

THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

TIME ON TASK IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN UMLAZI

A DISSERTATION IN
THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION
(EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT)

BY

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DEDICATION

I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO ALL THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE. MY WIFE,
ZANELE, AND MY DAUGHTERS LUNGIE, POPI, OLWETHU, PHUMELELE
AND NONTANDO. LAST BUT NOT LEAST TO MY LOVING MOTHER.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of 'time on task' in schools in Umlazi which is a township in the province of KwaZulu Natal in the Republic of South Africa. The study measures how much time is spent on task by students. It investigates how principals and teachers enhance or reduce 'time on task',

This research regards 'time on task' as an important teaching strategy to be used as a resource in the organisation and delivery of teaching which could have a positive effect on student achievement. A focus on time in schools is a strategic technique for student achievement.

The research was conducted through observing lessons in two subjects in two high schools in Umlazi. Principals and teachers of these schools were surveyed to find out what role they played in contributing to the enhancement or the reduction of 'time on task'.

The study found out that students were on task for two thirds of the time provided for learning. The study found out that both principals and teachers do not focus on time as a teaching strategy to improve student performance. Time set aside for learning was often used for non learning purposes.

DECLARATION

TIME ON TASK IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN UMLAZI

MED 1996

I SIBUSISO BENEDICT NGIDI DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THIS DISSERTATION, WHICH IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF EDUCATION, HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN SUBMITTED BY ME FOR A DEGREE AT ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY, THAT IT REPRESENTS MY OWN WORK IN CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION AND THAT ALL THE SOURCES WHICH I HAVE QUOTED HAVE BEEN INDICATED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY MEANS OF A COMPLETE REFERENCE.

Signed by me on theday of.....1996

Signature.....

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The 1976 student's revolt and the resulting virtual breakdown of Black Education was a consequent of the state's education policy. One of the reasons before and after this landmark episode was that the apartheid's "main interest in Black schooling has been for its role in political control rather than meaningful education for black children" (O'Neill, 1993, p.6). This is supported by Bigelow, 1987 when he states that "real learning was never the object of black education" (p.121).

This neglect manifests itself in a number of ways. One of these facing education in South Africa "is the high level of demoralisation among teachers and students and consequently the collapse of the culture of teaching and learning" (Maseko, 1994, p. 13). The collapse in the culture of teaching and learning has resulted in a situation where in "some regions and areas education has virtually come to a standstill for most learners in this country" (Desai, 1994, p.40).

In some of our schools time set aside for learning is no longer used for that purpose. Learning time in some instances is used for non academic purposes. The

learning time problem is not an isolated problem. It is one manifestation of the lack of a "culture of learning" which is a country wide problem. It is one piece of evidence of the lack of the culture of learning in our schools.

According to O'Neill (1993) in many schools, probably the majority of schools, learning time is radically less than that claimed in the official curriculum. It is also greatly less than that available to learners in the more privileged schools. In a study of two schools over a period of one year O'Neill (1993) found that sixty teaching days had effectively been lost to students. This amounts to almost one third of the 200 day teaching year. These disturbances involved the whole school rather than the individual classes. The disturbances could include athletics, soccer, choral events, staff meetings.

Other school disruptions are caused by factors which "reduce real teacher-student contact time" (O'Neill, p.3). These include schools which do not start on time in the mornings for a variety of reasons. "This factor alone can account for an effective drop of 30 teaching days per year" (Ibid). They also include schools who close early on Fridays, sports days and on teacher pay days. Teacher-student contact is also reduced by a high rate of teacher absenteeism. O'Neill states that there are often an

average of two to three teachers absent per day in an average sized school.

This research concerns itself with the use of time in schools. Through this study, I intend to discuss the problem of the culture of learning by highlighting the use of time as an important component of teaching and learning. This study investigates the principal, the teachers and the students, to find out how they enhance or retard teaching time in schools.

The principal, teachers and the students are the important components of learning. Teachers have a duty to teach and the students have an obligation to learn. The principal must create conditions that are conducive for these processes to take place. It is important to study the interrelationship of the behaviour of these three components to gain an insight as to how they enhance or reduce time on task. This knowledge is crucial because of the importance of time on task as an instructional technique to improve student achievement.

The study accepts the fact that the principal is an important agent for change in a school. In a study of schools Fullan (1992) argued that where a principal acts as an instructional leader "planned change, school improvement, effective schools and staff development all

bear the mark of the principal as central for leading and supporting change" (p.84). This research paper acknowledges that time on task is important for learning and this is linked to student achievement. From this premise it becomes important, therefore, to have some understanding and knowledge of how much time is spent on task by students. Not only that, but also how both principals and teachers can assist to enhance time on task.

1.2 Purpose of study:

The broad goals of the study are:

(a) to find out how much time is spent on task by high school students in Umlazi. I have investigated the role that the principals and teachers play in enhancing or retarding time on task. This research aimed at finding out how teachers view the principal's role to be, regarding the management of time on task.

(b) to find out if teachers in Umlazi are familiar with the concept of time on task. If so, do they plan for such time use and how much time is provided for students to be on task. Understanding the use of time can contribute to an improved effort towards better student achievement. Research has shown that improved teaching and leadership is expected to increase student academic learning time (Stallings, 1985).

(c) to find out if the schools allow the maximum time available to be used for teaching and learning. In other

words do schools seriously aim to reduce to a minimum all that which interferes with teaching time.

(d) to understand classroom interactions that promote or retard time on task. This includes what teachers and students do during the learning process. This assumes that there are some activities that enhance and those that retard time on task.

1.3 Problem Statement:

This research investigates the amount of time which is used in high schools in Umlazi. In the process the research has found out as to whether principals and teachers in Umlazi are familiar with concepts of 'time on task' and 'academic learning time'. The research will specifically answer the following research questions.

1.3.1 Research Questions:

- (i) How much time is actually spent on task by students?
- (ii) What are principal's self perception of what they do to enhance time on task?
- (iii) How do teachers perceive the principals role regarding the management of time on task?
- (iv) What are teacher's self perception of what they do to enhance time on task?

1.4 Significance of study:

It is important to highlight that if schools focus on time

as a technique that they can use in teaching they would at the same time be moving towards the restoration of the culture of learning. This study shows also that the principal is an important part in a school. This is true because the principal and the teacher actions can enhance or retard 'time on task'.

'Time on task' and 'academic learning time' are characteristics and traits which can be found in most effective teachers. This study highlights the importance of measuring time on task in classes. "Providing teachers with the opportunity to receive information about academic learning time in their own classrooms is a key part of (the) staff development..." (Murphy. 1992, p. 24).

This study is important in that it is the first study of 'time on task' that has been undertaken in schools in Umlazi or anywhere else in KwaZulu Natal. Most research on this and other related topics has been undertaken initially largely in American schools. This study will therefore add information on 'time on task' in this region.

1.5 Limitations:

An important limitation to this study is that teachers would go to classes and teach because there is a visitor who has arranged to observe their lessons. This may not necessarily be what happens in a normal school day in a

township school. This bias towards attendance may actually be a limitation to the study itself.

This study is limited to observing and recording data for high schools only. There is no information therefore about what happens in primary schools. What is true for high schools may not be the same for primary schools. The study does not include primary schools in the area. Besides this, it is also confined to standard 9 classes and only observes English and Mathematics. Teachers tend to put more effort on final year classes in their schools. Time on task observed in a standard 9 class may differ vastly from that observed in a final year class.

An integral part of 'time on task' is class visits by principals. This research has revealed that principals do not visit and observe teacher lessons. One reason could be "the Department of Education and Training (DET) has encountered resistance to its system of performance appraisal (evaluation/inspection) from various sources. This resistance lead to the near collapse of the entire appraisal system in some regions and areas" (Sadtu/Det Draft Document 1994).

1.6 Definition of terms:

I have listed terms which need to be defined in this research. The definition which follows hereunder is

adapted from Anderson (1993).

1. Allocated time:

Amount of time during which students are at school. This can be expressed in school days per annum; hours per school day or minutes per subject period. This is the highest possible amount of time that can be used in a school for instruction.

2. Instructional time:

Time during which instruction is provided to students. This is part of allocated time but excludes non instructional activities like announcements, attendance checks, collection of papers, and other class management activities. Anderson (1993) states that "the discrepancy between allocated time and instructional time tells us about the quality of classroom management. The greater the discrepancy the poorer is classroom management" (p.18). He further states that at times 20% or more of allocated time is lost on non-instructional activities which could include "dead time" and "discipline" (Anderson, 1993, p.18). It is clear therefore that teachers whose instructional time show little discrepancy are better classroom managers. Anderson however, argues that teachers should devote as much time to instruction as possible.

