

**THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATOR ABSENTEEISM
ON EFFECTIVE EDUCATION**

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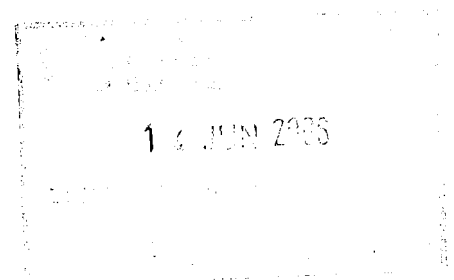
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of educator absenteeism on effective education. It was also to determine if district office supports principals and deputy principals and H.O.D.'s in their effort to reduce absenteeism.

This investigation was prompted by the high rate of educator absenteeism at schools and principals who cannot reduce absenteeism.

To investigate the problem, a literature study and empirical research were undertaken.

The literature study indicated that principals and H.O.D.'s are faced with a big problem of absenteeism.

The empirical study was successful in obtaining, analysing and interpreting the required information from the principals, deputy principals, H.O.D.'s and educators.

The research findings revealed that educators are more absent from schools. Principals can not deal effectively with educators who are absent from school regularly. Educators submit doctor's certificates which indicate illness and number of leave days to be taken. And learners also found to be absent at schools. Indications were that some learners are sick; others look after their sick families and relatives. Also the absence of feeding schemes contributes to absenteeism of learners. District office need to speed up with feeding schemes for those schools not getting it.

Recommendations have therefore been made so that district officials can assist principals and HODs in reducing absenteeism in schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

On a national level, employee absenteeism is estimated to cost the economy of the United States of America over \$40 billion per year in reduced productivity. This is an enormous loss of productivity and a substantial debit in the national economic ledger (Cascio, 1991:58-60). Unfortunately a national or macro perspective, while important, masks the costs borne by individual organisations in the economy. The costs of employee absenteeism can also be estimated at the level of the individual organisation, although not quite as easily as regularly computed expenditures such as rent, direct labour, building depreciation or utilities. Despite these difficulties, the costs of absenteeism are very real even if they are buried in an assortment of production, personnel and accounting records. Until the magnitudes of these are known, management will find it difficult to determine the extent of the problem, to estimate its effect on overall productivity or to formulate strategies for dealing with it (Cascio, 1991:58-60).

Absenteeism is any failure to report for or remain at work as scheduled, regardless of reason. The use of the words "as scheduled" is significant, for this automatically excludes vacation, personal leave and the like. A great deal of confusion can be avoided simply by recognising that if an employee is not on the job as scheduled, he/she is absent, regardless of cause. The employee is not available to perform his/her job, and that job is probably being done less efficiently by another employee or is not being done at all (Cascio, 1991:59).

Wolmarans (1994:5) states that absenteeism is a global phenomenon influencing productivity. He illustrates the cost and workdays lost to absenteeism in Britain and the USA, stating that Britain, in 1987, lost 5 billion pounds or 105 million workdays to absenteeism. Indications are that the problem is still on the increase. Clearly, absenteeism is a problem with costly

and pervasive implications, not only for effective functioning and productivity, but also for relationships among the people in an organisation and more formally, for labour relations. South Africa, and specifically the Eastern Cape, is also influenced by this costly and pervasive phenomenon. The problem is, however, compounded by the fact that the region is beset by unknown levels of absenteeism. According to Jordaan (2003:240), few employment-related problems are so difficult to manage as absenteeism. Where the absence is without the employer's permission, or a medical certificate is forged, or an employer has enough proof that the employee has not really been too ill to work, disciplinary action is appropriate.

As Jordaan (2003:24) says, where there is sufficient medical proof that the employee has a genuine illness or injury, the problem should be dealt with as one involving ill health in terms of the provisions of clauses 10 and 11 of the Code of Good Practice: Dismissal and, where appropriate, the Code of Good Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace (Mdladlana, 2004).

Declining standards of learning and teaching at schools are two of the most serious problems in various parts of the world (Chapman, 1994:1). Within these problems, one issue, which is seen as a threat to sustained improvement in educational quality, is high rates of educator absenteeism. Chapman (1994:1) warns that high rates of educator absenteeism cut to the heart of student learning by denying learners direct instructional time. Absenteeism in South Africa costs private industries R 3 000 million per month to cover absences (Winfield, 1991:2-18).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Horne (1990:7-10) describes two types of absenteeism, namely voluntary absenteeism and involuntary absenteeism. Voluntary absenteeism is under the worker's control, whereas involuntary absenteeism is not. According to Horne (1990:7-10), voluntary absenteeism constitutes as much as 40% of all absences. He indicates that absenteeism goes along with job satisfaction. The more dissatisfied employees are with some aspects of their job, the greater will be their propensity to voluntarily absent themselves from the

workplace. Wiley (2003:19-20) supports what Horne says about the dissatisfied employee, but adds that absenteeism is influenced by age, gender and education. Many old educators, for instance, tend to absent themselves from work because they are old and cannot cope with the work. Due to the fact that it has not been a norm, men are not used to being led by female leaders and, as a result, they sometimes resort to absenting themselves from work. Women, too, appear not to want to be led by another woman and if that happens, they tend to undermine her by just coming to work whenever they want to and this affects the education of the learners. Due to the changes in education, some educators who feel they do not fit into the new system, just absent themselves from work (Horne, 1990:7-10; Thomson, Griffiths, Davidson & Suzanne, 2000:2).

The Free State Department of Education (2002:36-37) states clearly that if any educator has utilised his/her days, whether it is vacation or sick leave, that educator will be subjected to unpaid leave. Only in exceptional cases will the employer grant more than 184 days of unpaid vacation leave in a period of 18 months. The employee may not stay away from his/her place of duty unless an application for leave of absence has been lodged in writing and he/she has been informed by the head of department that the application has been approved. The Department of Education (DOE, 2002:36-37) regards absenteeism as leave, depending on whether it is paid leave or unpaid leave. So to combat this absenteeism, an educator has to fill in a form and the principal must ensure that leave forms (Z1-name of leave form) are submitted for all absences and outstanding leave forms are followed up.

Rafferty (2002a:6-7) warns that absenteeism among educators is caused by low morale and lack of commitment (Pisa, 2000:1-2). Education has the ability to play a role in combating absenteeism by calling all educators and making them aware about the work requirements and how important their presence is at work (Cohen, 2002:13-21).

Hepburn (2001:92-93) purports that the quality of education is negatively affected in AIDS-affected areas by the decreasing supply of trained educators and the loss of teaching productivity when they become ill. As a result,

parents and care-givers choose not to send their children to school because educators are often absent and the learning environment is disorganised. When educators become ill, their teaching capacity decreases, further limiting the quality of instruction. High educator mortality rates have a serious impact on the future and quality of primary education, and without trained educators, it is difficult to maintain high quality instruction and keep schools open. The result is that schools are often forced to combine learners in different primary grades into one classroom. While estimates of educator mortality vary from country to country, a striking trend towards increased educator HIV infection levels and mortality is emerging. As HIV progresses into full-blown AIDS, educators are often forced to take long absences to recuperate from illnesses. Since substitute educators are rare, classes are often suspended. If educators are able to attend classes physically, the emotional stress is traumatic and lesson preparation, homework correction and classroom interaction are often a last priority (Hepburn, 2001:93-93).

There is already a relatively high educator attrition rate of about 6% per year, as compared to the previous year, and AIDS is adding to the problem (Cullinan, 2003:1). Cullinan (2003:1) states that more than 680 educators in KwaZulu-Natal – more than 55 a month – died during service in 2000.

The above leads to the following problem questions:

- What is the nature of absenteeism of educators in education?
- To what extent does absenteeism impact on education in South Africa?
- Which guidelines can be laid down for education role players regarding educator absenteeism?

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

- To determine the nature of absenteeism of educators in education.
- To determine the extent to which absenteeism of educators impacts on education in South Africa.

- To lay down guidelines for education role players regarding absenteeism of educators.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Literature study

A literature study on educator absenteeism was conducted with the aim of determining the nature of educator absenteeism, factors influencing it, as well as the extent to which absenteeism affects education in South Africa.

A DIALOG-search was conducted with the help of the following key words: absent, absenteeism, education, efficiency, effective education, sick at work, voluntary absenteeism, involuntary absenteeism, government policy, incentives.

1.4.2 Empirical research

1.4.2.1 Aim

An empirical investigation was conducted to determine the impact of educator absenteeism on education in South Africa, particularly in the Northern Free State District of the Free State Province.

1.4.3 Instrument

Data for this study was collected through the use of the questionnaire survey technique. A questionnaire that has been designed by Dr Mary Grösser of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, has been adapted for purposes of this study. Information revealed by the literature study has also been taken into account.

The answers to the questionnaires were compared to the official leave records at the District Office in Sasolburg to verify the validity and reliability of the responses. This helped towards giving a clearer picture of the problem.

1.4.4 Target population

All schools in the Free State will be considered the target group.

1.4.5 Accessible population

Since the Free State consists of many schools which will take a long period to cover and will have unaffordable financial implications, it has been decided to limit the target population to the Northern Free State. There are approximately 3 000 schools in this province. The population of the study is comprised of principals, deputy principals, heads of departments and educators in Parys, Vredefort, Sasolburg, Kroonstad and Heilbron in the District of Northern Free State of the Free State Province known as D21.

1.4.6 Sample

A sample (n= 300) will be drawn of which 50% (n=150) will be educators, 25% (n=75) will be heads of departments and 25% (n=75) will be principals or deputy principals. This sample will be drawn from 40 schools (20 primary and 20 secondary schools) in the Free State Province, District D21, by means of the stratified random sampling method to ensure that identified groups in terms of gender and race are representative of the population. Principals and deputy principals are categorised as one sample group because of their limited numbers.

1.4.7 Pilot study

The questionnaire was pre-tested by administering respondents with regard to its qualities of measurement and appropriateness, and to review it for clarity. The pilot study revealed no apparent weaknesses in the questionnaire. It appeared to be well-phrased and clear.

1.4.7.1 Ethical consideration

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education of the Free State Province – Sasolburg district and from the principals of the schools selected.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study and no information will be made known to an unauthorised person without the permission of the schools

in question and the Department of Education of the Free State Province – Sasolburg district.

1.5 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

The Statistical Consultancy Services of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) was approached for assistance in the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study hopes to highlight the impact of absenteeism on teaching and learning at schools and will generate recommendations to deal with both the causes and the solutions of the problem.

The study should be of great help to both schools and the Department of Education. Schools will be able to manage the problems brought about by educator absenteeism and the Department of Education will be able to design policies and regulations to deal with this problem.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

This study will be conducted in the Free State Province. Since the Free State Province is vast and it will be financially impossible to visit all schools in the province, it was decided to delimit the field to the Northern Free State which composes of Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Parys, Vredefort, Heilbron and Koppies.

1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

- Chapter 1 : Introduction
- Chapter 2 : The nature of absenteeism
- Chapter 3 : Empirical research
- Chapter 4 : Analysis and interpretation of results
- Chapter 5 : Recommendations and conclusion

1.9 RELATED RESEARCH

Unicomb and Roberts (2003) have done research based on this topic of absenteeism and were only concerned with which level of educators become absent from school. They found that elementary educators are absent more often than secondary educators.

Hung and Liu (1999:226-241) have done research on this topic, but were concerned with the effects of absenteeism on educators' professional commitment.

This study focuses on the effects of absenteeism on education as a whole and attempts to lay down guidelines for education role players regarding the absenteeism of educators.

1.10 SUMMARY

It is clear that education is increasingly influenced by absenteeism of educators.

This phenomenon affects provincial departments of education as well as schools in various ways, because it has to do with various aspects. Currently there are classes that are empty at some schools, but there is also the issue of educators who are in excess at their schools. The reason is that some parents have withdrawn their children from schools which have a high rate of absenteeism. Some educators are overloaded with work because of having to combine classes of those educators who are not at work and they suffer through stress and other illnesses. This absenteeism also affects school results, because where there is a high rate of absenteeism at a school, the results will speak for themselves.

The researcher hopes to empower the provincial departments of education and the principals to deal with absenteeism in a way that will diminish it and promote everybody's satisfaction and work running smoothly without any hindrance. One must not forget that the ultimate goal in education is to produce knowledgeable and committed people who will love and protect their

work, and furthering the most important aspect: that of educating our learners, as we committed ourselves to do when we decided to take up the teaching profession.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF EDUCATOR ABSENTEEISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 dealt with the definition of absenteeism and how educator absenteeism affects the learners in the school.

This chapter deals with the nature of absenteeism, the extent of absenteeism and the possible causes of it. According to Wiley (2003:519), employee absences are a costly problem for employers. The correlates and antecedents of employee absenteeism have been on a variety of personal, attitudinal, and organisational variables both to predict and to explain absenteeism. Personal factors empirically studied in conjunction with absenteeism include age, gender and education, mood, accident frequency, and job satisfaction. Steele (2003:3) agrees with Wiley in saying that employee absences are costly problems for employers.

Wolmarans (1994:3) views absenteeism (time lost) as one of the dominant phenomena that influence productivity worldwide and thus one of the focal points in the drive towards productivity. A reduction in the levels of absenteeism is thus a practical operationalisation of the goal of enlarging the economic "cake" through productivity. Winfield (1991:11) agrees with Wolmarans in saying that absenteeism is a dominant phenomenon that influences productivity worldwide. In South African companies, absenteeism is an area of concern for management and an area that often deserves more attention than is given to it.

Chapman (1994:2-3) notes that the problems of high absenteeism and turnover have their roots in the recent history of education systems development in many Third World Countries. Education systems grew rapidly in response to both increasing population and increasing participation rates. The rapid growth in the teaching force put great strain on national education

budgets, even at the time that many countries were experiencing serious economic and fiscal problems.

As money becomes tighter, some governments cut back on textbooks, instructional materials, instructional supervision, school construction and maintenance, and let educators' salaries fall behind the rate of inflation. Management capacity at schools did not keep up with system growth either. Operating procedures did not change to accommodate the expanding system, staffs were promoted into administrative positions without adequate training and managers led with superficial personal knowledge of what was going on at the schools. The convergence of these factors left countries with fewer well qualified educators in front of large classes, often in poor facilities, without textbooks or other forms of instructional assistance, in a system managed by staff poorly prepared for their responsibilities. Quality of education dropped sharply (Chapman, 1994:2-3).

2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Only those terms or concepts that are used in a specific context in this research will be clarified.

2.2.1 Absent

According to Chapman (1994:1-5), the concept "absent" refers to an act of not being available at a certain place as scheduled. Winfield (1991:2.1) describes the concept "absent" as referring to non-attendance of an employee when he or she is expected to work, for any reason at all, medical or other.

2.2.2 Absenteeism

This term refers to an act of being absent already taking place (Rafferty, 2002a:6-7). Wolmarans (1994:13-21) states that "absenteeism" is non-attendance of an employee when he/she is expected to work, for any reason at all, medical or other. Wolmarans (1994:13-21) gives three classifications of absenteeism: sick-absence, voluntary/authorised absence, involuntary absenteeism/ unexcused absence. These are discussed later in this chapter.

2.2.3 Educator

The Department of National Education (2002:36-37) refers to this term as a professional person who has trained to educate another person and is accepted by the Department as a qualified educator.

