to check for any omissions; to verify data and make corrections if necessary.

3.7 Sampling

Four school principals were identified in four schools in the Umlazi district. Cohen, *et al* (2007) advocate that it is not only the appropriate methodology and instrumentation of the research that ensures its quality but also the aptness of the sampling strategy. I chose these principals because they all belonged to one cluster as the school I used to teach at. I was aware that they had experienced teacher attrition in their schools.

3.7.1 Participants’ biographical information

The participants were four school principals in the Umlazi district. Two of them were from primary schools and the other two from secondary or high schools. Each of them was given a pseudonym. They were Miss Bala*, Mr Coka*, Mr Linda* and Mrs Siba*.

Miss Bala is a 46 years old and single. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree. She has been a principal for two years and this is her first school as a principal and it is a primary school. Mr Coka, the second participant is a 48 year- old secondary school principal. He is married and has a Master of Education degree as his highest qualification. He has been a principal for 10 years in the same school and this is his first time as a principal. Mr Linda is a 54 year old secondary school principal who is married. His highest qualification is a Master of Education degree. He has been a school principal for 13 years although he had been acting for at least a year before that, in the same school. This is also his first school as a principal and he is also the first principal of the school since its opening in 1997. The last participant is Mrs Siba, a 49 year old primary school principal. She is also married and holds a Higher Education Diploma. Although she has been a teacher for 28 years, her experience as a school principal is that of 7 years.

Sampling is purposeful as semi-structured interviews are used as a research instrument. The school principals were the ones who could provide answers and insights for this study. It is for this reason that this study used purposive sampling to select its participants. Creswell (2008) argues that purposeful sampling involves the researcher intentionally selecting individuals or researchers handpick cases to be included in the sample on the bases of their judgement of their typicality.

This study focused on the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition. It is for that reason that they were chosen as a sample in order for them to relate their experiences and how they manage them. Two were from primary schools and another two from secondary schools. This is because mostly in primary schools a teacher teaches all learning areas, there is no specialisation.

Having worked in a primary school in the Umlazi district for 12 years, it was easy for me to identify sites and respondents in the area. Also, working as clusters in the district has ensured we secured a close network as teachers in the district. This enabled me to identify sites and consequently identify the participants. I also had an opportunity to gather some data through informal discussions with some school principals even though I did not intend having those principals as part of the sample.

Two of the schools, a primary and secondary school are from the same area which is semi-urban. They are both well constructed double storey schools. The third school is a township secondary school. Although it is an old school it has new well built premises across the old site. The last one is a new school surrounded by low cost housing provided by the government of South Africa for its poor citizens. The school has only the administration block constructed in brick and tile. The classrooms are still prefabs but it looks like it is going to be a beautiful school after construction. It is overcrowded since it is the only primary school in the area.

When one teacher resigns, take early retirement or dies, nine learning areas are without a teacher whilst in secondary schools there is specialisation. I felt the experiences of the principals would not be the same. This was done through in-depth interviews as discussed earlier. Patton (1990) explains that in purposive sampling participants are selected because of some characteristics and in this study participants were school principals only, which justified my choice of sampling.

3.8 Data collection plan

Account is characterised by what people say to the researcher, the actual words. It is collected using audio recording, transcription and verbatim notes (Mason, 2002), as is the case in my study.

Why is data being collected?	To explore the experiences of school principals regarding attrition.
What is the research strategy?	Semi- structured interviews.
Who (or what) will be the sources?	The school principals themselves.
How many data sources will be accessed?	Two primary school and two secondary school principals.
Where is the data to be collected?	From two primary school principals and two from secondary school.
How often will data be collected?	One interview will be conducted with each principal.
How will data be collected?	Through semi-structured interviews which will be recorded.
Justification	School principals are the ones who can provide data required in the study. Primary school and secondary school experiences might not be the same; therefore sample will be taken from both. The semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions thus allowing the researcher a chance to gather more data.

3.9 Data analysis

Holliday (2007) defined data analysis as a process of making sense of the data and discovering what it has to say. Since this is a qualitative study, data was collected through I did the transcription personally to ensure that data does not go missing since I was the one who did the interviews. These interviews were later transcribed. During the presentation of the findings, data were categorised according to these headings: kinds of teacher attrition

experienced by school principals, factors influencing teacher attrition, challenges experienced by principals and how principals cope with these challenges. I categorised the data according to the relevant topics that I had already identified. Themes then emerged from these categories and analysed to make meaning. From the themes I drew conclusions which were discussed in Chapter Five. The aim of the study was to explore and document the experiences of school principals during teacher attrition and data analysis was an ongoing process.

3.10 Limitations

I acknowledged that things might not go according to plan and therefore anticipated some limitations for an example having a technological problem with the dicta-phone, the principal not being at school on the day of the interview and failing to notify me in advance. The principal not being willing to answer some questions even though I do not view the questions as threatening, invasive or embarrassing. When I did the interviews, the common limitation was the principals being busy and having to try and keep the interview short. Fortunately, I managed to ask all the questions I had set out to ask and also managed to probe the participants for more information. In one school, the interview started two hours late because the chairperson of the School Governing Body had arrived unannounced and held a meeting with the principal. In another school, the phone rang during the interview and I had to pause the recorder but we continued after the call and the principal asked the secretary to hold all her calls unless it was an emergency. Luckily the interview proceeded smoothly after that without any interruptions. In one primary school, teachers would walk in even though the door was closed but the principal would signal to them to remain quiet. This did interrupt our interview but each time it happened I would repeat the question for the principal.

3.11 Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the degree of correspondence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world. In other words, it is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the researcher and the participant thus both agreeing on the description or composition of events, and especially the meaning of these (McMillan& Schumacher, 2006). I took the transcripts back to the participants to verify data to check if there were any corrections to be made or even omissions made during transcription. In qualitative research this is referred to as member checking. It involves sharing the

researcher's interpretations of data obtained from various sources with the participants from whom they were gathered and determining if they feel that the results are plausible (Creswell, 1998; Leedy & Omrod, 2001; Merriam, 1998).

Interviews were conducted in the language the participants were most comfortable with, which was English, so that they could express themselves freely. These were recorded and later transcribed. Data was analysed and copies were given to participants to verify data and check for any mistakes or omissions. It was then to be stored safely in a disk and kept at home in a safe under lock and key after necessary arrangements have been made with the supervisor.

In qualitative research validity might be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, and the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher (Cohen *et al*, 2007). The study chose two principals from two primary schools and two from secondary schools in order to get their experiences at both levels. I did this to ensure that I get a thick and rich description of these principals' experience at both levels. As a researcher, I acknowledged and limited my own bias as a teacher who has also resigned due to teacher stress. Kuper, Reeves and Levinson (2008) refer to this as reflexivity. Cohen, *et al* (2007) define reflexivity as a research technique to enhance researchers' recognition of their own influence on their research, such as how their gender, ethnic background and social status influence the choices they make about methods, data collection and analysis. Reliability is a measure of consistency over time.

3.12 Ethical considerations

When conducting a study, it is imperative that participants are not harmed physically; they are not made uncomfortable in any way or subjected to stress. I ensured that participants were not exposed to questions which could cause them embarrassment. A researcher has to take steps to remove these or even prevent them whenever possible (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001). The interviews were conducted in the principals' offices and this proved to be where they were most comfortable. Henning, Rensburg and Smit (2004) advocate that respondents need to give informed consent to participate and must be made fully clued-up about the research in which the interview is going to be used. Cohen, *et al* (2007) add that participants

should assured that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected and what is going to happen with their information.

To be able to gain access to these schools I firstly applied for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee which allowed me to conduct my study. I then wrote to the head of the Department of education in KwaZulu-Natal requesting permission to conduct the research. Thereafter letters were written to the school principals as participants informing them of the purpose of the study and seeking their approval to interview them. These letters clearly stated that there were neither foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with their participation in this study and also that participation is voluntary and they could withdraw at any point should they wish to do so. With the letters were declaration forms which the participants signed, giving me their consent. I also ensured that anonymity and confidentiality were observed by using pseudonyms throughout the study. I did everything possible to safeguard the privacy of participants.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research design and methodology of the study. The following aspects were tackled: the research design and methodology for the study and I justified their appropriateness in my study. The chapter also gave a detailed data collection plan explaining how data was going to be collected, where and when and justified these. It even discussed the participants stating who they are, justified their choice and how I used the interviews to answer my research questions and also explained in detail how I was going to analyse the data in the following chapter. It also discussed the limitations I encountered during data collection and explained how I managed them. Validity and reliability and also the ethical considerations were part of this chapter. The following chapter deals with the presentation of the findings as well as their discussion. Quotations from the transcripts are all in italics. Before commencing with each aspect of the following chapter I explained in detail how it is going to be conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter findings are presented and data collected during the interviews discussed. It focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. The objectives of the study were to explore and document the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition, to identify factors which influence teacher attrition, to examine challenges experienced by principals with regards to attrition and to find out how principals manage these challenges. The research questions were:

What are the experiences of school principals with regards to teacher attrition?

- What factors influence teacher attrition?
- What challenges face school principals with regards to teacher attrition (e.g. disruption of teaching and learning, disruption of school planning, impact on learner performance, reputation of the school etc.)?
- How do school principals respond to these challenges, their coping strategies?