3. Time on task:

This is also known as engaged time. This is the amount of

time during which a student or a group of students is attending to the appropriate task or is actually engaged in learning. It confines itself only to as far as that the students are engaged on some academic task. This excludes time when students fidget, daydream or are distracted by other students and events inside or outside the classroom or are simply bored. It may include being engaged in tasks like keeping quiet in class.

Time on task is helpful when compared to instructional time. In other words the greater the amount of instructional time that students are on task the higher the quality of instruction. Anderson (1993) states that it is not unusual for students to be off-task for about a quarter of the time that instruction is occurring. Thus teachers who engage their students for more than three-quarters of instructional time are likely to provide higher quality education.

4. Academic learning time (ALT):

This is a portion of time on task during which students are working on assigned objectives or tasks. They are actually on task or engaged in learning related to specified objectives and are successful in meeting the objectives. The importance of ALT is that students are successful in meeting the objectives of assigned tasks. They are thus not only on task but are also successful in their tasks.

Herein lies the difference between 'time on task' and 'academic learning time'.

Anderson (1993) describes the relationship between allocated time, instructional time, time on task and academic learning time in the following manner. This is explained in the figure which follows here under.

Allocated time	-----	100%
Instructional time	- - - - -	83.3%
Time on task	- - - - -	62.5%
Academic learning time	- - - - -	41,7%

The above indicates that allocated time can be seen as 100% of the time available. This might be the number of years a pupil has to spend at school, the number of days in a year, hours in a day or minutes in a period. This is the highest amount of time available which can be used for academic tasks. Not all available time is used for academic tasks. Some of the time will be used for breaks, assemblies and other non academic tasks. Anderson is of the opinion that this can be used up to a point where 83.3% remains for instruction. If this is exceeded instructional time is thus eroded.

Of the instructional time available 62.5% is used on task

by the students. The discrepancy between 83.3% and 62.5% is made up of off task activities such as announcements, attendance checks, late or absent students, distribution and collection of exercise books, a quarrel between students, a student day dreaming or a teacher being absent. Anderson states that it is to be expected that students can be on task for between 38% to 75% of the time that they are receiving instruction.

The remainder of the time is academic learning time (ALT). Anderson (1993) says this is "that portion of classroom time during which students are working on important objectives or tasks; actually on task or engaged in learning related to those objectives; and successful in their learning endeavours" (p.17). The important consideration with ALT is that students must be successful in academic tasks. Depending on the quality of instruction, the presence or absence of both teachers and students ALT may range from 0 to almost 100%.

The discrepancy between academic learning time and time on task provides a reasonable estimate of the quality of student learning. The closer academic learning time is to time on task, the more likely it is that students are learning what is appropriate and expected. Theoretically academic learning time can be increased until it is equal to instructional time. This, however, may not be

practical.

1.7 Organization of this dissertation

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first serves as an introduction to the study. It gives the background, the purpose and the significance of the study. This chapter also discusses research questions and the definition of terms which are associated with the study.

The second chapter discusses and reviews the literature which is a background to the study. This chapter justifies through previous research why it was necessary to embark upon this type of research. Chapter three discusses the research design and the research methodology used in this paper. The chapter explains what type of study this is. It deals with issues around instrumentation, sampling, data collection and analysis.

Chapter four and reports on the findings of the research. This chapter explains how the survey questionnaire and the observation instrument were used to arrive at the research findings. The observation instrument is explained in such a manner that it can also be used by other researchers who would conduct similar studies in other areas.

The last chapter ends with recommendations. These recommendations, it is hoped will be of great use and would

contribute to further studies on 'time on task' and 'academic learning time'. At the end of this chapter is a list of references which could be used for further research on 'time o task'. Also included at the end of this research is an appendix wherein readers will find questionnaires used in the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON TIME ON TASK

2.1 Introduction:

The state of California in the United States of America established in 1970 a Commission for Teacher Preparation and Learning (CTPL). The CTPL commissioned a research study which became known as the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study (BTES). The purpose of the research was to identify generic teacher competencies and the evaluation of teacher education programs with an aim of helping recent graduates from teacher education institutions (Powell, 1980). The study took six years from 1972 to 1978. As research progressed goals and aims of the research changed. The new focus became directed to a "better understanding of the nature of instruction and teaching practices" (Denham & Lieberman, 1980, p. iii). Subsequent studies focused on experienced effective teachers rather than on recent graduates and their evaluation programs. The name Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study was however retained.

The most important contribution of BTES was the concept of academic learning time. According to Borg (1980), this notion was influenced by the work of Carroll (1969), Bloom (1980) and Wiley and Harmischfeger (1974). The work of Bloom had a more direct influence. Bloom's operational definition of quality of instruction serves as a foundation

for the academic learning time model. Bloom's work involves teacher activities such as cues, reinforcement, allowing for student participation, feedback and correctives.

2.2 Teacher's role and time on task:

Academic learning time is student engaged time coupled with the associated success in what is learned. This is supported by numerous researchers who study time as it affects instruction (Stallings, 1980; Webb, 1982; Noli, 1982; Denham, 1982; Confrey, 1982; Lieberman, 1992; Fisher, et al, 1981; Denham and Lieberman, 1980). Connelly and Claudinin (1993) put it differently when they state that "the more time is spent learning the more is learned" (p,9).

Teachers know that if student time on task is increased an increase in student achievement will follow. Most teachers and students know that students should be kept engaged in tasks. However, Stallings feels that "such knowledge is not helpful unless more specific statements are made about how to engage students" (1980 p. 11). It is necessary to study the activities that occur within a class period and see how time is distributed over such activities. It is through this knowledge that we can make specific statements about what is happening in the classroom. This might make it possible to be more specific about how to engage

students.

Most researchers agree that more engagement results into more success. For instance, Evertson (1980) in Stallings (1980) states that low achieving pupils are engaged 40% of the time as compared to high achieving pupils who are engaged for about 85% of the time. Evertson further states that low achieving pupils have more "dead time" (1980, p.12). Supporting the above Stallings argue that students who spend more time than average in high success activities achieve higher scores and have a better retention than those who do not (1980, p.14).

Academic learning time has two components, i.e. classroom student behaviour and student achievement. Researchers on time in classrooms look at teacher behaviour as an important aspect of engaged time. For instance C.W. Fisher, N.N. Filby, R. Marliave et.al.(1981) view instructional functions as divided into:

- (i) **Instructional planning:** This involves diagnosing the student's current level of knowledge and prescribing what is to be learned.
- (ii) **Instructional interaction:** This includes the presentation of the lesson, student activity, feedback and monitoring.

Walberg (1993) argues that quality instruction can be

understood to include providing optimal cues, correctives and reinforcements to ensure successful engaged time (p.6). He continues to say that good classroom morale, peer group outside of school and a stimulating home environment can help by enlarging time and enhancing efficiency. This is why Karweit (1985) in Walberg (1993) suggests that it would be possible to double time on task from 2.3 hours to 4.6 hours without exceeding the six or so hours of the ordinary school day (p.2). According to Karweit this can be achieved by good instruction which is motivating and suitable as well as a reduction in interruptions, distractions and non-academic activities (in Walbeg, 1993).

The above supports the notion that even though academic learning time refers to student engagement, teacher activity is an important aspect of engaged time. This is emphasized by Noli when she states that "student engagement rate is higher when students are involved in more academic interaction with the instructor" (1982, p.25).

Stallings (1980) goes beyond this to suggest that an in depth study should be made describing the actual activities which take place in a classroom. In a reading class study in an elementary school he identified two variables of interaction. These were the interactive on-task instruction variable and the non-interactive on-task

variable. Stallings concluded that activities such as discussion, reading aloud, praise, supportive feedback are interactive on-task and are positively related to gain. This means that if such activities are increased in class the rate at which the students will succeed would be increased. Activities like classroom management, sustained silent reading, written assignments are a non-interactive part of instruction, and these are negatively related to student gain. This is important, for it suggests that time on task should not only be increased but also that a deeper understanding of the actual activities which take place during instruction should be carefully considered. It is particularly worth noting that praise, support and positive corrective feedback can be positively linked to student success.

Fisher et.al.(1981) and Walberg (1993), in supporting Stallings have stated that the quality of instruction can be used to increase learning time without increasing school time. Stallings found out that only thirty-eight percent of the school day is used by students engaged in academic activities. M. Karweit (1988) is of the opinion that there is little evidence to support the view that "increasing time in and of itself will be an effective strategy to increase achievement" (p. 32).