2.2.4 Learner

Chapman (1994:105) refers to this term as one who is receiving education at school. According to Duminy and Steyn (1985:25), a basic fact of the teaching-learning situation is that the learner is a child on his/her way to adulthood. As a child he/she has his/her own image or likeness, which differs from that of the adult. This is an image of non-adulthood and serves as the point of departure for learning activities.

2.2.5 Education

Horne (1990:7-10) refers to this term as knowledge that is being given to the learner.

2.3 THE NATURE OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism has been described as the largest single source of lost productivity in business and industry. Absence can generate costs in a number of ways. One of the most immediate and substantial costs resulting from absence is the direct payment of sickpay to employees. Sick-pay can prove costly to the organisation, because, if it is bringing in staff to cover for the absentee, it is, in effect, paying twice: for the absent employee and the replacement worker. The 1994 changes in statutory sickpay saw the costs of absence shift from state to employer; reimbursements to employers for statutory sick-pay (SSP) payments to employees were abolished, with the exception of small employers (Dunn & Wilkinson, 2002:1-2). According to the government at the time, the 1% point reduction in the lower rates of employers' National Insurance Contributions (NIC), together with the 0,2% point reduction in the standard rate to 10,2% to balance the SSP changes, would move the additional costs to employers of irreclaimable SSP payments.

Nevertheless, the 1994 changes meant that absence costs became more prominent (Dunn & Wilkinson, 2002:1-2).

Blyth (2003:2) in their research conducted in a private company found that there was a 6% of staff absenteeism rate. These researchers discovered that many sickness days were due to non-work issues, such as staff supporting family members with problems or experiencing marriage difficulties. Dunn and Wilkinson (2002:1-2) discovered that absence, in the language of economics, is an unpredictable variation in the firm's labour supply, and in labour-intensive and technologically primitive settings this can produce costly concomitant variations in output.

Dunn and Wilkinson (2002:1-2) further show that there are also a myriad of indirect costs which are often more intangible and difficult to measure, such as reduced productivity, as work is done by people who are less experienced and/or tired, lower product quality if replacement staff are not sufficiently competent, loss of customers due to failure to meet deadlines or through an inferior service, management/ supervisory time used in revising work schedules, etc.

McHugh (2002:1-2) agrees with Dunn and Wilkinson in saying that employee absence is an issue which has been the subject of much research and debate over a prolonged period of time. To date, much work has sought to highlight the direct cost of absence to individuals, organisations and industry. McHugh also indicates that the annual cost of absence to the UK economy was around £13 billion, an average of £581 per employee. These figures are regarded as being a conservative estimate and do not include indirect costs covering lower customer satisfaction and poorer quality of products or services leading to a loss of future business. The author comments that the economic impact of employee absenteeism derives mainly from the costs of decreased productivity because of absence from work, less experienced replacements and the additional expense of hiring substitute labour. On the basis of the data collected, it is estimated that when indirect costs are included, absenteeism costs British employers around £1, 092 per employee per year.

Haswell and Matt (2003:1) support the views of Dunn and Wilkinson when they say sick leave and absenteeism can take a heavy toll on a company's productivity and place a huge financial burden on employers. In addition to lost revenue, sick pay and the costs of temporary cover, the employer may need to adopt the work place, implement a rehabilitation strategy and operate a support programme for employees who have become incapacitated. The costs of illness are unpredictable, but can be staggering.

Thomson *et al.* (2000:2) indicates that one of the changes in many countries of the world was demographic change. A typical result is increased pressure on older workers to remain in the workforce for longer than they have traditionally done over the last 30 years. As the ratio of the number of working people to each retired person is falling, governments will find it increasingly hard to support the financial burden of an ageing population. In many countries governments are witnessing efforts to persuade employers to reject their recent traditional practices of offering older workers early retirement packages and making them redundant.

Winfield (1991:23-25) compares absenteeism in the United States, Britain and South Africa. She notes that the cost of absenteeism in 1977 in the United States was \$26, 4 billion and in Britain in 1979 over 300 million work days lost due to employee absenteeism, while in South Africa during 1984 and 1985 absence due to illness and injury alone cost industry R300 million to cover this absence. This figure includes the amount lost by industry due to the cover indulgence in alcohol. The R300 million is equal to the total military budget and is a cost the consumer eventually pays for as increased product cost. A 10% absence rate per month, a Monday absence of up to 40%, over-employment of 10%, and also a high injury rate all contribute towards South Africa's low productivity rate. Winfield (1991:23-25) feels that absenteeism might produce both negative and positive consequences: negative in that the company loses production and the worker may also lose some income which could support his family and positive in the sense that the worker may get a time to rest or a time to hide himself from the employee when he is drunk.

In research done in the Eastern Cape, Wolmarans (1994:208-219) focussed on the abuse of sick leave as the dominant problem experienced by a confectionery manufacturer. He presents a pie graph to confirm the above-mentioned proposition. He reflects on sick-absence, absence with permission, absence without permission and late-comings. His research shows that 88,1% of all Mondays lost were because of sick-absenteeism and that the dominant problem experienced by the company was the abuse of certified sick-absence. He further discovered that the workers perceived sick leave and the provisions made in the sick leave policy as a right and not as a privilege. The workers saw their sick leave benefit as a form of additional leave. The company was paying twenty days of sick leave at full pay and this contributed towards many workers abusing it. He lastly found that there was a high percentage of absence without permission and late coming.

Winfield (1994:226-227) and Steele (2003:3) further highlight the effect of sick payment. Both researchers say sick payment is insurance for workers when there is a loss in earnings owing to illness. However, sick leave abuse takes place and adds greatly to manufacturing costs. There is empirical evidence that organisations with paid sick leave experience almost twice the absenteeism of organisations without such a programme. Furthermore, when more generous sick pay schemes are introduced, absence increases. The low rate of absence in the first six months of employment in companies where no sick payment is given, and workers' attendance at work once their paid sick leave has been used up, also shows that financial disincentives prevent absences attributed to sickness. Both the above researchers agree that the introduction of paid sick leave schemes cause an increase in sickness absence.

Winfield (1994:229) further revealed that females have higher rates of absenteeism than men and are more frequently absent. It was found that females had higher absence rates between ages twenty-six and thirty-five than they do after age forty-six. Male-female differences in age-absence trends can largely be explained by differences in levels of domestic responsibility. Winfield (1994:231) illustrates that overtime and job grade also

contribute to absenteeism. She says that there was a tendency for absence to be less among those who worked medium or small amounts of overtime. Men at higher wage levels lost more time through absence than men at lower wage levels or those who worked medium or small amounts of overtime.

Wolmarans (1994:3) views absenteeism (time lost) as due to the dominant phenomenon that influences productivity worldwide and thus one of the focal points in the drive towards productivity. A reduction in the levels of absenteeism is thus a practical operationalisation of the goal of enlarging the economic "cake" through productivity. Winfield (1991:11) agrees with Wolmarans in saying that absenteeism is a dominant phenomenon that influences productivity worldwide. In South Africa companies, absenteeism is an area of concern for management and an area that often deserves more attention than is given to it.

Wolmarans (1994:117-118) points out that sick-absenteeism and its abuse is a dominant problem experienced by manufacturing organisations in the Eastern Cape. There is a correlation between the number of days provided by the sick leave policy and the organisations' gross absence rate. Organisations with paid sick leave experience almost twice the absenteeism of organisations without such programmes. Illness, whether certified or not, may form a disguise for absenteeism because no clear-cut frontier exists between sickness and psychological malaise. The problem of sick-absence started as doctors' certificates became more readily available. The concept of allowing x amount of sick days encourages employees to beat the system.

Cilliers (1977:29-31) noted in the Cape industries that weekly paid workers were found to have a higher absence rate than monthly paid workers. A progressive charting of the monthly absence rates indicates a general pattern logically consistent with the progression of the seasons. At the beginning of the year, many new workers enter the labour force and during the first three months, problems of adjustment inevitably affect attendance at work. After March, workers "settle" into the routine of work and absence rates tend to decline. With the onset of winter, illness affects attendance behaviour more severely, and absence rates tend to increase. The validity of this interpretation

is proved by the fact that an analysis of “reasons” listed for absence show that while unexplained absence with permission account for significant proportions of the total number of absences during January and February, these do not form significant proportions in subsequent months. On the other hand, family and health reasons tend to increase significantly as the season progresses into winter.

Chapman (1994:30) reports that while educator absenteeism is widely recognised as a serious problem, there is surprisingly little systematic data on to the pervasiveness or extent of the problem. It happens at the local level where few observe it, where those who do observe it are generally powerless to stop it, and where few, if any, attendance records are maintained that would provide a basis for intervention by higher authorities. Consequently, most of the data as to pervasiveness of the problem is anecdotal – but nevertheless real. There is widespread consensus that educator absenteeism is a major threat to educational quality and efficiency in many developing countries, South Africa being one of them.

Stress is currently a phenomenon that must be recognised and addresses in various professions. The teaching profession is no exception. In the past educators did not consider stress to be the primary cause when they needed to escape from the school environment, but rather claimed to be overworked in such a case. Some educators lack coping mechanisms to combat excess stress effectively. This in turn can lead to absenteeism (Mazibuko, 1993:186)

2.3.1 Categories

The following broad categories of absence can be identified:

- **Sickness absence**

According to Wolmarans (1994), sick-absence is a category of absence where the employee claims ill health as reason for his/her absence. In the case of genuinely ill employees, sick-absence carries the highest sanction from employers, but this is dependent on the notice given by the employee to the employer and by the production of a doctor's certificate.

- **Voluntary absenteeism/ Authorised absence**

Wolmarans (1994:16-21) explains that absence of this nature is authorised or is permitted. It is a category of absence where an excuse is offered and accepted by management for reasons other than sickness. The credibility of the excuse determines the classification of the incident of absence. The sanction and acceptance by management for voluntary absence can vary a great deal. If the employee gives prior notice of his/her intended absence, management provides a higher positive sanction.

Horne (1990:7-10) also refers to this term and describes it as being absent from work when you want or feel to do so, and having asked permission.

- **Involuntary/non-voluntary absenteeism**

Wolmarans (1994:16-21) points out that if the reason for absence is beyond the control of the employee, there is a greater sanction and acceptance than in the case of absence under the control of the employee. Most companies, however, try to emphasize to their employees the importance of prior notice. Normally such a request is included in the absence policy of the company.

In Horne's (1990:7-10) description, this term refers to not being at work or school because of reasons beyond your control.

- **Unexcused absence**

This form of absence carries no sanctions, i.e. authorisation from management, and is regarded as delinquent. It is perceived as unacceptable behaviour and is dealt with by means of progressive discipline and the principle of "no work, no pay" (Wolmarans, 1994:16-21).

- **Unpaid vacation**

The following procedures must be followed regarding the implementation of leave without pay: the employer must grant leave of absence from duty by an employee with due regard to the requirements of the employer or state educational institution concerned. Leave without pay will be implemented for

unauthorised absence duty. From the implementation of leave without pay, the following documentation must be submitted: the *Audi alterem partem* rules must be applied. This rule makes provision for the alleged guilty party of alleged unauthorised absence to, within a period of seven days, give reasons for his /her absence and explain conditions leading to his/her absence and explain conditions leading to his/her actions (Free State Department of Education, 2002:26).

2.3.2 Factors which influence absenteeism among educators

Educators who take time away from work through sickness present problems to school principals who must cover their work. Their absence will have an impact on learners and other educators, as well as on the resources available to schools (Bowers, 2001:1).

According to Skatun (2003: 1), it is well known that the social cost of illness and absenteeism is considerable. The amount of absenteeism in the US labour market, for instance, is estimated to account for roughly 2% of total working time. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that absenteeism and sick leave from work have received considerable attention, resulting in numerous studies. However, most of these investigations have been empirical in nature, and only a few papers have afforded attention to the theoretical analysis of sick leave and its consequences for payment structure.

Governments have long since realised that low educational quality has serious negative consequences on the continued development of other sectors of the economy (Chapman 1994:3). Improvements in health, agriculture and commerce all depend on an educated workforce. This has led to a renewed commitment in many countries to upgrade the quality and efficiency of education.

Upgrading educators is one of the most direct ways of influencing pedagogical practices at school and classroom level. Consequently, educator training is the single most widely employed strategy (by itself or with other strategies) to improve instructional quality in the Third World. However, in many countries, educators, once trained, tend to leave teaching. This has led to a widespread

interest in identifying ways that a country's investment in its educators can be protected (Chapman, 1994:3).

To a great extent, high levels of educator absenteeism and attrition can be explained by low educator morale, which, in turn, is due largely to (Chapman 1994: 3):

- a lack of financial and other incentives for educators;
- inappropriate recruitment and promotion policies; and
- weak administrative support for educators (e.g. late pay checks, poor communication, etc.)

According to Anon. (2001:54), every morning, in every school, educators record attendance. In the past, the school's average daily attendance dictated the amount of state funding the school would receive. If many learners were absent or chronically tardy, achievement levels suffered. As schools look to improve academic achievement, many are realizing the importance of attendance and acting accordingly. States are re-examining minimum attendance requirements, districts are reviewing attendance policies, and schools are reaching out to parents and the community. Unfortunately, when educators spend time getting a few students to catch up, instruction for the rest of the class suffers. To counter the effects of absenteeism and tardiness, states, districts and schools are making some changes. There are a number of ways in which schools can influence overall attendance positively and help those students who are chronically absent or late. Informing parents and the community about the school's attendance policy and the impact of missed instruction goes a long way to reduce absenteeism.

Educator absenteeism, however, is a complex issue and there are numerous contributing factors that play a role. The following factors could be identified from the literature study:

2.3.2.1 Alcohol consumption and drug abuse by educators

Many researchers have found that the abuse of alcohol brings about undesirable behaviour in people. To workers, as well as professionals, alcohol causes many problems and to the government and employers, it causes a loss of time, production and money. Alcohol consumption may increase employee absenteeism. SAMHSA (2002:7-8) indicates that employees are nearly twice more likely to call in sick the day after alcohol has been consumed. SAMHSA found that 69 of 280 employees reported at least one absence from work for illness during a one-month period. Among these employees, the average number of absences for the month was 2.5 and the average of days of alcohol use was 7.1. Of the 235 employees who reported drinking alcohol at least once during the month, the average number of days of drinking was 8.4.

Mears and Gatchel (1979:229-260) indicate that alcohol is a physiologically addicting drug. Chronic and heavy use can also lead to serious nutritional deficiencies, resulting in physical damage such as cirrhosis of the liver. Furthermore, Mears and Gatchel (1979:229-260) and Sarason and Sarason (1980: 358-385) agree that excessive problem-drinking on and off the job are costing American industries approximately one billion dollars a year. Besides this significant health hazard, abuse of alcohol intake impairs effectiveness.

Mears and Gatchel (1979:229-260) agree with Duke and Nowicki (1986:336-360) that alcoholism is not only an adult problem. It is becoming a significant problem among adolescents. The abuse of alcohol is increasing, especially among teenagers. By the time most adolescents graduate from high school, they have established a pattern of light to moderate drinking and this ultimately has an effect on their employment.

Bootzin and Acocella (1980:229-259) estimated that alcohol-related problems cost the American economy almost \$43 billion in 1975. Sarason and Sarason (1980:358-385) agree with Bootzin and Acocella in that abuse of alcohol cost the American economy a lot of money.

Most of this economic loss was concentrated in three areas: motor vehicle accidents, decreased work productivity and health problems. The largest portion of this loss is due to decreased work productivity. With drinking problems, workers are slower and less efficient, lose time on the job and lower the morale of their co-workers.

