

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**CHALLENGES FACING HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for the Degree of**

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**SUPERVISOR: Mr S D BAYENI**

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## **Declaration**

This research has been carried out as part fulfilment of the requirement for the award of a degree of Master of Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I declare that this thesis is my own work and I have completed through different sources which are duly acknowledged here.

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## **Supervisor's statement**

This dissertation is submitted with / **without** my approval.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 22 / 12 / 2011

Mr S D Bayeni

## **Dedication**

**TO MY LATE PARENTS**

**MANDLA WALTER MTHETHWA KANGQAZU KAVIMBA (IMBOZA)**

**AND**

**BATHOKOZILE CLAUTILDA MAGCWABAZA MTHETHWA**

**FOR PROVIDING ALL OF US YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN A HOME**

**WHERE LEARNING WAS PART OF GROWING UP**

**“THIS ONE IS FOR YOU**

**MAY YOUR SOULS REST IN PEACE”**

## **Acknowledgements**

ALL GLORY TO GOD for selecting a wonderful pair of parents for me.

Thanks to my family for putting up with my absence during the course of this study.

Fifty Thousand thanks to Tata Group Africa for ensuring that my focus was on studies and not on financial worries.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Mr S D Bayeni for his guidance, intelligence and patience throughout this long and winding journey.

Thanks to all my academic siblings, especially the 2008 MED Support Group

Thanks to Professor T Buthelezi, for her guidance and support.

A million thanks to all the participants to the study for allowing me to invade their lives. Ngithi inkosi inibusise.

## **Writing Conventions**

In this dissertation, the researcher applies the American Psychological Association (APA) 5<sup>th</sup> style for referencing. The following examples serve to explain to the reader:

1. For direct quotes from a source the citation is presented as:  
(Mbhele,2007, p.34) if a single page is cited.  
(Mbhele,2007. pp.34 – 35) if more than a single page is cited.
2. When the author's argument forms part of the discussion it is presented as:  
Mbhele (2007) is of the view that ...

### **List of Acronyms**

<b>AS</b>	ASSESSMENT STANDARDS
<b>CAMM</b>	CURRICULUM AREA MIDDLE MANAGER
<b>CAT</b>	COMPUTER APPLIATIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES
<b>DOE</b>	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
<b>EEA</b>	EMPLOYMENT OF EDUCATORS ACT
<b>HOD</b>	HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
<b>INSET</b>	IN SERVICE TRAINING
<b>KLAC</b>	KEY LEARNING AREA COORDINATOR
<b>KZN</b>	KWAZULU NATAL
<b>LO</b>	LEARNING OUTCOMES
<b>MIET</b>	MEDIA IN EDUCATION TRUST
<b>NCS</b>	NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENTS
<b>NCSL</b>	NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
<b>NGO</b>	NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
<b>OFSTED</b>	OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
<b>OVC</b>	ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN
<b>PAM</b>	PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION MEASURES
<b>PPN</b>	POST PROVISION NORM
<b>SASA</b>	SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT
<b>SMT</b>	SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM
<b>TA</b>	TEACHER ASSISTANT
<b>TTA</b>	TEACHER TRAINING AGENCY
<b>UK</b>	UNITED KINGDOM
<b>UKZN</b>	UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL
<b>UTE</b>	UNPROTECTED TEMPORARY EDUCATOR

## **Abstract**

The study was conducted in four rural schools with low learner populated area in a ward within the KZN Pinetown District. This ward covers a vast sparsely population area, leading to low learner populations in schools. The common factor among the selected schools was that the learner enrolments were above one hundred and fifty but below two hundred. This qualified them to have only one HOD appointed in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (Act 76 of 1998). Five HODs participated in the study; three from three primary schools and two from one secondary school.

The first research question of the study investigated challenges facing heads of department (HODs) regarding conflict between the teaching and the management roles. The second research question sought to investigate strategies applied by the participants in maintaining the balance between management and teaching. Theoretical frameworks underpinning this qualitative study were the Situational Leadership model and bargaining and negotiation theory. Case study methodology was employed in the study. The data collection method was the audio taped semi-structured interviews on the tension between the role of teaching and that of curriculum management and the strategies employed in addressing them. In order to ensure confirmability of data documents produced and used within the departments were also sought as part of the interviews.

The findings indicated HODs struggled for time to perform management duties. It was also found that teaching time is negatively affected as a result of performing some management duties during teaching periods. It also became evident that supervision and mentoring of educators was compromised. Working in isolation and dealing with many learners' social problems were also identified as challenges. The study also found that delegations, assistance from principals, and participating in workshops organised by the Department of Education were some of the strategies used by the HODs in trying to strike a balance between the roles.



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with a discussion on the background to the study. The subsequent section focuses on the problem of the study. In addition, I then present the purpose of the study and the research questions. Included in the chapter is a discussion on the rationale and the significance of the study. I conclude the chapter by discussing key concepts in the study and a presentation of the layout of the study.

#### **1.2 Background to the study**

The period of political transition in South Africa came with a variety of challenges in most spheres of life. Education was no exception as it is a field that is characterised by a lot of changes. Evidence from literature (Bennett, 1995; 2003; Fidler, 1997) shows that organisations use structures in executing their tasks. Fidler (1997) argues that job descriptions in organisations are guides that are used in allocating specific duties and responsibilities to post-holders. The structure of schools, as organisations was also changed after the introduction of democracy in South Africa. Schools now have school management teams (SMTs) consisting of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments HODs. Each member of the SMT has specific responsibilities to perform as it is given in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document. According to the PAM document, HODs have the following tasks to perform: guiding and supporting educators, controlling the work of educators and learners, developing policy and co-ordinating assessment of all subjects within the department. However, in schools without HODs, all the management duties remain in the hands of the principals. The consequence of that is that the curriculum management duties are not effectively done because principals have a number of responsibilities.

Changes mentioned above are entrenched in the new curriculum. This new curriculum introduced new responsibilities for both the educators and the learners. Post level one educators are at the chalk face; their main responsibility in the classroom is to facilitate

the transfer of content knowledge by teaching learners various subjects as it is prescribed in the curriculum. Apart from the facilitation of the content knowledge, educators are, according to the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) (Department of Education, 2005, p. 3), also expected to, *inter alia*, “interpret and design learning programmes and materials”. The introduction of the NCS was a move away from the emphasis on teaching learners so that they reproduce what was learned, as it was the case during the apartheid years, to a situation where both learners and educators are involved in knowledge construction. The roles of the curriculum developer and that of being the mediator of learning are highlighted in the Department of Education (2005), as two out of the seven expected roles of educators. In performing these two roles the educators are expected to facilitate learning programmes in accordance to the philosophy espoused in the NCS. Post level one educators perform their duties under the guidance and monitoring of HODs and principals.

Ideally, guiding and monitoring post level one educators on subject-related matters is the responsibility of a person with sufficient relevant subject knowledge. Therefore subject leaders usually referred to as HODs should possess sufficient learning area or phase expertise to effectively support, guide, evaluate and monitor the post-level one educators’ work. However, this is not the case in most rural schools with low learner populations as these schools have either one or no HODs. The absence of HODs compromises effective teaching and learning. The consequence is that educators could not teach and evaluate themselves without the guidance and expertise of the HODs.

The absence of subject based supervision from the HODs also compromises the monitoring of learners’ work. For example, if the appointed HOD in a combined primary school with foundation, intermediate and senior phases does not have any teaching experience in one of the three phases, the monitoring of educators’ work in that particular phase is compromised due to the lack of the HOD’s experience. Similarly, in a secondary school with only one HOD appointed for example in languages, but expected to evaluate and support the educators in subjects like Accounting , Mathematics and Physical Sciences, quality and development of those educators will be compromised.



The PAM document outlines the school based educators' responsibilities and time that is to be spent on performing those duties. The educators' responsibilities and time allocation vary depending on the post levels. An HOD in a primary school is expected to spend between 85% and 90% of their time on teaching and the between 10% and 15% of the time on management responsibilities. The Employment of Educators' Act (EEA) (No 76 of 1998) stipulates that HODs in secondary schools should spend up to 85% of the time on teaching and 15% on management duties.

### **1.3 The problem of study**

Personal experience in a rural school with low learner populations confirms that HODs face a problem of spending up to 100% of their time on teaching. This situation is a result of the allocation of educator posts to the schools which is determined by the number of learners enrolled in the schools. The number of learners enrolled in a school is used in determining the number of educators that should be appointed to that particular school. The appointed educators include post level one educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals. In rural schools learners are fewer compared to densely populated schools in the cities. Therefore many rural schools qualify to have few educators with one HOD only, while classes start from Grade R to Grade Seven. This means this HOD would be expected to supervise all the educators teaching different subjects from Grade R to Grade Seven.

Rural schools have low learner enrolments due to sparse population as opposed to schools in townships and informal settlements in the urban areas. Skinner (2003) found that there was a 50% decrease in learners attending KwaZulu-Natal rural schools. This finding provides evidence that learner populations in rural schools in KZN are generally low. A policy guiding the allocation of both physical and human resources to schools is in place and is applied across all public schools. However, having a common policy for all schools with disparities in terms of contexts, background and capacity poses a challenge. In addition, the allocation of educators' posts according to the number of enrolled learners in schools ignores the schools' needs such as the teaching different grades in primary schools and learning area specialisation in secondary schools. For

example, a senior primary school with 60 learners will be allocated two educators, including the principal, regardless of the number classes that have to be taught, i.e. Grades Five, Six and Seven, in such a school. This leads to a situation where learners from different grades are packed together in one class and taught by the same teacher at the same time but with the same subject contents.

The allocation of management posts to schools presents even more challenges. According to the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (1998), a primary or secondary school with 150 learners qualifies for one HOD post. The improvement of the quality of teaching and assessment is the responsibility of the HOD. An HOD should therefore, be properly qualified to teach in the particular phase in a primary school and the specific subject in the case of secondary schools. The HODs in low learner population schools are also normally requested to take the responsibilities that are reserved for deputy principals as these schools do not qualify for deputy principals posts. The EEA (1998) stipulates that the deputy principal's post is allocated to a school with more than 455 enrolled learners. The roles and responsibilities of HODs are therefore increased as they also have to stand in for principals under certain circumstances.

#### **1.4 Purpose of study**

The study focuses on the challenges that face the HODs in rural schools with low learner populations. The aim was to have a better understanding of the management of the tension between the roles of teaching and curriculum management. The study sought to investigate how the roles of teaching and curriculum management were managed in the selected schools.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

The study answers the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges facing HODs in rural schools with low learner populations?
2. What strategies do these HODs use to maintain a balance between the role of teaching and that of curriculum management in these schools?

## **1.6 Rationale of the study**

My research interest was born of the frustration and confusion I experienced during the two years I served as the only HOD in a rural school with a low learner population. I was expected to perform some management duties while I had a teaching duty load that made me spend close to 100% of the time on teaching. This caused some role confusion and conflict in my roles. Although I had been teaching for twelve years in a school without HODs, I struggled as I was the only Mathematics and Physical Science teacher. Being the only teacher for the mentioned subjects, I had to spend most of the time teaching and little or no time on monitoring post level one educators' work. In addition, in my informal discussions with colleagues who are HODs and principals in rural schools with low learner populations confirmed that the problem relating to a lack of time for management responsibilities is common and poses a serious challenge.

Evidence from studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and South Africa (Blandford & Gibson, 2000; Coleman, 2003; White, 2000; Wise & Bush, 1999), concludes that school-based HODs are grappling with inadequate or lack of time to perform management duties. Although the lack of time is noted as a major challenge from studies discussed above, it was also important to investigate other challenges that could result in schools that are located in rural and disadvantaged areas. In addition, the study was aimed at finding out strategies that are employed by the HODs in rural schools in an attempt to strike a balance between the role of teaching and that of curriculum management.

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

The findings of the study could be useful to other HODs working in similar contexts where they are expected to supervise post level-one educators while having teaching duty loads that are equivalent to those of post level one educators. Strategies used by participants in playing the roles of teaching and curriculum management could provide relevant strategies of managing the roles of teaching and curriculum management in such a way that school effectiveness is enhanced. Apart from that, the findings from the study could also inform school principals about both management and delegation of duties to

the HODs in such a way that the above-mentioned dual roles are properly managed. Findings from the study could also help the departmental officials at ward, circuit and district levels in designing relevant training programmes for school based HODs.

This study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. Henning (2004) is of the view that interpretive researchers begin with individuals [participants] and set out to understand their [participants] interpretations of the world around them.

## **1.8 Key concepts**

This section is a discussion of key concepts in the study. These are Heads of department, rural schools and school with low learner population.

### **1.8.1 Head of Department (HOD)**

This concept refers to school-based educators employed in terms of the EEA (Act 76 of 1998), occupying post level two with curriculum management as their responsibility in addition to teaching. One of the key aims of the job, according to the Department of Education and Culture (2002, p. 70), is “to ensure that the learning area or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner.”

### **1.8.2 Rural schools**

In this study, this concept refers to schools situated in an area that is under the jurisdiction of Amakhosi (Chiefs) and Headmen (Izinduna). The area is characterised by a lack of development in the sense that there is neither electricity nor running water and proper sanitation facilities.