This chapter presents the general view of the participants, providing quotes which serve as evidence leading to the general view. Findings were then presented followed by the discussion. In the discussion, the literature and theoretical framework from Chapter Two were integrated since they influenced this study. Holliday (2007) claims that the discussion has three elements. The first element is the argument, which the author perceives as a major driving force of the data discussion. The second element is the data extract (verbatim quotes) from the corpus which when strategically deployed provide evidence to support the argument. The final element is the discursive commentary which tells the reader which bits of each data extracts are significant and why, showing the reader how they provide specific evidence to support the argument. This author continues to argue that overriding these elements are the themes which form the basis upon which the argument, the data extracts and discursive commentaries are organised, providing headings and stages in the argument. The use of first person separates the researcher's agenda from other voices in the text, thus increasing transparency and accountability (Holliday, 2007). This allowed me as a researcher to make contact with the reader and emphasize the „everyday' nature of qualitative research

as Holiday (2007) will put it. The elements mentioned above show how I intended conducting the discussion. Themes which emerged were discussed and conclusions thereof were drawn in Chapter Five.

Data is presented under the following sub-headings derived from the critical questions:

- Kinds of teacher attrition experienced by school principals
- Challenges experienced by principals
- The impact of teacher attrition on learner performance and the school
- How principals managed these challenges

4.2 Kinds of teacher attrition experienced by school principals

The interviews revealed that not all four school principals experienced the same kinds of attrition. Three of them had had teachers resigning and taking early retirement some due to illness. What was also revealed is that sometimes principals experienced teachers resigning from the profession in pursuit of greener pastures due to job dissatisfaction. Samodien (2008) wrote that highly- skilled teachers are leaving the country in their numbers, generating qualms that dreadful working conditions, poor salaries and encroaching could spark an education crisis. Miss Bala's experience of teacher attrition was that of resignation.

“Mm the only thing I have experienced is err...resignation. Four teachers had all left at once.”

This is how Mr Coka shared his experience:

“ Ey...we have experienced a great deal of teacher attrition...err through resignation, retirement, early retirement, and transfers either single transfer or cross transfers. That is our experience and over the last few years I would say it's been quite high if you consider one teacher leaving the school can cause a lot of instability. And we've also had a great deal of teachers falling ill and err...ended up taking medical boarding. Two cases in point, Mr Cele and Miss Doyisa*, who due to kidney, failures had to take an early retirement.”*

Mr Linda took time to talk about his experience of losing one of his deputies through early retirement and also two post level one teachers, one of whom was a maths teacher. He complained that the departure of his deputy was sudden as he did not get enough time to prepare for it. According to him this was a bad experience given the fact that it was during

the final exam, the time when he needed him (his deputy) most. He felt let down by their departure:

“Err (pause) one of my deputies took an early retirement err at the age of 50. Err (pause) err...the other two post level one educators just took early retirement for some personal reasons...”

His experience was worsened by the resignation of a Mathematics teacher. This is because Mathematics teachers are scarce in South Africa and finding a replacement is a real mission. At least 6000 schools in South Africa do not have qualified Mathematics and Science teachers and this has led to SA government recruiting foreign teachers to teach these subjects (Mangxamba, 2007).

Mrs Siba was the only principal who had experienced death as a form of attrition and she described the experience as the most important one:

“The most important one that I was...I was confronted with...the death. I think I have how many educators who died... (trying to recall), about four.”

According to her all four teachers died of natural causes, they had been sick. For her, losing those teachers like that was a really bad and an extremely sad experience because she felt guilty as if she did not do enough to help:

“Oh...ey... (pause) it’s sad, it’s sad and you feel as if there is something wrong with you as a leader if an educator dies. You just... (pause)...you feel that maybe you should have done something but there’s nothing you can do. It’s so challenging...it’s so challenging...and it’s sad. That is the bad experience that I have with this school. And as ...and as a principal, those are the challenges that I’ve faced and I don’t feel like facing them again.”

She narrated how this experience affected her as a school principal:

“...as a mother, even that one as a principal you can feel that ey...it’s hard. You become stressed yourself...:...because you feel like giving assistance but you can’t. And that...and that disclosure helps to you as a leader to understand the situation. Even if that educator is absent then you know that ok it’s fine because of one, two and three...he’s visiting a doctor or what. But it does affect work.”

She further described the pain of losing teachers through death as the worst experience for one as a principal especially when having to face the bereaved family:

“There are so many challenges you become faced with...like facing the parents of those....family of those educators (the deceased). You need to go there to... (pause) mourn with them, to give them hope of life”

Two of the four participants spoke about the challenge they experience as school principals when an educator is ill and his or her attendance is irregular and how it impacted on learner performance. According to Boler (2003), whatever the magnitude of the impact, it is clear that the epidemic does influence the working conditions of teachers. School principals stated that the major challenge is that according to the Department Of Education’s policy, a teacher has to be away for thirty consecutive days in order for the school to qualify for a replacement. At some point Mrs Siba would approach a sick teacher and request them to negotiate with their doctor to give them a thirty-day sick leave in order for the school to qualify for a substitute. This could have gotten her into trouble since she is not a medical expert but she maintains she was trying to cope as a school principal and had the learners’ best interest at heart:

“It’s better if the educator can apply for a leave of maybe thirty days because the Department (of Education) doesn’t pay for the substitute if the days are less than thirty”.

Mr Coka added that lack of cooperation and communication from the offices was another factor:

“Sometimes you go to the offices you don’t get an official. You have to go and come back again .You phone, phones are not answered”.

According to Mrs Siba, the fact that as a school principal you know what is wrong with the teacher does not make much difference because at the end of the day learners need to be taught. The school and the learners were still affected if the teacher’s attendance is not regular:

“Even if you understand (that a teacher is ill) but learners need to be taught. There must be something...there must be somebody in the classroom and if you are understaffed you don’t have the educators that may assist...it becomes a problem. It does affect the...the performance of the school as a whole. Definitely it did affect the school, the

learners and their performance as well. It did, yes, yes it does affect, it does affect if the teacher gets absent from work, then definitely school work is affected”

According to Bennell (2005), teacher HIV/AIDS prevalence is projected to increase from 12.5% in 2000 to 30% by 2015 and annual mortality rates are projected to increase eightfold from 0.5% to 4% during the same period. I found this to be really alarming considering the fact that South Africa already has a shortage of teachers especially those who teach Mathematics and Sciences. Rademeyer (2005) pointed out that South Africa will need about 22 000 new teachers annually. This however, does not in any way insinuate that all teachers who die of natural causes in South Africa die of HIV/AIDS related illnesses.

He felt there was a difference in circumstances depending on the type of attrition. For him, it is better to have a teacher take a transfer because as a school principal one gets a chance to start looking for a replacement whereas a sick teacher’s attendance will be irregular and one cannot anticipate how long a person would be sick for and this affects learning:

“...But the difference is, a teacher who is going through medical boarding or through sickness (pause), there’s a period of absence from school because of that poor health... and that affects the learning of the children. Whereas the one who goes on transfer, we’ve got enough time to plan for the replacement”.

He went on to make an example of his own experience:

“There’s a teacher who is in history. He has been sick for quite some time now because of illness...Maybe after 20 or maybe after 15 days he is better, comes to comes. During that two weeks break, due the leave of absence, I cannot employ a teacher and the learners are worst hit.”

Further advancing on the differences in experience he said:

“The one who is resigning, although the only difficulty would be to get the right replacement. But if he had told you that he will be resigning in 3months, you’ve got a better opportunity of planning for the replacement. Sometimes it’s not better because he may have told you quite in advance but there is no teacher in case of a scarce subject.”

4.3 Challenges faced by school principals during teacher attrition

All four principals agreed that teacher attrition of any form brings about instability. Mintzberg's model of organisational structure (adapted from Mullins, 1988) which is triangular puts the school principal at the top as the strategic apex, and the teachers at the bottom as the operating core. Teacher attrition at the bottom of the structure directly affects the strategic apex. The participants cited uncertainty, instability, confusion among staff and learners as well, disruption of learning and teaching and school planning also disruption in learning among the challenges that school principals face during attrition, the participants. This disruption impacted on planning for the school and also led to compromised student performance.

Mintzberg (1990) identified ten roles of managers and these were relevant to school principals also. Among them is a role of a manager as a **figurehead** that performs the ceremonial and symbolic duties as head of the organisation, **leader** who fosters a proper work atmosphere and motivates and develops subordinates and a **disturbance handler** who deals with unexpected events and operational breakdowns like teacher attrition. School principals are expected to handle this disturbance and instability during teacher attrition but often they find this hard to. The participants mentioned that classes were disrupted, learners were losing out and that this impacted negatively on the learner performance and that of the school as an organisation:

“I had to go to classes sometimes, leave the office and sometimes spend less than 30min in class and I'm called at the office.”

This disruption of learning due to teacher attrition left school principals with a mixture of feelings. These included frustration, pain, stress and even despair. Kyriacou (1999) views teacher stress as a mixture of detestable emotion like tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression ensuing from his work. Miss Bala related how she ended up in hospital due to stress related illnesses:

“And it brought too much stress on me to such an extent that I had to go to the hospital for a week or more because of stress-related illnesses.”

These are the negative organisational conditions that impact on staffing which Ingersoll (2001) talks about in his organisational theory.