Teachers need to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of student learning. They need to increase their

understanding of time use in classrooms as means of increasing efficiency. Webb (1982) has argued that this cannot be simply achieved by increasing engaged time or by focusing on student participation in the classroom processes. He feels that student achievement is directly related to teacher behaviour. The teacher classroom management skills and how the subject matter is presented are important facets of student achievement. Presentation will involve the cues the teacher uses, feedback, evaluation and the effective manner in which the subject lesson preparation has been done.

Improved teaching may also involve using the lesson presentation model by Hunter (in Oliva, 1993) which advises teachers to present new concept with a 'set.' This involves setting the stage and getting all students involved; followed by a statement of clear and observable objectives; data delivered in segments; followed by a check for understanding (Stallings, Robbins, Presby and Scott 1986). If this instructional model is followed expected outcomes would be an "increase in the amount of time that students spent on task" (Stallings et. al. 1986 p.518).

Another view point to effective teaching is the one advanced by Confrey. Though Confrey's emphasis is on the subject matter she however accepts the importance of time on task. Confrey (1982) has argued that a concept of

learning as it is in the academic learning model is "nonsensical" in a discussion of learning if it does not refer to what is to be learned, that is, the subject matter. She argues strongly therefore, that since time is a limited resource a decision on what topic is to be learned is an important question to be considered. Not only that, but Confrey is of the opinion that an emphasis on time reduces learning to be considered "as a quantity and hence a function of time" (p.33). For instance, she has argued that academic learning time emphasizes "learning more" or "increasing learning". This means a science teacher who is low in academic learning time might be encouraged to increase instructional time from say 15 minutes to 30 minutes. If time was a result of inadequate subject-matter preparation the outcome would be thirty minutes of poor instruction.

For Confrey learning is also a function of quality. Confrey feels that the BTES research encourages one to think of learning as a quantity. She is more interested in the use of time as a quality and in the roles that are played by concept learning. In approaching this she quotes Bruner (1960), who discussed the importance of teaching powerful concepts which convey the structure of a discipline and have the potential to improve the transfer of learning to other situations.

The idea of academic learning time has become a widely accepted educational concept. This is to such an extent that Reyes and Donald (1990) state that it can now be "regarded as a 'proxy' variable for the learning process" (p. 9). These researchers are of the opinion that teacher behaviours which promote academic learning time can reasonably be expected to find their way into teacher evaluation. They further feel that academic learning time can be a variable which can be identified in effective teachers.

2.3 Principal's role and time on task:

The above discussion has not included the principal as an important part of a discussion of time on task. This discussion has concentrated on what happens in the classroom and how teacher behaviours affect time on task. "To date, efforts to improve ALT have been directed almost exclusively at individual teachers in their classrooms" (Murphy, 1992, p. 19). The neglect of the principal in this improvement endeavour is unfortunate. The principal has to be involved because the research on effective schools is of the opinion that "no one is important to the climate and culture of the school than the principal" (Andrews and Bason, 1990, p. 38).

If principals want to positively affect climate and culture of schools they should not allow allocated time to be

disturbed by non instructional activities. Gilman and Knoll (1984) have identified the following factors that reduce allocated time: school musicals, drama practices, sports and cultural events and fund-raising. Time which is set aside for instruction is also reduced by in-service training, parent conferences, work stoppages and record keeping (Gilman and Knoll, 1984).

Tom O'Neill in a study of DET and KwaZulu schools identified a number of school activities which disrupted a school day. These include the following:

- * Official athletics events;
- * Soccer events and practise for them;
- * Choral events- as with soccer and athletics if the school is successful disruptions can go on for months;
- * Staff meetings occur often, and usually run into teaching time;
- * Boycotts and other unrest disturbances;
- * Teacher organisation events and recruitment drives;
- * Insurance and other salesmen addressing staff;
- * School close-down for memorial services in the area;
- * The writing of private and supplementary exams on the school premises severely disrupts the school for the entire duration of the exams;
- * Beauty contests;

The principal must also be familiar with the relevant

concepts of time as pertaining to a discussion of time on task. This will enable him to compare and measure in class visits in the first instance, allocated time and instructional time. If there is a great discrepancy between allocated time and instructional time the principal must know that the problem is likely to be classroom management (Anderson, 1993). The classroom management problem can be solved either through clinical supervision or through a staff development program.

Secondly, the principal has to compare instructional time and time on task. Instructional time is the time where the teacher provides instruction and time on task is time during which a student is attending to the appropriate task or is actually engaged in learning. As stated before the increase in time on task results in the increase in student achievement. This is of great pedagogical importance. If the difference between instructional time and time on task is great then the problem is didactic (Murphy, 1992). This is a problem of supervision and leadership where principal intervention through staff development can help to alleviate this didactic problem. Staff development would attempt to answer the following questions [adapted from Lieberman (1982)]: What are our time priorities? Are students involved, engaged or connected? What are the distractions that keep engagement low? Are they within our control?

Principals often define themselves as "instructional leaders" (Cooper, 1989 p. 13). As such it is important for them to improve their school's instructional programs. That is why principals in schools should promote staff development programs "focused on improving the instruction and classroom management of teachers" (Stallings and Krasavage, 1986, p. 120).

In an effort to emphasize their roles as instructional leaders a "growing number of administrators are spending more and more time in teacher classrooms" (Pigford, 1989, p.30). The problem according to Pigford is that they do not have a clear idea of what to expect. Seifert and Beck (1984) provide the following advice. Principals should ensure that:

- (a) Teachers start classes on time causing students to be actively involved from the beginning.
- (b) Teachers plan their instructional strategies to fill the entire class period.
- (c) Teachers control their classrooms because each disciplinary interruption where a teacher has to discipline a student places the whole class out of task.
- (d) Interruptions by the office aides, secretaries and students getting into classrooms should be limited.
- (e) The number of intercom interruptions, entertainment type programs and special interest programs should be reduced.

The above advise though simple in approach is positively associated with increase in academic learning time.

2.4 Summary:

Classroom and school time management remain one of the most important variables for student achievement. In fact Karweit (1988) argues that classroom and school time management "remain a promising strategy for improvements in learning" (p.31). Principals have a responsibility to reduce loss of instructional time which may be as a result of student absences and disruptions, student lateness, early closing and teacher strikes.

Studies in recent years have indicated rather conclusively that "increasing the amount of time students are instructed can have a significant and beneficial effect on student achievement" (Gilman and Knoll, 1984, p.41). These authors continue to argue that the actual amount of time allocated for instruction may be one of the most important factors associated with student performance. According to Gilman and Knoll one study concluded that the "actual amount of time allocated to the task of learning can be interpreted as an immediate ongoing measure of student learning" (1984 p.41).

It is important that schools make better use of the time available for instruction. In many school systems the

amount of time available for instruction constitute a very small portion of the school day. It is so small that it may make "up less than thirty percent of the amount of time that students are at school" (Gilman and Knoll, p. 43). This low figure does not include or take into account the amount of time that teachers waste while they are in the classroom. I am particularly interested in this type of time wastage that occurs in the classroom. I am not in any way down playing loss of time due to outside factors.

The focus of the study is to understand the use of time. This understanding should be utilized to reduce "dead time" in classrooms. "Dead time" does not contribute to the learning of students. Making time productive should be a goal of all teachers. A student learns when s/he is engaged in some task. The time a student spends engaged in a task that s/he can perform with success constitutes a measure of student learning.

From the discussion above it is evident that increasing the amount of time available for learning and making it more productive are important in improving the success rate of students. Principals are important in planning for the improvement of time on task in schools. They are able to influence the climate and the culture of a school. Through this influence they can make time on task a school wide objective which all personnel would strive towards

attaining. Principals are leaders who are supposed to be competent in instruction. Competency in this field will be useful when principals help teachers who have classroom management problems as well as didactic problems.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

This study was conducted in two high schools in Umlazi, a township in the province of KwaZulu Natal in the Republic of South Africa. Both schools are community schools, that is, schools "established by local authorities, tribes or communities and subsidized by the government" (Jones, 1970 p.68). These schools are similar in that their classroom-pupil ratio of 1:53,2 and 1:42 is high. This is indicative of overcrowded classrooms. The schools are also similar in that they are both situated next to squatter communities. This is because they are both situated at the edge of the township. This means that they serve a mainly low socio-economic status community.

Two classes were observed in each school, that is, one Standard 9 English and one Standard 9 Mathematics. One teacher per subject per school was observed. This made a total of four teachers, two from each school. I refer in this research to the first school as school A and the other as school B. The English teacher in school A is designated in the Tables that follow as A(e) and as B(e) for the second school. I refer to them as A(m) and B(m) with regards to mathematics.