### **1.8.3 School with low learner population**

In this study, a school with low learner population refers to a school where the number of enrolled learners is more than one hundred and fifty but less than two hundred and fifty. This is informed by the Employment of Educators’ Act (EEA) (1998) which stipulates that South African schools (primary and secondary) must enrol one hundred and fifty learners in order to qualify for one head of department (HOD).

## **1.9 Layout of the study**

Chapter One provided the background, statement of purpose and the rationale of the study. I also outlined the research questions that are addressed in the study. I concluded the chapter by discussing the significance of the study, key concepts and layout of the research report.

Chapter Two is a review of both international and local literature on the topic of middle management, with a special focus on HODs as part of middle management in schools. The duties and responsibilities of HODs as outlined in different countries are discussed. Included in this chapter, is a discussion of findings from studies on HODs conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and South Africa. The chapter also includes a discussion of the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

Chapter Three is focused on research paradigm, design and methodology. In this chapter I discuss the research paradigm under which the study was conducted. The discussion on the research design includes the chosen research methodology together with the data collection method and the instrument. Ethical considerations prior the data generating process are also discussed. Apart from that, I also report on the suitability and the selection of participants to the study and give a detailed account of the process of conducting interviews. In conclusion, the chapter discusses in detail the research field and the data collection process in the field. There is also a section that deals with procedures I followed to ensure trustworthiness of the study and the internal validity of the data collection instrument.

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis and presentation of data collected through the interviews from the selected participants. The discussion includes both interpretations and emerging themes from the data.

Chapter Five discusses the summary, recommendations and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter discussed the background, purpose, the rationale for the study; the research questions' and significance of the study. This chapter reviews local and international literature on management with special attention to middle management. This chapter begins with a discussion of concepts such as management, educational management, middle management as conceptualised by different scholars. In addition, interpretations of different roles played by middle managers in other countries are discussed. This is followed by the discussion of duties and responsibilities of the school-based HODs in different countries. The last section looks at research specifically conducted on middle management in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and South Africa. I conclude this chapter by discussing two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

#### **2.2 Management**

Management of schools depends on the school management team (SMT), which includes the principal, deputy principal and the heads of departments (HODs). Management is the cornerstone of all that happens at school. Management is conceptualised as “designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working effectively with people” Fullan (1991, pp. 157 - 158 ) whereas West-Burnham (1992) views management as concerned with execution, planning, organising and deploying.

The common thread that runs through the two conceptualisations above is that management is about planning and execution of such plans, which implies being in charge. Therefore people who are in management in organisations should, to a greater extent, be in charge of the sections or departments they are managing. The management activities include supervising, directing, running, command and guidance among other things.

“Managers have to plan what is to be done within their area of responsibility, organising people and resources so that the plans can be carried out, commanding or giving instructions so that everyone involved is clear about their work, co-ordinating the work, including monitoring and evaluating process and outcomes, and controlling what is done”(Bennett, 1995, p. 137).

### **2.3 Educational Management**

“Managers in schools are those teachers who have some responsibility for planning, organising, directing and controlling the work of other teachers” (Everard & Morris, 1990, p. 5).

“Management is a specific type of work in education which comprises those regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place”(Van der Westhuizen, 1991, p. 55). The Department of Education and Culture (2002, p. 40) refers to the concept of educational management as the management of schools as they are institutions where teaching and learning takes place. The above conceptualisations capture the central purpose of educational management which is to support, improve and enhance teaching and learning as the core business of schools. It is in context of being managers responsible for teaching and learning that the challenges facing HODs were investigated.

Van der Westhuizen (1991, p.55) outlines the key management tasks as:

1. *Planning*- this includes policy development, setting organisational aims and objectives, decision-making and problem solving.
2. *Organising*- creating organisation structure, delegating some of the duties and co-ordinating activities.
3. *Leading, guiding*- involves people, building interpersonal relations, motivation and communication.
4. *Controlling* - controlling instructions, observing and measuring, evaluating and taking corrective action.

## **2.4 Managers in schools**

“All teachers are managers in that they are responsible for the management of learners and resources, and the management of the learning process, but managers are the teachers that have responsibility for the work of other adults” (Earley, 1998, p.149). Based on the above statement (*ibid*, p.149) then management can be defined “as getting things done by working with and through other people and it is likely to consist of a combination of activities such as planning, organising, resourcing, controlling, evaluating and leading.”

Blandford (1997) concurs with the above conceptualisation and she includes the achievement of objectives through people, as the key element of management since managers are responsible for the work of others. Authors (Fidler, 1997; Hales, 1997) concur that the critical management task is to influence or modify the behaviour of others. This influence, as Hales (1997) argues, presupposes some leverage or power for attempting to ensure that those being managed respond as intended. Therefore managers should be in possession of one form of power.

## **2.5 Middle management in schools**

Schools are organisations that have managers operating at either junior or middle or senior level. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges facing HODs in rural schools with low learner populations and since HODs form part of middle management in schools it is then imperative to discuss middle management in detail.

Middle management in schools is a field intermediate between class teachers and the senior management teams. White (2000, p.79), refers to middle management as “the connection between the senior administration of the school, and the teaching staff and students.” It is due to this position in organisations that middle management plays a critical role in ensuring that there is always a link between senior management and the rest of the staff. There is a difference between Bennett’s (1995, p.18) view that middle management “assumes a downward flow of authority from the leader of the organisation, given in order to promote what the leader seeks” and Bush’s (2003) argument that middle managers shape the future and direction of their organisations.



Middle management is, due to its location within the organisation, generally characterised by tensions resulting from role strain. Blandford (1997) says that role conflict and role ambiguity are the manifestations of role strain in middle management. On the other hand, Bullock (1988) argues that the HODs are perceived as master teachers rather than middle managers and this is another source of role confusion in schools. Furthermore, Coleman (2003) suggests that the HODs experience role conflict or strain as a result of conflicting demands from senior managers, other middle managers and members of the department. Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) see the lack of clarity between different groups on what the role of a HOD involves as contributing to the HOD's and department's ineffectiveness.

In schools middle managers occupy a position between the senior staff and the class teachers. Blandford and Gibson (2000) acknowledge the diversity of practice in the management of schools but conclude that in all settings, middle managers are player managers, involved in daily tasks of teaching while being team leaders / managers. It is from this perspective that Blandford and Gibson (2000) argue that it is essential for middle managers to identify their roles in terms of tasks, responsibilities, relationships and working conditions and external influences. The Employment of Educators' Act (EEA) (1998) further stipulates that the HOD coordinates all the activities within the department and that includes capacity-building for the members of the department.

White (2000) refers to them as a link between teachers and senior administration in schools. Blandford (1997, p.3) refers to the "middle manager as a staffroom manager, managing the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities of colleagues." In the same way Wise and Bush's (1999) study considers a teacher who has a responsibility for one or two teachers as a middle manager. Blandford and Gibson (2000) also found that curriculum and subject leadership is the key performance area for middle managers in Australia, England, America and France.

Literature from the United Kingdom (UK) refers to 'heads of year', heads of departments, academic middle managers, key stage coordinators with subject responsibilities, subject leaders and curriculum coordinators as middle managers (Bennett, 1995; Blandford, 1997; Blandford & Gibson, 2000; Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales report, 2004; Wise & Bush, 1999a, 1999b). In Australia, White (2000) studied teachers with the middle management responsibilities for coordinating a subject or a group of subjects within secondary schools. In White's (2000) study, HODs and the Key Learning Area Coordinators (KLACs) were referred to as curriculum area middle managers (CAMMs). Coleman (2003, p.83) defines the curriculum middle manager as "a teacher who is largely free of whole school responsibilities but whose responsibilities extend beyond his or her classroom to include supervision and advice to a group of classroom teachers, within a specific subject area."The middle management field in schools is therefore very broad.

Contrary to the practice in the UK and Australia, in South African public schools, the HODs and deputy principals occupy middle management positions. These post-holders serve as immediate supervisors to the post-level one educators whilst they are being supervised by principals as senior managers in schools. For the purpose of this study, the concept of HOD is used in an inclusive manner that makes no distinction between the curriculum middle manager, subject leader and academic middle manager and curriculum area middle manager.

## **2.6 Job descriptions**

According to Bush (1998) organisations need structures in order to distribute and coordinate work in pursuit of organisational goals. This distribution, as Bush (1998) further argues, fulfils the need for differentiation in organisations. "Management Roles provide the formal mechanism through which people are matched with tasks and responsibilities [in order] to ensure the smooth running of the organisation" (Hall, 1997, p. 63). This section deals with the duties and responsibilities that are allocated to the HODs in South Africa and the UK.

### **2.6.1 South African Context**

South African schools allocate different management responsibilities according to Department of Education's (DOE) guidelines, but taking into consideration the individual school's needs. Although there is some flexibility with regards to the allocation of duties to educators at different post-levels in schools, the personnel administrative measures (PAM) document allocates the bulk of curriculum management duties to the HODs.

An agreement was reached in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in 1998 on the duties of school-based educators. According to the EEA (1998), HODs are required to be in charge of the subject / learning area (in secondary schools) or phase (in primary schools). The minimum duties and responsibilities of the HOD listed in the PAM document in EEA (1998) and in the Department of Education (1999), in relation to the curriculum management involves:

- Class teaching
- Taking responsibilities to ensure effective functioning of the department
- Organising relevant or related extra-curricular activities to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner.

Deducing from the responsibilities of the HODs, the PAM document also states that as curriculum managers, they take charge of a subject, learning area or phase and are also responsible for policy development. The HODs are also required to co-ordinate evaluation and assessment, homework, written assignments, and so on, of all subjects in their department.

Policy guidelines on educators' duties also include that HODs are expected to provide and co-ordinate guidance to educators on the latest approaches to the subject. Included in the list of duties in the PAM document are the compilation of syllabuses, schemes of work, homework, practical work, remedial work and the induction of the staff members.

The PAM document (1998) highlights that HODs control the work of educators and learners, moderate tests and examination papers and memoranda and also keep the records on learners' marks. This will ensure that learners' achievement is enhanced. In order to do this, the HODs need to keep and also submit reports on learner performance to the School Management Team. Lastly the PAM document also stipulates that the HOD must share the responsibility of organising and conducting extra-curricular and co-curricular activities with the other SMT members and the post level one educators.

### **2.6.2 United Kingdom (UK) Context**

In England and Wales' Departments of Education, the core purpose of subject leadership in schools mentioned in the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) document (1997, p. 2) is "to provide professional leadership and management for a subject to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils."

It is also explained in the TTA (1997) that subject leaders [HODs] should provide leadership and direction for the subject and ensure that the subject is managed and organised to meet the school and subject aims and objectives. In addition, subject leaders [HODs] have the responsibility for the subject curriculum and for establishing high standards of teaching and learning in their subject as well as playing a major role in the development of school policy. The key areas of subject leadership and management identified by the TTA (1997) include giving the strategic direction and development of the subject. Teaching and learning, leading and managing staff and the development and deployment of people and other resources are also included in the TTA (1997) as areas of subject leadership.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) document (1998, p.1) summarises the role of subject and middle management [HODs] in schools in England as "the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring good planning and promoting better teaching in order to secure and sustain high standards across the curriculum." In addition to that, the important role the HODs play in ensuring that leadership, vision and a strong sense of

purpose is developed within a school is noted. Blandford (1997) also discusses some curriculum management responsibilities such as being responsible for schemes of work, setting cover work for staff absence and the responsibility for learners' continuity and progression.

Although different countries use different terms when referring to HODs like subject leader in the UK, curriculum area middle manager (Camm) in Australia and school-based HOD and senior teachers in South Africa, but what has become clear and common among them all is the responsibilities and duties they are expected to perform. These similarities are according to Coleman (2003) focused on the HODs' role as curriculum managers. Similar findings were made by Earley (1998) where he notes that most writings on research and inspection findings on middle management confirm that the HODs' role is defined and enacted in terms of the subject or curriculum management. In furthering the above, Earley (1998) also points out those duties of HODs focus on the management of teaching and learning and include the monitoring and support that should be given to the educators.

## **2.7 Studies on departments**

In a quantitative study conducted by Harris, Jamieson, and Russ (1997) in the United Kingdom (UK), two main findings were that effective schools were characterised by having successful departments. Characteristic to effective departments includes among others:

- A collegiate management style.
- A strong vision of the subject effectively translated down to classroom level.
- Good organisation in terms of assessment, record keeping, homework, *etcetera*.
- Good resource management.
- An effective system of monitoring and evaluating.
- Structured lessons and regular feedback.
- Clear routines and practices within lessons.
- A syllabus matching the needs and abilities of pupils.
- Opportunities for autonomous pupil learning.

- A central focus on teaching and learning.

The above-mentioned features seem to be meeting most of the basic requirements in different countries' job descriptions discussed earlier.

The study by White (2000) in Australia found that HODs are regarded as the primary instructional leaders in their departments and appeared to play a significant role in the formation of culture of their departments. White (2000) classifies HODs as part-classroom teachers and part-administrators. This dual role is, according to Briggs' (2005), makes the HODs to play a liaison role by being the link between teachers and senior administration. This role, as White (2000) argues, requires considerable skill, but possesses only a limited formal authority.