Ingersoll (2001) declares that important employee turnover is linked to performance and effectiveness of the organisation. If there is a shortage of teachers in a school due to teacher attrition this affects its performance. I agree with Ingersoll (2001) as I believe that that is what is happening in most South African schools where the performance of the school as an organisation is affected by the departure of teachers from the profession, especially those whose replacements are not easy to find, like Mathematics and Science teachers. Mrs Siba felt that things were even worse for her colleagues in high schools:

“If an educator resigns in high school, was teaching physics, you need to get an educator who knows about physics and who has got the majors for physics. Then it’s not the same. If you don’t get them the learners will just sit like that, so it becomes hard. It’s hard for them.”

Morgan and Sives (2006) believe this teacher migration has taken away the most needed teachers in SA, the mathematics and science teachers and the findings of the study revealed it is true. The management of the school with principal as the head is greatly affected and that is why this study focuses on the experiences of school principals on teacher attrition. What I found from my participants is that when teachers leave through attrition, finding a replacement is not easy it takes longer than expected. This was Mr Coka’s feeling:

“They (the department) are not being helpful. It takes a lot of time to get a teacher.”

Regarding the replacement of teachers, the participants felt let down by the Department of Education. Principals need time to plan in their schools and they felt that bureaucracy caused a delay in teacher replacement and that affected them as school principals since they have to see to it that learning and teaching takes place efficiently and consequently the school performance. It came up that the department of education had a replacement policy that took too long to provide schools with a replacement. This is how Mr Linda described it:

“It is a lot of bureaucracy, you have to do an adjustment and that affects the time table that is existing in the school. So it has got that impact...”

Mr Coka agrees and advances to say:

“They (the department) are not being helpful. It takes a lot of time to get a teacher.”

He was then prompted to talk about what he thought the reason was for this bureaucracy, which according to him affected them as school principals during teacher attrition. His take

was that the department is trying to address the issue of transformation and he blamed the schools that we reluctant to embrace change. He claimed these school principals would provide false information to the education department because they did not want to embrace other races or cultures in their schools:

“Some schools because they want to preserve a particular race in their school, they may not inform the department of the post that they have”.

He even went on to support the Department’s effort to try and bring about transformation though he was a bit sceptical:

“...the intentions are good but practically...we are not sure if it is yielding results.”

One of the principals blamed this bureaucracy on nepotism displayed by them as principals when hiring replacements. Another principal also blamed the principals as the cause of this new long system of hiring because they want to preserve jobs for some people whilst other principals try to preserve a certain culture or race in their schools. Lack of honesty from the principals and irregularities during placement were identified as among the reasons for the department to resort to this new policy which principals perceive as long and time consuming.

Miss Bala blamed the Department for not providing her with replacements timorously calling it negligence on their part:

“It was negligence on the part of the department because they had given them enough time to...to...to place teachers. They could have placed them even in January. I don’t know it’s because of their changing policies everyday that affect us”.

Again this showed that the problem is widespread. As a researcher I also noticed that for these school principals it was not just about teachers leaving but what they also found even more frustrating was the time at which it happened and the disruption it brought along. Xaba (2003) contends that teacher attrition disrupts schooling especially when teachers leave the profession during the academic year or whilst engaged in critical projects. This is evident in two principals’ account. For Mr Linda, having his deputy leave at the time when he needed him most, was more of an issue than his actual departure:

“It was bad because it was during the time in which I needed him most... because it was during the final exam and...he... was my second hand.”

Miss Bala was concerned about four teachers leaving her school in the first term which resulted in the school not being able to give out quarterly reports on time:

“And even the reports at school had to come out late because not much work was done because there were no teachers”

There was also an issue of scarcity of subject teachers which proved to be common in secondary schools. This led to replacement taking longer as the department is struggling to find a teacher qualified in that particular subject. The high school principals were the ones directly affected by this scarcity of subject teachers. Lewis (1999) attested that is important for schools to get highly skilled teachers for the betterment of student performance and this teacher shortage has hit the high- poverty areas in America. Mangxamba (2007) wrote about the crisis of scarce subjects teachers in South African schools. In his report he stated that the government had resorted to recruiting foreign teachers to teach the subjects. Principals said it does not matter how long in advance the teacher tells you they are leaving, if it is a scarce subject finding a replacement can be quite challenging if not impossible. Mr Coka commented:

“He (the teacher who is leaving) may have told you quite in advance but there is no teacher in case of a scarce subject”

It came up in the interview with Mrs Siba that the experiences of high school principals are sometimes different from those of primary school principals. Mr Linda strongly believed that the experiences of teacher attrition for primary school principals were different from those of secondary schools. In terms of planning and the fact that as school principals they are tasked with a huge responsibility of ensuring that teaching and learning does take place, he stated that the fact that teachers specialise in secondary schools made matters worse for them since it is often problematic to find a teacher who will have the same majors (specialisation) as the one who had left:

“The teacher in primary school is teaching every subject that is taught in the primary school, there’s no specialisation. So you get an educator who’s just an educator like all other educators. Err... but I’m also thinking on the other side a teacher who has got a background of mm...what is it?...Foundation phase...and there is a vacant post on...on Senior phase, that teacher hasn’t been in Senior phase. So it’s either the principal is moving a teacher within so as to open a space err... for this coming Foundation phase

teacher. So there is that manoeuvre which is sometimes necessary. Depends on ...on the needs of that particular school.”

She advocated that it is a little bit easier for them as primary school principals to get a replacement than it is for the fellow colleagues in secondary school. She claims this is because as primary schools they do not focus on the majors (specialisation) secondary school children “*will just sit like that*” whilst searching for a suitable replacement. According to Mr Linda, sometimes finding that replacement does not solve the problem:

“As long as you got a person who will fit exactly in that vacancy but it’s not always the case because err...a teacher has got two majors. Err... you are given a teacher with different majors who doesn’t fit to the position that has been vacated. So, you have to do an adjustment and that affects the time table that is existing in the school. So it has got that impact.”

This lack of support led to the principals finding it hard to cope during attrition. Yet, to be successful, they need training, ongoing professional support (Colley, 2002).

The participants were asked to air their views on their experience of the Rationalisation and Redeployment (R&R) Policy as a form of teacher attrition. The participants had different views on the. Although some perceived it as a disruption to the teaching and learning program but they all agreed that it was necessary. Mr Linda was very vocal on the issue stating that it depends on the angle from which one looks at it. He felt the department had no choice but to move teachers from schools where there was an excess to those which have a shortage. He continued to say that for a school principal this could be sensitive especially because it would definitely cause instability somehow. Mrs Siba had not experienced teachers leaving the school because of R&R but mentioned that she had received teachers who were in excess in their schools through R&R:

“I have received educators from other schools to my school ...because we are a big school with big enrolment. So, we’ve never had a problem of us giving away or getting educators to other schools other than bring them, maybe about five to six from other schools through Redeployment, yes!”

On the R&R policy itself, she felt that teachers should be moved and placed in the beginning of the year to avoid the stress that teachers often experience when they have to move during the course of the year. Xaba (2003) states that teacher attrition disrupts schooling especially if

teachers leave the profession during the academic year whilst they are engaged in critical projects. I also believe this to be true since I feel that moving from one school to another requires one as a teacher to really adjust and adapt.

4.4 The impact of teacher attrition on learner performance and the school.

From the interviews it became comprehensible that teacher attrition does not only affect the school principals directly but also the learners' performance and the school. The principals spoke about the impact that teacher attrition had in their schools. They all agreed that learners were indeed hit by teacher attrition. Miss Bala felt that learners were mostly affected since she had to go to class and teach and be at the office at the same time. This is how Miss Bala relates her story:

“Err... mostly learners that were taught by myself were actually disturbed. They couldn't even follow the lessons because I used to come to school (class) whenever I had time to come to class. And they were also confused because they had lost so many teachers in almost the same grade. They had to live without teachers so most of the first term they spent without teachers and it had a great impact.”

Mr Coka was very passionate when he spoke about his own encounter:

“Terribly, terribly, it's terrible, it causes instability!”

He felt it was better those who were retiring due to age since he could prepare a year in advance.

On the role played by the education department during teacher attrition, the principals had concerns on the replacement policy of the education department'. They described it as “a lot of bureaucracy’ as compared to the past where they could just find the teachers themselves.

Mr Coka said:

“I'm sitting here with a post that needs to be filled for History and Dramatic arts. There's this new way of them telling us how to get a teacher. Previously I would just look for a teacher and employ him or her. Now there's this TSA02 form which you have to fill in and say you have a vacancy and give it to the district co-ordinator of labour for him to look at people who've said they are qualified teachers who can teach. Then they contact that person. It is a lot of bureaucracy. To be short on things, they are not being helpful. It takes a lot of time to get a teacher.”

For Mr Linda who is a secondary school principal, the main challenge of teacher attrition was the disruption of learning and teaching and the unnecessary gaps it causes and he strongly felt that this affected them as school principals and impacted greatly on learners. He further states that these gaps are caused by the amount of time the school has to wait to be provided with a replacement and the time it takes for the replacement to adapt:

“It has got unnecessary gaps...because sometimes learners have to wait for the substitute or for the person who will fill that...that err... vacancy. Because when a teacher is teaching learners, a bond is created err...learners become familiar to the methods and approaches of that educator. Now when he or she is leaving, the learners now have to...to...to experience new approaches, experience this new person in front of them, experience the attitude of this new person. And...and apart from that, there are gaps because learners sometimes or most of the time have to wait.”