The observation of lessons was aimed at answering the

question how much time is actually spent on task by students? Sixteen observations were conducted over a period of three weeks at a rate of one observation per subject per school per day. Each subject per school was observed for four times.

The principals were asked to answer a survey questionnaire. This was a self-completion questionnaire. This was subsequently followed by an interview which was informal. These instruments were used to answer the following: What are the principal's self perception of what they do to enhance time on task?

Fifteen teachers were asked to respond to survey questions (see appendix 2 and 3). Eight of these were from school A and rest were from school B. These included the two teachers whose classes were being observed from each school. The rest were teachers of English and Mathematics of the other classes that were not observed. The four teachers whose classes were observed were later interviewed as a follow up to the survey questionnaire. The fifteen teachers were asked to respond to the following two research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the principal's role regarding the management of time on task?
2. What are teacher's self perception of what they do to enhance time on task?

3.2 Pilot Study

The questionnaire for principals was first given to two principals in Umlazi who were not principals of the schools to be studied. They were asked to answer the questions and later to make general comments about the survey questions. Three teachers who were not part of the study were also asked to do the same for the teacher questionnaire.

The purpose of this pretesting was an attempt to answer the following:

- * do the questions mean the same thing to everyone?
- * can these be asked in the manner they are written?
- * is it a question that people can answer?
- * is it a question that people are willing to answer?

The comments that were received resulted in a change in terminology to make it more user friendly for a South African audience. I had to explain right at the outset the meaning of terms like 'time on task' which is common knowledge for many American educators but is not as familiar in South African schools. This information I obtained from the responses from both teachers and principals in the pilot study.

The observation instrument which is used in this study was first pretested in a school in Kwamakhutha. I have adapted a pre-existing instrument which was developed by RBS (Huitt and Caldwell, 1984) I observed lessons for a

duration of thirty minutes at a time. This afforded me an opportunity to use the observation instrument in a real classroom situation. The main purpose for this exercise was to gain experience and practise in administering the observation instrument.

A lesson I learned was that my observation should include the first part of each lesson. This was largely due to the fact that most periods were of a thirty minute duration or slightly longer. I could thus not opt to observe either the middle part of the lesson nor the end part if I wanted to observe for a for thirty minutes.

3.3 Type of Study

I have used a combination of descriptive (quantitative) and numerical (qualitative) indices to measure time on task in Umlazi classrooms and self-perception of principals and teachers with regards to time on task. I have used research techniques which include questionnaires, interviews and an observation instrument. This multiple method of data collection is what Denzig calls "triangulation" (Merriam, 1988 p.69). Cohen and Manion (1989) define this triangulation as the "use of two or more methods of data collection" (p.269). They further state two advantages of triangulation. Firstly, they argue that single observation provide a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and that the multi-method

approach of data collection yields greater confidence in the researcher. For example in this approach the outcome of a survey questionnaire may correspond to that of an observational study of the same phenomenon. This according to them may make the researcher more confident.

Secondly, Cohen and Manion (1989) state that triangulation is not culture bound, that is, it is not limited to one country nor is it bound by time. This means it is not limited to one point in time and nor does it not take into consideration the fact of social change.

The opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection "is a major strength" in educational research. Merriam, (1988) contends that "rigor in qualitative case study derives from the researcher's presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and the rich thick , description" (p.120). I have thus used the case study research method because it is suited to a study where observations have to be conducted in classes.

I have used data which I have obtained through questionnaires, interviews and observation. This is what Yin calls "case study data base" (Merriam, 1988 p.126). This data base is central to my study. Through this data I have developed categories which make sense to me and these form the content of my analysis. These categories

reflect the purpose of my research.

The data has been organised chronologically and has been presented in a narrative descriptive manner. This way of presenting data may begin with thinking about one's data, that is, theorising, and this is a step towards developing theory (Merriam, 1988). The development of theory in this manner stems logically from the data collected. Merriam postulates that "since the theory is grounded in the data and emerges from them, the methodology is called grounded theory" (p. 142). It is this method of research that I have employed throughout this study.

Lastly, the use of either quantitative or qualitative type of research "depends crucially upon the nature of the research questions" (Vulliamy e.a. 1990 p.15). Even though researchers may be predisposed to one or the other it is "the nature of the research questions which should dictate the methodological approach adopted" (Ibid). The fact that my study to uses an observation instrument lends itself more to a qualitative case study type of research.

3.4 Instrumentation

I have used three research techniques in this study, the survey questionnaire, the interview and an observation instrument.

3.4.1 Observation instrument:

This has been used to answer the question: how much time is actually spent on task by students? I have used the instrument and procedures (allocated time log and the on task rate form) developed by RBS (Huitt and Caldwell 1984). This was validated by the Pearson-Product-moment correlation instrument (Huitt and Caldwell, 1984).

I collected data on allocated time for each classroom by completing the Allocated Time Log (see Table 1). The example in Table 1 is for one teacher only. The same procedure was followed for the other three teachers. I first recorded the date and the time allocation. Time on task was then recorded as is explained hereunder. The rate on task was later computed and recorded on the allocated time log.

Allocated Time Log

School:A		Teacher:A(m)		
Class:Std 9		NO. of Students:30		
Subject:Mathematics				
Date	Activity	A.t.	T on t	R on t
20.09	homework corrections	30 min	23 min	76%
21.09	class discussion	30 min	26 min	85%

Table 1

A.t: Allocated time; T on t: Time on task: R on t:Rate on task.

This was followed by a systematic observation process for collecting data on the percentage of students in the class actually working on assigned academic tasks. I used the On Task Rate Form (see Table 2) to code the on task rate. I made about fifteen scans every 1 to 3 minutes. Students were coded as being on task or off task. On task students were those involved in or attending to instruction. For an example, an on task student may be reading, writing, answering a teachers question, watching a student answer a problem on the board, listening to a teachers academic presentation, or doing anything else that would indicate that s\he was involved in academic task.

On Task Rate Form

School:B		Date:21.09.95				
Class:Standard 9		Teacher:B(e)				
Subject:English		# of Students:42				
Time	8.46	8.47	8.48	8.49	8.50	8.51
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mgmt/Trans	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /		
Socializing						
Discipline						
Unoccupied						////
Out of room	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total off task	42	42	42	42	1	5
Total on task	0	0	0	0	41	37

Table 2

A student off task would be a student not involved in any academic task. Huitt and Caldwell, 1984 describe these off task behaviours as follows:

* **Management/ transition:** Getting ready for instruction, waiting, listening to non-academic directions, collection and distribution of papers, change of periods, cleaning and storing of teaching aids.

* **Socializing:** This would include students chatting to each other over that which has nothing to do with the objectives of that day's lesson or watching others do so.

* **Discipline:** This is when the teacher dispenses with some disciplinary problem. A student would be reprimanded or would watch another student being disciplined or punished.

* **Unoccupied/ observing:** This is when students are not doing any instructional activity in the presence or absence of the teacher. They may be wondering about with no apparent purpose or watching other people or playing.

* **Out of room:** This is when the student is not in the room.

3.4.2 Survey questionnaire:

This is perhaps the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research, the survey questionnaire. I have used a structured close ended questionnaire. This is mainly a self completion questionnaire. I have set questions which are clear, unambiguous and are uniformly workable. I have intentionally avoided open ended questions because these are "too demanding of most respondents time" (Cohen and Manion 1989 p.106).

The responses were pre-coded into (1) Almost Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Not Sure, (4) Frequently and (5) Almost Always. The higher figures of 4 and 5 were associated with positive responses. The lower figures of 1 and 2 were negative.

Three set of questionnaires were designed. These were answered by principals to find out their role with regards to the management of 'time on task'. The second questionnaire was directed to teachers to find out the teachers perception of principal's role. The last questionnaire was answered by teachers to find out as to how they do to enhance or retard 'time on task'.

These survey questions have been developed and adapted from the discussion by Murphy (1992). Murphy discusses strategies to improve time on task. Murphy divides these strategies into three broad groups. These strategies and activities "incorporate the examinations of ALT in individual classrooms, but base these assessments within a school wide plan for enhancing student engagement" (Murphy, 1992, p.20).

(i) Direction setting:

The questions which developed from this discussion involved time allowed for instruction, how extra mural activities affected lesson time and how an orderly learning environment was promoted in each school by both teachers

and principals. These are questions 1-3 in the questionnaires (see appendix 1-3).