Briggs (2005) notes the multifaceted nature of HODs' tasks within a complex and changing environments and further identifies five aspects of this role. First, as a corporate agent, the HOD contributes to the school's strategy and the implementation there of. The second role is that of an implementer and it entails the performance of curriculum and departmental activities. In addition, as an implementer the HOD is also responsible for managing resources. These are both human and physical resources in the department. Third, the HOD has to play the role of a staff manager who organises, monitors and evaluates the work of the staff. The fourth role is about forming links between senior management and the departmental members and Briggs (2005) calls it the liaison role. The last role identified by Briggs (2005) is leadership which focuses on the HOD as being an instigator of action. It is in this way that Briggs (2005) found that the HOD acts as a role model and also creates and encourages innovations within the department.

Whilst most of the reviewed literature (Bennett, 1995; Wise & Bush, 1999; Blandford & Gibson, 2000; Briggs, 2005) agrees that HODs perform their roles as managers and teachers. Blandford and Gibson (2000) for instance, argue that for HODs to understand the nature of their job, teaching responsibilities are to be considered within the management role. To extend the debate, Blandford and Gibson (2000) note the challenge

of role compatibility over and above the time management challenge. According to Wise and Bush (1999), the dual role of teacher and manager imposes a heavy burden and may not be sustainable without additional resources.

## **2.8 Monitoring**

Monitoring is defined by the Encarta Online Dictionary (2009, n.p), as “watching over somebody or something, especially in order to ensure that good order or proper conduct is maintained.”According to Bennett (1995), organisations need to monitor the performance of employees at different levels. Immediate supervisors are therefore responsible for the monitoring of subordinates. Monitoring ensures that employees work towards the achievement of the organisation’s goals. Van der Westhuizen (1991) argues that organisations should set up systems for monitoring performance. When the systems are in place both supervisors and subordinates have a common understanding about the expected performance.

“To monitor the progress of students taught by a colleague was thought to be an embarrassing activity and was frequently avoided”(Bullock, 1988, p. 66). The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (2003) also mentions the similar challenge as it reports that direct observation is seen by [HODs] as a challenge to professional norms of equality and privacy.

Literature (National College for School Leadership, 2003; Wise & Bush, 1999c) suggest that although the HODs are aware that they should be monitoring the teachers’ work especially by observing them in the classroom they are unwilling to do so directly. In addition, there is also reluctance to report formally on the classroom performance of their colleagues. Bennett (1995) found that the HODs preferred to monitor by checking exercise books, lesson plans and assessments rather than observing the teaching by colleagues. These monitoring aspects of the department’s work, such as exercise books and teachers’ planning and records, according to the OFSTED (1998) only provide indirect evidence of the quality of teaching which may not be conforming to the agreed criteria.

One of the key findings from the NCSL (2003) report is that the HODs should acknowledge and resolve the tension between monitoring and professionalism. The report further suggests informal and other strategies that could be used to monitor colleagues' work. An example of these strategies discussed in the NCSL (2003) report, is the introduction of classroom observations in the form of collaborative learning activity for the whole department rather than as management activity for the HOD. The classroom observations discussed above are in line with the democratic nature of support and development that should be offered to the educator as stipulated in the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) introduced in terms of Collective Agreement 8 of 2003 in South African schools. The educator selects one's development support group (DSG) and works in collaboration with the group from formulating the personal growth plan towards class observation.

## **2.9 Time for management duties**

“Middle managers still give top priority to teaching, which takes up a high proportion of the school day, but acknowledge the need to monitor colleagues' work to ensure the implementation of school policy. Despite the acceptance of the new managerial role, it remains difficult for the [HODs] to fulfil the new expectations because of the shortage of time” (Wise & Bush, 1999, p.183).

The PAM document emphasises that the HODs should manage their departments in addition to their teaching role. Resolution 8 of 1998 stipulates that the HODs should spend up to eighty five percent of the time at school on teaching and the remaining fifteen percent on management duties. The application of the above agreement in practice depends on both the school type and the arrangements specific to the school. The HOD should therefore perform a juggling act including the monitoring of educators' and learners' work while at the same time teaching.

However, the findings from studies [on HODs] (Office for Standards in Education, 1998; White, 2000b; Wise & Bush, 1999b) provide more evidence of a lack of time to perform all that is required of them. This is also highlighted in the OFSTED (1998) document



which acknowledges that the non-teaching time for the HODs is barely enough for them to carry out administrative functions. This is caused by the fact that their time-table requires them to teach most of the day as Wise and Bush (1999) found. The OFSTED (1998) further reports that non-teaching time is eroded by coping with staff shortages or mentoring student teachers, whilst Wise and Bush (1999) note that the HODs were not given enough time to adjust to their new management roles as they shift away from only teaching.

According to the OFSTED (1998), the HODs need enough time to undertake a genuinely managerial role, i.e. to monitor the work they manage. In addition, timetables have to be restructured to accommodate the HODs to supervise subordinates. In addition, the OFSTED (1998) report further warns that the responsibility for monitoring will remain a pipe dream unless sufficient time is made available and appropriately structured for it to be undertaken effectively. Wise and Bush (1999) found that delegation provides a partial solution to the problem of overload arising from the increase in managerial responsibilities but it does not necessarily solve the problem since schools do not allocate the required time to perform these duties successfully.

### **2.10 Subject knowledge**

The NCSL (2003) states that the HODs' authority does not emanate from their position but their competence as teachers and their subject knowledge are important requisites to performing their duties. It is from this perspective that in South Africa applicants to the HODs' posts should have three years teaching experience.

It was also found that some primary schools HODs did not have subject knowledge to help educators in their departments. This makes it difficult for them to monitor colleagues' work. Although the NCSL (2003) reports that primary teachers acknowledge that HODs are not subject experts but they emphasise teaching excellence. On the other hand, the NCSL (2003) report that secondary school teachers' view is that subject expertise is a measure of competence for leadership through acting as a role model. Coleman (2003) argues that the HODs are most likely to influence teaching and learning

in the classroom. In line with this assertion, the OFSTED (1998) and the NCSL (2003) reports contend that the HODs must have subject expertise and be an expert teacher.

### **2.11 Perceptions and expectations**

The NCSL (2003) report suggests that senior staff expects the HODs to become more involved in the whole school context, however the HODs are reluctant to do so, as they regard themselves as departmental advocates playing a role of being colleagues' spokespersons. In this way, the HODs feel that they are departmental representatives, providing support instead of forcing educators to perform their responsibilities. White (2000) found that the HODs are seen as leading professionals by their department members. As leading professionals, the HODs do not only guide educators on the expectations of their job, but also monitor the work of departmental colleagues. White (2000) also found that the ability to develop department members into a team committed to a common purpose is considered as an important HOD's duty. As primary instructional leaders in their departments, according to White (2000), the HODs are responsible for the development and sustenance of culture of their departments.

### **2.12 Training for HODs**

According to the Encarta online Dictionary (2009), training refers to the "acquiring of skill or the process of teaching or learning a skill or job." Training as such enables the individual to perform one's duties confidently. White (2000) notes the lack of training to acquire the leadership and managerial knowledge and skills required for the role as an impediment to the subject leaders the [HODs] performing their duties. Blandford (1997) highlights the importance of training and development for HODs is important as it empowers them about the expectation of their job.

The need for training is further emphasised by Blandford and Gibson (2000) when they mention the need for the HODs to have enough knowledge about their roles, teams and managers regardless of their setting. Blandford and Gibson (2000) also suggest that managers should continuously evaluate their roles within an institution. The authors also acknowledge that the development of the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities required to manage other people is a time-consuming process. Therefore

education managers should be aware of the need to reflect on, and learn, from their practice.

### **2.13 Theoretical frameworks**

The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study are the Situational leadership model and the Bargaining and negotiation theory. “We all use theories to guide our actions. Some are implicit and others are explicit; in fact, many of our personal implicit theories are formal ones that have been internalised” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 4).

#### **2.13.1 The Situational Leadership model**

This model was developed by Hersey and Blanchard hence it is referred to as the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model. In this model, the uniqueness of the individual’s [follower’s] characteristics plays a key role in determining to the leader the style that is appropriate to a particular follower. Individuals in organisations possess unique characteristics. These characteristics play a major role in the individuals’ performance of the roles within the organisations. The performance of allocated duties (tasks) in organisations such as schools depends on the skills that individuals have and the relationships between the leaders and followers. It is therefore crucial that the leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of their followers so as to apply appropriate leadership styles. The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) suggests that follower’s maturity level is key to the leader’s adjustment of the leadership style. The follower’s maturity is explained, in the model, in terms of readiness for task performance. Readiness for task performance comes as a result of the individual’s competence and commitment. The follower’s competence and commitment are ranked in a continuum from low to high. The combination of these ranked levels of competence and commitment are used to determine the appropriate leadership style for the follower at different maturity levels. The four leadership styles in relation to the follower’s competence and commitment are represented in figure.1 on page 22.

<b>COMPETENCE</b>		<b>LEADERSHIP STYLE</b>	
	<b>HIGH</b>	PARTICIPATING/ SUPPORTING	DELEGATING
	<b>LOW</b>	TELLING / DIRECTING	SELLING / COACHING
		<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
		<b>COMMITMENT</b>	

*Figure 1. Leadership styles in the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model*

*Adapted from Figure 5-7 in Hersey & Blanchard (1993, p. 128)*

Delegating, participating, selling and telling are the four leadership styles identified by the model according to the follower's maturity levels. These styles are: the delegating style which is suitable for highly committed and competent followers. These followers are able and willing to perform the task at hand. The leader therefore allows the individual or group of followers to be in charge, particularly if the decisions on the delegated duty have to be made. On the other hand participating or supporting style is applied when a follower is competent but lacks the commitment to perform. The emphasis is on the sharing of ideas and participative decision making. When the participating style is applied it implies that the relationship between the leader and the follower is high.

Selling or coaching style is, according to the situational leadership model, appropriate for followers who are not competent to perform the task but willing and motivated to do the task. Telling or directing leadership style is applied to followers with low competence and low commitment to the tasks. When applying this style, the leader plays a highly directive role while focussing on the tasks that must be performed by the follower.

The analysis of the different leadership styles employed by the HODs in this study was guided by the situational leadership model. This model is relevant to the study under investigation as the participants utilised this model in their day-to-day activities within

their departments. Different educators deserve different treatment owing to their different levels of maturity. Therefore leaders need to be sensitive to the uniqueness of their followers' characteristics. The HODs as leaders are expected to offer individualised support to educators in their departments. In addition to the Situational leadership model, decisions and actions taken by the HODs in performing their roles include teaching and curriculum management, and these were underpinned by the bargaining and negotiation theory.

### **2.13.2 Bargaining and Negotiation.**

Jönsson (2002) differentiates between bargaining and negotiations by mentioning that bargaining involves the exchange of verbal and non-verbal communication, whereas negotiation is based only on verbal communication. This assertion as Jönsson (2002) continues makes negotiations a sub-class of bargaining. Negotiation is defined as “an engagement between two or more people or parties with the aim of solving a dispute, reaching an understanding or resolve a point of difference” (Morley, 2006, p. 403). According to Jönsson (2002, p. 213) “in negotiations the parties are left to themselves to combine their conflicting points of view into a single decision.” Negotiation is thus as identifiable mode of joint decision-making. Negotiation as a dispute resolution strategy occurs for example, between the employer organisations represented by the directors and the workers represented by the unions. Morley (2006) highlights that negotiations handle cognitive problems through working individually and collectively.

In the context of this study bargaining and negotiation theory was used to understand choices that were made by the HODs in their practice. In this study the HODs in schools were constantly engaged in negotiating. Participants in the study were critical negotiators as a result of their position within the schools. The HODs engaged in negotiations at individual and collective levels. At individual level, the HODs negotiate with the self about decisions and actions to be taken in terms of providing support to the educators. The HODs made decisions as individuals in relation to the leadership styles they had to employ in different situations in the school. In order to make such decisions the HODs should be knowledgeable about their contexts. This would include consideration of the

strengths and shortcomings of the followers. The needs of the educators [followers] also play an important part in informing the HODs. The other individual decisions related, *inter alia*, to the choice between the times to be spent on teaching against the time to be used to perform management duties.

Collectively, the HODs were also involved in negotiating with colleagues in their respective schools. These negotiations included soliciting ideas and participation of the educators and principals in planning activities in schools and executing those plans. Negotiation is thus closely related to the game theory which is concerned with making interdependent decisions (Game Theory, n.d.). The bargaining and negotiation theory is employed to understand the processes that the HODs engage in when leading, to the decisions that they make in their practice.

#### **2.14 Conclusion**

In this chapter management related literature with middle management as the main focus has been reviewed. The conceptualisations of management, middle management and middle managers as understood in different countries across the globe have been discussed. Duties assigned to the HODs and findings from studies of departments in different countries were also highlighted in detail. The Situational leadership model and bargaining and negotiation as theoretical frameworks underpinning the study were discussed in concluding the chapter. In Chapter Three I discuss research paradigm, design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed national and international literature on middle management in schools. This chapter describes data collection process focusing mainly on the steps that were followed to collect data from the participants. The chapter begins with a discussion about the research paradigm, design and methodology employed in the study. The subsequent sections of the chapter deal with the research field, sampling, access to research sites and ethical considerations. This includes obtaining permission to conduct the study from relevant gatekeepers. In addition, the data collection is discussed in detail. Included in the chapter is a discussion on steps followed to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of content analysis and limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

“A paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view – it addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between knower and known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies” (Niewenhuis, 2007a, pp. 47 - 48). Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend inquirers’ actions are guided by paradigms. Niewenhuis (2007) considers the paradigm as the lens or guiding principles used in the interpretation of reality. This study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. Henning (2004) is of the view that interpretive researchers begin with individuals [participants] and set out to understand their [participants] interpretations of the world around them. The researcher is, according to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), considered as the main instrument in studies within the interpretive paradigm. The hallmark of interpretive research is the joint creation of knowledge between the researcher and the researched. In addition, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 33) list the following as some of the key features of interpretive research:

- the individual

- small-scale research
- non-statistical
- ‘subjectivity’
- Interpreting the specific
- Practical interest

The choice of locating this study under interpretive paradigm was informed by the above features. Figure 2 summarises the interpretive researchers’ views of reality and their methods of researching. Included in the figure is the type of knowledge produced and how it is produced following the naturalistic research methods.