Alcohol misuse also affects schools. Educators have been reported to come to school late and leave early as result of alcohol abuse. Educators also send learners to buy liquor during school hours, and using liquor at school. This abuse of liquor makes them less efficient, lose time on the job and lower the morale of their co-workers (Anon, 2005:54)

2.3.2.2 Stress

Poussett and Hanse (2002:229-231) found in their research that ill-health and sickness-absence due to psychosocial stressors in the work environment constitutes a serious and increasing problem in contemporary working life. Theories that make predictions about antecedents to ill-health and sickness-absence often make the assumption that the relationships are the same in different occupational types.

Furthermore Poussett and Hanse (2002:230) found that the influence and control of work is assumed to provide protection from stress and disease, because the worker feel that he/she has the situation under control and can control the duration and the frequency of the load (Chapman, 1994; Winfield, 1991). Chapman (1994) and Winfield (1991) have shown that reduced job autonomy is associated with higher sickness-absence, in both cross-sectional and follow-up studies. In an early study based on workers in a highly mechanised production industry, it was found that physiological stress reactions indicated greater stress when the production process dictated the work pace.

The high-risk group excreted more catecholamine (adrenalin) compared with a control group, and was also found to have a higher general level of illness and experience a higher occurrence of symptoms such as back pain, headache and gastric ulcer, as well as considerably more absence due to

stress or fatigue (Poussett & Hanse, 2002:230). However, it is not entirely clear that the outcome differences between low and high risk groups can be attributed primarily to differences in perceived job control.

Poussett and Hanse (2002:230-231) indicate that work stress has become a major issue among employees in the advanced industrial societies. Stressful work environments are often incompatible with human physiological capabilities and psychological needs. Stress at work often depends on high job demands in relation to the worker's abilities or resources, frustrated aspirations and dissatisfaction with valued goals.

In their research, Norton and Scott (1994:2) studied some of the mediating social factors involved in linkage between stress and illness behaviour among urban public school educators. They found a low but statistically significant relationship between job stress and reported stress-induced illness. A second study hypothesis, stress-induced illness, is lower among educators assigned to schools where the principal is seen as supportive. However, a third hypothesis related to stress-induced illness and the presence of supportive co-workers was not supported. Unlike the supportive school principal, supportive co-workers did not reduce the level of stress-induced illness reported by educators. Shamian (2003:86), in her research among nurses, found that the top three reasons for high stress levels were exhaustion, burnout and frustration.

In their research Norton and Scott (1994:2), found that through the rapid spread of new technologies and the globalisation of economic development, profound changes in the labour market have been observed. Most notably, a segment of the work force, which is more privileged and has a stable employment (Godin & Kittel, 2003:1-2) and the other segment of a workforce which is characterised by instability, exposure to hazards and poor salaries lead to absenteeism. Structural unemployment, underemployment and forced early retirement have aggravated and continue to aggravate this situation of feeling uneasy at work in many of the advanced economies, including European countries. Consequences of this work environment can be seen in increased stress and higher job insecurity, coupled with lower job satisfaction.

Haswel and Matt (2003:2-3) indicate that 6,5 million sick days from work are taken every year as a result of stress alone and urges employers to take stress as seriously as other workplace hazards. An estimated half -million individuals report experiencing stress at a level they believe makes them ill.

Prolonged work-related stress can lead to poor mental health, heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal disturbance and miscellaneous minor illnesses. It is often associated with an increase in unhelpful health behaviours - skipping breakfast, drinking too much alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Stress reduces staff morale and leads to poor performance. This can lead to staff seeking alternative employment, leaving the employer with the additional costs of recruitment and training (Haswel & Matt, 2003:2-3).

An increase in sickness-absence can also have a domino effect - one person goes sick, which leads to their workload being shared among the remaining staff. They are unable to cope, which affects their health and this lead to greater absenteeism (Haswel & Matt, 2003:2-3).

Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2004:261-264) find that the transformation in the education system and schools seems to have confused educators as to their roles and even their own identities. Educators are experiencing stress-related problems. These problems manifest in various forms of destructive behaviour such as alcohol abuse, absenteeism and destructive relations between educators and learners, educators and colleagues, and educators and their families. These problems are usually indicators/symptoms of personal health at risk which leads to stress-related diseases.

Van der Linde (2001:376-379) states that stress, which finds its origins in successful activities, brings about a feeling of contentment and adds youthful vigour. As a matter of fact, Van der Linde calls stress "the spice of life".

These characteristics also present themselves in education. For instance, the educator should encounter challenges to motivate him/her, such as putting effort into the preparation of lessons. Success, love and achievement are examples of pleasant stress. The total absence of stress is just as disastrous in life as too much of it (Van der Linde, 2001:376-379). Thus too little work

and too much monotony may bring forth the same physiological and psychological symptoms as too much work. Van der Linde maintains that being subjected to stress daily makes one exceptionally "alert" and keeps the senses and mind particularly sharp. A life without stress is impossible. All people experience stress. When considering the demands made by educational institutions, teaching involves great responsibility on behalf of the educator. The educator cannot leave young children on their own for even a short while. For this reason, teaching makes great demands on one's health and stress-related diseases abound. Too much distress may cause diseases and even death. Van der Linde (2001:376-379) further mentions that education is an emotionally exhausting profession. As much as one thousand hundred interpersonal interactions may occur in one day in the life of an educator. Van der Linde remarks that an educator who experiences stress may often be absent from work and tends to be unproductive, experience lack of patience, declining professional achievement, carelessness regarding appearance, disregard for time, coupled with inordinate clock-watching and withdrawal from personnel activities.

Lindeboom and Kerkhofs (2003:10) suggest that educators are more frequently and more persistently exposed to stressful situations than are their counterparts in the private sector. This is partly ascribed to difficulties with teaching itself, but more to problems encountered in the work environment. Relation problems with colleagues, the work ethics within the school, the school management and limited opportunities for promotion are considered to be the major determinants of absenteeism.

2.3.2.3 Job satisfaction

Scott and McClellan (2001:232) indicate that pain-avoidance and motivational models of absenteeism imply that if work is painful or unstimulating, employees tend to avoid work. The possibility exists that men and women respond to a dissatisfying work environment in different ways. Scott and McClellan (2001:232) further find that there are significant correlations between absenteeism and all dimensions of satisfaction for men. For women, they only find one significant relationship, which is between absenteeism and

satisfaction with pay. Men relate absenteeism negatively with attitudes towards satisfaction with supervision, the work group, wages and promotions, and overall satisfaction.

Furthermore, men may perceive work as the central part of their life, more so than women, and as a result they would be more likely to withdraw from work (be absent) when they are dissatisfied. Finally, because women are absent more frequently for home-related reasons, they would not be able to take time off for job-related reasons without having their attendance rates threaten their employment. Thus, job satisfaction may have a significant negative relationship to absenteeism for men, but not for women.

Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2004:263-264) find that management is reactive and not proactive. There are many problems at school which only a few educators are trying to address. A lot of educators are in the process of leaving their school.

Educators seem to be plastering the cracks that are in the wall. Educators are trying to make a positive difference, but get no encouragement from management. They only receive negative criticism. Management is not supportive. Educators are not getting support from the administration and management and this could lead to stress and health-related problems (Myburgh and Poggenpoel, 2004:263-264).

2.3.2.4 Ill-health

Bowers (2001: 1) highlights the fact that those educators who take time away from work through sickness present problems to school principals who must cover their work. Their absence will have an impact on learners and other educators, as well as on the money available to schools. When educators become too ill to teach, their absence before retirement may affect the organisation of the school, while their premature retirement due to disability can have adverse consequences both for the individual and the education system as a whole.

An educator who is absent through illness or any other cause or who leaves teaching because of persistent illness, is lost to the children whom he/she would otherwise have taught.

One indicator of the lack of employee health and well-being is absenteeism from work, (McHugh, 2002:2). There are many reasons why employees may have been absent from work. They may be experiencing ill-health, or aspects of the work environment could cause individuals to absent themselves from their job. Regardless of the reason, absenteeism from work is considered to represent an enormous cost for organisations and is cited as being indicative of deeply-rooted organisational problems which are symptomatic of organisational ill-health.

Poussett and Hanse (2002:1) indicate that ill-health and sickness absence due to psychosocial stressors in the work environment are serious and increasing problems in contemporary working life. Educators do not escape these stressors.

2.3.2.5 HIV/Aids

HIV/AIDS does not only impact on the infected person. The HIV/Aids pandemic has far-reaching implications. Therefore it can be categorised on its own.

The quality of education is negatively affected in AIDS-affected areas by the decreasing supply of trained educators and the loss of educator productivity when they become ill (Hepburn, 2001:92-93). As a result, parents and care-givers choose not to educate the children because educational materials are rare, educators are often absent and the learning environment is disorganised.

Hepburn (2001:92-93) indicates that high educator mortality rates have a serious impact on the future and quality of primary education, and without trained educators it is difficult to maintain high quality instruction and keep schools open. In 1998 Zambian educators' deaths were equivalent to the loss of approximately two-thirds of the annual output of newly qualified educators.

Overall, there was no net gain of educators in the educational system that continues to grow. When educators become ill, their teaching capacity decreases, further limiting the quality of instruction. As HIV progresses into full-blown AIDS, educators are often forced to take long absences to recuperate from illnesses.

Since substitute educators are rare, classes are often suspended. If educators are able to attend classes physically, the emotional stress is traumatic and lesson preparation, homework correction and classroom interaction are often a last priority. While estimates of educator mortality vary from country to country, a striking trend towards increased educator HIV infection levels and mortality is emerging.

Shaeffer (2004:2-3) indicates that HIV/AIDS may affect the supply of education through deaths of personnel, school closures and reduced budgets for education. Educators and other education personnel are not immune to HIV infection; indeed, in some instances, HIV seroprevalence may be higher among educators than among other groups. Educators' higher incomes and greater mobility are important risk factors; furthermore they may be posted to areas away from their families. The result of HIV infection will be:

- absenteeism caused by illness, tending the sick and attending funerals;
- loss of staff due to increased mortality; and
- transfers from (or refusals to be posted to) heavily affected areas.

Grey (2001:1) further supports Hepburn in mentioning that HIV/AIDS is killing many educators. Diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and pneumonia are exactly the opportunistic diseases that those with HIV/AIDS are extremely vulnerable too. While life expectancy for average South Africans is between 60 and 65, for people infected with HIV/AIDS it is 41 years. According to a recent South African Democratic Teacher's Union (SADTU) report on the issue, 1 011 educators who were members of SADTU died of natural causes between June 1, 2000 and May 31, 2001. The number represents an increase in deaths from the previous survey and the report concludes that

more educators are dying, and dying young (the average age is just under 39). Department officials generally prefer to avoid concluding that HIV/AIDS infections are taking a high toll on educators, although most schools include HIV/AIDS programmes in their curricula.

The Voice (2004:24) states that poverty reduces children's chances of attending school, which in turn lowers their chances of gaining employment and increases their risk of HIV infection. Children often drop out of school to care for sick family members or their younger siblings, or to look for work. Children lose the chance to "be children" because of these additional burdens.

The Voice (2004:8) further states that the impact of HIV/AIDS on education is such that in numerous industrialising countries, the epidemic ravages the investments made in education services. In Malawi, 14% of the population is affected by Aids. Parents and educators die each day, and children stop school because they are ill themselves or they have to tend to bed-ridden family members. UNAIDS estimates that out of 2,8 million primary school pupils, 52000 would lose an educator due to AIDS.

2.3.2.6 Low morale

Rafferty (2002a:4-5) points out that when the educator has a low morale, he/she will absent herself/himself from work. There are both internal and external reactions to low morale. Factors related to internal reactions are confusion, insecurity, frustration, lack of confidence, fear of supervision and an attitude of futility. As a results of low morale, the educators would resists change, and the school would have a high rate of educator absenteeism. Rafferty (2002a:4-5) points out the external reactions to low morale: attitude, self-esteem, and self-concept.

Rafferty (2002a:1-6) indicates that there are both internal and external reactions to low morale. The internal characteristics of low morale are confusion, insecurity, frustration, lack of confidence, fear of supervision and an attitude of futility. As a result of low morale, the educators would resist change and the school would have a high rate of educator absenteeism.

Rafferty (2002a:1-2) furthermore indicates that external reactions to low morale are associated with an individual's attitudes, self-esteem, and self-concept. Reactions of low morale refer to relationships with other educators and administrators. These external reactions could result from some internal feelings of educators, such as insecurity, frustrations and lack of confidence. Educators with low morale would be engaged in backbiting (the slandering of an absent party), open hostility, bickering, communicating resentments, forming cliques and generally showing a lack of consideration for others. In addition, the educators recognize that a number of educators would react to low morale by resigning their positions, thus causing high educator turnover.

The majority of organizations comment that employees' low morale is the root cause of absenteeism (McHugh, 2002:5-6). And this low morale is attributed to changes that have occurred within local government organisations such as compulsory competitive tendering and best value. For many employees coping with such change has been difficult. They have found themselves having to work within a more pressurising work environment where they are required to become more accountable, efficient and effective. It is frequently argued that the demands being placed on district councils necessitate a change in organisational culture reflected in a shift in the mindset, attitudes, values and beliefs of employees. The effective management of people is a core part of any change of management activity. Thus it is argued that the low employee morale present within many of the participating organisations is partly attributable to the way in which these organisations have attempted to address the changes occurring within their operating environments.

Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2004:262-263) further find that educators' inputs are not recognised. Whatever solutions they may come up with, will not be approved by management, because it thinks that it has all the ideas, and the educators does not know much. Management reprimands the educators' initiatives. Educators are overloaded by work and management team has the lighter load. The management team does not fully motivate educators. Instead it is looking for mistakes. When an educator does well, no one notices, but when he/she makes mistakes, everybody comments.

2.3.2.7 Organisational climate

In general terms, organisational climate is one of the components that determine quality of working life. The quality of working life is thus determined by how an organisation manages to fulfil certain minimum conditions essential in creating a pleasant working environment (Mentz, 2002:147-149).

Norton and Scott (1998:3) define organizational climate as the collective personality of a school, the atmosphere as characterised by the social and professional interactions within it. They find that perceived organisational support increases an employee's effort to meet the organization's goals through improved attendance. The strength of an employee's work effort is found to be dependent on the treatment received by the organization. Employees who believe that the organisation values their contributions and care about their well-being, tend to be absent less often than others. Collegial relations and leadership style of the principal are found to be associated with the rate of educators' absence. In another study (Chapman, 1994:2-5) indicates that educators who have supportive principals are less likely to report stress-related illnesses than those with unsupportive principals.

To Bowers (2001:145) it seems a truism that a school where educators feel happy and appreciated will be less likely to have high levels of staff absenteeism, than one where the reverse is the case. When job satisfaction is positive, staff personnel are motivated towards serving the organisation and goal achievement. Such an attitude leads to improved attendance.

Norton and Scott (1998:3) point out that organisational climate has been defined as the collective personality of a school; the atmosphere as characterised by the social and professional interactions within it. They mention that perceived organisational support increases an employee's efforts to meet the organisation's goals through greater attendance. The strength of an employee's work effort is found to be dependent on the treatment received from the organization. Employees who believe that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being tends to be absent less often than others.

2.3.2.8 Discipline among learners

Blandford (1998:1) indicates that when the educator is absent from school, it causes lack of discipline for his/her learners. If this absenteeism continues, the learners will continue to lack discipline which will impact negatively on other classes. According to Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2004:265) management is partly to blame at some schools, with reference to learners' behaviour. Learners may fight educators and not be punished. This causes the affected educator to absent himself from school.