(ii) Direct support for teachers:

There are four questions in this group. These involve what principals and teachers do to enhance time on task. They also include what teachers think is the headmaster's behaviour with regard to time on task. The actual questions were directed towards information on supervision and class visits, observations and staff development programs as they affected time on task. These are questions 4-7 in the questionnaires (see appendix 1-3)

(iii) Structural alterations:

These are policy considerations questions as they pertain to time on task. Questions asked wanted information on a school policy with regards to class visits, staff development programs and the general goals of the school with reference to how they affected time on task. These are questions 8-11 (see appendix on the questionnaires.

3.4.3 Interview:

The principals of the two schools were interviewed after they had responded to the survey questions. The teachers were also interviewed but these were only those whose classes had been observed. All these were conducted once only with these respondents.

I used the person to person encounter to elicit information from my respondents. Because I had previously used a highly structured survey questionnaire the additional information that I still needed I obtained through the use of an informal interview. The purpose was to raise a number of key issues in conversational style instead of having a set questionnaire. This was of great benefit because I was able to obtain information that alluded to the fact that class visits by principals were no longer being carried out. I did not pursue this issue because it is not part of this study and could make an independent study on its own.

3.5 Sampling:

The total population for this study is all the high schools in Umlazi. I have selected two high schools because the qualitative type of research that I have undertaken would not allow me the time and the capacity all by myself to work on more than twenty schools.

I chose to study two of these twenty schools as my sample. The first consideration was that they should be representative of schools in Umlazi. Most of high schools in Umlazi are community schools. I avoided those schools that are described as 'territorial' because they receive higher funding from the government and are also in the minority. These were thus hand-picked by me for this research. Cohen and Manion state the following " the

researcher hand-picks the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgement of their typicality. In this way he builds up a sample that is satisfactory to his specific needs" (1989 p. 103).

The other important consideration in choosing a sample for this study was accessibility. Measor, 1985 states that with regards to accessibility the issue is to "find informants and getting them to agree to be interviewed and give up their time" (p. 16). The two schools I used were thus accessible both in terms of distance and the ease with which I could interview teachers and observe lessons. The principals of the two schools were willing to answer the survey questionnaire that I used in this study. I had initially planned to survey all the teachers in the two schools. This was not possible. I ended up with a sample of those teachers who were teaching English and Mathematics in these schools.

I observed 16 lessons in two standard 9 classes in each of the two schools. I ended up with four observations per subject per class per school. I used the same classes throughout without any interchange. I chose these subjects because all high schools in Umlazi offer these in standard nine. I am also familiar with English and Mathematics to able to understand progress in lessons during observation.

3.6 Data collection:

The first step in data collection was to visit schools that I used in this study. I spoke first to the principals and was given permission in principle to work on this project in their schools.

The next step was to talk to teachers whose classes I would work with. It was emphasised that they were under no obligation to oblige me any cooperation. They knew that they entered into this arrangement as voluntary participants without any coercion of any kind. These discussions took about two hours in each school.

Right from the outset it was explained that principals and teachers would be asked to respond to survey questions. I further explained that I would conduct a series of observation of lessons in the standard nine English and Mathematics classes. Teachers of these classes were supportive from the onset largely because these class visits would not be used to evaluate teacher performance. The visits were thus never intimidating largely because they were seen as not judgemental.

The survey questions for principals and teachers were conducted on the same day. Since I had previously planned to spend about half a day at each school for this purpose these self-completion questionnaires were administered and

collected from all respondents on the same day. In this manner I avoided the frustration of not receiving a response by conducting these through the post. Another added advantage was that I was at hand to give assistance where it was needed.

The next step was to engage in a systematic process of data collection through class observation. Not all observations were recorded and used for this purpose of data collection for this research. The first four observations were used mainly to familiarise both the students and the teachers of the presence of a 'foreigner' and an intruder in their classrooms. This was discussed with the teachers involved right at the onset.

I used a total of 11 observations for this study. They are eleven instead of twelve because one Mathematics teacher was absent on one day which had previously been pre-arranged for observation. The duration of each observation was thirty minutes. I used the first part of the period irrespective of the length of each period. There was a wide discrepancy in the length of periods between the two schools. School A had 35 minute periods and school B used a 60 minute block scheduling type of period. It made sense therefore, in order to maintain uniformity to observe for both schools only the beginning part of each period.

For each observation I used the On Task Rate Form (see Table 2). Students were coded as being on or off task. A tally was made on these categories for each minute of observation. At the end of an observation lessons computations were made as what percentage of time was spent on task. After all observations were collected a summary sheet was completed which gave an indication on how much time is spent on task in classrooms in Umlazi.

3.7 Data analysis:

Data which was collected through observation was computed at the end of each day. At the beginning of each observation a record was made of the time and the number of students in each class. A tally was made in one of the five off task categories each time an off task student was observed. At the end of each observation the number of on task students was computed by subtracting the number of tallies from the total number of students, that is, the total number of students minus students off task equals students on task.

It is possible, therefore to calculate using this observation instrument the amount of time which is spent on off task activities like management and transition, socializing, discipline, unoccupied and express these as a percentage of the total time available for instruction. The first task in analysing information from the survey

questionnaires was to process the survey data. This process included editing for

(a) completeness: I checked as to whether there was an answer to every question.

(b) accuracy: I checked if all questions were answered accurately, that is, only one option was chosen per question as allowed for by the directions in the questionnaire.

(c) uniformity: A check was made that interviewers have interpreted instructions and questions uniformly.

After this editing process I calculated for each question how many respondents chose 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. I then expressed this in terms of a percent for positive responses as well as negative responses. Options 1 and 2 were negative responses to questions whilst 4 and 5 were on the positive. Option 3 was neutral. Through expressing these responses as percentages I was able to deduce the perception of both teachers and principals with regards to time on task.

3.8 Conclusion:

The terminology of 'on time' used in this research was not familiar to the teachers in Umlazi. From what one principal said these are terms which are not in general use in Umlazi. The concept of time is however familiar to both teachers and principals. They know that being on time and

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The presentation is in four sections. The first section is a presentation of how much time is actually spent by students on task. This presentation has been made through the use of the observation instrument. This includes an explanation of how the instrument was used. The second section is a presentation of what the principal's self perceptions are of what they do to enhance 'time on task'. The next section is a presentation of how teachers perceive their principal's role to be regarding the management of 'time on task'. Lastly I present teachers responses of what they do to enhance 'time on task'.

4.1 Time spent by students on task:

I first collected data in classrooms and completed a log (see Table. 1). Four teachers from two high schools were observed, two for English and two for Mathematics one per subject per school.

The duration of the observations was 30 minutes. I used mainly the first part of each period and observed for the same duration irrespective of the length of each period in each school. There was a wide discrepancy with school A having a 35 minute period structure and school B with 60 minute period. Because of the difference in the length of

periods I thus decided to observe only the beginning part of each period.

Rate on task

School:B			Date:21.09.95			
Class:Standard 9			Teacher:B(e)			
Subject:English			# of Students:42			
Time	8.46	8.47	8.48	8.49	8.50	8.51
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mgmt/Trans	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// /		
Socializing						
Discipline						
Unoccupied						////
Out of room	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total off task	42	42	42	42	1	5
Total on task	0	0	0	0	41	37

Time	8.52	8.53	8.54	8.55	8.56	8.57
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mgmt/Trans						
Socializing		//// /		////		////
Discipline						
Unoccupied	///	/	///		////// /	
Out of room	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total off task	4	8	4	5	8	5
Total on task	38	34	38	37	34	37

Time	8.58	8.59	9.00	9.01	9.02	9.03
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mgmt/Trans					//////// //////// //////// //////// ////	//////// //////// //////// //////// //////// //
Socializing				////		
Discipline						
Unoccupied	//////			///		
Out of room	/	/	/	/		
Total off task	7	1	1	8	42	42
Total on task	35	41	41	34	0	0

Time	9.04	9.05	9.06	9.07	9.08	9.09
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mgmt/Trans	///// ///// ///// ///// ///// ///// ///// ///// //					
Socializing			////	/////		
Discipline						
Unoccupied						
Out of room						
Total off task	42	0	4	5		
Total on task	0	42	38	37	42	42

Time	9.10	9.11	9.12	9.13	9.14	9.15	Total
Assigned	42	42	42	42	42	42	1260
Mgmt/Tran							290
Socialize				///	//	////	36
Discipline							0
Unoccupied							27
Out of R							16
T off task				3	2	4	353
T on task	42	42	42	39	40	38	907

Rate on task $907/1260 \times 100 \% = 72\%$

Table 4

In the example in table 4 above there were 42 students in class during the 30 minute observation period. The total number of students would therefore be 1260, (i.e. 42×30). In table 4 the total number of on task students is 907, the on task rate is then computed by dividing 907 by 1260, to get a rate of 72%. The example in table 4 two also indicates that management or transition time has a total of 290 students. The rate of time used for this off task activity is 23%. This is equals to seven minutes in a thirty minute period. In this example the teacher came to class four minutes late.