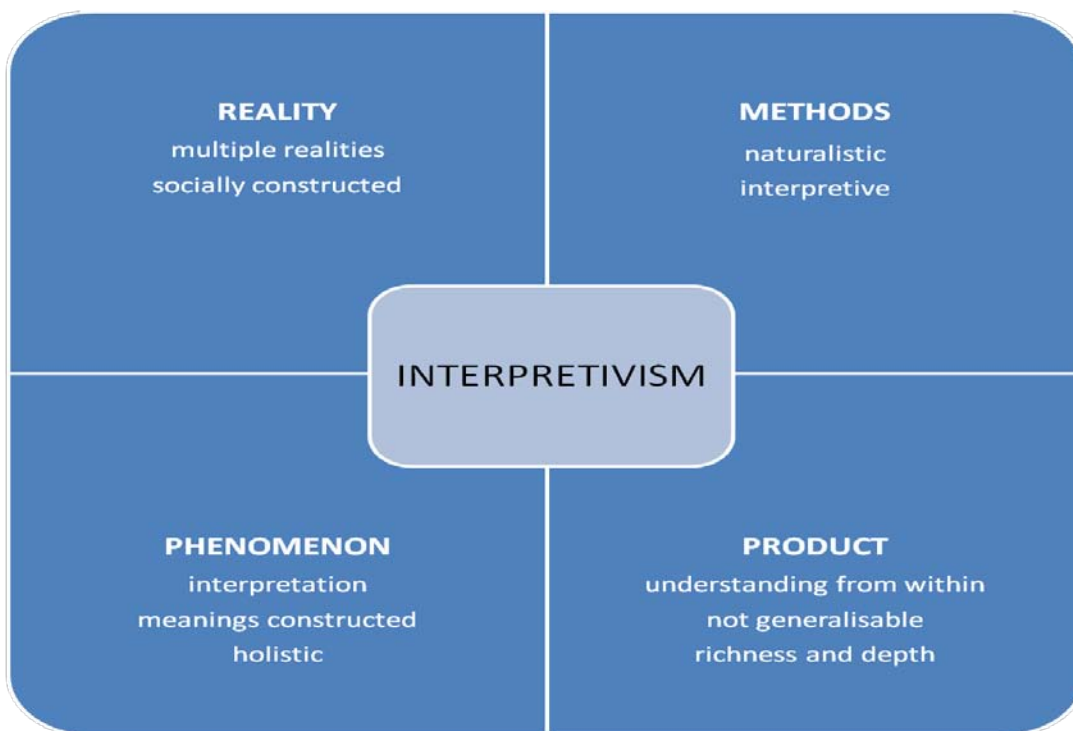


Figure 2. Representation of Interpretivism. Adapted from (Niewenhuis, 2007a, p.61)

### 3.3 Research design and methodology

Babbie and Mouton (2004, p. 74) define a research design or strategy as “a plan that specifies what the researcher wants to find out, and the best way of going about it.” The research design does for the researcher what a house building plan does for the builder. It gives clear guidelines and direction to be followed in conducting the study. Scholars conceptualise research methodology differently. Payne and Payne (2004) note that some scholars believe that methodology means the same as data collection method, whereas



Henning, *et al.* (2004) argue that methodology is a coherent group of methods that complement one another and while attempting to answer the research questions in depth within the single phenomenon that is studied. In this study, Henning, *et al.* (2004) conceptualisation of research methodology is followed.

Qualitative research is a 'term that denotes the type of inquiry in which *qualities*, the *characteristics* or the *properties* of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation'(Henning, *et al.*, 2004, p. 5). The other feature of a qualitative inquiry mentioned by Henning, *et al.* (2004) is that participants give their views and demonstrate their actions in a more open ended way. This study was qualitative and the case study methodology was employed. Authors (Henning, *et al.*, 2004; Yin, 2003) concur that the case study is conducted so that an intensive descriptions and analysis of a single unit is done. This view is similar to Stake's (2005) assertion that case studies are conducted when there is a need to gain a better understanding of a particular case. "Case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena"(Yin, 2003, p. 1). This research had 'five HODs in rural schools with low learner populations' as a case that was studied.

### **3.4 The research field**

The study was conducted in four schools within the Pinetown District within the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. The district has four circuits which are made up of sixteen wards. The wards are further divided into clusters of schools. These clusters are different as some are in urban areas while others are in rural areas. Most schools in urban clusters have high learner enrolment figures while clusters in rural areas have low learner populations. Schools with low learner populations experience problems of staff shortages which lead to the appointment of fewer HODs. Many of these schools do not qualify to have deputy principals which made HODs to perform more management duties than other HODs in schools with deputy principals. Performing the management duties such as monitoring the work of the educators is a challenge to the HODs in low learner population schools as they have duty loads equivalent to those of post level one educator.

### 3.5 Sampling

In discussing key characteristics of qualitative research Ivankova, Cresswell, and Plano-Clark (2007, p. 257), say “the size of the sample is small and is purposively selected from those individuals with most experience with the studied phenomenon.” Purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of four schools with the abovementioned problems. According to Henning, et al. (2004), the purposive selection technique looks towards participants that fit the criteria of focus. The criterion for the selection of schools and subsequently participants was informed by two factors. These were the location of the schools in a rural area and the schools’ low-learner population status. In the context of the study, as discussed in Chapter One, a school with a number of enrolled learners above one hundred and fifty but less than two hundred and fifty has a low-learner population status. Schools with enrolled learners below one hundred and fifty were therefore excluded from the sample as they do not qualify for HOD posts whereas the target group of participants were HODs.

The similarities among all the participating schools, besides low learner population, were that they belonged to the same cluster. Hence they are serviced and supported by the same Department of Education officials. In addition, these schools served a community characterised by high poverty and unemployment levels. Hence all selected schools were classified as Quintile One schools as a result of the high poverty level of the community. In addition to that these schools were also categorised as ‘no fee schools. A high proportion of learners in these schools were either orphans or vulnerable children. Using the criterion for sampling discussed above, three selected combined primary schools qualified for one HOD while two HODs were appointed in the selected secondary school as summarised in the following table:

<b>School Type</b>	<b>No of schools</b>	<b>Participating HODs</b>
Primary Schools	3	3
Secondary Schools	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

*Table 1. Selected schools and participating HODs.*

The participants were therefore five; with three female and two male HODs. All the participants were involved in managing departments in schools with low learner population and were in a better position to provide firsthand experience of the challenges they face in their schools. In addition, the participants could also provide strategies they employ to cope with the demands of their duties. For anonymity purposes names of the selected schools are not declared, instead they are labelled School-A, School-B, School-C and School-D. Similarly, the five participants to the study from the four schools are given codes as follows:

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Code</b>
HOD from School A	HOD A
HOD from School B	HOD B
HOD from School C	HOD C 1
HOD from School C	HOD C 2
HOD from School D	HOD D

*Table 2. Codes for participants*

All four schools obtained water from water tanks. The water tanks are filled up with rain water. There was no electricity supply from the national grid to the schools. The sources of electric power used in these schools were from petrol generators. There was no telephone facility in the area; therefore the only direct method of communicating with the departmental officials at the ward, circuit and district level was through cellular phones. School-D was disadvantaged because it was situated in an area that had no cellular network coverage at the time of data collection. This made communication between the school and the Department of Education (DOE) impossible during school hours.

### **3.6 Access**

The study was carried out following the generally accepted ethical considerations. I applied for permission to conduct the study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Faculty Research Office. After obtaining the ethical clearance number HSS/0763/08M (Appendix A) from the university, permission from the Department of

Education ward and district officials, and school principals was sought. Subsequent to getting permission from principals, I then set appointments with the schools' HODs during which we made arrangements for suitable dates and times to conduct interviews.

Informed participant consent was firstly sought verbally by explaining to the participants [HODs] that participation was voluntary and that anonymity would be maintained throughout the study and that the data collected would be used for the study only. I also verbally asked for permission to record the interviews. I then provided a written declaration (Appendix E) where participants were asked to sign before the interviews. Three participants had no problems with the use of the recorder whereas the other two had some reservations about the use of the tape recorder but after explaining to them they agreed to being recorded.

### **3.7 Data collection**

The main data collection method in the study was the semi-structured interviews held with the HODs as the only participants from the selected schools. The interviews were audio-taped. The tape recorder was used mainly to enable me to capture all the participants' responses verbatim while I was busy making notes. The choice of the semi-structured interview was informed by Payne and Payne (2004) suggestion that it is used to obtain an in-depth account of the experiences from the participants and Niewenhuis' (2007b) assertion that interviews assist the researcher see the world through the participant's eyes. Semi-structured interviews were also suited to the study as they allow the interviewer an opportunity to use probing questions during the data collection process.

The main data gathering tool that was used in the study was the interview schedule consisting of seven guiding questions. These questions were asked in such a way that the participants were encouraged to tell more about the challenges they face. The sequence of questions were therefore not the same to all participants as interview proceedings were guided by probing questions informed by participants' responses. The instrument had two forms that were filled-in by the participants before the questions in the interview schedule

were asked. The participant's personal details form (see Appendix G) sought some biological data from the HODs. This information included age, qualifications, phase or subjects taught, experience both as an educator and as an HOD and training undertaken for the job. The second form was the school details form (Appendix H), and it was aimed at collecting the schools' details such as the type of the school, number of enrolled learners, phases and grades, classrooms and offices, number of HODs, and the number of post level one educators.

The first question in the interview schedule was aimed at establishing the HODs' management responsibilities besides teaching. The second question was aimed at finding out from HODs the times during which they performed management duties. The third question asked the participants the amount of time they spent on teaching duties. The fourth question wanted to find out the effects of the tension between teaching and curriculum management on HODs' performance. Question five was looking for strategies employed by the HODs in order to maintain the balance between teaching and carrying out management duties. Questions six focussed on establishing the help needed and received by the participants in carrying out their management duties.

Questions seven, which was the last question in the interview schedule was aimed at identifying documents produced by subject or phase departments within schools. The intention was to establish evidence of curriculum management and also to serve the purpose of triangulation of data collection method. Information from the HODs' responses to the first six questions in the interview schedule was to be compared with written records from these documents. The targeted documents included instruction books, teaching monitoring tools, departmental minute books, coaching registers, workshop-related documents, moderation records and all the curriculum management-related documents.

### **3.8 Interviews**

This section presents detailed descriptions of the four schools in the sample. Included in the section is a discussion of the interview process as they were conducted in the selected

schools. A tape recorder was used to capture the participant's verbal responses. Apart from the tape recorder, notes about the participants' non verbal communication such as nodding and shaking of the head were taken. The aim of taking notes was to ensure that there would be a back-up in case of a tape-recorder breakdown whilst the tape recorder was used to ensure that all the participants' verbal responses were captured. The notes also included the general impressions about the school's buildings and grounds taken after the interview. The questions were aimed at finding out the challenges faced by the HOD in the school with low learner populations regarding the dual roles of teaching and management. In addition, strategies used in managing the challenges were sought from the participants.

### **3.8.1 Interview in School-A**

The school is located about seventy kilometres from the city. It is situated at the hilltop about nine hundred metres from the bus stop. A very bad dirt road leads to the school. The school was fenced but there was no access control gate and I observed goats roaming the premises during my visit. The school consisted of four blocks of buildings and a container. The four blocks of buildings formed a rectangular shape that is open like a fork on the side of the entrance. There was a building consisting of six classrooms on the right hand side of the entrance. A two-classroom block was situated opposite the six classroom block. The first classroom in the longer block was used as a staff-room. Office partition boards separated the principal's side of the staff-room from the HOD's and the post-level one educators' side. Behind the staffroom was a container that served as the school's kitchen. A block consisting of three classrooms was at the far end of the school. Behind that three-classroom block was another building consisting of three classrooms. Eight classrooms were used for teaching and learning while three were disused and in a bad state of disrepair. There were sufficient toilets for educators and learners in the school. The school had no playing fields.

As a combined primary, the school catered for learners from Grade R to Grade Seven. One hundred and eighty three learners were enrolled at the school. According to the school's post provisioning norm (PPN), the number of all posts allocated to the school

including the principal and the HOD but excluding the teacher assistant (TA) and Grade R educator, was six. The consequence of the PPN of six whereas there were seven grades was that one grade had no class educator. In order to address the shortage noted above, the school had a multi-grade class consisting of grades two and three. The total number of teaching staff, including the TA and the Grade R educator was therefore eight. The gender distribution of this staff was seven females and one male (HOD). During the interviews, the school's HOD was teaching in the senior phase and had no experience of teaching in either foundation phase or intermediate phase.