2.3.2.9 Trauma in classrooms

Once educators know they are HIV-positive, many are likely to lose interest in continuing professional development. Even among educators who believe they are not infected (or do not want to be tested), morale is likely to fall significantly as they cope emotionally and financially with sickness and death among relatives, friends and colleagues, and wrestle with uncertainty about their own future and their dependants (Coombe, 2000:14). Educational management capacity is fragile at national, provincial and district levels. At school level, many principals have not yet received sufficient support or training to enable them to be creative and supportive to HIV-infected educators.

Apart from managers, the system will lose experienced educator-mentors and educators at universities and colleges whose career experience cannot be replaced. Younger and less experienced educators will take their places. As a result, the quality of educators or education will decline drastically.

Quality educators and officials will be lost to education through death, illness or departure for other jobs or the private sector. The capacity of educator education programmes to keep up with heavy losses will be undermined by their own staff losses. Rates of enrolment in post-secondary institutions will decline as secondary school output and quality goes down. And as higher education institutions lose academic staff (Van Vuuren, 2001:80), HIV/AIDS may make it even more difficult to sustain the structures necessary to provide

formal education of the scope and quality envisioned by democratic government policies.

Incalculable psychosocial impact will overwhelm educators, children and their families. At the very least, school effectiveness will decline where a significant proportion of educators, officials and children are ill, lack morale and are unable to concentrate.

2.3.2.10 Lack of economic incentives for attendance

Chapman (1994:30-32) points out the root causes and the enabling factors of absenteeism by mentioning that economic incentives for attendance are weak. In some countries, pay scales are so low that educators must have supplemental employment in order to live. For example, in pre-war Somalia, educators' salaries provided only about 12% of the basic cost of living for a family. As a consequence, educators are forced to maintain outside employment, which often conflicts with school responsibilities, leading to high rates of absenteeism.

Godin and Kittel (2003:1-2) agrees by indicating that aspects such as instability, exposure to hazards and poor salaries lead to increased absenteeism.

2.3.2.11 Government policies that encourage absenteeism

Chapman (1994:30-32) further points out that another factor is that government follows policies that encourage absenteeism, e.g. in pre-civil war Liberia, pay check distribution required that educators leave the school, often for a week at a time, to travel to the District Education Office to pick up their pay cheques. It was also often necessary for educators to either pay a large service fee to a local merchant or, alternatively, to travel to a larger city where there was a bank, resulting in further time away from school.

While the government policy had been designed to help to avoid corruption by having educators pick up their own cheques, its unintended impact was to

increase educator absenteeism. The absenteeism was hard to combat, since it was caused by the interaction of government policies.

Skatun, (2003: 379-380) shows that absenteeism may be aggravated by the payment of sick leave and the granting of it.

2.3.2.12 Lack of supervision within schools

Chapman (1994:31-32) notes that lack of supervision within the school causes absenteeism, because classroom teaching occurs in relative isolation from central, regional and even district authority. Few people outside the school or community know much about the diligence with which individual educators approach their work. It falls to those at school and in the community to monitor the day-to-day behaviour of educators. Another factor is that of lack of local community influence over educator behaviour. Often, in countries with a highly centralised education system, only the central education ministry has any direct authority over the terms of educators' employment. Local communities have little or no influence over the educators' terms of employment or formal ability to sanction or reward their day-to-day behaviour. The last factor is lack of appropriate sanctions. Even if district or regional officials recognize the problem and wish to address it, they often lack an appropriate range of intermediate responses (Mazibuko, 1993:15-45).

2.3.2.13 Lack of appropriate sanctions

Chapman (1994:30-32) indicates that even if district or regional officials recognizes the problem and wish to address it, they often lack an appropriate range of intermediate responses. There are few manageable interventions between simple reprimands, on one hand, and firing the educator, on the other hand. Reprimands are too often ignored and terminating employment is seen as overkill (especially if replacement educators are hard to find). While assessing fines or withholding salary is possibilities, the mechanics of implementing those sanctions are complicated and the punishment comes long after the infraction.

Within individual communities, educator absenteeism tends to be chronic and unpunished in three types of situations. First, community members may be so sympathetic with the plight of educators they acknowledge the legitimacy of educator absenteeism. For example, if educator salaries are below subsistence levels, community members may not complain about the time away from class that educators take to work on their farm. Indeed, they might not be able to imagine a situation in which the educator would be able to have consistent attendance, and for them how would the educator live? The community tolerates educator absenteeism from recognition that the educator has no choice.

Second, community members do not realise that regular attendance constitutes effective school. While this condition is getting rarer, it still occurs in rural areas in which, current students are the first generation to attend school. Parents may have such little first-hand experience with schools that they take educator behaviour for granted. They have no reason to expect anything different; they have no basis for comparison (Chapman, 1994:30-32).

Third, absenteeism becomes habitual when educators feel no loyalty to the children or community to which they are assigned. This can happen when educators lack both legal and emotional ties to the local community in which, they work. In most developing countries, educators are employees of the central government and, in many of those countries; only central government officials can sanction their professional behaviour. Particularly when educators are assigned to schools of communities of different ethnic or tribal orientation, they may not feel great allegiance to the community, or vice versa. The community may lack any meaningful way of rewarding or sanctioning educator behaviour. Indifference sets in (Chapman, 1994: 31-32).

2.3.2.14 Gender issues

Norton and Scott (2004:1-2) report that women are more likely to be absent from work than men. The reason is that women take care of a sick child or dependant adult. Most women are likely to report a major illness than men.

Norton and Scott (2004:1-2) further found that stress and illness are more frequent among women than men educators.

2.3.2.15 Lack of local community influence

The other factors leading to absenteeism are lack of local community influence over educator behaviour and lack of appropriate sanctions. Often countries with a highly centralized education ministry have direct authority over terms of educators' employment. Local communities have little or no influence over educators' terms of employment or the formal ability to punish or reward their day – to – day behaviour (such as regular attendance). District or regional officials, even if they recognize the problem and wish to address it, often lack an appropriate range of intermediate responses (Chapman, 1994:30-32).

Brown and Sarah (1999:1-2) point out that overtime may be associated with increased absence, since it may actually lead to less flexible working arrangements and longer working days. Brown and Sarah (1999:1-2) also argue the essence of the paradox which exists if a firm provides overtime to attendees in order to compensate for absentees. Employees working additional overtime hours may be able to “afford” absence. Such an effect may lead to another group of workers' overtime and so on. This tendency has been called the “snowball effect”.

2.3.3 Trends concerning absenteeism of employees

Literature has revealed that there are particular trends that appear to have developed concerning absenteeism.

Vaananen, *et al.* (2003:8-10) noted that during the past two decades, the interest related to women's health has grown. Studies have shown that women usually have poorer self-rated health than men, as measured by the number of reported symptoms. Interestingly, the sources of stress seem to vary between women and men. Women seem to have fewer coping resources in stressful situations due to their various roles of demand, and this seems to affect their health. Female educators are absent more often per year than

men based on this research. Godin and Kittel (2003:2-4) have also come to the same conclusion as Vaananen and others. Lindeboom, et al. (2000: 10) noted that the age effect reaches its peak at age forty-one. This implies, for instance, equal age effects for a twenty-one year old educator and an elderly educator of sixty-one. This might reflect what is sometimes referred to as the survivor effect. As in most other countries, the participation rates of elderly workers have declined dramatically in the past decades. The share of older workers (55 years and over) in the education sector amounts to only 5%. The majority of older educators either retire or change professions considerably before the mandatory retirement age.

Vaananen *et al.* (2003:820) highlight that in the present study women had higher levels of sickness absenteeism during the baseline and follow-up, and they had some what more physical and psychological symptoms. There is plenty of literature showing that women carry a heavier burden at home. High demands from various areas of life can be manifested at work as short absences, but they can lead to more severe health outcomes. Further, research evidence shows that women, more likely than men, tend to resort to help-seeking behaviour at the stage of recognizing health problems. Illness can be more stigmatising for men, and women are more willing to report symptoms than men.

Blyth (2003:2) point out that absenteeism in the company they researched was based on marriage difficulties.

Shamian, J. (2003:81) points out that Health care workers generally, and nurses in particular experience higher rates of absenteeism and injury than other types of Canadian workers. The health of nurses, and their availability for work is a major concern of employers, funders, and nurses themselves.

Thompson, *et al.* (2000:1–2) noted that there was a relationship between age and absenteeism. Older workers have fewer spells of absence because of having greater family and financial responsibilities that would deter them from staying at home as the result of minor illness.

Vaananen *et al.* (2003: 820) highlight the fact that, according to the present study, women have higher levels of sickness absenteeism during the baseline and follow – up, and they have somewhat more physical and psychological symptoms. There is plenty of literature showing that women carry a heavier burden at home. High demands from various areas of life can be manifested at work as short absences, but they can lead to more severe health outcomes. Further research evidence shows that women, more likely than men, tend to resort to help-seeking behaviour at the stage of recognizing health problems. Illness can be more stigmatising for men, and women are more willing to report symptoms than men.

Bowers (2001:152-155) points out that ill-health retirement generally occurs among older workers. This occurs when the old educator is continuously ill and demotivated, and is experiencing an associated sense of no longer being needed.

Norton and Scott (1994:1-2) note that the number of absences claimed by female educators increases with age. Male educators, on the other hand, claim more days in their thirties than at any other age. There is a significant difference in the occurrence of absence for men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-nine years. Overall, male educators have fewer absences than female educators. The average days of absence for females are 5, 29 per year; males average 3, 39 days. The researchers have found that the greater the proportion of educators older than age fifty-five, the lower the usage of sick leave days. This is due to the expected pay-off for their retirement in the near future.

Cunningham and James (2000:3) find that a total of 17% of the organizations recorded relatively low rates of absence of 2% or less (N = 8), and a further 50% reported absence levels of greater than 2%, but less than 5% (N = 24). In other words, 67% of the sample gave absence rates at or around the averages obtained in the recent surveys conducted by the CBI and the Industrial Society.

Norton and Scott (1998:1-2) further find that educators are absent more frequently on Wednesdays than on any other day. Contrary to popular belief, Mondays are the least claimed day of absence. November, January and April are peak months for educator absences. Educators nearing retirement are often absent more frequently than others. Educators who have accumulated the maximum number of sick-leave days tend to use additional days indiscriminately rather than lose them. These researchers also found that the greater the proportion of educators older than 55 years, the lower the usage of sick-leave days. Again individuals who receive low performance ratings are associated with higher levels of absenteeism. Schools employees rated as unsatisfactory or doubtful are absent significantly more days than those rated satisfactory. And in the case of females, low ability to control anxiety is associated with absenteeism.

2.4 THE EXTENT OF ABSENTEEISM

Wolmarans (1994:116-117) finds that the lack of proper records and collective measurement techniques on absenteeism lead to the real extent of absenteeism being hidden and underestimated by Eastern Cape manufacturing companies. Organisations keep inefficient records, as well as measurements on absenteeism. There are only 987 United States firms who maintained and analysed detailed attendance records.

Cilliers (1977:29) noted that weekly paid workers were found to have a higher absence rate than monthly paid workers. A progressive charting of the monthly absence rates indicate a general pattern logically consistent with the progression of the seasons. At the beginning of the year many new workers enter the labour force and during the first three months problems of adjustment inevitably affect attendance at work. After March workers “settle” into the routine of work and absence rates tend to decline. With the onset of winter, illness affects attendance behaviour more severely, and absence rates tend to increase. This research was done in Cape Industries. Vaananen et al. (2003:812-813) confirm what Cilliers has noted in his research about the extent of absenteeism.

Bowers (2001:143) reports that absenteeism of educators is causing a major problem to the management of the school and affects the work of other educators and learners. Illness-absence is the dominant factor in the absence of educators.

Norton and Scott (1994:1) point out that the problem of educator absenteeism is an increasing concern among the nation's educators. In a state wide study of school personnel directors reported that seventy-one percentage of them reported educator absenteeism as one of the leading problems facing them.

Hepburn (2001:91-93) reports that many children in Sub-Saharan Africa who are attending school are affected by the absence of educators due to illness that is not curable. In Zambia in 1998, educator deaths were equivalent to the loss of approximately two-thirds of the annual output of newly qualified educators. Overall, there was no net gain of educators in an educational system that continues to grow.

In South Africa, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, City Press (2003) reports that more than 680 educators, more than fifty-five a month, died during service in 2000. Most died from unspecified illnesses, and the average age at the time of death was 36. Between 1999 and 2000, there was a massive seventy percent increase in deaths of female educators between the ages of thirty and thirty-four. It is clear that absenteeism of educators is a big problem, irrespective of whether it is genuine or not, and it affects many countries, even in industries.

Wolmarans (1994:148-152) find that to determine the extent of the absenteeism at a company two resources are needed. The Gross Absence Rate (GAR) and the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR) can be used as measure.

2.4.1 Gross Absence Rate

The Gross Absence Rate (GAR) was broken down into the following categories of absence (Wolmarans, 1994:148-152):

- Sick-absence
- Absence without permission
- Absence with permission
- Late coming

A percentage (%) of the total time lost was used to indicate the ratio relationship between the different categories.

2.4.1.1 Analysis of time lost to all absences:

- 1) Average time lost to **sick-absence** per employee for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost to sick-absenteeism}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

- 2) Average time lost to **absence with permission** per employee for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost to absence with permission}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

- 3) Average time lost to **absence without permission** per employee for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost to absence without permission}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

- 4) Average time lost to **late coming** per employee for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost late comings}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

- 5) Average time lost to **all absence** per employee for a year

Formula:
$$\frac{\text{Total time lost to all absence}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

6) Average time lost to **all absence** per employee for a year

Formula:
$$\frac{\text{*Total time lost to all absence}}{\text{Average days in employment}}$$

*Exclude time lost to late comings.

2.4.2 Absence Frequency Rate

This measure was broken down into the following categories of absence:

- Sick-absence
- Absence without permission
- Absence with permission
- Late coming

A percentage (%) of the total time lost was used to indicate the ratio relationship between the different categories.

2.4.2.1 Analysis of time lost to all absences:

1) Average length of a **sick-absence** incident for a year

Formula:
$$\frac{\text{Total time lost to sick-absenteeism}}{\text{Total incidents of sick-absenteeism}}$$

2) Average length of a **absence with permission** incident for a year

Formula:
$$\frac{\text{Total time lost to absence with permission}}{\text{Total incidents of sick-absenteeism}}$$

3) Average length of a **absence without permission** incident for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost to absence without permission}}{\text{Total incidents of sick-absenteeism}}$$

4) Average length of a **late coming** incident for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{Total time lost to late coming}}{\text{Total incidents of sick-absenteeism}}$$

5) Average length of an **absence** incident for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{*Total time lost to all absenteeism}}{\text{**Total incidents of all absenteeism}}$$

*Exclude time lost to late coming

**Exclude the incidents of late coming

6) Average length of an **absence** incident for a year

$$\text{Formula: } \frac{\text{*Total time lost to all absenteeism}}{\text{**Total incidents of all absenteeism}}$$

*Include time lost to late coming

**Include the incidents of late coming

2.4.3 General Information

In conceptualising and understanding the results yielded by the statistical analysis, the following information is essential:

- The statistical analysis covers a period of two years from 14/07/1991 to 19/06/1993.
- The company's monitoring system divides the year into thirteen periods of twenty workdays in each period.