Each day the amount of student's on task time was calculated as the observation took place. This was recorded to be used to develop a summary sheet of time (see table 5). The summary sheet on time gives information on the observations for each teacher. Allocated time for teacher B(e) is 120 minutes which is obtained by adding all the allocated time for only those lessons that were observed. Students time on task is also computed from the information obtained as in the example in table 4. From all this information the rate of time on task is then calculated by adding the on task rates for each day and dividing by the number. An average student on task time is the calculated from daily computations.

The summary sheet which follows here under indicates that the students were on task for 74% of the time. This means on average the students are on task for 22 minutes in 30 minute period. The greater bulk of the remaining 26% of the time is wasted with the teacher not in class. The main reason for the late coming by teachers to class is that they were still busy in the previous class. This happens even if the teacher was free during the previous period.

SUMMARY SHEET FOR TIME

Subject	Teacher	Rate Time on Task	Allocat ed Time	Student time on task	Averag e Studen t Time on Task
Eng	B(e)	81%	120 min	98 min	97 min
Eng	A(e)	67%	60 min	40 min	40 min
Maths	B(m)	67%	70 min	45 min	47 min
Maths	A(m)	81%	60 min	49 min	49 min
Total		74%	310 min	232 min	233 min

Table 5

Huitt and Caldwell (1984) have argued that student on task is a better predictor of achievement than either allocated time or on task time alone. Principals are supposed to be able to collect this classroom data to calculate student time on task. This classroom observation data can then be compared with research evidence.

4.3 Principal's role and time on task:

Principals of the two high schools were asked to answer eleven survey questions. These can be divided into three separate groups. The first group is made up of three questions which pertain to structural changes which principals could introduce to effect change that would improve 'time on task'. The second group is a set of four questions are related to the direct support that a principal could give to teachers to help them improve 'time on task'. The last group is made up of four questions which relate to policy which schools could adopt in order to improve on 'time on task'.

Principals were asked whether they allowed the maximum time available to be used for instruction. Their response was that they almost always allowed for maximum time available to be used for instruction. This was consistent with the response to the second question which asked as to whether they allowed extra-mural activities to encroach on academic learning time. They stated that extra-mural activities were not allowed to encroach on the teachers teaching time. An interview which subsequently followed revealed that at times extra-mural activities do encroach on academic teaching time. But they always try to reduce this to a minimum. The third question asked principals whether they promoted an orderly learning environment. They stated that they always do that. Principals in these

two schools spend most of their day moving about and being visible outside the office. One principal has a daily routine of driving everybody literally into class after each and every break. He stated that if he did not do that then the break or recess would go on for the remainder of the school day. At times ,however, being township schools stay-aways and general boycotts disrupt their schools and this is beyond their control.

The next question asked the principals if they measured how much time students spent on task. Their response indicated that they seldom visited classes and therefore could not measure time on task in classrooms. When asked as to whether they observed teacher lesson in order to measure how much time students spend on task and provide this information to teachers, they indicated that this was not possible since they did not visit classes. Subsequent interviews with the principals revealed that when they observed teacher lessons they did not specifically measure how much time was spent on task by students. But these were scarce and far in between and at times non existent.

Responses to survey questions revealed that class visits were seldom used to provide teachers with information on time on task. This was also the case with reference to staff development. Teachers did not receive much support from the principal through either class visits or staff

development programmes to enhance time on task. In response to the question on interference of class lessons the principals stated that they acted in a manner that reduced that which might disturb classes. Interviews with principals revealed that they 'stormed' into classes unannounced and they did not view this as a disturbance. Principals did not view themselves as contributing to a disturbance if, in their view they were carrying out their duties.

This last set of four questions concerns itself with a school wide policy or model of teaching that aims at promoting students 'time on task'. Principals were asked whether 'time on task' was one of the school's policy; whether class visits were used to analyze how time is used in lessons; whether they provide teachers with staff development programs which help teachers in increasing student's time on task and lastly whether time on task was one of the school's goals. The response to these questions was mainly on the negative. What emerged was that these schools did not have a policy of helping teachers increase students time on task. The principals have actually not viewed time in this manner. These schools did not have time on task as one of the general aims of the school.

4.4 Teachers perception of principals' role:

Teachers were asked to respond to eleven survey questions. The purpose of surveying teachers was to find out what teachers think their principal's role to be regarding the management of 'time on task'. Fifteen teachers from two high schools were surveyed. These were English and Mathematics teachers and they included the two teachers from each school whose classes were observed.

Teachers were asked firstly whether they thought their principal allowed maximum time available to be used for instruction. Sixty four percent associated their principal with this role. The remaining thirty six percent were of the opinion that their principal allowed time for teaching to be used also for non-teaching purposes.

The second question asked teachers to state if their principal allowed extramural activities to encroach on academic learning time. Most teachers felt that their principal did not allow extramural activities to encroach on learning time. However, thirty six percent of teachers were of the opinion that their principal at times allowed extramural activities to encroach on academic teaching time. This encroachment would result into a reduction in learning time.

The third question asked teachers to comment on the

principal's behaviour towards promoting a school wide orderly learning environment. Two thirds of the respondents felt that the behaviour of the principal promoted a positive school wide orderly learning environment.

When the above questions are grouped together they refer to structural setting or direction setting. Most teachers see their principal as setting direction towards structural changes which would allow for the teaching time to be used to its maximum. This would be achieved by reducing the influence of extramural activities as well as by promoting an orderly learning environment. One third of teachers were of the opinion that the structural changes performed by the principal are seldom directed towards maximising 'time on task'.

The next set of four questions relate to what the principal is doing to support teacher endeavours in increasing time on task. The four questions centre around supervision and observation, class visits and staff development as well as the principals attempt to reduce any disturbance which might affect lessons in class. Disturbance might include announcements from the principal's office, visits by other teachers or students running different kinds of errands.

Teachers were asked to state their opinion firstly with regards to the supervision and observation which was performed by their principal which would support the enhancement of time on task. Sixty four percent of teachers stated that their principal performed these functions. The remaining thirty six percent felt that the principal seldom supervised and observed with an intention of giving teachers support to increase time on task.

The second question asked if after class visits the principal provided information on how time on task was used in a lesson. Seventy two percent of teachers stated that class visits are never performed by the principal let alone to provide information on how time on task was used in a lesson.

The third question asked whether the principal provided staff development programs which develop teachers in improving time on task in classrooms. Sixty four percent felt that this was always done. At the same time thirty six percent of the teachers stated that this was never performed. It could be concluded that staff development programmes if performed are haphazardly organised.

The fourth question referred to the principal's role in trying to reduce to a minimum any disturbance of lessons. Disturbance may come from the principal's office, other

teachers or students from other classes. A portion of teachers, thirty percent, saw the principal as acting positively towards this statement. Some teachers were not sure, these were about thirty four percent. The remaining thirty six percent stated that it was seldom that their principal acted to reduce to a minimum any disturbance which might affect teaching. Teachers stated that secretaries regularly came with instructions and memos from the principals office. This constitutes a disturbance.

The last set of four questions relate directly to policy formulations or direction setting. Teachers were asked to give opinions as to their principal's role with regards to policy considerations which were connected to time on task.

The first question asked whether the principal had a policy in place for the whole school which aimed at promoting students time on task. Most respondents, that is, seventy two percent, stated that there was no such policy. This indicated a lack of skill in developing and formulating policy which would include time on task. The second question asked whether class visits were used by the principal to analyze how much time was used by staff members in their lesson. Sixty four percent of the teachers polled stated that this was seldom. A little more than thirty percent were somewhat positive with regards to this and felt that this was done frequently.

The third question referred to policy on staff development which is aimed at helping teachers increase student's time on task. Teachers felt that this was not performed by their principals. More than two thirds of teachers responded on the negative in answering this question. The last policy question asked if the principal had made time on task to be one of the schools goals. Response was mainly on the negative with more than sixty four percent saying this was seldom done.

4.5. Teachers role with regards to time on task:

Teachers were asked to respond to eleven survey questions. The questions aimed at finding out what were the teachers perception of what they do to enhance 'time on task'. The first three questions related to structural changes or direction setting which is aimed at increasing students 'time on task'. In responding to the question the teachers surveyed were agreed that they used the maximum time available for instruction.