The interview with the HOD from School-A was held in the principal office. It lasted for thirty-two minutes. The interview started during the school's lunch break, but went on until the first period after lunch. There were disruptions caused by learners' noise from the class next to the principal's office. The main data collection tool was the interview schedule which contained questions about the work of the HOD with a special focus on the challenges experienced and strategies used to manage them.

### **3.8.2 Interview in School-B**

The school is located about sixty kilometres from the city near one of the highest mountains in the area. The school was named after this mountain. There were five blocks of buildings in the school. On the left hand side of the school's entrance there was a huge, unused, prefabricated building filled with unused furniture and equipment. Located opposite the prefabricated building was a two-roomed administration block consisting of the principal's office and the printing room. Toilets for learners and educators were situated behind the administration building. There were also three blocks of buildings arranged in a U shape. Four classrooms were in the block adjacent to the prefabricated building and were parallel to a three-classroom block. The furthest building block from the gate consisted of two classrooms and formed the base of the U-shaped arrangement. The total number of classrooms was nine; six of which were used for teaching and learning while three were unused.

There were no playing fields in the school except a wooden jungle gym for pre-scholars situated behind the prefabricated building. The printing room also served as a meeting venue for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Media in Education Trust (MIET) and schools, since the school was the centre for a cluster of eight schools. MIET's project focused on caring and supporting orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in the cluster of schools. Although there was no electricity in the school, signs of electrification were evident in the area as street poles were erected and some homes in the school's vicinity already had electric power from the national grid.

The school had been a junior primary with Grade R as the lowest grade, but the introduction of Grade Four in 2007 and Grade Five in 2008 made it a combined primary. According to the information from the HOD Grade Six was going to be introduced during the following year (2009). Two hundred and eight learners were enrolled in the school. The total number of educator and teacher support staff was eight which was made up of a PPN of six educators. This staff establishment consisted of four post level one educators, one HOD and the principal who were all female. The teacher assistant and the Grade R educator were excluded in the school's PPN. The only HOD in the school was teaching in the foundation phase during the data collection period.

The data collection activity was fruitful since the participant is somebody blessed with a gift of storytelling. Although there were prepared questions in the interview schedule, I ended up listening to stories about her experiences she was relating. The participant started by relating the experience as an HOD in the former school since she had been in the school for six months after being re-deployed as a result of a decrease in learners' number in the previous school.

The interview was conducted in the principal's office. There was a disruption when the participant's phone rang during the interview. The tape recorder was then stopped to allow the HOD to answer the call. Apart from that, learners from her class came to report that some learners were causing some mischief in their classroom. In addition, teachers came in asking some administration related questions from the HOD. Later the principal



came to inform the researcher and the participant that the superintendent of education (management) [SEM] was on the way to the school. So we had to move from the principal's office to the printing room where interviews continued until completion. The interview lasted for fifty five minutes.

### **3.8.3 Interviews in School-C**

School-C was located in the river valley about seventy five kilometres from the city. The nearest bus stop is about five kilometres from school and this made educators to rely on lifts to the school from the bus stop. It was the only secondary school that was included in the research and it started from Grade Eight to Grade Twelve, with each grade consisting of a single class section. The school had three blocks of buildings. The longest block consisted of five classrooms. The classroom at the far end of this block was used as a science classroom due to the absence of a fully equipped laboratory. It was also noted that there was no library at the school. Parallel to the five classrooms were two adjacent blocks of buildings. The first of the adjacent blocks was the administration block and it consisted of the principal's office and a printing room. The staffroom and a classroom formed the school's third building. The school had enough ablution facilities for both learners and educators. These toilets were situated about one hundred metres opposite the classrooms and the administration blocks.

A netball court was situated behind the staffroom block and there was a soccer field outside the school premises. According to the information I gathered from the participants the soccer field belonged to the school; however soccer teams from the community used this facility in the afternoons and during weekends. The school's fence had a number of holes, which were evidence of vandalism. In addition, classrooms and staffroom had a number of broken windows and doors were missing in three of the six classrooms.

Two hundred and thirteen learners were enrolled in the school and the total number of educators in the school was nine. According to the school's PPN, there should be seven educators. The composition of the teaching staff was supposed to be four post-level one

educators, two HODs and the principal; however there were two posts additional to the school's PPN. These additional posts were for curriculum transformation. As a result of that nine educators were employed in the school. Out of the nine teaching staff members, seven were female and two were male. The male HOD in this study was referred to as HOD-C1 and HOD-C2 was the code that was assigned to the female HOD from the school. During data collection HOD-C1 led the Sciences and Mathematics department while HOD-C2 was in charge of the Languages and Humanities departments.

### **3.8.3.1 HOD-C1**

The interview with HOD-C1 was held in the principal's office during the school's lunch break. Conducting the interview during the school's lunch break presented a challenge since learners were making a lot of noise in the school yard and it was captured by the tape recorder. This came as a result of the fact that learners were buying from the food stall next to the principal's office. In addition to the tape recorder, notes were taken by the researcher to capture key points that were discussed by the participants and also serve as a back-up for the tape-recorder breakdown. The interviews lasted for seventeen minutes.

### **3.8.3.2 HOD-C2**

Interview with HOD-C2 was held one week after HOD-C1 interview. It was also held after school in the principal's office and it lasted for twenty minutes. The notes would play a role of back-up in case of tape-recorder malfunction. There was a minor disruption towards the end of the interviews when one of the educators entered the office to tell the participant that the staff taxi to the city had arrived.

### **3.8.4 Interview in School-D**

School-D is the furthest from the city among the selected schools. It is located about eighty kilometres from the city. It is situated at the bottom of the valley and had four blocks of buildings arranged to form a horse-shoe shape. A netball field was situated between the two parallel rows of buildings. The classroom block on the left hand side was shorter than the one on the right hand side as it was made up of only two classrooms,

whereas the longer block had six classrooms and the school hall. The school's toilets were situated on the left hand side behind the block with two classrooms. At the far end of the school there was the administration block made up of the principal's office, staff-room and the school's kitchen. This arrangement of buildings made a visitor to walk through almost the whole school yard before reaching the principal's office. The school was well maintained since the classrooms were neatly painted and all buildings were fitted with burglar guards and there was no evidence of either broken windows or missing doors. There was also a vegetable garden next to the principal's office.

One hundred and sixty six learners were enrolled in the school. Although there were eight teaching and teacher support staff members, the official PPN of the school was six as it excluded both the TA and Grade R teacher. As a result of the shortage mentioned above, similar to School-A, there was a multi-grade class made up of Grades Two and Grade Three. Seven teaching staff members were female and the principal was the only male in the school. There was no direct public transport from the city to the area as it was also the case in School-C. All four post level one educators and the HOD relied on hiking for lifts from the bus stop which was about seven kilometres away from the school. The absence of direct transport to the school caused late-coming and early leaving by the educators.

The interview with HOD-D was held after school in the Grade One classroom which was managed by the participant (HOD-D) and it lasted for twenty-four minutes. The interview went on very well as there were no disruptions except that I had to continuously remind the participant not to refer to surnames of colleagues during our discussions. The interview schedule was only used as a guide as there was some flexibility in the order of questions and probes were also used for clarity in other questions.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are criterion areas that qualitative researchers ensure in their studies as opposed to strategies employed in quantitative studies to ensure reliability of their instruments and also validity of their findings. In this study I enhanced trustworthiness

through the application of member-checking as a technique to improve credibility. The second strategy applied to improve credibility was data source triangulation.

### **3.9.1 Credibility**

One of the strategies I applied with the intention of improving credibility of the study is what Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) refer to as member-checking. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member-checking could be applied both in process and at the end of the study. I employed member-checking at different stages of the study. Firstly after interviews, I made transcriptions and sent each transcript to the relevant participant to check that what I captured during interviews was reflected correctly. I allowed participants to add some issues that they felt were left out in the transcripts. This was done in order to ascertain whether the participants agreed with the recorded version of the interviews. Secondly towards the final stages of the writing of the research report I also sent the final versions of the data presentation chapter to all the participants and also gave them an opportunity to comment on the presentation and the analysis of the data.

### **3.9.2 Data source triangulation**

“Internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data”(Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 135). Tellis (1997) refers to comparing different sets of data as data source triangulation. The seventh question in the interview schedule which asked for the presence of documents produced by the participants in their departments sought to confirm participants’ responses to earlier questions. Apart from those documents, notes from the research field served as a third data source in the study.

### **3.10 Content analysis**

Data generated from the semi-structured interviews was analysed through ‘content analysis.’ According to Henning, *et al.* (2004) content analysis is about identifying themes that might emerge from the data. In line with Henning, *et.al.* (2004), Cohen, *et. al.*(2007, p. 475) argue that content analysis entails “summarising and reporting written data-the main contents of data and their messages.”

The steps I followed in analysing data described below were informed by Cohen, *et. al.*(2007, pp. 475 - 487). Immediately after conducting the interviews I started transcribing data from the audio cassettes verbatim. The time between the interviews and transcription was kept short in order to transcribe the participants' responses while they were still fresh in my mind. After reading the interview transcripts, I arranged the HODs' responses according to the order of questions in the interview schedule. I then used four differently coloured marking pens to mark and sort participants' responses into four key headings. These headings are normal HOD duties, extracurricular duties, challenges, consequences and strategies employed in addressing the challenges. I then compared different participants' responses now guided by the headings I had identified. The comparison was not limited to participants' responses to questions in the interview schedule, but it also included themes that emerged from responses to the probes. The next step entailed grouping the issues under the four identified headings into categories. Finally the groups of issues were analysed through looking for similarities and differences in their messages. As part of the interviews I also looked at documents produced or used by participants in their daily practice. This was aimed at identifying participants' records as data source triangulation.

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

The study was located in the deep rural part of a ward within Pinetown District. There were thirty two schools in the ward but only three primary schools and one secondary school were selected out of sixteen schools with low learner populations (learners who are more than one hundred and fifty but less than two hundred and fifty). A sample of five HODs was purposively selected from the selected schools and it is therefore non-representative. The case methodology is incapable of providing generalisable conclusions (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003). This implies that the findings from the study will not be generalised to HODs in all rural schools with low learner populations. Notwithstanding the abovementioned limitations, the study is extensive and powerful as it addressed specific in-depth cases of the participating schools. Data gathered from the participating

schools provides insights understandings of how specific rural schools dealt with the problem they faced.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed research design and methodology applied in this study. In addition to that, the research field and data collection was outlined in detail. I concluded the chapter by discussing how trustworthiness and internal validity were ensured. Chapter Four discusses data analysis and presentation of findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter captured the research design, paradigm, instrument and methodology used in the study. This included sampling, research field and data collection process using interviews. This chapter gives the data analysis and the presentation of the findings. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five HODs. In the process of presenting the data I describe and explain what participants had said but in some areas their voices are presented verbatim.

The study had the following research questions to answer:

1. What are the challenges facing HODs in rural schools with low learner populations?
2. What strategies do the HODs use to maintain a balance between the role of teaching and that of curriculum management in these schools?

#### **4.2 Participants' personal details and teaching staff profiles**

Table 3 on page 42 provides a summary of the details collected using the participants' personal details form (see Appendix G). This form was filled in by the participants before the interviews commenced. As discussed in the previous chapter, in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality participants were allocated codes. The five participants were coded HOD-A, HOD-B, HOD-C1, HOD-C2 and HOD-D.

*Table 3 Biological and personal details of the participants*

	<b>HOD_A</b>	<b>HOD_B</b>	<b>HOD_C1</b>	<b>HOD_C2</b>	<b>HOD D</b>
<b>GENDER</b>	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
<b>AGE</b>	40-50	50-60	40-50	30-40	40-50
<b>TEACHING EXPERIENCE</b>	13 Years	14 Years	16 Years	15 Years	17 Years
<b>EXPERIENCE AS AN HOD</b>	9 Years	5 Years	4 Years	7 Years	5 Years
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>	M + 4 SPTD & HED	M +4 JPTD & HED	M+4 SPTD, HED, FDE & BED (Honours)	M+4 B. Paed (Arts)	M + 3 JPTD
<b>PHASE / LEARNING AREA SPECIALISATION</b>	Intermediate & Senior	Foundation	Mathematics & Physical Science	IsiZulu & History	Foundation
<b>TRAINING TO THE HOD JOB AND ALL OTHER CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS ATTENDED</b>	1998 – HOD Induction 2001 – Management Workshop 2007 – Subject-related workshop	2007 – HOD Training	2005 – HOD Orientation workshop 2007- NCS (FET) workshop	2002 & 2003 HOD Training workshops	2004 – HOD Induction workshop

The above table shows that there was a fairly balanced gender representation because sixty percent of the participants are female and forty percent are male. This is in line with the current trends in South Africa supporting equitable gender representation in management positions. According to the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) Act 76 of 1998, an educator with a minimum teaching experience of three years while holding three-year teaching qualification after Grade Twelve is eligible for an HOD post. It is therefore clear from the table that all participants satisfied the two post requirements



since they all had been teaching for at least thirteen years and the least qualified participant held a three year teaching diploma. Participants also had sufficient experience as HODs as it ranged from four to nine years.