- A week (five days) consists of forty – four hours, an average of 8.8 hours per day, and is equal to 528 minutes.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the nature of absenteeism was explored. It became clear that absenteeism is a big problem for industries and education in general. Many industries have already started to measure the extent and the trends of absenteeism. These industries have discovered that women workers are more absent than men and that age also counts in absenteeism. Many old workers above the age of fifty-five are absenting themselves from work or even retiring to take other professions. It has been found that many more hours are lost due to absenteeism as compared to hours worked. This is not the problem of industries alone. Even the Education Department encounters the same problem. Education districts are faced with many sick leave forms of educators and this affects the learners negatively. Some industries and education departments have come up with strategies for controlling this absenteeism, like introducing incentives for those workers and educators who showed good attendance. They hope that the different measures are being taken to address the problem of absenteeism and will decrease it to an acceptable level.

From the deliberations that have taken place, it is clear that absenteeism of educators causes problems for the State, parents, learners and the industry. Absenteeism costs the State a lot of money in the sense that the State must pay the newly recruited educator while the other one is absent and, at the same time future learners will be half educated so that the State will have to retrain these learners.

Different researchers have found that many different things cause absenteeism. Among educators, the researchers found that, among other things, low morale (believed to be brought on by an unhealthy atmosphere) is not conducive for educating. Leadership which is not supportive also causes absenteeism of educators. Educators feel the stress and, as a result, they

tend to abuse alcohol. This abuse of alcohol ultimately makes them ignore their work.

Lack of incentives and other policies of the State also cause educators to abstain from their work. It is a known fact that when educators complete their training, they search for other green pastures and schools are left with shortages of educators. This ultimately forces the State to reconsider those educators who have retired or about to retire. The State must come up with ways of keeping educators at school and help the principals to exercise more authority to solve this problem of absenteeism. Another problem the State must cope with is the illness of educators. With the escalation of AIDS, which affects many educators, the learners are left alone in many parts of the country. Even some of those who are new in the field are already infected with AIDS. These educators do not last long in their work because they have to be absent from work very often or neglect their work when they are present.

Heavy losses among educators can have either positive or negative consequences. In a positive sense, attrition may be one way of naturally getting rid of incompetent educators and hiring new educators who may be competent and may introduce new programme contents, and new policies and procedures to existing programmes.

In the next chapter the empirical research will be discussed. Attention will be given to the research design and the questionnaire as a measuring instrument.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters form a background to the investigation found in this research. Chapter two provided a theoretical background to the nature of absenteeism in education. It clearly illustrated that absenteeism of educators should be investigated by the researcher. Chapter two also gave an overview of factors which influence absenteeism among educators.

The substantive literature study, as well as the preliminary research, helped to identify some of the crucial issues pertaining to the topic, as well as to reflect shortfalls in the current knowledge on the absenteeism of educators.

As the empirical research will be discussed in this chapter, attention will be on the research design and the questionnaire as a measuring instrument, through which the presentation and analysis of the responses will be explained. The reason for the choice and type of questionnaire will be given.

Through the empirical research, the researcher wants to prove the truth of the discoveries from the literature study and estimate the impact of educator absenteeism on the education of children in the Northern Free State Province.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a blueprint for the conducting of a study that maximises control over factors that could interfere with the study's desired outcome (Burns & Grove, 1997:50).

3.2.1 The quantitative survey

Quantative research was selected as the most suitable research design for the purpose of this study. The quantative survey generalises the outcome and involves the generation of numerical data to address the research objectives.

A quantitative survey will be used to explore and describe the phenomena in real life by using numbers to collect research data. It is therefore suitable to the aims of this study as it would assist in identifying possible reasons for the absenteeism of educators.

According to Louw and Edwards (1997:36) and Delport (2002:172), this type of research has advantages, as well as certain disadvantages:

3.2.2 Advantages of the quantitative survey

- The major advantage of the quantitative survey is its economic nature. The researcher does not have to drive to the respondents. It yields the maximum number of factors or bits of data. However, the economy is gained via built-in limitations on the depth of the data obtained.
- The respondents may consult with others, review records, think about a question before answering and interrupt the process of completing the instrument if necessary.
- It is a useful way to obtain information about sensitive issues.
- It provides a basis of comparing results with one another.
- Numbers can be subjected to mathematical procedures and dealt with on a computer, so quantitative methods provide ways to deal with large volumes of data.
- Statistical techniques permit hypotheses to be tested rigorously.

3.2.3 Disadvantages of the quantitative survey

- Data converted to numbers is removed from the actual behaviour and experience of the participant and the results often fail to show the true nature of data that have been quantified.
- Many complex psychological phenomena are difficult to quantify and emphasising quantitative research may keep the researcher's attention on simple and superficial aspects of human nature.

However, despite the above disadvantages, the questionnaire still remains the instrument best suited to the purpose of this study as it provides complete anonymity to the respondents.

3.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire used in this study will be structured in a way that caters for principals, deputy principals, heads of departments, as well as for educators.

The aim of the questionnaire is to establish the causes of absenteeism.

3.3.1 Types of questionnaires

3.3.1.1 Mailed questionnaire

It is a questionnaire sent by mail in the hope that the respondent will complete and return it. Here the researcher and the respondent are physically removed from one another (Grinnell, 1993:216-217).

3.3.1.2 Personal questionnaire

The questionnaire is handed to the respondent to complete it on his/her own, but the researcher is available in case problems are encountered. The researcher remains in the background and can at most, encourage the respondent with a few words to continue with his/her contribution to the subject.

3.3.1.3 Questionnaire delivered by hand

The questionnaire is delivered to the respondent by hand to be completed and then collected later. The agreement must be reached around the collection of the questionnaire.

3.3.1.4 Telephonic questionnaire

The researcher and the respondent discuss the questionnaire over the phone. The questionnaire must have clear instructions, because the researcher's time is limited.

3.3.1.5 Group-administered questionnaire

Members of a group who are present complete the questionnaire (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:52-156).

In this study, the personal questionnaire was used in order to ensure better feedback.

3.3.2 The format of the questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire is to obtain information from principals, deputy-principals, heads of department and educators. The information is needed to find out whether there are support services for principals, deputy-principals, educators, learners, teaching activities and structures. The aim of the questionnaire is to find out to which extent absenteeism of educators is affecting education. The format of the questionnaire will be influenced by whether it will be a mailed, telephonic, group-administered or other type of questionnaire, as well as where, under what circumstances and by whom it will be completed.

All questionnaires should, however, be accompanied by a covering letter. In the covering letter, the person or organisation undertaking the research must be identified. A short description of the purpose of the study must be given in order to motivate respondents to give their co-operation to the investigation. The covering letter must give an indication of the importance of the study, as well as for whom it is of special importance. The covering letter should also give an indication of how the respondent came to be involved in the investigation. (See 4.8, 4.9 and Appendix.)

3.3.3 Construction of a questionnaire

Fasou-Amoah (1999:105) states that constructing a questionnaire requires considerable time, planning and thought. Framing questions to obtain honest answers is an act and therefore the researchers should explore their experiences, literature and other questionnaires thoroughly so as to frame questions according to the precise variables which concern the test in depth:

The following guidelines were considered in the compilation of the questionnaire (Fasou-Amoah, 1999:105):

- Only items that relate directly to the objectives of the research must be included.
- The questions in the questionnaire should be clear, brief and straightforward.
- Each question should be limited to a single idea only.
- Biased questions must be avoided.
- Short items should preferably be used.
- Questions should be drawn up in such a way that they would be easy to answer.

These guidelines were taken into consideration when constructing the questionnaire for this study (see Addendum C).

3.3.4 Steps taken to ensure the completion of the questionnaire

For the purpose of this research, the questionnaires were designed to be clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. The design of the questionnaires is intended to minimise potential errors from respondents and coders. Since the participation of the respondents in this survey was voluntary, questionnaires were designed so as to engage their interest and encourage their co-operation.

After considering the advantages of a questionnaire as a measuring instrument, it was decided to deliver the questionnaires to the principals of the schools participating in this research. The principals distributed the questionnaires to the educators and deputy-principals.

The completed questionnaires were placed in a specific container designed, and collected by the researcher on a specific predetermined date.

3.3.5 Advantages of selecting the questionnaire

The questionnaire as an instrument of quantitative research displays advantages and disadvantages.

According to Burns and Grove (1997: 358-359), the questionnaire has the following advantages:

- A questionnaire as a measuring instrument is more effective than an interview.
- It is more economical than an interview.
- Many people can be easily contacted in this fashion.
- Responses can be easily analysed.
- The standardised instructions allow the respondents to answer what is expected from them.

3.3.6 Disadvantages of selecting the questionnaire

- It is difficult to determine the reliability of a postal questionnaire.
- The correctness of the answers is difficult to determine.
- The respondent can interpret the questions wrongly.
- The questionnaire can be completed by someone other than the respondent.
- No provision is made for the independent opinion of the respondents.

The questionnaire is deemed suitable for this specific survey because all the educators could be reached easily. The respondents could complete the questionnaires in their own time and responses can be easily analysed.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study provides the researcher with a chance of exploring and field-testing the questionnaire. A major pre-test questionnaire offers the advantage of being able to refine the techniques associated with the study (Delpont, 2002:172).

Five pilot questionnaires were prepared and sent to school principals. This was done in order to improve the reliability and validity of the items and to decide on the form in which questions should be presented. After the questionnaires were completed, they were taken to the supervisor of the researcher. The pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire for feasibility or semantic problems. As already indicated in Chapter 1, no flaws were indicated.

3.5 THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

After the pilot study had been conducted and observations noted, the final questionnaire was designed and administered to principals, deputy-principals, heads of departments and educators, randomly selected in the Northern Free State district schools.

Accompanying the questionnaires, was the covering letter indicating the aim of the research and also requesting the respondents to complete the questionnaires as honestly and frankly as possible. The confidentiality of the information was also stressed. The purpose of the covering letter was to gain co-operation and to arouse the respondents' interest so that they would complete questionnaires as frankly and honestly as possible. The researcher visited the schools by appointment, explained the questionnaire to the respondents and made sure that the interpretation was the same at all schools.

3.6 SELECTION OF THE STUDY POPULATION

The population of this research comprises the learners, educators and the school management teams of the schools in the areas of Parys, Vredefort,

Sasolburg, Kroonstad and Heilbron in the Northern Free State district of Free State Province currently known D21.

3.7 SAMPLE AND TARGET GROUP

A sample is a subset or a portion of the total population. A sample must always be viewed as an approximation of the whole, rather than as a whole itself. Indeed much statistical effect is directed at the task of determining the probability of the observed phenomena, given a particular hypothesis is true.

Sampling can be highly accurate. It saves money and time. Sampling can achieve a greater response rate and greater co-operation in general from respondents.

An availability sample was used to compose the research group. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the educators, learners and school management teams of different schools in the Northern Free State District. The completed questionnaires were then collected and returned to the researcher.

This would be a sample of 300 ($n=300$) of which 50% ($n=150$) would be educators, 25% ($n=75$) would be heads of departments and 25% ($n=75$) would be principals or deputy-principals. The sample was drawn from the 40 schools (20 primary and 20 secondary schools) in the Free State Province, district 21, by means of the stratified random sampling method to ensure that identified groups in terms of gender and race are representative of the population. Principals and deputy-principals are categorised as one sample group because of their limited numbers.

3.8 PERMISSION

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education of the Free State Province in the Northern Free State District, and from the principals of the schools selected.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The questionnaires were completed anonymously and no respondents were traced, as the questionnaires were not numbered beforehand. As the questionnaires were completed anonymously the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their individual responses. The respondents returned completed questionnaires in sealed envelopes to the principals, without coercion and without remuneration. No codes were used on the questionnaires, in an effort to ensure absolute anonymity in order to obtain truthful answers, thus the non-respondents could not be identified.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

As this research was conducted as an exploratory descriptive, quantitative survey and no hypotheses were formulated, the responses from the usable questionnaires were tallied, and frequencies and percentages were calculated and displayed in tables where necessary.

Through numbers, we can express what is inexpressible, describe what is indescribable and predict what is reasonable to expect, or infer a logical conclusion to a series of events (Leedy, 1997:243).

Data are processed and analysed by means of statistical programmes selected in consultation with the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus).

3.11 RESEARCH RESULTS

The research results obtained from principals, educators and heads of departments working in the district of the Northern Free State are presented with brief interpretations and discussions from both groups of respondents whenever possible, in an effort to enhance the meaningfulness of the research results.

Furthermore, references to similar or dissimilar results reported by others in the reviewed literature are provided in an attempt to link this project's results to those of previously reported research projects addressing the same issues.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter briefly outlined the aims of the empirical research, research design, and selection of the target population and the principles of questionnaire construction.

The next chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to determine the effect of absenteeism on education and on learners, and how the Department of Education deals with it. It investigates how absenteeism affects educators, learners, management and the Department. Deductions and conclusions are to be made on the effects of absenteeism on schools, and for this to happen, it is necessary to investigate the biographic data of the respondents.

The information on the biographic data of the respondents is presented in Section A, while information on the effects of absenteeism is presented in sections B, C, D, E, F and G.

4.2 DATA ON THE GENERAL INFORMATION

Data concerning the review of respondents are shown in table 4.1 and personal and employment backgrounds are shown in table 4.2. Responses in this section may be analysed and interpreted as follows:

4.2.1 Review of respondents

300 questionnaires were distributed to the sample of the population composed of educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals at the schools in the Northern Free State District of the Free State Province. The return rate is depicted in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Response rate from educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals

Sample	Returned	Percentage
300	187	62,3

The return rate indicates that 62,3% of the educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals reacted to the request to complete the questionnaire, while 37,7% did not respond. According to Delport (2002: 172) a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% as good and 70% as excellent. The response rate in the case of this research can therefore considered good.

4.2.2 Statistical techniques

The research data were processed using the Statistical Consultancy Services of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). Statistical measures such as frequencies, means and standard deviations for each sample were used to obtain an idea about the nature, factors and to what extent absenteeism affects education.

4.3 DATA ON BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This section deals with biographical details of educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals from Free State Province schools in the district of Northern Free State. These biographical details include age, teaching phase and type of school. Each group of these biographical details will be discussed separately. This information would enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the background of the respondents.

The distribution between age groups is depicted in table 4.3.