There were some teachers who were of a contrary view. They stated that some academic learning time was used for non-teaching purposes. To support this view the following was observed. School A had planned a cultural day for a Wednesday in a week where I had to do observations. Two days prior to this event academic instruction was completely disrupted. Preparations for the occasion were

in full swing and you could hear the sound of the cow-hide drum as you entered the gates. This was as early as 8.30 a.m. two days prior to the event.

The reality in schools is that extra mural activities do encroach on student learning time. This is in contrast to what the principals and teachers say they say they do. It is evident that there are a wide number of disruptions that encroach on the student learning time. Some of the events are part of the normal life of the schools which I have observed. In fact school A according to the principal has had the most successful soccer team in the Umlazi area for the past decade. In reality this means that some instructional time is lost due to soccer practice, matches, travelling, celebrations and other soccer related activities.

Teachers agreed that they promoted an orderly learning environment for the whole school. Interviews held with teachers indicated that teachers say they spend most of their day in trying to promote an orderly learning environment.

The next set of three questions pertained to the support that teachers receive from their principals in enhancing 'time on task'. Firstly, it became evident that principals did not supervise and observe teacher lessons with an aim

of, inter alia, measuring how much time students spend on task. When lessons were observed it was not with an intention of measuring 'time on task'. In fact very little classroom observation is performed by principals. The conclusion is that little or no support comes from the principal with regard to time on task. About eighty percent of them stated that their principals did not conduct class visits.

Since class visits were seldom conducted very little information could be provided by a principal on how much time on task was used in a lesson. This linked directly to the next question, that staff development programmes could not be designed to help teachers to improve on techniques to enhance time on task. The absence of class visits meant that a need for staff development could not be realised. Teachers surveyed stated that they did not have staff development programs which were conducted in their schools.

The next question asked whether interference during lessons was kept to a minimum. Interviews with teachers revealed that principals were at times responsible for classroom disturbances by sending instructions and messages in the middle of lessons. Another problem was of students running errands during lessons. Some of these are teacher to teacher errands. Some are out of need. In one school there was a shortage of dusters and students would move in

and out looking for or returning dusters. These comings and goings resulted into disturbances. The principals themselves were guilty of class disturbances by sending for teachers or circulating instructions during lesson. However, principals do not regard their conduct as undesirable.

The last group of questions relate to policy formulation. The schools under study did not have a policy in place where 'time on task' was one of the school's goals. There was also no model of teaching which aimed at promoting the enhancement of students' 'time on task'. The schools did not have a policy on class visits or staff development which was aimed at the enhancement of 'time on task'. Evidence collected through the survey indicate that the teachers do not contribute in any manner to the creation of such a policy.

4.6 Conclusion

Data collected through the observation instrument gives an indication of how much time on task spent by students was observed. Knowing how much time is spent on task is important because as Connelly and Claudinin (1993), "the more time is spent learning the more is learned".

The first glaring off task activity observed was that teachers come late to their classes. This tardiness in

punctuality is often attributed to the fact that the teacher is still busy in the previous lesson. This is not particularly the case in all instances. Too often teachers move from one class to the next via the staff room . In doing this they either socialize or pretend that there is something they need to take from the staff room.

Most lessons will then begin with the teacher not in class. When s\he finally comes to class two to three more minutes will be spent preparing and making students ready for instruction. In general the early part of the period is spent on management and transition which are off task activities.

This late coming by teachers to class happens even though it might be the first period of the day and no teacher could claim to be held up in the previous class. At times after a lengthy assembly up to five minutes or more would still be wasted by teachers and students before they settle down on the days work. Teachers and students have a general tendency of coming late to school. O'Neill supports this view when he states that "though most schools official start at 7.45, the first lesson, and much of the second have already passed by 9.00 the real starting time of many schools" (p.3). According to O'Neill this could effectively reduce the school year by 30 teaching days.

Observation for the two schools was over a period of three weeks. In that period I was observing four teachers. In that observation period three out of four teachers were absent for a total of six days. This rate of absenteeism is generally high. In a study of schools in KwaZulu Natal O'Neill (1993) concluded that "there are often an average of two to three staff members absent per day in a medium sized school" (p.3). The teachers who were absent did not come school even though they knew that there was an observation of their lessons in progress. Most of the student time on task is lost due to teacher tardiness.

The summary sheet on time indicates that the rate on task was 67% for English and Mathematics. This time includes instructional time because most of the lessons were of an interactive on task. If 67% of the time is used by teachers and students in class then the amount of time lost without any tangible explanation is great. This is an unnecessary loss of time.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction:

Schools can begin to restore the culture of teaching and learning by focusing on time. The focus on time will increase the realisation that for teaching and learning to be optimized teacher-student contact hours should also increase. This chapter begins with conclusions and then offers some recommendations to enhance 'time on task'.

5.2 Time spent by students on task.

The research has revealed that in one school in English pupils were on task for 67% of the time and in the other school in Mathematics students were on task for the same amount of time. What this means is that in each and every 30 minute period a third of the time is lost. In a nine period cycle per day the total time lost is 90 minutes. This translates into one day of learning lost for each and every five-day week of learning.

This time loss is not due to external general class disturbance but rather lost during normal teaching time. Most of the time loss was as a result of tardiness on the part of the teacher. Most lessons start on average five minutes into each and every period. Most time is lost when teachers socialize with each other as they move from one class to the next.

The absence of teachers from classes is detrimental to achievement. Stallings (1980) suggests that there are activities which take place in class which are related to student success in academic activities. These are interactive on-task activities which naturally cannot take place in the absence of the teacher. It is important that a teacher should be in class for teaching and learning to be realised.

The next off task activity which uses the greater part of learning time is management and transition. The teacher is in class in this instance. However, time is used up by classroom management in an attempt to get students to be ready for learning. At times students take a long period of time before they are ready for the lesson at hand. This may also be coupled with disciplinary problems. If discipline is a prevalent problem in class then the teacher need to be assisted to improve class management.

5.3 Principal's role and time on task:

This is linked to the research question which asked what were the principal's perceptions of what they do to enhance time on task. The response to the survey questions revealed that very little was done by principals to enhance time on task. The initial glaring shortfall was that supervision, class visits and observation was not taken seriously by principals. With regard to this issue

principals had abdicated their responsibilities. It is not my intention to find out the causes of this abdication in this limited space. This can form a basis of a completely new study.

The lack of direction setting by the principal has significant consequences for the time provided for learning in schools. The proper use of this time is thus not seen as being of utmost importance. Future studies and practises should to a greater extent involve the principal. Most studies on time on task "have been directed exclusively at individual teachers in their classrooms" (Murphy, 1992, 9.19).

Because principals do not observe teacher lessons they are unable to provide support for teachers in the form of staff development. If principals do not know their teachers limitations it is not clear as to how they could help teachers to enhance time on task. Nor would they possibly hope to assist them to help students enhance academic achievement.

A number of intrusions are allowed to encroach on to academic learning time. These intrusions are allowed to use up normal teaching for up to a week at a time. In school A, a pending cultural event resulted in no learning for up to two days before the actual event. This is so

even though when principals are asked they say the opposite.

5.4 Teacher's view of principal's role:

Teachers generally view the principals as partly actively promoting the use of time on task to its maximum. On one hand slightly more than half of the teachers support the view that principals are adequately promoting time on task. This is so even though both teachers and principals know full well that this is not always the case. The teachers who were interviewed to explain this contradiction stated that they felt that they had a moral obligation not to talk ill of their principal. Apparently they were not prepared to expose the weaknesses of their principal in front of a complete stranger. I was regarded as an outsider who should not be privy to any inside dirty linen.

Teachers stated that their principals seldom conducted class visits. Since these were not conducted teachers received no support from the principal to help them increase time on task for students. This was unfortunate and detrimental to student progress because "the more time is spent on learning the more is learned" (Claudinin, 1993, p.9). In this way student loses the optimum amount of time that he could use to learn.

It is clear that teachers have a dim view of what principals do to enhance time on task. In answering this research question it is clear that there is very little that is being done by principals to help teachers enhance time on task. No class visits translates into no staff development which means that no help comes from principals to assist teachers in an attempt to increase time on task.

5.5 Teacher's perception of their role:

The attitude of teachers to what they do does not show that there is a effort to link 'time on task' to their teaching or their duties. In fact their response indicates that they have not previously considered carefully the concept of 'time on task' to be a repertoire of what they do as teachers. Perhaps teachers are not conscious of the importance of time as a critical resource in student learning.