HOD-A taught in the intermediate and senior phases whereas HOD-B was teaching in the foundation phase and had never taught in any other phases. Both HOD-A and HOD-B were therefore facing a challenge of monitoring the educators' work in phases they had no experience in teaching; the foundation phase in the case of HOD-A and the intermediate phase in the case of HOD-B. As a result of that the monitoring of both the teachers' and learners' work was compromised. Unlike HOD-A and HOD-B, participants from the secondary school (HOD-C 1 and HOD-C 2) taught the subjects they specialised in during their initial teacher training. In this way the secondary school had suitably qualified HODs to the posts. HOD-D was teaching in the foundation phase but it was established during the interviews that she had some experience of teaching in the intermediate phase. She also faced a challenge of monitoring the work of the Grade 7 educator while she had no experience of teaching Grade 7.

The other important issue from the table is that all participants attended some induction workshops on their roles and responsibilities as HODs. However, data from the table suggests that there were no training workshops organised lately for the HODs since four participants (HOD-B, HOD-C1, HOD-C2 and HOD-D) last attended training workshops at least four years before data collection for this study. HOD-A attended an induction workshop immediately after appointment as an HOD nine years prior to this study. HOD-B only attended the training / induction for the position in 2007 and there was no other workshop thereafter. This shows that for three years after her appointment as an HOD she was expected to perform her duties without any formal training or experience for the job. This situation presents a challenge to the performance of the management duties.

I also asked the participants to fill in the school details form (Appendix H). The school details form sought information about the numbers of learners and educators in

participating schools as well as physical infrastructure (classrooms and offices). The human resources information for all four schools is summarised in Table 4 below:

SCHOOL	NO. OF LEARNERS	PPN	SMT	TEACHER ASSISTANT (TA)	GRADE-R EDUCATOR	ADDITIONAL POST (ABOVE PPN)	TOTAL TEACHING STAFF
<b>A</b>	183	6	2	1	1		<b>8</b>
<b>B</b>	208	6	2	2	1		<b>9</b>
<b>C</b>	213	7	3			2	<b>9</b>
<b>D</b>	166	6	2	1	1		<b>8</b>

*Table 4. Summary of human resources in participating schools*

The above table provides the numbers of learners and educators in the four schools in the study. Teacher assistants (TA) and Grade-R educators were not part of the schools' post provisioning norms (PPN) as they were not employed in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (Act 76 of 1998). It is also worth mentioning that the three primary schools (Schools-A, School-B and School-D) had qualified educators occupying the posts as provided for in their respective PPNs. Contrary to the situation in three primary schools, it was noted that School-C (the secondary school in the study) had two curriculum transformation posts which were above the school's PPN. These posts were, according to the information I gathered from HODs, for Physical Sciences and Computer Applications and Technologies (CAT). These curriculum transformation posts were filled by unqualified, unprotected temporary educators (UTEs). The fact that there were unqualified educators shows that the school was unable to recruit suitably qualified educators to these posts. I also heard from HOD-C1 during the interviews that he was the school's only Physical Sciences educator and that CAT was not taught at the school which suggested that the appointed UTEs were actually not teaching the curriculum transformation subjects. This implies that the secondary school in the sample also faced the challenge of the scarcity of Science subjects' teachers.

### **4.3 Presentation of findings**

In this section I present findings that emerged from the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. The discussion consists of challenges that faced participants and strategies employed by the participants in addressing the challenges.

#### **4.3.1 Challenges**

The first section in the interview schedule aimed at answering the first research question which was about the challenges that faced the HODs in rural schools with low learner populations. To address this research question, I asked participants four questions. The questions were about the HODs roles and responsibilities in addition to teaching, time of the day used for management duties, the amount of time spent on teaching and the consequences of tension between teaching and management duties. In responding to these questions, a number of issues were highlighted, but the main issues included performing multiple roles, compromised supervision and mentoring of educators as a result of limited time for management duties and compromised teaching.

##### **4.3.1.1 Performing multiple roles**

Participants highlighted a number of duties that they carried out in addition to their teaching but the three main responsibilities that were common are discussed below.

###### ***4.3.1.1.1 Monitoring of post level one educators' work is the main responsibility.***

All five HODs that participated in the study highlighted monitoring the work of post level one educators in their schools as their main responsibility besides teaching. The following statement confirms this view:

*My duty is to ensure that teaching takes place in the school...that needs the Composite Time-table. I also see to it that teachers' work is properly planned ...if the teacher is not ready, then we sit down and solve the problems (HOD-A).*

There was an emphasis on the huge amount of work that was supposed to be done when HOD-B said:

*I am the only HOD in the school and I have ‘a lot of work to do---a lot’...because ...I have to teach grade two, then there is also educators’ work that I must monitor.*

It is clear from the data that all participants were aware of their management responsibilities within their departments and in the schools. There is also a confirmation of the HODs’ management duties related to monitoring such as class visits, induction of newly appointed educators and supporting educators through the provision of learning and teaching resources. In order to do this kind of work, HODs needed to have more free [non-teaching] periods that they could use to visit, supervise and evaluate educators in their classrooms.

#### **4.3.1.1.2 Acting as Principals**

The absence of deputy principals’ posts in all participating schools compelled the HODs, as the only other SMT members, in addition to principals in their schools, to also act as deputy principals in some situations. Four HODs [HOD-A, HOD-B, HOD-C1 and HOD-D] out of five participants mentioned playing the roles of their principals in their absence as another part of their duties in addition to teaching. The following statement by HOD-A sums this up:

*“If the principal is absent, I am compelled to face all the principal’s duties”*  
**(HOD-A).**

It was however noted that the responsibilities related to standing in for the principal were sometimes considered as a disturbance to teaching as HOD-A complained:

*“I must stop teaching and go to the office to attend visitors...One cannot control people from the community they just come any time”* **(HOD-A).**

It also appears that School-A did not have other staff members who could be delegated to attend to community and parental needs. The school did not have structured allocated times to attend the community’s needs.

HOD-B and HOD-C1 concurred with utterances by HOD-A, but they also mentioned other duties delegated to them by principals. The delegated duties mentioned in the case

of HOD-B involved coordinating and overseeing the project that was catering for the needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) at the school. She had this to say about her role in the OVCs programme:

*“I am in charge of the OVCs’ programme in the school”.*

The responsibility of standing in for principals was not limited to within the school premises as HOD-C1 stated performing delegated duties:

*“My duty is to help the principal by attending principal’s meetings on his behalf and come back with feedback”.*

While discussing her management responsibilities, HOD-D mentioned decision-making responsibilities during the principal’s absence and also attending to the visitors to the school. These visitors included both officials from the DOE and learners’ parents. The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document does not include standing in for principals as one of the responsibilities of HODs. Participants’ utterances about their role of standing in for principals suggest that they were willing to perform the multiple roles in the interest of effective functioning of the schools. Circumstances in schools compelled the participants to be the only decision-makers on management matters during the principals’ absence. In this way the HODs could acquire more school management skills and therefore develop as managers. The internally negotiated choices made by the HODs ensured that the schools continued to function effectively.

#### ***4.3.1.1.3 Dealing with more orphans and vulnerable children***

The other issue that emerged from the three participants [HOD-B, HOD-C1 and HOD-C2] out five HODs was the provision of care and support to the OVCs as another important responsibility they performed over and above teaching. A case of stabbing was also mentioned by HOD-B who lamented:

*There are social problems in the school and these require a Social Worker--- So I end up playing the role of the Social Worker.*

The learners’ social problem mentioned by HOD-C1 and HOD-C2 was hunger among the OVCs and the lack of money to pay for school excursions respectively. It is in these situations that the HODs found themselves organising food for these learners and

sometimes paying for them when there were excursions to be taken by all learners. School-based educators at all levels were, according to the Department of Education (2005), expected to be community members, citizens and pastors at the same time. The responses from the three above mentioned HODs regarding their dealings with learners' social problems confirmed that they provided pastoral care and support to the learners.

The high number of OVCs in schools was found to be increasing the burden on the shoulders of the HODs. I also found that learners' social problems and all related matters were dealt with in an *ad-hoc* and unstructured way. There was a need for more cooperation between the schools and the Department of Social Development so that learners who are OVCs can be assisted in applying and acquiring the foster care grants for which they qualify but cannot access without support from the schools and or their community.

The multiple responsibilities performed by the HODs in the study ranged from monitoring educators' work, standing in for principals at meetings when principals were busy with other management duties, acting as principals in their absence and also serving as 'social workers' offering care and support for learners with different social problems. This suggested that the HODs in schools with low learner population were expected to perform multiple roles that were also not well structured. This meant that they served as 'fillers' where the gaps existed.

#### **4.3.1.2 Compromised supervision and mentoring of educators**

The second finding was that most participants struggled to perform the management duties as a result of the heavy teaching load allocated to them. The heavy duty loads for these HODs came as a result of low number of educators employed to all the participating schools. It was clear from the data that teaching took much more than the stipulated time.

Two HODs [A and C1] out of the five participants mentioned that they spent almost one hundred percent of the time on teaching. The time spent on the HODs' two core

responsibilities of teaching and curriculum management did not follow the regulations stipulated in the PAM document.

The following statement bear testimony to the above stated as HOD-A argued:

*As an HOD, I teach some subjects but it is too heavy because my [teaching duty load] allocation compels me to have a load that is equivalent to that of post level-one educator due to our [low-learner] enrolment.*

Coinciding with HOD A's sentiments HOD-C1 had this to say:

*"My [heavy] teaching load makes me not to have time to monitor teachers".*

As a result of the above-mentioned situation regarding monitoring, newly appointed educators to these schools were disadvantaged because they were expected to teach with little or no guidance from the HODs who served as subject leaders in the schools.

Apart from that, HOD-C1 also faced a challenge of being the only Physical Sciences and Mathematics teacher in the school. Due to the remote location of the school and the absence of direct public transport to the school, the school was failing to recruit qualified Science and Mathematics educators. As the only teacher for the above-mentioned subjects the HOD-C1 ended up shouldering a heavy teaching load.

To further the argument HOD-C1 said:

*"I only have a single free period in a week, which makes it difficult to monitor any educator. It is even difficult for me to hold a class visit to support the teacher"*

It is clear from the data that HOD-C1 struggled for time to perform management duties; but HOD-C2 spent her teaching time in accordance with the guidelines set out in the PAM document. Confirming that she said:

*"Teaching takes more time, let me say eighty five percent of the time" (HOD C2).*

The situation in School-C requires that urgent attention. It could be decreasing the number of duties delegated to HOD-C1 so as to allow him to have more time to attend to curriculum-related issues during the allocated free period per week. The high percentage

of time spent on teaching therefore denied HODs an opportunity to mentor and develop educators in the subject or phase departments. At the same time the supervision of the educators was not carried out which caused the educators, especially newly appointed ones to teach learners with little or no guidance from their HODs as immediate supervisors. The newly appointed educators needed continuous guidance and support so as to learn more about their duties.

#### **4.3.1.3 Teaching was also sacrificed in some instances**

It became clear from the data that participants used different times of the school day to perform management duties. Circumstances in the participants' schools determined times for these responsibilities. HOD-A, for instance, used the mornings after assembly before going to classes for teaching, to perform management duties. In this regard HOD-A commented:

*When there are important things to discuss with educators, I call them when we arrive in the morning ... and tell them about those points and ask for their opinions on the matter.*

Both HOD-C1 and HOD-C2 responded in a similar manner and stated that they performed their management duties during the school's lunch break. However, HOD-C 2 noted that she sometimes held meetings with educators for management related activities during teaching time in addition to lunch breaks. In this regard she had this to say:

*"Sometimes I use of the teacher's lunch break time, or use the teacher's teaching period.... of which is wrong..."*

In this way both HODs [C1 and C2] and educators sacrificed their lunch time in order to hold management related meetings as a result of limited time at their disposal. The consequence of using teaching time for management duties is that learners' work was negatively affected as they spent less than the department's notional time on teaching and learning duties. Notional time is the prescribed minimum number of contact hours that should be spent on teaching and learning during a school day. Another consequence of that could be the educators' failure to complete teaching loads as scheduled in their



different subjects' work programmes. Although there was an admission from one participant [HOD C2] about the fact that using teaching time for management duties was wrong there was no mention of catch up programmes that were designed to make up for lost teaching time. It also became clear from the data that meetings were held only if and when there was a need, and that suggested the absence of planned times for departmental meetings for such briefings.

#### **4.3.1.4 Both curriculum management duties and teaching are compromised**

All five participants mentioned both teaching and curriculum management as being negatively affected due to the multiple responsibilities they performed. Three HODs (A and B and C2) mentioned disruptions to their teaching. HOD-A highlighted attending to educator's problems [part of management duties] as an impediment to the performance of teaching duties as opposed to being part of core responsibilities. The following statement bears testimony to that:

*"It becomes too! difficult sometimes---I end up suspending my teaching duties in the classroom in order to attend to an educator's problems"*(HOD-A).