Table 4.2: Age groups of educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals

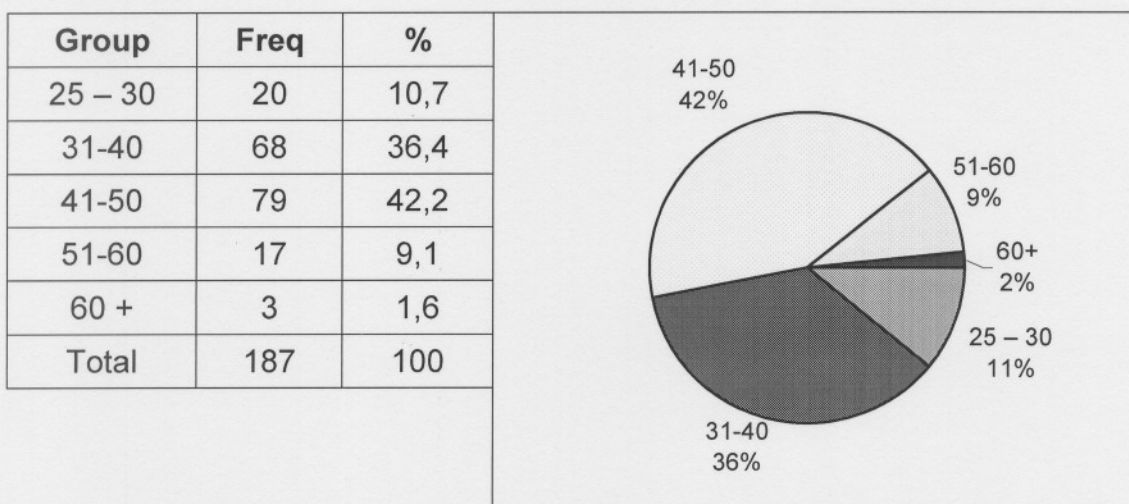


Table 4.2 presents the distribution of age groups of educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals in the Free State Province in the district of Northern Free State. The largest component of the educators, namely 42,2%, are in the age group 41 to 50 years, the second largest group (36,4%) is 31-40 years. The third age group is between 25 and 30 years and makes up 10,7%. The implication is that the majority of the educators and management teams are found in the largest age group and that this age group is found in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases at public and ex-model C schools. This age group consists of matured and experienced people who will not easily be guilty of absenteeism. They may not always know how to deal with these issues.

4.4 RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS AND HODS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABSENTEEISM

After a detailed discussion of the biographic information in section A, it is necessary to analyse the results of section B. This section consists of 8 questions. Each of these questions will be analysed individually and where necessary, explanations will be given.

4.4.1 Awareness of sick educators

This question (B01) expected principals and HODs to respond by “yes”, “not sure”, “no” or “don’t know” to their awareness of sick educators. The responses are depicted in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Awareness of sick educators

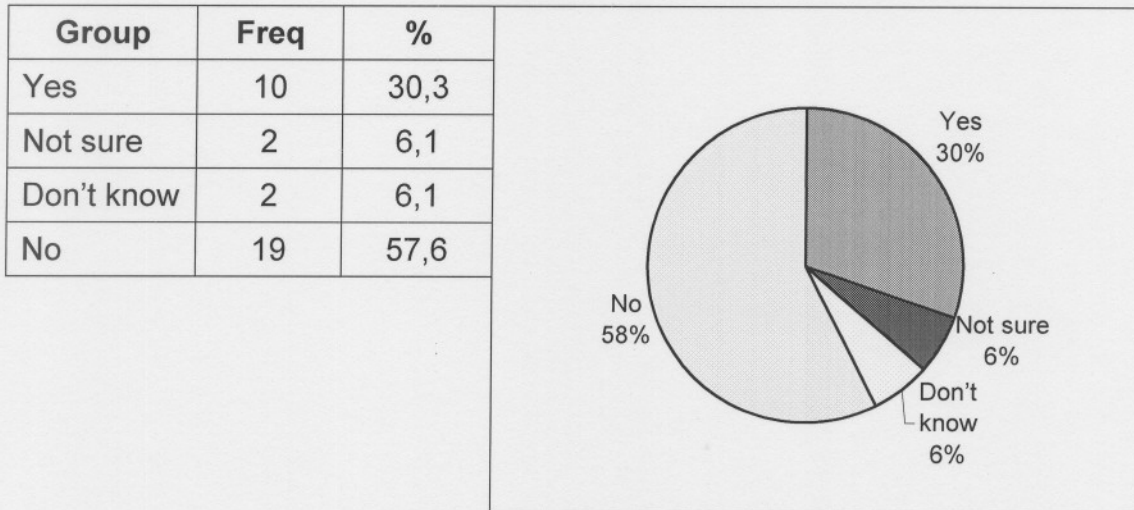
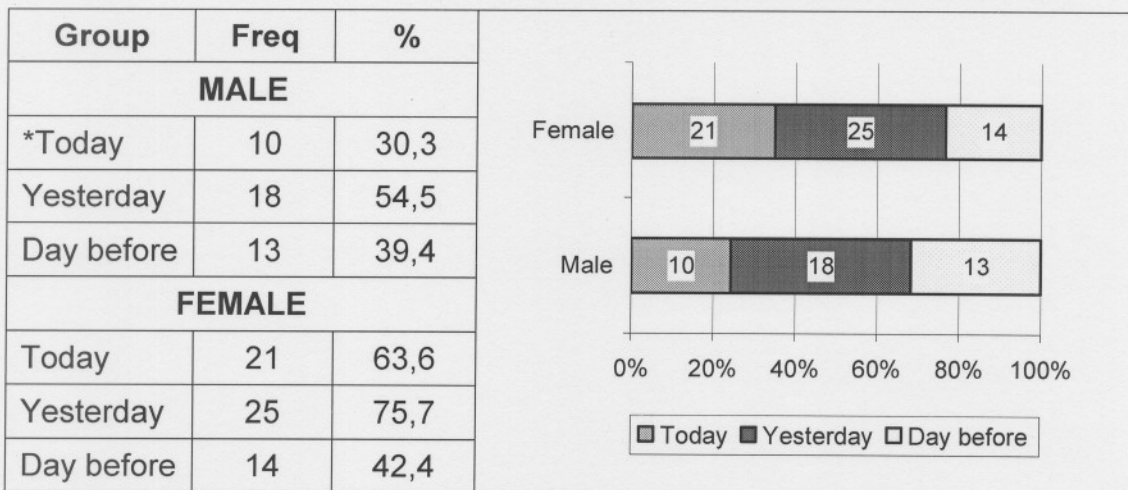


Table 4.3 indicates that 57,6% of the principals and HODs are not aware of educators who are sick. 30% of the principals and HODs indicate that they are aware of sick educators at their schools, while 6.1% indicate that they do not know or are unaware of absenteeism as a problem in their schools. It appears as if the majority of principals who responded are not aware of the extent of absenteeism in their schools.

4.4.2 Educators absent from school during the past three days

Item B02 posed the question to the respondents to indicate how many educators (male and female) had been absent from school during the previous three days. Table 4.4 reflects the responses.

Table 4.4: Educators absent from school during the past three days



* Today in this case refers to the day on which the questionnaire was completed.

Table 4.4 (B02) indicates that 54.4% of the male educators were absent yesterday, while a day before 34,9% of the male educators were absent and today 30,3% were absent.

Yesterday 75,7% of the female educators were absent, today 63,6% and the day before 42,4% were absent.

This shows that females are significantly more absent than male educators, confirming the findings of the literature study.

4.4.3 Reasons for educator absenteeism

In item B03 respondents had to indicate how often the following reasons are used for absenteeism by educators:

- Minor illness
- Accident
- Suicide
- Violence/Homicide
- Serious illness e.g. cancer, HIV/AIDS

The responses are depicted in table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Educators absent from school during the past three days

Reason	Always		Often		Sometime		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Minor illness	4	16	5	20	14	56	10	40
Accident	0		4	12,1	10	30,3	19	57,6
Suicide	0		0		0		33	100
Violence/Homicide	0		0		6	8,2	27	81,8
Serious illness	0		0		11	33,3	22	66,7

According to table 4.5 the reason used most for absenteeism is minor illness: 56% indicate that this reason is used sometimes, 20% indicate that it is used often and 16% indicate that it is always used. Serious illness is only used

sometimes (33,3%), while 30,3% report accident used as reason sometimes and 12,1% report it to be used often. Only 8,2% of the respondents indicate that violence/homicide is sometimes used as a reason for absenteeism. All respondents indicate that suicide is never used as reason.

4.4.4 Average number of educators absent on a weekly basis

In item B04, respondents were asked to indicate the average number of educators (male and female) who are absent on a weekly basis.

Table 4.6 reflects the responses.

Table 4.6: Average number of educators absent on a weekly basis

	Average	%
Male	22	66,7
Female	32	96,9

Table 4.6 (B04) indicates that 66.7% of the male educators are absent on a weekly basis and 96,9% of the female educators. This therefore confirms the previous finding that female educators are absent more often than male educators.

4.4.5 Average number of educators absent for the past three months

In item B05, respondents were asked to indicate the average number of educators (male and female) who have been absent for the past three months. The responses are depicted in table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Average number of educators absent for the past three months

	Average	%
Male	77	41,2
Female	97	51,9

Table 4.7 (B05) indicates that 41,2% of the male educators (41,2%) have been absent for the past three months and 51,9% of the female educators.

The overall rate of absenteeism is clearly quite high and it is confirmed yet again that female educators are absent more often than male educators.

4.4.6 Appointment of substitute educators

In item B06, respondents had to indicate whether substitute educators are appointed. The responses are depicted in table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Appointment of substitute educators

	Always		Often		Sometime		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Substitutes appointed	3	9,1	1	3,0	16	48,5	13	39,4

Table 4.8 (B06) shows that 48,5% of the respondents (Principals and HODs) indicate that substitutes are sometimes appointed, 9,1% indicate that substitutes are always appointed and 3,0% indicate that substitutes are often appointed. However, 39,4% indicate that substitutes are never appointed.

This, in short, means that substitute educators are often not appointed in the posts of permanent educators who are ill. The implication is that learners in these classes are receiving less teaching-learning time and attention than they should. There is also little continuity in the teaching-learning process, because these learners would often be placed with other educators. The negative effect on their academic progress is obvious.

4.4.7 Main reason for absenteeism of educators

In item B07, respondents had to indicate the main reason for absenteeism of educators. Table 4.9 reflects the responses.

Table 4.9: Main reason for absenteeism of educators

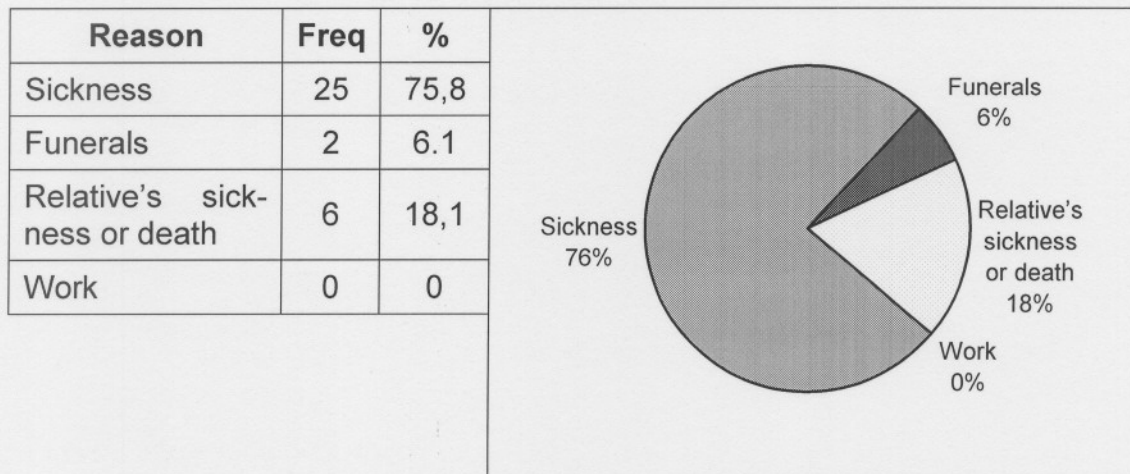


Table 4.9 (B07) shows that the majority of the respondents (75,8%) indicate that sickness is the main reason for absenteeism, 18,1% indicate that the sickness or death of a relative is the main reason, while 6,1% indicate that funerals are the main reason for absenteeism.

4.4.8 Noticeable reaction

In item B08, respondents had to indicate to what extent the following reactions are noticeable among learners and educators:

- Lack of motivation
- Lack of social interaction
- Hyperactivity
- Passivity
- Nervousness
- Poor discipline
- Absenteeism

Table 4.10 reflects the responses.

Table 4.10: Noticeable reactions

Reaction	No		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Lack of motivation	18	54,5	8	24,2	4	12,1	3	9,1
Lack of social interaction	22	66,7	8	24,2	3	9,1	0	0
Hyperactivity	19	57,6	7	21,2	4	12,1	3	9,1
Passivity	4	12,1	20	60,6	6	18,2	3	9,1
Nervousness	8	24,2	19	57,6	2	6,1	4	12,1
Poor discipline	9	18,2	17	51,5	5	15,2	5	15,2
Absenteeism	10	30,3	12	36,4	5	15,2	6	18,1

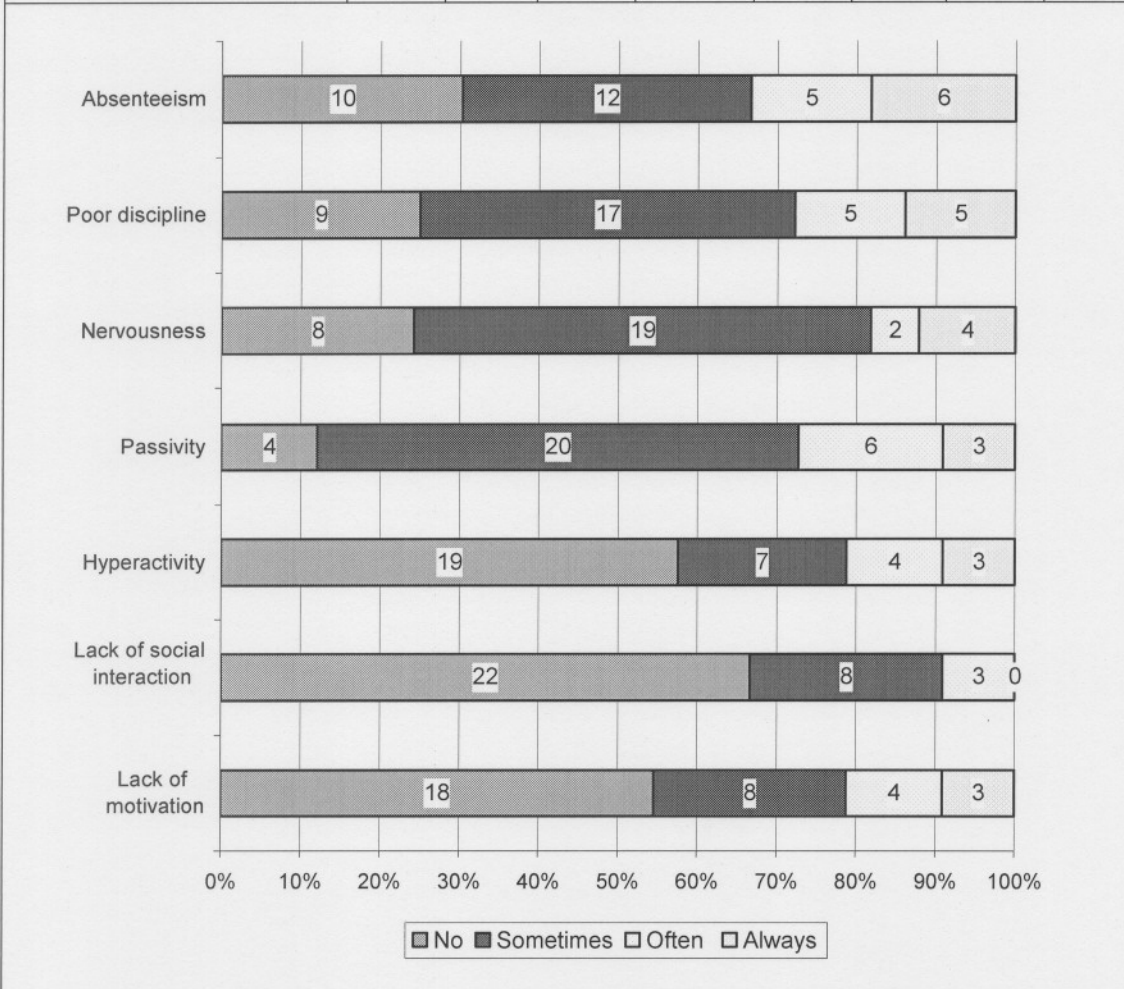


Table 4.10 shows that 66,7% of the respondents indicate that a lack of social interaction is not noticeable among learners and educators; 57,6% indicate that hyperactivity and 54,5% indicate that a lack of motivation is also not noticeable.