4.5 How principals managed or coped with these challenges

Managing or coping with these challenges was not easy for these principals. I noticed that primary school principals found it difficult to cope as compared to the male secondary school principals. I do not know whether their gender (being female) had anything to do with it. One of them, Miss Bala said she had to be admitted to hospital due to work- related stress:

“At one point I was admitted to hospital for stress- related reasons”

Another one, Mrs Siba, mentioned how, at one point, she felt she needed counselling to help her cope with the situation:

“When I was still new in this field I would say:” I need to get a counsellor myself, I can't handle these problems”.

According to the 'Great man' model or Qualities theory, based on research into the qualities (behaviour and character traits) of historical leaders, particularly military and political, leaders were born and not made (Clarke, 2007). Those who aspired to take positions of leadership needed to emulate the personality traits, behaviours and values of the heroes of history. Leaders needed to be visionary, inspirational, courageous, loyal, steadfast and stoical Clarke (2007). School principals as leaders are expected to possess these traits and be able to cope during teacher attrition but it is not always feasible. The interviews exposed the difficulty these principals were faced with during attrition. Miss Bala stated it categorically that as a school they could not cope during teacher attrition:

“We couldn’t...we couldn’t (cope). The first term was just a disaster!”

Mr Coka claimed:

“It’s quite difficult. The only thing you can just hope and pray that people remain in your school”.

It became clear that even though they were not satisfied with the department’s replacement policy, which they found to be quite bureaucratic, they had no choice but to rely on it in order to get replacements. Mr Linda remarked:

“While they (education department) are trying to help the school, they stick to this paperwork”.

The principals who had experienced illness as a form of attrition expressed their concern on the policy that required that a sick teacher had to be on thirty consecutive days leave in order for a substitute to be hired. They felt that if a teacher was on and off at school it caused a lot of disruption and confusion among learners as well.

At some point, one principal from a primary school had to ask parents with grade 12 to come and assist during the times when a sick teacher was not at school for days on end and circumstances did not allow for a substitute to be hired:

“So I used to maybe get parents to come and assist. Maybe just phone a parent whom I know is having grade 12 and maybe to assist for the particular day, but it is not an easy thing”

In some instances a principal had to teach in class and be at the office at the same time which was not easy. Mr Linda mentioned that they had to make internal arrangements and reshuffle in an attempt to make sure that all learners were receiving some learning whilst waiting for a suitable replacement. That too was not easy. He narrated how they were trying to cope without a mathematics teacher:

“We...were negotiating with Mathematics teachers inside sometimes err...forfeiting some periods where they were supposed to go so that all learners will get that err...err...that learning. It wasn’t easy...it wasn’t easy because it was entirely depending on the attitude of available teachers”.

The principals did not have specific coping mechanisms and they felt let down by the system at some point. The departmental personnel contributed also as they were hard to get hold of and their phones often unanswered and this was Mr Linda's experience:

"Sometimes you go to the offices you don't get an official. You have to go and come back again. You phone, phones are not answered. So it is a process which is very slow."

The general feeling regarding teacher attrition itself was that it may be a blessing if a teacher who is leaving has been troublesome but if the school is losing a good teacher or a teacher who teaches scarce subjects, it is a great loss to the school. It could also happen that a school gets a good teacher through cross transfer or R&R. The principals perceived R&R as means of bringing about some balance in human resource distribution. However, they were not happy with the fact that it takes place at any time during the school year.

This is evident in their accounts where Miss Bala told of how she ended in hospital due to stress related illness and Mrs Siba mentioned how at one point she felt she needed counselling to help her cope with the situation. The Miss Bala stated it categorically that they could not cope at all during attrition:

"...ey it was difficult. The situation got better when I received two of the teachers but others came a little bit late towards the end of the term and... (Pause). I don't think we coped at all because it was only during the end of the second term that we saw what we were doing in class. But the first term we couldn't cope. We couldn't...we couldn't (cope). The first term was just a disaster."

Miss Bala went further to say that she was not sure who to blame as it seemed their immediate supervisors and district personnel were all unsure about the new process of hiring teachers:

"It was new, both the supervisors and the principals were not familiar with the process even our district, they had their own concerns. They had issues about this to such an extent the schools suffered because of the arguments that they had about the way the teachers were now given jobs."

Describing the experience for this particular time Miss Bala echoed:

"A bad one (the experience of not being able to cope during teacher attrition)."

She was very vocal about the Department of Education not working quick enough to ensure that teachers are replaced on time when they leave. This was evident when I asked if she thought the Department could have handled the situation better given the fact that teachers had tendered their resignations three months in advance. Her response was:

“Yes it was negligence on the part of the Department of Education because they had given them enough time to...to...to place teachers. They could have placed them even in January. I don’t know, it’s because of their changing policies everyday that affect us.”

When asked what she felt the Department could do differently she was not sure as Miss Bala blamed this long process on them as principals:

“I don’t know what they can do because err the thing that brought this is the issue of nepotism on the part of us as principals. I ...I don’t know, they have to...to devise some other means of dealing with this. But this thing of waiting for the Department of Education to hire teachers after three months after the others have left is still not working.”

For Mr Coka coping during attrition is not easy when one is a school principal. He felt that as school principals they needed to ensure that the school environment is conducive in an attempt to retain teachers at school. He claimed that at times a teacher would want to leave the school because they are unhappy or even depressed:

“Depression is a cause that is affecting many schools because the principal did this, or the one teacher did this and people are depressed. Again, some point, I’m sure you’ve heard in one school in Isipingo one teacher is on sick leave because of depression and there is infighting”

This was how Mr Linda responded to teacher attrition:

“Well, we were doing internal arrangements. We...were negotiating with mathematics teachers inside sometimes err...forfeiting some periods where they were supposed to go so that all learners will get that err... err...that learning. It wasn’t easy...it wasn’t easy because it was entirely depending on the attitude of available teachers.”

His feeling was that the Department is doing something in trying to assist them as school principals during attrition but it is not enough:

“Ja, they are doing something but I can't say it's enough because while they are trying to help the school, they stick to this paperwork. And...and there's this issue of a pool that we can't just employ as principals even though you coming across a qualified, and a teacher whom you believe can deliver. You have to go and check in the departmental pool or district pool whether there is... and it doesn't take short, it takes long because sometimes you go to the offices you don't get an official. You have to go and come back again you. You phone, phones are not answered. So it is a process which is very slow.”

Mrs Siba had her own special way of managing the challenges posed to her by teacher attrition. She relied on parents with grade 12 to help serve relief since her school was understaffed:

“I used to maybe get parents to come and assist. Maybe just phone a parent whom I know is having grade 12 and maybe to assist for the particular day, but it is not an easy thing. It's better if an educator can apply for a leave, a leave of maybe 30days because the dept does not pay for a substitute if the days are less than 30. Sometimes I used to negotiate with them, tell them that for the benefit of the learners, they need to apply...to explain to the doctor to get a letter that will have 30 days inclusive on that leave. And then if it's like that it becomes easy. But even though it's not easy because we'll be getting a person that doesn't know anything about that class at that particular time. Transferring the work schedule, the lesson plan and everything for a particular month does affect the performance because the educator will start on his own way and to resolve and do not do exactly as the educator who that is sick.”

She believed the department was doing something to assist them as school principals during attrition. She relied mainly on departmental policies to manage attrition:

“...it depends on you as a principal how much support do you need from the department but as a department, they do have the policies that you need to follow as a principal. So it's up to you then to do whatever you do taking into consideration the policies of the department... Like for instance, if an educator has disclosed to us that he is sick or there's something wrong with him, he's stress...he's having stress or depressed, there are...there is a programme from the dept that is known as the Educator Assistant Programme. So as principals we need to inform educators about that. They need to... (pause) work together with that. The department is doing that programme so that the educators will be assisted.

Because the educators...it's of no use to...to let the peoplethe educators be absent from work but not getting the treatment, proper treatment that he needs to get."

But she strongly believes that principals should follow departmental policies especially to help them cope with attrition:

"But we cannot run away from (pause)...the policies of the department. Because if you can think as a leader, because you need to think err... wise about it in as much as we don't want educators to move but can there be educators who can just be doing nothing at schools? No (laughs) it won't work like that because if they don't have duty load, so it means the department will lose money for nothing. So, rather than appointing new educators at that particular school, rather get those that are already on the data base and...ja."

She also felt that there was a difference in the experiences of primary school principals than those of secondary school principals:

"There is a difference...the...there is a big difference between primary schools and secondary schools in terms of the attrition. Because as a primary school err....principals, it's easy for us to get educators because we will not be focusing on the...on the....majors as such. Even if maybe you can try to get one or two in grade seven, more especially because we do have a senior class grade seven but it is the same as high school. If an educator resigns in high school, was teaching physics, you need to get an educator who knows about physics and who has got the majors for physics. Then it's not the same. If you don't get them the learners will just sit like that, so it becomes hard. It's hard for them."