The low number of educators employed in participating schools is therefore a challenge because in some cases classes were left unattended during school management team's (SMT) meetings and it is in this way that learners' work was also adversely affected. The following statement from HOD-B concurs with HOD-A, as she complained about holding SMT meetings during teaching time and said:

*"The learners' work is negatively affected, because during SMT meetings I leave them alone [in the classroom] and it is problematic".*

At the same time there is evidence of adverse impact on learners' work as a result of performing curriculum management activities by the HOD and educators during teaching time. HOD- C2 had this to say:

*"The learner[s] is [are] negatively affected when the teacher does not attend to the class".*

While the above mentioned HODs complained about disruptions to their teaching to HODs (C1 and C2) mentioned being unable to perform management duties as another challenge. The participants (HOD-C1 and HOD-C2) said ineffective monitoring of educators' work within their departments was a result of the heavy teaching load they had. HOD-C1 noted:

*"I cannot say I am confident with monitoring because I do not have enough time to help teachers".*

Similar sentiments were expressed when HOD-C2 said:

*"I end up feeling guilty about not performing management duties ----because I spend more time in the classroom [teaching]"*.

In this way HOD-C2 and HOD-D were of the view that responsibilities both teaching and curriculum management were negatively affected. HOD-D supported this as she mentioned the teaching and management of a multi-grade class as a major challenge since she struggled to get time for both teaching and management duties. Highlighting the problem HOD-D had this to say:

*Mhh! I had limited time for management duties. I do not want to lie, the time for both [teaching and management] was insufficient, because learners were cheated, and management duties were negatively affected. I could not get enough time for both [duties].*

HOD-D was the only participant who had recently been a multi-grade class teacher. She had been teaching multi-grade class-teacher for three years before the interviews were held for this study. A multi-grade class is made up of learners from two or more different grades taught the same content by the same educator at the same time. It was established from the data that there was a multi-grade class in School-A but it was not the participant's class. The mismatch in the data presented suggests that teaching and management roles were both compromised but they differed in the extent of being disadvantaged.

#### **4.3.1.4 Other emerging issues**

The following discussion depicts issues that emerged from the conversations that I held with participants. These issues were not direct responses to questions as set in the interview schedule.

##### ***4.3.1.5.1 Being the only HOD in the school***

Two HODs [A and B], out of five participants highlighted working in isolation as a major challenge they faced. As the only HODs in their respective schools they only had principals as the other SMT members. Most management activities were planned and executed without consulting any SMT member. Planning school activities was, according to HOD-B, therefore difficult. In lament, this is what she said:

*Schools with more HODs are better because they [HODs] share ideas. As the only HOD [in the school] I can't share ideas with anyone. If my idea fails, that's it.*

Similar sentiments were echoed by HOD-B when he complained:

*Everyone works individually in one's corner, there is nobody to talk to about one's challenges (HOD A).*

It is also clear from the data that the two participants [HOD-A and HOD-B] felt that the sharing of ideas could take place if more HODs were employed in the same school. However there is no evidence from the data that supports any sharing of ideas and strategies as an attempt to address the common challenges amongst HODs from the selected cluster of schools.

The other important issue from the data is that both HOD-A and HOD-D attended workshops on teaching and managing the multi-grade class. While HOD-A expressed that he obtained skills and knowledge of handling such a class from the workshop, HOD-D mentioned that she experienced difficulties in managing a multi-grade class even after attending the workshop. It is therefore evident that the sharing of experiences and

strategies between HOD-A and HOD-D at a cluster level could have provided solutions to the difficulties facing HOD-D. This therefore supports the need for more networking among HODs at a local cluster level.

#### **4.3.1.5.2 Working in disadvantaged schools**

Three HODs (HOD-B, HOD-C2 and HOD-D), out of five participants highlighted the challenges related to their teaching since the schools were located in a disadvantaged area. The participants mentioned three issues, and these were the lack of facilities such as libraries, absence of electricity from the national power and the lack of learners' exposure to facilities that might aid teaching. HOD-B's point was further clarified when she complained:

*Hheyi! It is not easy to teach here! Like reading is very poor.....I think learners should be able to read on their own, the absence of libraries makes this difficult.....when you teach Art and ask learners to bring magazines, it becomes a huge problem.....It is even hard to get ISolezwe ne Langa [newspapers] from the local shops(HOD-B).*

Similar views were expressed by HOD-C2 when she concurred with HOD-B and said:

*Our learners are not exposed to things that make learning easy. For example some learners in our school do not even know a train. So our teaching ends up being difficult (HOD-C2).*

HOD-D lamented the inability to use the available audio-visual teaching materials such as television and video cassette recorders (VCR) due to the absence of electricity in the school as an impediment to teaching when she said:

*“It would be easy to use videos as teaching aids if we had electricity”(HOD-D).*

The data is however silent on the schools' efforts to provide resources and facilities that would make teaching easier. There is also no evidence from the data on activities and programmes that were designed by the schools aimed at extending the learners' opportunities to learn. Educational excursions and field trips could help expose learners

to cities and improve the schools could also provide teaching aids, such as newspapers in order to assist learners improve on activities such as reading. It is in this way that the data only identifies the challenges and does not provide strategies to address them.

#### **4.3.2 Strategies employed by the HODs**

This section is a discussion of the five strategies that were found to be employed by the participants to maintain the balance between role of teaching and management responsibilities. Participants highlighted these strategies as helping them to make time to perform management duties despite shouldering heavy teaching loads.

##### **4.3.2.1 Seeking support from principals and senior educators**

The first strategy that was found in the study was that participants sought help and support from principals and senior educators. Principals assisted participants in performing some of the management tasks. In the same way some duties were delegated to senior teachers and this also made the HODs' work a lot easier. Two HODs [HOD-A and HOD-B] out of the five participants mentioned the monitoring the work of both the learners and the educators in phases unfamiliar to them as a challenge. This came as a result of a lack of the necessary knowledge about the work done in those particular phases. In order to address this challenge HOD-A got help from the school principal as he said:

*The principal helps with the monitoring of the foundation phase most of the time, but when she is absent I just check whether there is any teaching and learning going on (HOD- A).*

Similar to School-A, HOD-D also sought assistance from the school principal. Emphasising this point HOD-D said:

*I rely on the principal for some management duties ---like [class] visits ---When I cannot conduct a class visit due to some other duties I ask him [the principal] to help me by conducting those class visits.---- Like checking learners' exercise books in order to see what's going on.*

In order to address the challenge of supervising educators in the phase that she had no experience in teaching, HOD-B delegated the monitoring and supervision responsibilities to a senior teacher in the intermediate phase of the school. She had this to say in that regard:

*“I have requested the senior teacher to monitor the work in the intermediate phase”.*

The act of delegating these duties by the SMTs to a senior teacher in School-B is evidence of a situational leadership style that was used. The appropriate leadership style (delegating) was applied to a specific situation. The fact that the leader [HOD] delegated these duties suggests that the follower [senior teacher] was either able to work independently or in possession of requisite skills (high competence) to carry out the task. At the same time the senior teacher might have also shown high commitment.

#### **4.3.2.2 Allocation of classes with less contact time to HODs in primary schools**

The second strategy that was found was the allocation of a class with less contact time for teaching was found to be a strategy employed in one of the primary schools in the study. This helped by allowing the HOD to have at more time available for management duties.

It was also established from the data that after continuous complaints from HOD-D to the principal when she was managing a multi-grade class, the SMT decided to address that problem. In order to address the unavailability of time for management duties faced by the HOD, one of the strategies employed in School-D was allocating a class with a lesser contact time to the HOD than the other classes. This strategy did not only make more time available for management duties, but it also alleviated the overload that came as a result of managing a multi-grade class. In this way the principle of teamwork was therefore applied in the schools.

The data also suggested that participants from school principals in School-A and School-D solicited the help of their principals only in times of difficulty. They normally did not have clear responsibilities assigned to them. Therefore the line of duties between the HODs and their principals was unstructured and *ad-hoc* in nature. This indicates a need

for clear allocation of all management responsibilities between the SMT members irrespective of their low number.

#### **4.3.2.3 Keeping abreast with developments in education through attending workshops.**

The third strategy found to be employed by the participants was attending workshops that were organised by the Department of Education. It was found that these workshops were useful as they provided much needed help to the HODs on various issues they faced in schools. These HODs (HOD-A and HOD-C2) expressed similar views when they said that, for educators to be up to date with the latest developments and innovations in education, they had to attend workshops that were usually organised by the education department. The workshop on managing a multi-grade class helped HOD-A by providing the necessary skills and techniques required to manage the multi-grade class effectively. In the same way HOD-C2 said that workshops for educators and HODs on the national curriculum statements (NCS) helped the school deal with the introduction of the NCS as the new curriculum. Apart from the curriculum management, HOD-C2 also said that workshops had helped both educators and the HODs deal with technical aspects of their work such as understanding the issue of promotion requirements both in the senior and the Further Education and Training (FET) phases.

It is important that educators keep abreast with the latest developments and innovations in the field of education as this empowers both post level one educators and the HODs. Attending and participating in workshops organised by the Department of Education was one way of ensuring that school-based educators were armed with skills necessary to improve practice.

#### **4.3.2.4 Holding short informal meetings with teachers.**

Three (HOD-A, HOD-C1 and HOD-C2) out of five participants agreed that they used the little time at their disposal to perform management duties. As discussed earlier in this chapter these times varied from the mornings after assembly before the beginning of the first teaching period, in case of HOD-A, to the lunch breaks and free periods as it is the case with HOD-C2. The data did not provide concrete activities except mentioning that

the HODs used to meet with educators during these times. The duties of the HODs were not limited to meetings with educators as it also involved the monitoring of their work through activities such as class visits and other mentoring engagements. HOD-C1 mentioned that as a strategy for addressing the limited time for management he made contacts informal contacts with the post level-one educators as opposed to holding formal meetings with agendas and minute taking.

*I hold informal meetings during lunch breaks with the teachers. Maybe... when we meet... during lunch breaks I sometimes ask the teacher about the activities that were done in the workshop.*

The information shared in these informal meetings was only limited to educators informing the HOD about the work that was done in the workshop. The collected data was therefore silent on other specific management activities such as moderation of assessment activities and other support provided to educators by the HOD during these meetings.

#### **4.3.2.5 Involving post level one educators in planning**

The HOD (theoretically) plays a leading role in planning all the activities for the month, quarter and the whole year in a subject or phase department. HOD-A and HOD-C2 mentioned that they had joint planning with all educators as a strategy contributing to maintaining a balance between the role of teaching and that of curriculum management. Holding these meetings ensured that problems experienced in different classes were discussed and possible solutions sought.

One participant said:

*“Towards the end of the quarter and also at the beginning of the following quarter we hold meetings to address common problems affecting our teaching”*  
**(HOD-A).**

Similar comments were made by HOD-C2:

*In subject department meetings we agree on how are we going to perform our duties....the educator[s] know things such as the expected number of learners*



*pieces per learning area....moderation dates..What is to be moderated (HOD-C2).*

The involvement of educators in planning meetings created systems and procedures within the department that made the management role of the HOD to be a little easier. In this way the department have policies that serve as guidelines enabling the HOD to hold educators accountable on all items agreed upon earlier. It is evident from the above discussion that the three HODs (A, B and D) recognised colleagues as partners. This made it easier for the HODs to perform their multiple roles in schools. The above quotation provides evidence of a participating or supporting leadership style being employed by the participants. In this way a leadership style that fits the readiness of the followers is employed. The data also confirms that management responsibilities were shared. The participation of all educators in planning meeting is very important as it creates a common understanding among members of the department about the expected duties throughout the year. The consequence is that the educators perform their duties according to agreed standards.

The last question in the interview schedule was aimed at establishing the presence and use by the HODs of any subject or phase department's documents. This question was included in order to confirm the data that was to be gathered through asking the first four questions in the interview schedule.

#### **4.3.3 The presence of records of subject / phase departments' management activities**

Two [HOD-A and HOD-C2] out of five participants, were able to show me some documents. HOD-A showed me an unfilled document entitled 'educator's work monitoring tool'. The 'document' had the name of educator and the grade but the columns with the headings learning area, learning outcomes and assessment standards were not filled. The fact that the educator's work monitoring tool was unfilled suggests that it was not used at all in the school as the interview was held during the third term of the school calendar year. In this way there was no recorded evidence to support the participant's response to the first question in the interview schedule when he said:

*"I also see to it that teachers' work is properly planned"*

It also became clear after probing that there were no other phase department documents in the case of School-A. Besides showing me the educator's work monitoring tool HOD-A also talked about his responsibility of compiling the school's Composite Time-table, which according to him served as an important communication tool as he said:

*“The Composite Time-table is the first communication tool we [HOD and the teachers] use to communicate”.*

The composite time-table is however for the whole school and this excludes it from the phase department's documents.

HOD-C2 showed me five subject department documents. These were the coaching register, log book, departmental instruction book, minute book and the book of appreciation. On perusal of the coaching register I noted that it had most entries and it that it was also used in communicating instructions to post-level one educators in the department. The presence of post level one educators' signatures in the coaching register confirmed to me the two way nature of communication between the HOD and post level one educators in her department. These were mainly the HOD's comments and advice on the moderation of tests and examinations question papers.

The department's log book served as both instruction book and record of circulars from the Department of Education issued to post-level one educators. A three month gap was however noted in the log book entries. This gap confirms that HOD C2 struggled to record some of the activities as it was pointed out in the earlier interview questions that teaching takes most of the time hence administrative duties are sometimes neglected. Apart from that, some subject department minutes were recorded and signed by all educators in the log book. Evidence from the documents discussed above confirmed the HOD-C 2's response to the first in the interview schedule when she mentioned the monitoring of post level one educators' work as one of her responsibilities.