The reactions indicated by respondents as always noticeable are absenteeism (18,1%), poor discipline (15,2%) and nervousness (12,1%).

The percentages of the respondents who indicate that the following reactions are often noticeable are as follows: passivity (18,2%), poor discipline (15,2%), absenteeism (15,2%), lack of motivation (12,1%), hyperactivity (12,1%), lack of social interaction (9,1%) and nervousness (6,1%).

The percentages of the respondents who indicate that the following reactions are sometimes noticeable are as follows: passivity (60,6%), nervousness (57,6%), poor discipline (51,5%), absenteeism (36,4%), lack of motivation (24,2%), lack of social interaction (24,2%) and hyperactivity (21,2%).

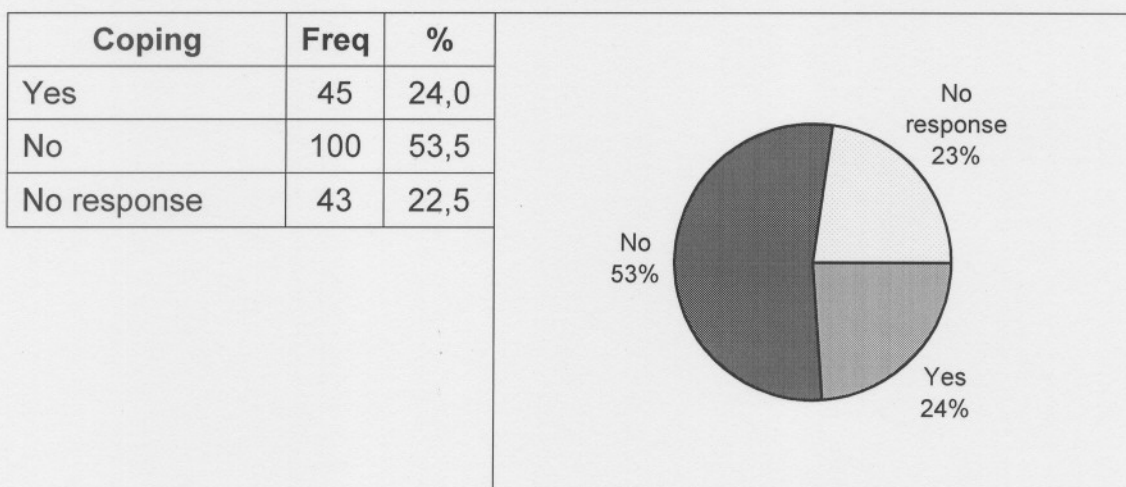
It is evident from the above that all the reactions are at least sometimes noticeable among learners and educators. However, discipline problems and learner absenteeism (which can often be linked to discipline in some way) appear to be the major effects of educator absenteeism.

4.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABSENTEEISM ON THE WORK OF EDUCATORS

4.5.1 Coping with additional workload

Item C01 requested educators to indicate whether they cope with more than one educator's workload. The responses are depicted in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Coping with additional workload



From table 4.11, it is evident that 53,5% of the respondents do not cope with more than one educator's workload, while 24% indicate that they do. This question was not answered by 22,5% of the respondents. The burden of additional workload, and the fact that educators feel they are not coping with it, may contribute to low morale – which is one of the causes of educator absenteeism again, This may lead to a vicious cycle.

4.5.2 Reasons for additional workload

In item C02, respondents had to estimate to what extent the additional workload is caused by a number of reasons. The responses are shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Reasons for additional workload

Reason	Definitely true		True		Sometimes true		Untrue	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Frequent staff members to attend to family responsibilities	9	20	17	37,8	15	33,3	4	8,9
Shortage of staff members	11	24,4	15	33,3	11	24,4	8	17,9
Staff members are not replaced	10	22,2	11	24,4	8	17,9	16	35,5

The respondents rate the reasons for the additional workload as follows: 57,8% indicate that it is true that staff members attend to family responsibilities, 57,7% indicate that it is true that there is a shortage of staff members and 46,6% indicate that staff members are not replaced. Respondents seem to agree with all of the given reasons to a certain extent.

4.5.3 Feelings and attitudes experienced because of additional workload

In item C03, respondents had to rate to what extent they are experiencing certain attitudes and feelings having to carry the heavy workload. Responses are depicted in table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Feelings and attitudes experienced because of additional workload

Attitude or feeling	Not at all		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Frustrated	17	11,0	63	40,9	36	23,4	38	24,7
Motivated	40	26,0	55	35,7	31	20,1	28	18,2
Stressed	10	6,5	63	40,9	36	23,4	45	29,2
Decreased interest in school and school activities	26	17,0	71	46,1	28	18,1	29	18,8
Coping with the situation	33	21,4	56	36,4	30	19,5	35	22,7
Not coping with the situation	38	24,7	59	38,3	30	19,5	27	17,5
Comfortable	48	31,2	53	34,4	28	18,2	25	16,2
Low morale	22	14,3	71	46,1	24	15,6	37	24,0
Depressed	28	18,2	65	42,2	25	16,2	36	23,4
Feel like resigning	40	26,0	56	36,3	20	13,0	38	24,7

Ranking feelings or attitudes that are often or always experienced, lead to the following:

Stressed (52,6%), Frustrated (48,1%), Coping with the situation (42,2%), Low morale (39,6%) Depressed (39,6%), Motivated 38,3%), Feel like resigning (37,7%). Not coping with the situation (37,0%), Decreased interest in school and school activities (36,9%) and Comfortable (34,4%).

4.5.4 Problems experienced when taking over the responsibilities of an absent teacher

In item C04, respondents had to rate to what extent they were experiencing problems when taking over the responsibilities of an absent teacher. Table 4.14 depicts the responses.

Table 4.14: Problems experienced when taking over the responsibilities of an absent teacher

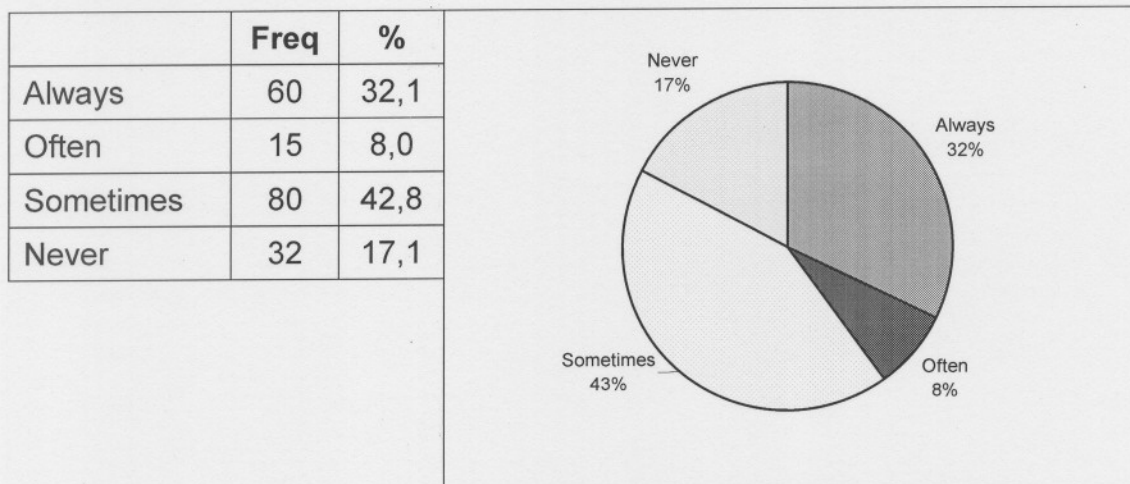


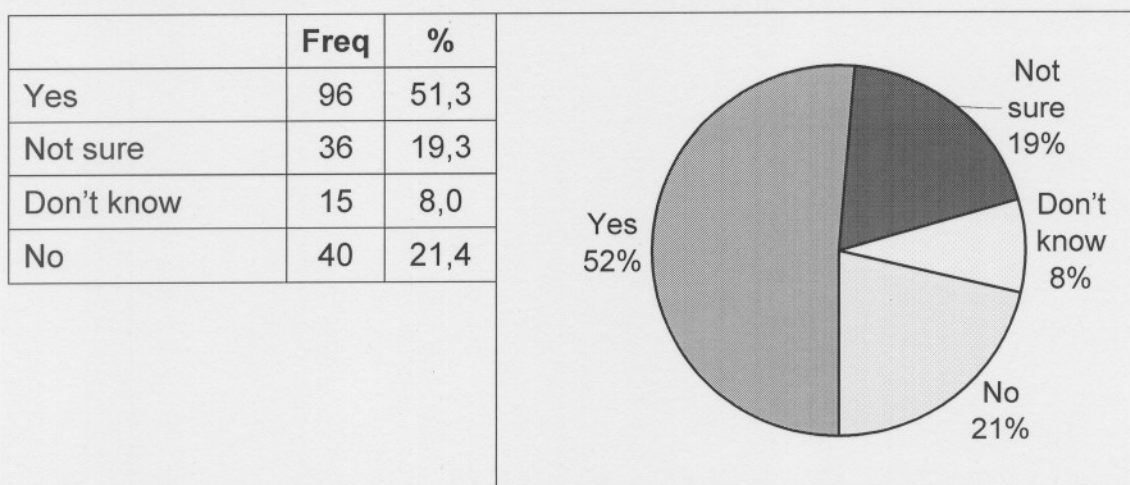
Table 4.14 indicates that 42,8% of the respondents experience problems of having to take over the responsibilities of an absent teacher sometimes, while 40,1% experience such problems often or always. The majority of respondents are at least some times experiencing problems of having to take over the responsibility of absent colleagues. This may lead to additional stress.

4.6 THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATORS' ABSENTEEISM ON LEARNERS

4.6.1 Educators' awareness of sick learners

The question whether they are aware of any learners that are sick was posed to the respondents. The responses are depicted in table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Educators' awareness of sick learners



The majority of the educators (51,3%) indicate that they are aware of learners who are sick, 21,4% of the educators indicate that they are not aware of such learners while 1,3% of the educators are not sure and 8% do not know.

4.6.2 Number of affected learners

Respondents who are aware of sick learners were requested to indicate the number of learners affected.

Table 4.16: Number of affected learners

	Frequency
Male	513
Female	593

The above appear to suggest a higher rate of absenteeism among female learner than that of male learners.

4.6.3 Learners who repeated grades

Respondents were requested to estimate what percentage of learners repeated grades in the past three years. The majority of the respondents (36,4%) estimate that between 0% to 10% of the learners repeated grades, while 22,5% estimate the percentage as being between 11% and 20%; 13,4% between 21% and 30%; 11,8% between 31% and 40%; 6,9% between 41% and 50%; 4,2%) between 51% and 60% and 4,8% estimate the percentage to be between 61% and 70%. Literature indicates that there is be a link between educator absenteeism and poor academic progress of learners (see Chapter 2).

4.6.4 Learners who have been affected by educator absenteeism

Table 4.17: Learners who have been affected by educator absenteeism

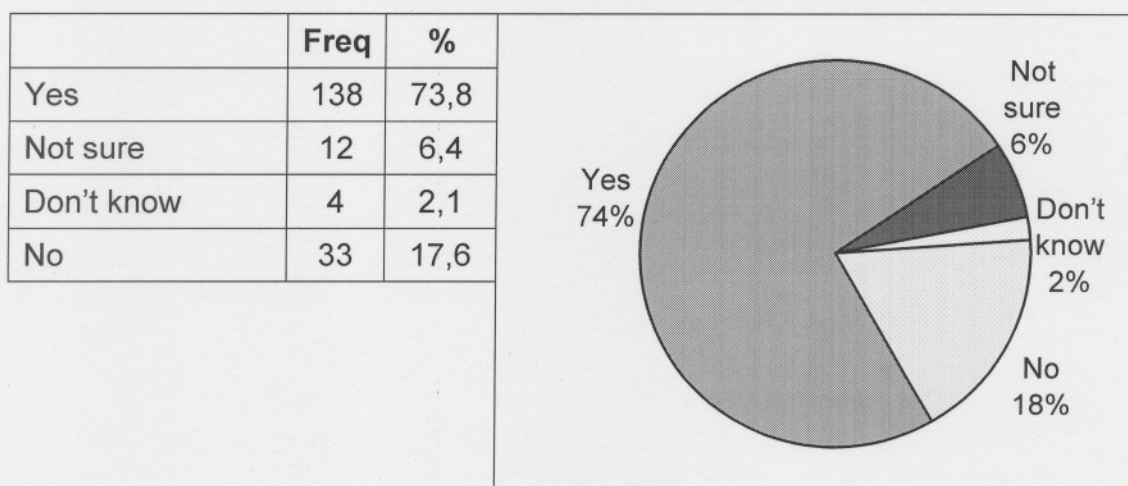
Estimated percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 10 %	106	56.7%
11 – 20 %	21	11.2%
21 – 30 %	19	10.2%
31 – 40 %	14	7.5%
41 – 50 %	12	6.4%
51 -60 %	10	5.3%
61 – 70 %	5	2.7%

Respondents were requested to estimate the percentage of learners who have been affected by educator absenteeism for the past three years. The majority of the respondents 56,7% estimated that between 0% and 10% of the learners are affected, while 11,2,5% estimate the percentage as being between 11% and 20%; 10,2% between 21% and 30%; 7,5% between 31% and 40%; 6,4% between 40% and 50%; 5,3% between 50% and 60% and 2,7% estimate the percentage to be between 60% and 70%. Literature indicates a strong correlation between educator absenteeism and learner absenteeism (see Chapter 2).

4.6.5 Educator awareness of lack of discipline in class

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they are aware of any lack of discipline in class. The responses are shown in table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Educators' awareness of lack of discipline in class



The majority of the educators (73,8%) indicate that they are aware of lack of discipline in class, 17,6% educators indicate that they are not aware of lack of discipline, while 6,4% educators are not sure and 2,1% do not know.

A fairly large percentage of educators reported discipline problems in class. Literature (see Chapter 2) indicates that a lack of discipline is both a result of educator absenteeism (at least to a certain extent) and a cause of educator absenteeism in the sense that educators reach a stage where they feel they can not cope any longer.

4.6.6 Learners who have been affected by educator absenteeism

Respondents were requested to indicate the main reason for absenteeism of learners at their school.

Table 4.19: Reasons for learner absenteeism

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Sickness	88	47.1%
Funerals	3	1.6%
Sickness or death of a relative	31	16.5%
Home responsibilities	48	25.7
Other	17	9.1%

Sickness is indicated by the majority (47,1%) as the main reason for learner absenteeism, while 25,7% of the respondents indicate home responsibilities as the main reason. Sickness or death of a relative is indicated as main reason by 16,5% and funerals by 1,6% of the respondents. 9,1% indicate other reasons. Under (other) reasons raised by learners it was found that poor results of learners make them hesitant to go to school. This can be attributed to educator absenteeism which impacts badly on the school results. This may be suggested for further research.