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings using responses the participants gave during the interviews. It is here that the experiences of school principals of teacher attrition were revealed, the challenges they face, the impact of attrition on them, the learners and their performance and the school as a whole. It also showed how these principals cope during attrition. Verbatim quotations from the transcripts were used in an attempt to ensure that the participants' voices were not lost. The themes that emerged from the data collected were also discussed fusing them with the literature in Chapter Two including the theoretical framework. Disruption of learning and lack of support from the education department emerged as sub-

themes under challenges which school principals face during attrition. The principals' coping strategies also emerged as a theme. Principals also voiced their concerns on some of the departmental policies that are supposed to help them cope with attrition. The next chapter provides the summary Recommendations and conclusion were dealt with in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four presented data and the discussion thereof. It is in this chapter that summaries emanating from the findings in the previous chapter were provided and conclusions on the research projects were drawn. Data collected from the participants revealed that teacher attrition was indeed a challenge for school principals and they needed support from the department of education. The department of education has to revisit its policies in order to ease the frustration for the school principals during attrition.

Again, it was found that the Department of Education was not taking into account the challenges that school principals face during attrition and the problems that were brought about by the long process of providing schools with a replacement when they require one. I will present the summary of each chapter; this will be followed by the summary of the findings, the recommendations and then the conclusion.

5.2 Summary of each chapter

The first chapter outlined the whole study. Chapter Two of my study dealt with the review of literature. I consulted different scholars and studies on teacher attrition. This revealed that previous studies have focused on the teachers themselves trying to find out their experiences of teacher attrition as well as provide the reasons thereof. This justified my study focus which is the school principals' experiences of teacher attrition. I defined the concepts teacher attrition; teacher turnover and teacher retention; teacher shortage; school principals as well as leadership. I then presented the factors influencing teacher attrition. I discussed the organizational theory which focuses on employee supply, demand and turnover and related it to my study. I also used Mintzberg's model of organizational theory and his theory on the roles of managers. I managed to fuse these into my study.

In Chapter Three I discussed my research design and methodology. I justified my choice of the qualitative approach. I used purposeful sampling since my focus was on the school principals and it was only from them that I could gather the data I anticipated. I used semi-structured interviews as my data collection tool. I provided details of how I was going to

analyse the data. Ethical issues were also considered and limitations were discussed and how I managed those.

Chapter Four was about the presentation and discussion of the findings. The study revealed that school principals were experiencing different forms of teacher attrition and they shared their views on factors which influence attrition. It covered even the challenges they faced during attrition and how they managed them. The discussion revolves around emerging themes and brings in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two as well as the theoretical framework of the study. It is in it that I made my personal input regarding the findings.

And I finally summarised the whole study and its findings; drew the conclusions and made recommendations for further research followed by a conclusion in Chapter Five.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

According to Clarke (2007) those who aspired to take leadership positions in the Qualities Theory, needed to copy the personality traits, behaviours and values of the heroes of history. School principals are often expected to be heroes in times of instability such as in times of teacher attrition. Principals identified that much of attrition is caused by retirement due to ill health and resignation due to job dissatisfaction. Ingersoll and Smith (2003), in a study conducted in Ghana, 72% of the respondents were dissatisfied with their job as a teacher. Under the school principals' experiences of different kinds of teacher attrition, teacher resignation for greener pastures due to job dissatisfaction as well as illness and death emerged as themes. The study revealed that teachers were resigning or taking early retirement in order to explore other careers or businesses.

One principal even said that he prefers retirement as he felt it gives them enough time to prepare and plan ahead unlike resignation. But it became evident that their major concern was the amount of time it took to find a replacement. The study showed that teachers were not satisfied with their remuneration and they left for "greener pastures" which could be business sector or the private sector. Egger (2004) states that, many teachers had to find supplementary jobs in order to get more income and make up for their poor salaries. In the study by Croasmum, Hampton and Hermann (2002), poor salaries were cited among the forces driving the issue of teacher attrition. The participants also expressed their frustration over the amount of time it took to get a replacement and even a substitute in the case of a teacher who is ill.

What also emerged was the challenge of scarce subjects whose replacement was even harder to find.

When discussing the challenges faced by school principals during teacher attrition, the themes which emerged were disruption of learning; compromised student performance; lack of support from the Education Department and Rationalisation and Redeployment (R&R). Ingersoll (2002) states that teacher turnover has a bearing on student performance and the school's effectiveness as an organisation. The findings of this study revealed that principals as head of schools are greatly affected by teacher attrition and the disruption it brought about. For these principals, this disruption and instability in schools caused them frustration arising from lack of support from the Department Education. They felt the department was taking too long to provide them with a replacement during attrition. This was a major challenge, according to the participants.

School principals felt let down by the Department of Education's teacher replacement policy. They felt it took longer than necessary to provide them with a replacement in times of teacher attrition. This, in turn, left them as school principals in a dilemma of having to find means to cope on their own. They maintained that this situation caused a lot of confusion among learners. This was because until their teacher was replaced, they were taught by any other teacher who was available. Because different teachers use different teaching styles, learners were caught up in the mist of confusion trying to adapt.

None of participants had lost a teacher through R&R but some had received teachers who were in excess in their schools. Report by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2003) mentions how more teachers are leaving the profession as compared to those entering whilst others were not properly deployed. Whilst school principals agreed that R&R was indeed inevitable, their concern was over its implementation. Teachers arrived in new schools anytime in the year thus disrupting planning, time tabling and even teaching and learning when accommodating them. Learners also had to adjust and get used to the teaching methods of this new teacher and this is often confusing for learners and affects their performance. The experience was similar when an ill teacher was substituted.

What transpired also was that principals found it hard to cope during attrition. They relied on various methods ranging from the departmental policies to internal arrangements where teachers would reshuffle their own teaching schedules to accommodate the learners who were without a teacher at that point in time. Inability to cope and departmental policies came up

during the interviews as the participants responded on how they coped with teacher attrition. Coleman and Glover (2010) view leadership as particularly associated with setting the values and the vision for the organisation. During teacher attrition, this is not easy. All principals agreed that coping was not easy. One principal even stated that they could not cope at all as a school, calling their first term a “disaster”. Principals again expressed concern over lack of support from the Department of Education during attrition. According to them the Department of Education took longer than necessary to provide a replacement. One principal who had experienced having teachers who are sick in her school, who eventually passed on, narrated how this affected her emotionally and psychologically.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Provision of support

Findings have shown that school principals find it hard to cope during attrition. One primary school principal mentioned that she had to be admitted in hospital for stress-related illness due to failure to cope during attrition. Another who has lost four teachers through death resulting from illness stated that there was a time when she felt she needed counselling in order to cope. The Department of Education should provide counselling for school principals in such situations. The teacher replacement policy needs to be reviewed as principals complain that there is a lot of bureaucracy, finding a replacement takes longer than it should. This results in disruption of learning which in turn impacts on student performance. When the results are poor, school principals are the first ones to account and if teacher attrition was also contributing factor, that is hardly taken into account then.

In cases of resignation and early retirement the Department of Education should utilise the given notice to prepare for replacement instead of waiting until the teacher is gone. Again, since it (the Department of Education) is said to have a pool of unemployed teachers on its data base, it should ensure that all subjects are provided for. This is because secondary or high school principals complained that since there is specialisation, it is often hard if not impossible to find a replacement for scarce subjects like Mathematics and Sciences. Teachers need to be retrained to meet the needs of modern day society where technology is improving rapidly. Also, the department has a responsibility to attract and recruit student teachers to enrol the scarce subjects.

The Department of Education also needs to revisit its substitution policy for ill teachers. I feel it is improper to expect an “on and off” sick teacher to continue teaching when their lives are deteriorating. Presently, these teachers should be absent for thirty consecutive days in order for the school to qualify for a substitute. This puts school principals in a dilemma as they cannot instruct these teachers to take a 30 days’ leave, the teachers can sue them for that, they are not medical experts. This should be reduced to at least two weeks. Again, more needs to be done to create greater awareness around the Educator Assistance Program which aims to assist teachers or educators with different personal problems. It even offers them counselling and rehabilitation if they require it. My perception is that if teachers are more conscious of the program and take advantage of it, it would reduce teacher attrition as the study has shown that some leave the profession due to stress resulting from financial constraints.

5.4.2 Rationalisation and Redeployment

This policy is welcomed by principals since they understand that if one school has an excess of teachers, those teachers need to be moved to a school where there is a shortage. This has proven to be quite disruptive though in schools and very frustrating especially for school principals as school heads since teachers are moved anytime during the course of the year. The advantage is that saves the Department of Education a lot of money in salaries since it does not have to hire new teachers where there are shortages and pay teachers who are in excess doing nothing in their schools.

However, it needs to make certain that this movement of teachers is done at the beginning of the year but schools need to be notified before the end of the previous year so as to allow them a chance to accommodate these teachers in their planning. Those schools which are losing staff members due to R&R will also plan and prepare to work without these teachers. This notification will also allow teachers directly affected to plan ahead and prepare to move. I believe this will reduce the amount of stress caused by this movement and hence prevent attrition in those who might want to leave the profession out of anger and frustration. Again, I am convinced that this in turn might impact on the way they adapt in the new schools.

5.4.3 Recruitment and development of scarce subject teachers

The government also needs to devise mechanisms to attract new teachers into the profession and keeping them in it, also known as retention. The country cannot afford not to have scarcity of Mathematics and Science teachers. This causes stress for school principals. I feel if this problem is not treated with the urgency it deserves, our country will be faced with an even greater teacher shortage crisis than it already is. That would mean more problems for school principals as heads.