The teachers surveyed were not involved in staff development programs which are aimed at both skilling and equipping staff with technical knowledge that would help them to increase their capacity to increase time on task. There is apparently no pre- or in-service avenue available where teachers skills could be improved so as to enhance teachers techniques in using 'time on task'.

5.6 Recommendations:

Pre- and in-service should provide avenues where teachers and principals are grounded in the art of measuring time on task in classes. Time on task analysis will inform us about the connection between increased academic learning time and student achievement. "A comprehensive analysis of time usage allows staff members to see this for themselves" (Murphy, 1992, p.20). This knowledge and the skill that might be gained will help "teachers to devise and implement strategies to measure actual time usage at the school and classroom level" (Ibid p.21). Teachers will thus be able to say how time is used by students "actually on task or engaged in learning ...and successful in their learning endeavours" (Anderson, 1993 p.17).

In order to realise this goal principals and teachers should work towards identifying and adopting a school wide policy that has been shown to promote high levels of students time on task. Murphy suggests two models of teaching that offer promise in this regard. These are cooperative learning and interactive teaching.

Some of the valuable teaching time is lost in between periods. A few structural changes might alleviate this problem. Schools can restructure the time allocation in such a manner that there is at least three to five minutes in between periods for a change over from one lesson to the

other. In areas where facilities are available teachers remain in their rooms and students move from one classroom to the next. In such situations it is easier to monitor student movement from one room to the next.

5.7 Strategies for improving time on task:

In the two schools that I have studied and indeed in schools throughout Umlazi students remain in their classes and do not move from one room to the other when periods change. It is the teachers who move from one class to the other. This results into a loss of about more than five minutes of each and every period. If this is multiplied by an average of nine periods a day this means each child loses no less than forty five minutes a day. This translates into three days lost in each and every month. This does not include other time lost due to factors outside the classroom situation, like time lost due to administrative requirements.

Teachers should employ teaching variables that make a difference in on task teaching time and allow students to be involved in longer periods of learning time. Coupled to this teachers should start their classes on time. Teachers must use a format that will cause students to be involved in learning from the beginning. Teachers must not allow students to start the class with a period of off-task time.

Teachers must plan strategies to fill the entire class period. They should also vary their instructional techniques and use three or four different strategies during one lesson period. Teachers must control classrooms effectively if significant achievement is to occur. Because each incident of discipline reduces the number of minutes of engaged learning time by a minute or more depending on the seriousness of the learning problem. Each time a teacher disciplines a student the entire class becomes off task.

Seifert and Beck (1984) regard the following as some of the strategies which principals can employ to increase time on task:

- * Reduce interruptions through the use of the intercom system or the sending of instructions to teachers during class time.
- * Limit the number of personal interruptions by office aides, secretaries and students. This requires the principal to make sure that unnecessary classroom contacts are not made.
- * Reduce lengthy assemblies which use up time into the first period and at times into the subsequent periods.
- * Reduce student absentees.

The use of time on task observation appears to be a valuable tool that a principal can employ to improve

instruction. Time on task as a teacher observation instrument requires the principal to perform the following tasks: (These strategies have been adapted from Seifert and Beck 1984) .

- * The principal should identify the teachers objective for the observation period.
- * The principal should visit class lessons and measure student time on task.
- * S/he should chart the students behaviour from the beginning to the end.
- * The principal should analyze the results of the data collected during classroom observation.
- * S/he should discuss the results of the time on task with the teachers.

The data generated from the principal's observation of the teachers instruction should provide a meaningful and a specific information about the instruction process.

5.8 Conclusion:

Schools should be encouraged to focus on time as a tool in teaching and learning. By merely getting schools to focus on time as a resource would be an important achievement.

Class visits and lesson observation in schools should be improved. The department of Education has a greater responsibility to see to it that this is realised. It is

of no use for the Department to expect principals to conduct class visits when they are not skilled in what to look for and how to conduct these class visits. Pigford (1989) observes that principals who conduct class visits do not know how and what to look for during class visits.

Developing and equipping both principals and teachers with skills to measure time on task will help them to have a vision of the importance of this tool in teaching. The idea of academic learning time has become an accepted educational concept and teachers should be aware of this. Reyes and Donald (1990) state that academic learning time can now be "regarded as a 'proxy' variable for learning" (p.9). These researchers are of the opinion that teacher behaviours that promote and enhance academic learning time might be included in teacher appraisals in future. They further state that academic learning time can be a variable that can be identified in effective teachers.

A serious attempt has to be made by both schools and the Education Department in reducing that which disturbs instruction time. There are a myriad of activities which are allowed to take place inside teaching time. These have to be reduce to such an extent that they would no longer be a factor in the school system. Clear-cut guidelines should be enforced that will ensure that schools perform business which is responsible for their existence, that is, instruction of students largely in academic subjects. Instruction time should not be tempered with. The aim is

use time on task to its maximum.

All schools should be capable of developing their own vision. This vision should be able to direct policy which would aim at increasing time on task or engagement rate. When this vision is developed issues like staff development would then be considered in order to help teachers improve on skills to enhance and increase time on task.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what principals do to enhance time on task in their schools. Time on task is the amount of time during which a student or a group of students is attending to the appropriate task or is actually engaged in learning.

Directions : Next to each of the following statements are five choices.

(1) Almost never, (2) Seldom, (3) Not sure, (4) Frequently
(5) Almost always

Next to each statement encircle the number which best expresses your opinion about the statement.

STRUCTURE ALTERATIONS

1. You allow the maximum time available
to be used for instruction. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
2. You allow extra mural activities
to encroach on academic subject
learning time. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
3. You promote a schoolwide orderly
learning environment. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
4. You supervise and observe teacher's
lessons and measure how much time
students spend on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STAFF

5. After class observations you provide teachers with information on how time on task was used in their classrooms. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
6. You provide staff development programs which develop teacher's techniques in improving time on task in classrooms. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
7. You minimize any interference in the teacher's classrooms from principal's office, through announcements, from other teachers and students. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECTION SETTING

8. You have a schoolwide model of teaching that aims at promoting student's time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
9. Through class visits you analyze how time is used by staff in their lessons. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
10. You provide staff development programs which help teachers in increasing students 'time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

11. You have made time on task
one of the school's goals.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what teachers think their principals do to enhance time on task. Time on task is the amount of time during which a student or a group of students is attending to the appropriate task or is actually engaged in learning.

Directions : Next to each of the following statements are five choices. (1) Almost never, (2) Seldom, (3) Not sure, (4) Frequently (5) Almost always

STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS

1. Your principal allows the maximum time available to be used for instruction. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
2. Your principal allows extramural activities to encroach on academic subject learning time. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
3. Your principal promotes a school wide orderly learning environment. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
4. Your principal supervises and observes teacher's to measure how much time students spend on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STAFF

5. After class visits your principal provides you with information on how time on task was used in your lesson. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
6. Your principal provides staff development programs which develop teacher's techniques in improving time on task in classrooms. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
7. Your principal limits to a minimum interference in the teacher's classrooms from the principals office, through announcements from other teachers and students. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECTION SETTING

8. Your principal has a schoolwide model of teaching in place that aims at promoting students time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
9. Your principal uses class visits to analyze how time is used by staff in lessons. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
10. Your principal provides staff development programs which help teachers in increasing student's time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
11. Your principal has made time on task to be one of the school's goals. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

APPENDIX III

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what teachers do to enhance time on task. Time on task is the amount of time during which a student or a group of students is attending to the appropriate task or is actually engaged in learning.

Directions : Next to each of the following statements are five choices. (1) Almost never, (2) Seldom, (3) Not sure, (4) Frequently (5) Almost always. Next to each statement encircle the number which best expresses your opinion about the statement .

STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS

1. You allow the maximum time available to be used for instruction. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
2. You allow extra mural activities to encroach on academic learning time. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
3. You promote a school wide orderly learning time. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
4. You measure how much time students spend on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STAFF

5. Class visits provide you with information on how much time on task was used in your lesson. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
6. You participate in staff development programs which develop teachers techniques in improving time on task in classrooms. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
7. You reduce to a minimum interference from outside into your classroom. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

DIRECTION SETTING

8. You support a school wide model of teaching that aims at promoting students time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
9. You analyze how you use time in your lessons. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
10. You participate in staff development programs which help teachers in increasing student's time on task. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5
11. You promote that time on task be one of the school goals. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5

ALLOCATED TIME LOG

[illegible]

Time Assigned	28	29	30	TOTAL
Mgmt. Trans.				
Socializing				
Discipline				
Unoccupied				
Out of Room				
Off Task				
On Task				