The last document that HOD-C2 showed me was the 'book of appreciation' that is used to record message sent to and signed by educators in recognition of the work they perform. The book of appreciation had a single entry that was made during the second

term of the school year. It was a note from the HOD thanking a particular teacher for helping the SMT in compiling the school profile. HOD-C2 mentioned the importance of the document in this way:

*“This document is used in order to show appreciation for the work done by the educator. It is a way of showing that you value the educator’s work”.*

The reason given by the HOD for that single entry was that the ‘book of appreciation’ was introduced a month before the interviews were conducted. Improvement of interpersonal relationships among colleagues within the subject or phase department could be an important factor contributing to improved performance from educators in schools. HOD-C2 also mentioned recognition of an educator encourages the educator in his / her work. However, none of the documents showed records of the monitoring of either learners’ exercise books or portfolios or educators’ work schedules or lesson plans. The other three participants [HOD-B, HOD-C1 and HOD-D] did not show me any subject or phase departments’ documents. However HOD-C1 talked about a coaching document when he said:

*I use the coaching document to record, in one sentence, what we have discussed with the teacher. Sometimes I ask the teacher to sign the document and sometimes it is not signed.*

The absence of the department’s documents confirmed HOD-C1’s response to earlier interview questions when he mentioned that he was not confident about the monitoring of educators. Similarly, the absence of records from HOD-B and HOD-D presented more questions about their responses to the earlier interview questions where they said they did perform a variety of management responsibilities. The consequence of the above-mentioned situation was that the HODs were not in a position to confirm the activities taking place in classrooms within their department.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter was mainly data presentation and analysis. The data was summarised and in some cases the participants’ voices were presented verbatim. I then discussed the

implications from the data presented. The discussion was not limited to the participants' responses to interview questions as it also included other issues that emerged during interviews owing to the qualitative nature of the study. In the next chapter I summarise the study and present findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented analysis of data and findings. Themes that emerged from the participants' responses to the seven interview questions were discussed and analysed. The discussion was not limited to direct responses to interview questions as it also included other issues that emerged from participants. I begin this chapter by summarising the first four chapters included in this research report. The next section of the chapter focuses on recommendations I made based on the findings. Subsequent to that is a discussion of the identified limitations of the study. I conclude the chapter with implications for further research on the topic.

#### **5.2 The study in summary**

Chapter One provided the background, statement of purpose and the rationale of the study. I also outlined the research questions that were addressed in the study. I concluded the chapter by discussing the significance of the study, key concepts and layout of the research report.

Chapter Two provided a review of both international and local literature on the topic of middle management, with a special focus on HODs as part of middle management in schools. The focus was on the duties and responsibilities of HODs as outlined in different countries are discussed. Included in this chapter, was a discussion of findings from studies on HODs conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and South Africa. Situational leadership model and the bargaining and negotiation theory as the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the study were discussed.

Chapter Three was focused on research paradigm, design and methodology. In this chapter I discussed the research paradigm under which the study was conducted. The discussion on the research design includes the chosen research methodology together with the data collection method and the instrument. Ethical considerations prior the data

generating process were also discussed. Apart from that, I also reported on the suitability and the selection of participants and gave a detailed account of the process of conducting interviews. I also discussed data collection process in detail and explain how trustworthiness of the study and internal validity of the data collection instrument were ensured. I concluded the chapter by discussing content analysis as it was employed as a data analysis strategy and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four was mainly on the analysis and presentation of data collected through the interviews from the participants. The discussion includes interpretations and themes that emerged from the data.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This section is a discussion of three recommendations I made informed by findings from the study.

#### **5.3.1 Need for more training of HODs**

The responsibility of training and empowering HODs in South African schools lies first, on the shoulders of their immediate supervisors who are deputy principals and principals depending on the enrolment of the school. Secondly, departmental officials both at ward, circuit and district levels should develop and offer in-service training (INSET) and development programmes for HODs. The INSET workshops keep HODs abreast with the latest curriculum developments and also equip them with skills to deal with other changes in their practice.

It was found, as discussed in the previous chapter, that participants received some induction training from the DOE officials after their appointment to their posts. The induction training programmes provided by the DOE should also include training HODs on whole school management as they also stand in for principals in some instances as it was found in the study. As a result of the different contexts in which schools operate, the need for more context based HOD training cannot be overemphasised. The planning and organisation of such workshops should be informed by the needs of HODs at cluster and

ward levels. In this way challenges resulting from specific contexts could be effectively addressed.

School principals should therefore delegate some whole school management responsibilities to the HODs whilst continuously supervising and monitoring their performance. The delegation of duties could empower the HODs with more managerial skills that would enable them to perform management duties with ease. It is in this way that the skills learned in workshops would be practised and reinforced in real work situation.

### **5.3.2 Allocation of duty loads at school level**

Time allocated to the roles and responsibilities of all post holders in South African schools is guided by the PAM document. As discussed earlier in this report, HODs should spend 85% of the school day on teaching and 15% of the school day on management duties. One of the findings from this study is that HODs in the selected rural schools struggled to get time to perform management duties. In order to address this challenge, the Department of Education should increase the time allocated to management duties in schools with low learner populations. This could be done through allocating more post level one educator posts to these schools, which would decrease teaching time for HODs.

At school level, this situation could also be addressed through the allocation of duty loads to all educators that takes into consideration the HODs' management responsibilities. This could be done, at school level in various ways that include, *inter alia*, regular coordination of periods for monitoring / supervision / guidance provided to post level one educators. The available 'free' periods for HODs could therefore be dedicated to the abovementioned activities and also to all other delegated duties in secondary schools. Similarly, the HODs in primary schools should be allocated time to teach classes with the least notional hours.

### **5.3.3 Networking among colleagues**

Networking among colleagues within schools and also with other colleagues from neighbouring schools is a recommended practice as it gives practising educators an opportunity to learn from colleagues and thus improve their practice. Networking could be a useful strategy employed by the participants to the study as it will enable them to share experiences and solutions to similar problems they face within the cluster of schools. This cooperation should not be limited to colleagues within the Department of Education but it must also include other departments such as the Department of Social Development. There is also a need to involve NGO's, together with the mentioned departments, in dealing with a plethora of learners' behavioural and social problems mentioned by participants in the context of the study.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

Findings from this study could form a basis for further research on the challenges facing HODs in schools located in different contexts such as townships and cities. It would also be important to explore the experiences of HODs in overpopulated schools. Strategies employed by the HODs in different contexts could play a major role in helping



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## APPENDIX A

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16 October 2008

Faculty Research Committee  
Faculty of Education  
Edgewood Campus  
University of KwaZulu-Natal



Dear Mr S.D. Bayeni,

### Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student:

Mthethwa, Fikani Goodpresent - 202519396

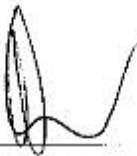
Your student's ethical clearance application has met with approval in terms of the **internal review process** of the Faculty of Education.

Approval has been obtained from the Faculty Research Committee, and the application will be forwarded for ratification (MEd) or recommended in the case of PhD and Staff applications, to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. All Masters applications approved by Faculty Research Committee may commence with research.

Both you and the student will be advised as to whether ethical clearance has been granted for the research thesis (PhD), once the Ethics Sub-Committee has reviewed the application. An ethical clearance certificate will be issued which you should retain with your records. The student should include the ethical clearance certificate in the final dissertation (appendixes).

Should you have any queries please contact the Faculty Research Officer on (031) 260 3524 or on the email [buchler@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:buchler@ukzn.ac.za)

Yours faithfully



Professor D. Bhana  
Acting Deputy Dean Postgraduate Studies and Research



APPENDIX B



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

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28 NOVEMBER 2008

MR. FG MTHETHWA (202519396)  
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mr. Mthethwa

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0763/08M**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

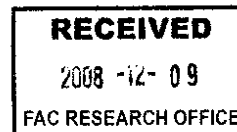
*"The challenges facing Heads of Departments (HODs) in rural schools with low learner populations: A case study of five rural schools in a ward within KZN Pinetown District"*

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

Yours faithfully

MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Mr. SD Bayeni)  
cc. Mr. D Buchler



## APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

E 899 Ibhobhoyi Grove  
Ntuzuma Township  
KwaMashu  
4359  
18 October 2008

The Circuit Manager  
\_\_\_\_\_ Circuit

Sir

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I wish to request your permission to conduct a research in five purposively selected schools in your circuit. I am currently registered as a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) specialising in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. As part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education I am required to conduct the research. My research topic is:

#### **Challenges facing Heads of Departments in rural schools.**

In analysing the data, confidentiality and anonymity will be observed and at no stage in the research report will the names of the schools and participants be mentioned. The research findings will be forwarded to your office for records and comments.

Should you require any additional information, you are free to contact my supervisor Mr Sibusiso Bayeni at 031 - 260 7026.

Yours sincerely

Fikani Mthethwa

## APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

E 899 Ibhobhoyi Grove  
Ntuzuma Township  
KwaMashu  
4359  
18 October 2008

The Principal

\_\_\_\_\_ School

Sir / Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I wish to request your permission to conduct a research in your school. I am currently registered as a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) specialising in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. As part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education I am required to conduct the research.

My research topic is: **Challenges facing Heads of Departments in rural schools**

In analysing the data, confidentiality and anonymity will be observed and at no stage in the research report will the name of the school and participants be mentioned. .

Should you require any additional information, you are free to contact my supervisor Mr Sibusiso Bayeni at 031 - 260 7026.

Yours sincerely

Fikani Mthethwa

## **APPENDIX E: INFORMED PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT LETTER**

E 899 Ibhobhoyi Grove  
Ntuzuma Township  
KwaMashu  
4359

23 October 2008

Dear Colleague,

### **REQUEST FOR YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MY STUDY**

I wish to request you to participate in the interviews I am conducting as part of my studies for the Master of Education degree. I am currently registered as a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) specialising in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy.

This study is entitled: **Challenges facing Heads of Departments in rural schools**

The interview will last for about forty five (45) minutes and shall be on a one-to-one basis between you and me. To check whether it provides a true reflection of what you mentioned during interviews, the data collected will be transcribed and be made available to you. Please be informed that participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participating at any time. Your views shall be kept anonymous and all your contributions, name and school name shall be treated in confidence.

Should you require any additional information, you are free to contact my supervisor Mr Sibusiso Bayeni at 031 - 260 7026.

Yours sincerely

Fikani Mthethwa



**INFORMED PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of participant) confirm that I am fully aware of the contents of this letter and the nature of the research project and I consent to participate in the research project.

I fully understand that I am free to withdraw from participating at any time, should I wish to do so.

**Signature of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

### Full Descriptive Title

Challenges facing Heads of Departments (HODs) in rural schools

**Name of the instrument** : Interview schedule for HODs from the five selected rural schools

**Resources needed** : Tape recorder with 2 sets of batteries  
Examination pad  
Room / space / venue for the interview

**Duration of the interview** : 45 minutes

### Instructions to the researcher

1. Negotiate the venue with the participant
2. Ensure that two sets of batteries and two empty cassettes are available.
3. Negotiate consent and the use of tape recorder with the participant.
4. Set ground rules such as 'Switching off cell-phones'.
5. Explain the reason for conducting the interview and thank the participant for agreeing to participate.
6. Ask the participant to fill in Appendix G (Personal and school details)
7. Start asking questions and allow the participant to talk more.
8. Listen attentively to the participant.
9. Write down notes in the form of shorthand.
10. Note the participant's gestures and silences
11. Add probing questions if there is a need.
12. Ask for permission to change cassettes or batteries should the need arise.
13. At the end, thank the participant and ask for any questions or comments.

## **The Interview Schedule**

1. Apart from teaching, what are your other roles and responsibilities as a head of department within the school?
2. Which time of the school day do you use for management duties?
3. How much time do you spend on teaching?
4. How do the dual roles; teaching and curriculum, management play out?
5. What do you do in order to maintain a balance between the conflicting roles?
6. Who are your sources of support and how do they help you in carrying out your duties?
7. What documents do you produce / use within your department in order to help you in performing your duties?

[Could you please show me some of those and tell me more about them.]

## **REMINDER**

Lead the participant to talk to these documents

Ask more questions about their contents

Take down important notes from the documents.

**APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT'S PERSONAL DETAILS**

Gender		Age	
Teaching experience in years		No of years as an HOD	
Qualifications		Phase / Learning Area specialisation	
Training / Induction to the HOD post And all other capacity building workshops that you have attended. (frequency)			

**APPENDIX H: SCHOOL DETAILS**

**POST PROVISIONING NORM (PPN) OF THE SCHOOL**

--

<b>PRIMARY</b>		<b>SECONDARY</b>		<b>NO OF LEARNERS</b>	
<b>FOUNDATION PHASE</b>		<b>SENIOR PHASE</b>		<b>NO OF GRADE- R EDUCATORS</b>	
<b>INTERMEDIATE PHASE</b>		<b>FET PHASE</b>		<b>NO OF TEACHER ASSISTANTS (TA)</b>	
<b>SENIOR PHASE</b>				<b>NO OF POST LEVEL ONE EDUCATORS</b>	
				<b>NO OF HODS</b>	
				<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	
				<b>TOTAL TEACHING STAFF ESTABLISHMENT</b>	

<b>NO OF OFFICES</b>	<b>NO OF CLASSROOMS</b>	<b>GRADES (FROM -TO)</b>	<b>NO OF CLASSES PER GRADE</b>