5.5 Further research possibilities

For future research I would propose that a larger sample be used so that the findings can be generalised and to afford more school principals a platform to share their experiences. I also suggest that a research be conducted to establish means and programs that can assist school principals to cope better during teacher attrition.

5.6 Limitations

The main limitation to this study is that it is small scale and expresses the experiences of only four school principals. This prevents the findings from being generalised.

5.7 Reflections

When I enrolled for this course I did not have funds, this meant late registration for me. By the time I attended my first lecture, I had already missed the first two lectures. I was intimidated, felt out of place as if I was lost. At some point I even wondered if taking the course was not a huge mistake. Thanks to the dedicated and supportive lecturers I managed to catch up. The proposal writing was quite intimidating but the lecturers and my supervisor would constantly remind me that it is doable. It turned out there was so much to do, the ethical clearance application; letters requesting permission to conduct the study and the interviews and the notice of intention to submit, it was all mind boggling. But again, the support of my supervisor and her faith in me kept me going.

This experience has managed to elevate me to greater heights both personally and academically. Reading so much literature not only on my study alone but throughout the entire course has taught me to perceive things in a different lens. I have grown as a student, a teacher, a parent and even as a citizen of this country. My writing has improved a lot. Those interviews with my participants were a real “eye opener” for me as I did not realise what was going on in the lives of school principals as school leaders until then. Listening to them relating their experiences of teacher attrition granted me great satisfaction as I noticed that in a way those interviews were therapeutic for them. They were afforded an opportunity and a platform to share their pain, frustration and despair they experience through teacher attrition. Looking back, I have learnt a lot about the impact of teacher attrition in our schools especially to the school principals as heads.

5.8 Conclusion

My study managed to achieve its aims and objectives. These were to explore and document the experiences of school principals regarding teacher attrition; to identify factors which influence teacher attrition; to examine the challenges experienced by principals during attrition and to find out how they cope with these challenges. The study used the qualitative approach and semi- structured interviews which helped me to gather the data I had anticipated from the sample that was chosen using purposeful sampling. In Chapter Four, the findings were presented and emerging themes were discussed. A summary of the findings, the conclusions as well as recommendations were addressed in this chapter. These, I believe will not only help the Department of Education in improving teaching and learning in schools and learner performance in schools but to also ease the burden and frustration on the school principals.

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Appendix A

33 Blackberry Place

Mulberry Park

Queensburgh

4093

22 June 2011

Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Nompumelelo P. Meyiwa, a student presently enrolled for a Masters Degree in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to do a mini dissertation as part of my studies. My research will focus on *Teacher attrition: Experiences of four school principals in the Umlazi district*. I will be conducting interviews in order to establish how they experience teacher attrition, their feelings and how they manage it.

This research will provide insights of how school principals are affected by teacher attrition. You are hereby requested to participate in this research project. I also seek your permission to interview you and tape record our discussion. This will help me to analyse data later on. The information gathered will be used with confidentiality for this study only and your anonymity will be ensured. Participation is voluntary and you could withdraw at any point should you wish to do so. There are neither foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at 083 350 8864 or at meyiwanp@gmail.com. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Irene Muzvidziwa at 0769668600 or (033) 2606095 or at muzvidziwaI@ukzn.ac.za.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

N.P. Meyiwa

(Student no. 210551385)

Appendix B

Declaration of consent

I.....(Full names of participant) .hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter fully and I do / do not consent to participate in the study by N.P.Meyiwa entitled **Teacher attrition: Experiences of four school principals in the Umlazi district**. I am also fully aware that I have a right to withdraw from the study at any point should I wish to do so.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix C: Interview questions (After each question I will probe for more data)

1. Have you ever experienced teachers leaving the school because of retirement, resignation, transfer, redeployment, medical boarding or death?
2. What challenges did this pose to you as a principal?
3. What impact did it have on the learner performance and the school as a whole?
4. How did you manage these challenges?
5. What are your views on Rationalisation and Redeployment (R&R)?
6. Do you think you are getting enough support from the department of education?
7. Would you say the experiences of primary school principals are similar to those of secondary school principals?



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref :2/4/8/131

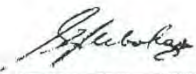
Ms Nompumelelo Priscilla Meyiwa
33 Blackberry Place
Mulberry Park
Queensburgh
4093

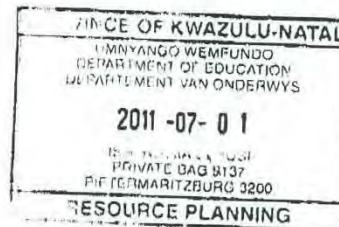
Dear Ms Meyiwa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Teacher Attrition: Experiences of Four School Principals in the Umlazi District**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of Investigation is limited to the period from 01 June 2011 to 01 June 2012.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the Schools and Institutions in the Umlazi District.


Dr SZ Mbokazi
Acting Head of Department: Education



...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONTACT: Private Bag 2014, Edmore Industrial Area, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa
 CONTACT: Office 033 341 8610 (toll-free), Metropolitan Building, Edmore Industrial Area, 3200
 TEL: 033 341 8610 | Fax: 033 341 8612 | Email: edu@kzndoe.gov.za
 Website: www.kzndoe.gov.za

8 August 2011

Ms NP Meyiwa (210551385)
School of EducationAL Studies
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Meyiwa

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0713/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Teacher attrition: Experiences of four school principals in the Umlazi district

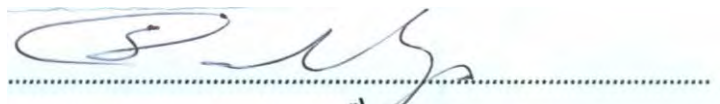
In response to your application dated 5 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Professor Steven Collings
(Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL
SCIENC

r)
ES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Dr I Muzvidziwa
cc: Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research office, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus

Literature Review on Teacher Retention and Attrition

August 2009*

This Literature Review on Teacher Retention and Attrition is comprised of three distinct parts:

- I. A summary, in narrative form, of the purpose, methods and key findings of the review.
- II. A detailed references list of 159 citations from the scholarly literature on the subject of Teacher Retention and Attrition.
- III. Excerpts from several scholarly papers (in three appendices) that provide deeper insight into the rationale for some of the findings and are illustrative of the issues relevant to the subject.

Narrative Summary

The review focuses on teacher retention and attrition, with a special lens given to mathematics teachers whenever possible. The review was performed on scholarly, credible studies whose data and analyses were contemporary in their substance and rigorous in their approach. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 2003 report, *—No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children,*” concerns about K–12 teacher shortages, teacher quality, and the cost of retaining high-quality instructors in the nation's schools have led policymakers to focus attention on teacher attrition and to identify it as one of the most serious problems occurring in today's teaching profession ([NCTAF 2003](#)). To determine the state of research into teacher retention and attrition in the years since the *—No Dream Denied*” report, the results of this review reveal that—although the literature on teacher effectiveness has a strong tradition of research efforts to identify the elements of effective instruction in mathematics—the literature on teacher retention and attrition is written more generally. In those studies that contrast the retention and attrition rates for teachers based on their area of specialty or expertise, mathematics and science teachers are compared to teachers of other subject matters. In the end, the review reveals many interesting and relevant findings that surround the overall issue of

teacher retention and attrition. However, the extensive search of the literature also reveals that large-scale, longitudinal studies that employ coordinated and consistent data collection methodologies, performed in rigorous, experimental fashion still remain to be done before problems of teacher retention and attrition specifically related to the areas of math and science can be identified conclusively.

In addition to the review itself, the review's extensive references listing should add much to facilitate further study into the issues that influence teacher retention and attrition, especially when it comes to the challenges of recruiting and retaining mathematically qualified individuals into teaching and motivating them to maintain long-term careers as mathematics teachers. The reviewers have also assembled three appendices that serve as representative samples of important studies from the body of research examined to prepare the review. While the appendices' studies in no way represent all of the studies reviewed, they embody many of the key features of the larger research pool and are presented with the review and references to orient the reader as to the academic rigor in and broad spectrum covered by the selected studies.

Research Standards and the Current Study Methodology

Several groups, from large federal research funding agencies and private foundations as well (Laitsch, D. & Earley, P. 2005), have attempted to provide an accessible system for communicating the results of evaluation studies to the field in a way that would make the information easier to understand and therefore increase the probability that the research would be used. The federal government has supported a national clearinghouse to set the standard in educational research and provide the field with incontrovertible evidence of "What Works." As a result, most recent, large reviews of the research in education have attempted to provide information about the quality of the research design in evaluating the usefulness of the findings for policy decision-making. The studies are screened for inclusion in the reviews based on a set of criteria related to aspects of academic rigor such as peer-review, relevance, validity (internal and external), reliability, sampling, comparisons, etc. Each large review study has a slightly different set of rules for inclusion or exclusion, but the attempt is to support rigorous conclusions in order to inform the field. It is hoped that the careful search of the recent literature conducted

for the review has uncovered a solid base of newly rigorous approaches to the improvement of teacher retention.

The scope of the review concentrates on existing reviews of the empirical literature in the area of teacher turnover, retention, and attrition published in the last five years. Since the most recent review identified was published in 2008 and contained no studies published since 2006, a search was made of the more recent, peer-reviewed literature for individual studies in teacher retention that might supplement the review publications. As a result, the following major reviews of the teacher attrition and retention literature were identified for this study:

- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(3), 367-409.
Borman and Dowling (2008) published the most recent review of teacher retention research, as well as the most restrictive. Borman and Dowling searched the world-wide web, other narrative reviews and reference databases from 1980 through 2005 for peer-reviewed studies in the areas of teacher attrition and retention and identified only 90 unique research efforts that included any report of empirical data. These studies were then screened as eligible for further consideration if the data would allow an estimation of effect size as part of a meta-analysis. In the end, only 34 studies met the requirements. Because of its comprehensive treatment of the topics relevant to this review, the principal findings of the Borman and Dowling study are extracted and included in *Appendix 1*.
- Guarino, C. M., & Theobald, N. D. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(2), 173-208.
Guarino and Theobald (2006) limited their search to scholarly studies published between 1990 and 2004 that were conducted on teacher labor markets in the United States and excluded simple program descriptions as well as “publications that offered only opinions, theory or principles without offering new or original evidence to support conclusions.” Selections were made based on four general criteria: a) relevance, b) scholarship, c) empiricism, and d) quality. Out of 4,919 unduplicated studies, only 46 could be included in their review.

- Johnson, S. M., Berg, J. H., & Donaldson, M. L. (2005). *Who stays in teaching and why: A review of the literature on teacher retention*. Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Education, Project on the Next Generation of Teachers.
Johnson et. al. (2005) used more inclusive selection criteria and allowed qualitative empirical data, as well as quantitative, and they included “older studies” along with the current studies. The research was discussed within six general topic areas and the authors presented 63 specific research efforts in their “annotated bibliography.”
- Guarino, C. M., Santibanez, L., Daley, G. A., & Brewer, D. (2004). *A review of the research literature on teacher recruitment and retention* (TR-164-EDU). Santa Monica, CA: RAND
Guarino et. al. (2004) did an earlier scholarly review including studies from 1980 through 2003. In this case they found 4,773 unduplicated studies that were further screened, resulting in the 96 studies that were included in the 2004 review.
- Ingersoll, R., & Kralik, J. M. (2004). *The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) narrowed their review to the empirical research on the effectiveness of teacher induction and mentoring programs. While the literature search located some 150 empirical studies, in the end only 10 studies could be included in the review because all studies had to satisfy three criteria: “The studies had to involve quantitative research, ...the studies had to evaluate the effects of induction in terms of well-defined, verifiable outcomes for the teachers who were mentored, and ...the studies had to compare those individuals who were mentored with those who were not in order to provide unambiguous conclusions about the value added (or not) of the induction programs.”

In addition to the literature above, the National Science Board’s *Science and Engineering Indicators 2008*, Chapter 1 – Elementary and Secondary Education, was found to be of interest to the reviewers. The NSB Science and Engineering Indicators 2008 report provides some of the clearest and most recent data to be found on math and science teacher demand, supply and attrition. The S&E Indicators report also provides data on the impacts of professional development, compensation, working conditions and school resources on math and science teachers. Since many of the report’s findings are relevant to general topics under review,

Chapter 1 of the report is included as *Appendix 2*. (Note: Discussions of Math and Science Teachers begin on page 24 of the appendix and continue to the end of the chapter on page 45.)

Teacher Supply and Demand

Several of the researchers who have conducted large-scale reviews of the literature on teacher retention and turnover note that one of the best ways to organize the findings is to place them within a labor market context and reflect on the findings as they relate to the supply and demand for teachers. Although databases exist that can readily provide data about availability, it is more difficult to determine the connection between teacher availability and teacher effectiveness and quality. Therefore, most of the studies used herein concentrate on supply-related factors as represented by Guarino et al. (2006) when they observed that: —The basic principle driving the supply of teachers is the following: Individuals will become or remain teachers if teaching represents the most attractive activity to pursue among all activities available to them. By attractive, we mean desirable in terms of ease of entry and overall compensation (salary, benefits, working conditions, and personal satisfaction).”

Teacher Turnover

Ingersoll (2001) defines turnover as —the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs.” Luekens et al. (2004) further distinguishes between three groups: *Stayers*, *Leavers*, and *Movers*. *Stayers* remain in their schools from year to year, *Movers* transfer or migrate to other schools, and *Leavers* make the decision to turn to other careers instead of teaching. In either of the latter two cases, the school must deal with recruiting and training replacements, adding to the costs of teacher turnover. Highlights of studies on teacher turnover reveal that:

- Overall, teacher turnover in American schools is increasing. In 2004-2005, the last year for which data are available, 270,050, or 8.4 percent of public school teachers left the teaching profession, and 260,400, or 8.1 percent moved to a different school (Marvel et al., 2007). These turnover rates are higher than in previous years — the percentage of teachers moving and leaving in the late 1980s was about 12% (Luekens et al., 2004) and

was almost equally divided between those who transfer or migrate to another school and those who leave teaching. By comparison, the average turnover rate for all other U.S. employees was about 11% in the 1990s (Ingersoll, 2001).

- Ingersoll indicated that only a small percentage (17%) of those teachers who turnover do so because they are planning to retire, although there is some evidence that teachers may be more likely to retire early (Harris & Adams, 2007).
- A study by Henke, Cataldi, and Nevill on Occupation Characteristics and Changes in Labor Force Status and Occupation Category: Comparing K–12 Teachers and College Graduates in Other Occupation Categories (NCES 2007-170. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Forthcoming) focused on the attrition of a segment of new teachers (recent college graduates who taught any of grades K–12 immediately following receipt of a bachelor's degree) and compared their occupational stability with individuals in other occupations. The results of this study suggest that movement among different occupations is common and that teaching is actually one of the more stable occupations in terms of attrition. Among recent college graduates working in April 1994, 34% were working in the same occupational category in 2003, and 54% had made a change in occupation. In contrast, 61% of those working as K–12 teachers in 1994 were still doing so in 2003, while only 21% had left teaching for nonteaching jobs.
- According to the NSB Science & Engineering Indicators 2008 report, teachers were more likely to remain in the same occupation than most other professionals, including those with comparable education such as legal professionals and legal support personnel, engineers, scientists, laboratory and research assistants, and computer and technical workers. Although recent college graduates do not represent the teaching workforce as a whole, in this study they indicate the job stability of teachers relative to that of other professionals.
- Ingersoll (2003) found that many schools with teaching openings have experienced difficulties with recruitment. They reported that 54% of secondary schools had job openings for math teachers and about four fifths of these indicated they had at least some difficulty filling these math openings.

- Between academic years 2003 and 2004, about 6%–7% of mathematics and science teachers in public schools left teaching, compared with 8% of all teachers. Regardless, public secondary schools continued to experience various degrees of difficulty in hiring mathematics and science teachers in recent years (Marvel & Rowland, 2007).

Factors Associated with Teacher Turnover

Each of the aforementioned reviews organized the research studies in terms of the various factors that were shown to be associated with teacher attrition and retention. There was considerable overlap in the categorizations, but the following summarizes the data that emerge with general consensus among researchers.

1. The characteristics of individuals who remain in teaching

Many studies have examined the demographic and situational characteristics of individual teachers. The information may be most helpful in directing special efforts to design attractive environmental conditions for these groups. It is unrealistic to assume that teacher selection processes will avoid those most likely to leave, and in fact, there may be other reasons to recruit from these populations that will prevail from a policy perspective (e.g. diversity, quality, etc.).

Gender

Many studies have found that women were more likely to leave teaching than men (Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby et al. 1999; Gritz & Theobald, 1996; Kirby, Girssmer, & Hudson, 1991; Murnane, Singer, & Willet, 1989; Allred & Smith, 1984) In his 2002 study, Stinebrickner observed that approximately 67 percent of existing female teachers leave the work force altogether, with the presence of a newborn being the single most important determinant of exits for females.

Race and ethnicity

White teachers are more likely to stay in teaching than minorities (Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby et al. 1999; Murnane & Olsen, 1989; Dworkin, 1980; Shin, 1995; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). However, a recent study by Kearney (2008) revealed that in the case of one urban school district that had developed special strategies for recruiting and retaining minority

teachers, the trend was reversed and the retention rate for African American teachers was slightly higher.

Age and experience

Attrition assumes a U-shaped curve with young and new teachers more likely to leave within the first five years and teachers who near retirement (over 50) also more likely to leave. (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; Kirby et al., 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Adams, 1996; Singer & Willet, 1988; Murnane, 1984; Dworkin, 1980). Harris and Adams (2007) suggest that one reason for teachers' early retirement may be that the ratio of pension to salary in teaching is quite high. According to the meta-analysis by Borman and Dowling (2008) teachers who are 51 years of age or older are nearly 2.5 times more likely to quit teaching than teachers who are 50 or younger.

Children and child-bearing

Older studies have found that women cite pregnancy and child-rearing as reasons for leaving teaching (Marso & Pigge, 1997; Stinebrickner, 1998, 2002; Kirby, Grissmer, & Hudson, 1991; Murnane, Singer, & Willet, 1989; Allred & Smith, 1984).

Ability and achievement

A few studies indicate that teachers of high ability are more likely to leave teaching. High ability was measured in various ways: ACT scores (Podgursky et al., 2004), degrees from highly selective institutions (Podgursky et al. 2004, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002), passing certification exams on the first attempt (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002), college entrance exams in the top quartile (Henke et al. 2000), and advanced degrees at entry to teaching (Kirby et al., 1999; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997).

Teaching specialty area, specifically mathematics and science

Citations with information specific to mathematics and science teaching reveal differences in research findings related to retention and attrition: Science and math teachers were found more likely to leave than were elementary teachers, in several studies (Henke et al. 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby et al., 1999; Arnold, Choy, & Bobbitt, 1993; Grissmer & Kirby, 1992; Murnane & Olsen, 1989; Dworkin, 1980; Shin, 1995; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). In Borman and Dowling's meta-analysis (2008) they combined the effects from six studies to determine that math and science undergraduates had odds of attrition that were twice as high as

the odds for other undergraduate degrees. Research identified in the NSB Science and Engineering 2008 report indicated that attrition from teaching was typically lower than from other professions and attrition rates of mathematics and science teachers were no greater than the overall rate.

Psychological factors

Several studies revealed that teachers were more likely to leave if they experienced frustration or a sense of failure, saw their teaching occupation as a temporary goal, or were measurably less effective teachers according to the school's accountability system (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Marso & Pigge, 1997; Boyd et al. 2008).

2. Characteristics of districts and school communities

School location, sector, size, students

Certain characteristics of schools were reliable predictors of increased attrition: high-poverty, urban, low-achieving, high-minority student populations, and if a school was charter or in the private sector (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Landford et al., 2002; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; Shen, 1997; Carroll, Reichardt, & Guarino, 2000; Whitener et al., 1997). According to Guarino et al. (2006) the findings could be explained with labor market theory since working conditions would have made the low-paying or more challenging school environments less attractive. A more recent study provides a more nuanced analysis based on teacher beliefs (Robinson, 2007). According to Robinson, teachers who attributed the problems of poverty to social structure and not individuals were more likely to persist in high-poverty schools.

Studies reported in Science and Engineering Indicators 2008 suggest that teachers in schools with low concentrations of minority and low-income students tended to have more education, better preparation and qualifications, and more experience than teachers in schools with high concentrations of such students. Furthermore, mathematics and science teachers in low-minority and low-poverty schools were more likely than their colleagues in high-minority and high-poverty schools to have master's or higher degrees, to hold full certification, and to be more experienced (i.e., have 3 or more years of teaching experience).

School resources, facilities, equipment and supplies

In an article about a survey of teacher working conditions (Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004) the researchers reported that teachers who planned to leave high-risk schools cited non-retirement reasons such as salary, lack of school leadership, class size, lack of supplies and materials, or bad school facilities. In two large urban districts, 40% of teachers who graded their facilities as below average indicated that they had considered changing schools because of poor conditions (Schneider, 2003). In a later study the effect of dissatisfaction with facilities was found to be larger than the effect of dissatisfaction with pay (Buckley, Schneider, & Yi, 2004). One study found that increased spending on instructional needs was associated with lower odds of attrition (Imazeki, 2005).

3. Policies to promote recruitment and retention

Compensation policies

A large number of studies have examined the relationship between pay and retention and have found a consistent association between larger teacher salaries and lower rates of attrition (Podgursky et al., 2004; Hanushek et al., 2004; Kelly, 2004; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Lankford et al., 2002; Kirby et al., 1999; Gritz and Theobald, 1996; Brewer, 1996; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Weiss, 1999; Ingersoll and Alsalam, 1997; Hall, Pearson, & Carroll, 1992; Murnane et al., 1991; Murnane, Singer, & Willet, 1989; Rickman & Parker, 1990; Murnane & Olsen, 1989; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Jacobson, 1988; Seyfarth & Bost, 1986). In Borman and Dowling's meta-analysis they included 14 studies looking at teacher salaries as a predictor of turnover and found the strongest effects for teachers later in their careers. However, attempts to connect compensation to teacher quality have been equivocal, with two studies indicating positive effects (Figlio, 2002; Loeb & Page, 2000) and others showing no association (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997; Ballou and Podgursky, 1995). When other teacher priorities are taken into consideration in a multivariate study, there is some indication that pay is not the primary reason for the choices teachers make. Consistent with psychological theories that separate motivational factors from "hygiene" or contextual factors (Herzberg, 1983), non-financial rewards are more likely to lead to higher satisfaction, but problems with low pay may become a source of irritation and dissatisfaction. When asked, teachers offer poor working conditions related to safety, facilities, supplies, class size and opportunities for professional development as

primary reasons for leaving or moving while pay is secondary (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson, 1990). Since districts that pay better also have better working conditions, it may be that the factors have been confounded in the interpretation of earlier studies. In a newer survey study, (Parrachione, Rosser & Peterson, 2008) several factors influenced retention: teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction. Low pay did not have any effect.

Research on alternative teacher education programs

The research on alternative certification and recruitment programs and their effects on retention is in its infancy and the few existing studies suffer from the challenges created by the self-selection of program participants. As Guarino et al. (2006) explain: “If participants in alternative programs are in some way different from those in traditional programs, and if these differences have effects on recruitment and retention that are independent of teacher program effects, then it is difficult to tease out true program outcomes.” Given this caveat, six studies were examined covering four programs (Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program, Pathways to Teaching Careers, Teacher Fellows Program, and Provisional Teacher Program) and two larger studies compared teachers from both alternative and traditional programs (Liu, Johnson & Peske, 2004; Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Davis, Higdon, Resta & Latiolais, 2001; Natriello and Zumwalt, 1993; Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Kirby, Darling-Hammond, & Hudson, 1989). Only two of the studies offered evidence that retention rates for program participants were higher than the national norm and only one of these two studies had a large sample to examine.

4. Administrative and organizational policies

Administrative support

Several studies have indicated that teachers who leave express dissatisfaction with the level of support and the effectiveness of the leadership of the school (Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Wiss, 1999). Schools with higher levels of administrative support had lower attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Kirby, 1999; Shen, 1997; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Hounshell & Griffin, 1989; Seyfarth & Bost, 1986; Berry, Noblit, & Hare, 1985). In a recent study of New York City teachers, both new and veteran, teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the administration of the school was by far the strongest predictor of a decision to leave, move or stay (Boyd et al. 2009).

Collaboration and teacher networks

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) in their analysis of the data from 3,000 beginning teachers found that the type of induction support with the strongest relationship to retention was —having a mentor in the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject, having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being part of an external network of teachers.

Curriculum standards and accountability

Guarino (2006) identify only one study that discussed the effects of the implementation of an accountability system. Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor & Diaz (2004) found that teachers were leaving at a higher rate from those schools that were identified as low-performing in the new system. Johnson, Berg & Donaldson (2005) in a lengthy discussion of the effects of these policies, although admitting the research was limited, presented the results from a survey study (Tye & O'Brien, 2002) where teachers —who had already left teaching ranked the pressures of increased accountability (high-stakes testing, test preparation, and standards) as their number one reason for leaving.” However, Johnson et al. (2005) offer that teachers react differently to this pressure to conform to standards and in some cases view it as a positive development.

Induction and mentoring policies

Although induction and mentoring programs have become widely accepted as a helpful strategy for supporting new teachers and many studies have been done, Ingersoll & Kralik in their 2004 review applied new standards of rigorous criteria to provide a —reliable assessment” of effectiveness. Induction programs may include a number of different activities, and mentoring approaches now dominate (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Ingersoll & Kralik found 10 studies they considered worthy for review and most found a positive connection between induction or mentoring and retention. (Brown & Wamback, 1987; Gold & Pepin, 1987; Cheng & Brown, 1992; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Spuhler & Zetler, 1995; Eberhard et al. 2000; Henke et al. 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Fuller, 2003). However, the size of the effect ranged widely and in some cases varied depending on the components included in the model. These studies, although empirical, must be interpreted with caution since teachers self-select into the programs. Differences in outcomes may be due to this selection bias as well as the differences between program models.

Conclusion

The body of research related to the issue of teacher turnover is large and comprehensive, although those studies that may be considered conclusive in their findings form a much smaller group. Even for those reviewers who have set the criteria for inclusion high, the studies that are presented still have limitations that make interpretation of the results difficult and recommendations for policy conditional. As Borman and Dowling conclude, four significant limitations to the current data sources on teacher attrition and retention exist:

- Few data sources have provided long-term longitudinal data on teachers;
- The literature on teacher attrition and retention has developed through a relatively uncoordinated array of data collection and analytical efforts that has focused on many elements of the problem and has, as such, not produced a very compelling body of cumulative evidence;
- The information on national attrition rates is sporadic and has been subject to some inconsistencies over time because of differences in data collection and sampling methods; and
- Despite some recognition of the problem of teacher attrition, there is little evidence in the way of rigorous experimental studies of programs or policies to guide potential initiatives to help ameliorate it.

Thus, opportunities for more focused study abound. Modern researchers have begun to concentrate on those factors that may be manipulated in order to enhance the attractiveness of the working conditions and encourage teachers to stay in teaching, however, some elements are quite resistant to change and challenging environments exist. In those situations, more recent studies suggest that those who stay in teaching are well-matched to the challenges of these environments and may find satisfaction in addressing them.

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