4.6.7 Average number of learners absent on a weekly basis

Table 4.20: Average number of learners absent on a weekly basis

	Frequency
Male	2976
Female	3519

Again it appears as if absenteeism among female learners is higher than that of male learners. Interestingly, a similar trend exists within educator absenteeism. When an educator continuously absents himself from school, it makes the learners to ultimate hesitate to attend school regularly. Girls will be more affected by educator absenteeism than boys because of doing their different tasks at home.

4.6.8 Learners exposed to different types of home situations

Educators were requested to estimate the number of learners exposed to different types of home situations. The responses are depicted in table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Reasons for learner absenteeism

	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-100%
Both parents alive	13	26	22	16	32	31	47
Paternal orphan	28	36	30	21	20	13	39
Maternal orphan	68	27	32	21	17	16	6
Double orphan	71	26	27	32	12	13	6
Seriously ill learner	127	25	17	10	4	4	0
Seriously ill family member	99	38	17	12	10	8	3
Parents died of AIDS	103	27	18	15	10	11	3

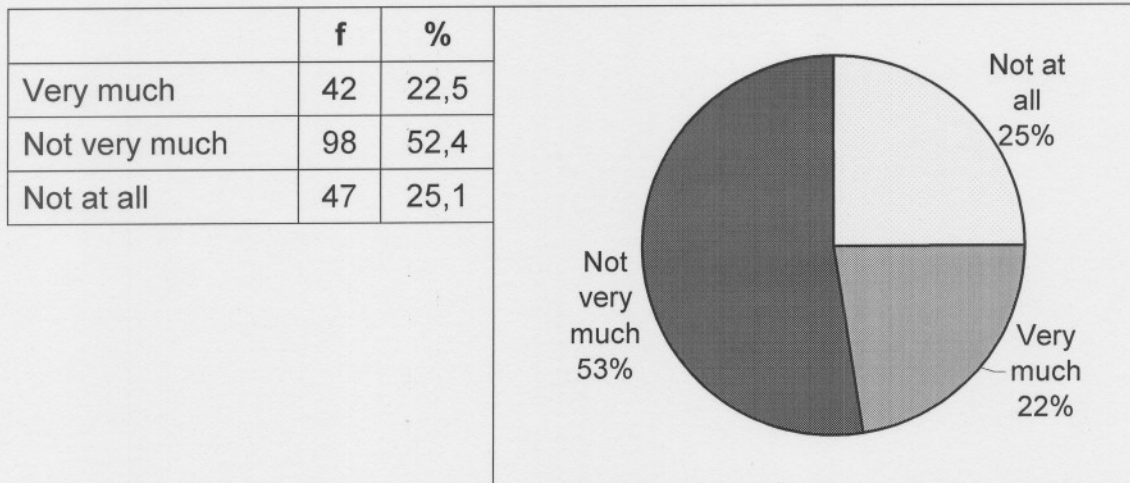
From table 4.21, 47 respondents estimated that 60-100% of the learners are exposed to a home situation where both parents are alive, 39 respondents estimated that 60-100% of the learners are exposed to a home situation where the father has passed away. According to the majority of educators (68) only between 0 and 10% of the learners are exposed to a home situation where the mother has passes away. Seventy-one of the educators estimated that between 0 and 10% of the learners are exposed to a double orphan situation. One hundred and twenty-seven educators estimated that between 0 and 10% of the learners are seriously ill; 99 of the educators estimated that between 0 and 10% of the learners have seriously ill family members and 103 of the respondents estimated that between 0 and 10% of the learners have parents or guardians who died of AIDS. Although these figures do not seem to indicate a major problem, dealing with orphans and learners from broken home may result in extra stress for educators as these learners may not have support at home.

4.7 THE INFLUENCE OF ABSENTEEISM ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

4.7.1 Schools affected by absenteeism

Respondents had to indicate to what extent their school is affected by absenteeism. The results are depicted in table 22.

Table 4.22: Schools affected by absenteeism



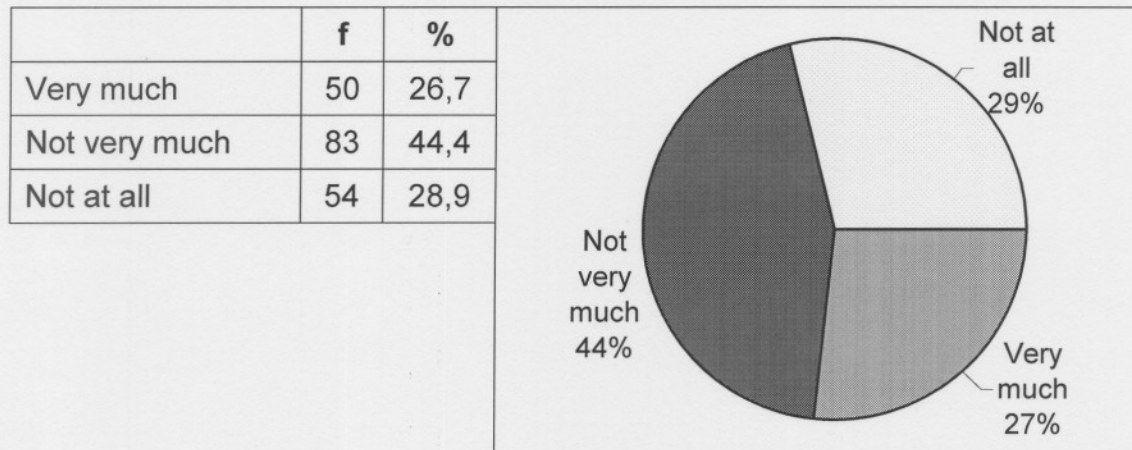
According to table 4.22, only 22,5% of the respondents indicate that their schools are affected very much by absenteeism, 52,4% indicate that their schools are not affected very much and 25,1% indicate that absenteeism does not affect their schools at all.

This may be interpreted as the majority of schools not really being affected by absenteeism, or that principals who responded are not aware of absenteeism and its results at their schools. If the literature study and the responses to some of the questionnaire are taken into account, one may tend to believe the latter. A third possibility may be that principals are hesitant to reveal the true state of absenteeism at their schools.

4.7.2 Satisfaction with academic progress

In the next question, respondents were requested to indicate to what extent they are satisfied with the academic progress of the learners at their schools. Table 4.23 reflects the responses.

Table 4.23: Satisfaction with academic progress



According to table 4.23, only 26,7% of the respondents indicate they are satisfied with the academic progress of learners at their schools, 28,9% indicate that they are not satisfied at all and 44,4% indicate that they are not very satisfied. The majority of respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with their academic progress. The correlation between educator absenteeism and lack of learner progress has been established earlier in this study.

4.7.3 Reasons for dissatisfaction with academic progress

In the third question, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the reasons given, give rise to his/her dissatisfaction with the academic progress at their schools. Table 4.24 depicts the responses.

Table 4.24: Reasons for additional workload

Reason	Definitely true		True		Sometimes true		Untrue	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Classes are too big.	56	29,9	60	32,1	43	23,0	28	15,0
It is impossible to attend learners individually.	81	43,3	70	37,4	27	14,4	9	4,8
Educators' workload is too heavy.	75	40,1	77	41,2	30	16,0	5	2,7
Learners are not motivated.	42	22,5	52	27,8	50	26,7	43	23,0
Educators are frequently absent.	5	2,7	61	32,6	69	36,9	52	27,8
Learners are frequently absent.	24	12,8	56	30,0	92	49,2	15	8,0
Learners are ill-disciplined in class.	42	22,5	48	25,6	71	37,9	26	14,0

62% of the respondents indicate that classes are too big and 80,7% indicate that it is impossible to attend to learners individually. 81,3% of the respondents indicate that the workload of educators is too heavy, while only 50,3% of the respondents indicate that learners are not motivated. Only 35,3% of the respondents indicate that educators are frequently absent and 42,8% indicate that learners are frequently absent. Ill-disciplined learners in class are indicated as a reason for unsatisfactory academic progress by 48,1% of the respondents. It is clear that a heavy workload is seen as a major reason for lack of academic progress. This may be due to educators having to deal with the work of absent colleagues.

4.7.4 Reasons for absenteeism

The fourth item in this section urged the respondents to indicate the frequency of some causes of absenteeism. Table 4.25 depicts the responses.

Table 4.25: Reasons for absenteeism

Reason	Seldom		Sometimes		Frequent		Often	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Personal illness	58	31,0	70	37,4	37	19,8	22	11,8
Illness of family member	81	43,3	83	44,4	17	9,1	6	3,2
Loss of family member	69	36,9	93	49,7	17	9,1	8	4,3
Too many responsibilities at home	88	47,1	59	31,6	30	16,0	10	5,3
Rejection by peers	119	63,6	51	27,3	9	4,8	8	4,3
School-related problems	92	49,2	70	37,4	12	6,4	13	7,0

Loss of a family member was ranked as the major reason for absenteeism (73,1%), followed by personal illness (69%), illness of a family member (56,7%), too many responsibilities at home (52,9%), school-related problems (50,8%) and rejection by peers (36,4%).

The research is focused on educator absenteeism, but overlaps the effects it has on learner absenteeism. It is known that learners tend to take advantage of the situation. In the case of educator absence, learners will cease the opportunity and use it to their own benefit. When investigating the reason for their absenteeism, learners give different reasons, but educators' absenteeism provides learners with reasons for their own absenteeism.

4.8 PREREQUISITES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

In this section, respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree with a number of relevant questions. The responses are depicted in table 4.26.

Table 4.26: Prerequisites for effective teaching

Activity	Seldom		Sometimes		Mostly		Always	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Educators are well prepared.	6	3,2	28	15,0	64	34,2	89	47,6
Educators present interesting learning activities.	5	2,7	36	19,3	75	40,1	71	37,9
Educators correct tests and assignments.	3	1,6	24	12,8	49	26,2	111	59,4
Educators provide assistance with educational problems.	5	2,7	29	15,5	59	31,6	94	50,3
Educators involve learners actively in learning.	6	3,2	18	9,6	52	27,8	111	59,4
Educators motivate learners.	1	0,5	13	7,0	50	26,7	123	65,8
Educators are dependable.	19	10,1	46	24,6	51	27,3	71	38,0
Educators are punctual and regular in attendance.	6	3,2	33	17,6	60	32,1	88	47,1
Educators control disciplinary problems in class effectively.	8	4,3	30	16,0	75	40,1	74	39,6
Educators send learners to buy food during teaching hours.	124	66,3	48	25,7	5	2,7	10,	5,3
Educators attend to their teaching periods.	1	0,5	9	4,8	60	32,1	117	62,6
Educators are sexually involved with learners.	139	74,3	17	9,1	14	7,5	17	9,1

According to table 4.26, 47,6% of the respondents indicate that educators are always well prepared; 40,1% of the respondents indicate that mostly present interesting learning activities; 59,4% of the respondents indicate that educators always correct tests and assignments; 50,3% of the respondents indicate that educators always provide assistance with educational problems;

59,4% of the respondents indicate that educators always involve learners actively in learning; 65,8% of the respondents indicate that educators always motivate learners; 38,0% of the respondents indicate that educators are always dependable; 47,1% of the respondents indicate that educators are always punctual and regular in attendance; 40,1% of the respondents indicate that educators mostly control disciplinary problems in class effectively and another 39,6% indicate that educators always control disciplinary problems effectively.

Furthermore; 66,3% of the respondents indicate that educators seldom send learners to buy food during teaching hours; 62,6% of the respondents indicate that educators always attend to their teaching periods and 74,3% of the respondents indicate that educators are seldom sexually involved with learners.

4.9 THE INFLUENCE OF ABSENTEEISM ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this section, respondents had to indicate what the frequency of a number of activities is. The responses are depicted in table 4.27.

Table 4.27: Frequency of activities

Activity	Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Are classes at your school left untaught?	2	1,1	3	1,6	63	33,7	119	63,6
Does the principal deal effectively with absenteeism of educators?	123	65,8	20	10,7	39	20,9	5	2,6
Does the school have a policy on absenteeism?	132	70,6	12	6,4	18	9,6	25	13,4
Are parents informed about absenteeism at school?	92	49,2	37	19,8	34	18,2	24	12,8
Are staff meetings held during teaching times?	9	4,8	9	4,8	42	22,5	127	67,9
Do educators report timeously to their respective classes?	116	62,0	30	16,0	34	18,0	7	4,0
Do educators control learner absenteeism in class effectively?	144	77,0	22	11,8	16	8,6	5	2,6
Do educators feel confident to teach HIV/AIDS topics?	102	54,5	41	22,0	37	19,8	7	3,7
Are there measures in place which deal with late coming?	128	68,4	25	13,3	24	13,0	10	5,3
Is there a feeding scheme at your school?	40	21,4	17	9,0	45	24,1	85	45,5
Is the governing body of the school aware of absenteeism at school?	90	48,1	28	15,0	49	26,2	20	10,6
Does the department implement leave without pay for educators who did not get permission from their principals?	106	57,0	17	9,0	51	27,0	13	7,0

In table 4.27, 63,6% of the respondents indicate that classes are never left unattended; 65,8% indicate that principals always deal effectively with the

absenteeism of educators; 70,6% indicate that the school always has a policy on absenteeism; 49,2% indicate that parents are always informed about absenteeism; 67,9% indicate that staff meetings are never held during teaching hours; 62,0% indicate that educators always report timeously to their respective classes; 77,0% indicate that educators always control learner absenteeism effectively in class; 54,5% indicated that educators always feel confident to teach HIV/AIDS topics; 68,4% indicate that there are always measures in place to deal with late-coming; 45,5% indicate that there is never a feeding scheme at their schools; 48,1% indicate that the School Governing Body is always aware of absenteeism at school and 57,0% indicate that the Department of Education always implement leave without pay for educators who did not get permission from their principals.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the findings of the empirical research with respect to analysis and interpretation of data. In 4.2, the data on the general information of the respondents was discussed. This enabled the researcher to know the respondents he was dealing with.

In 4.3, the data on the biographical information was also discussed and this helped the researcher to know the ages and teaching phases of the respondents.

In 4.4, the researcher dealt with the responses of educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals on the significance of absenteeism. The researcher found that principals do not know or are not aware of educators at school who are sick. Furthermore, most of the educators who are absent are females. The common reasons for absenteeism among educators are minor illness and serious illness e.g. cancer, AIDS. Sometimes substitute educators are appointed.

In 4.5, absenteeism was found to be putting a greater workload on other educators so that the educators cannot cope with this additional workload. Most of the educators who are absent cited the following reasons: attend to family responsibilities and shortage of staff makes other educators to absent

themselves from work. This workload makes educators experience problems such as stress, frustration, low morale, depression and lack of motivation.

In 4.6, the researcher found that learners are also affected by educator absenteeism. Most of the educators are aware of learners who are sick at school. Girls are absent from school more often than boys. Because of the absenteeism of educators, learners are affected and absent themselves too, citing sickness as the main reason. This leads to a lack of discipline in class.

In 4.7, the researcher found that the schools are affected by absenteeism and that educators are not very satisfied with the academic progress of the learners at school. Classes are too big for educators to attend to the individual learner.

In 4.8, the researcher found that educators mostly or always present interesting learning activities and control learners' work. Educators are punctual at school and control discipline. Educators do not send learners on errands during teaching hours and are not sexually involved with learners.

In 4.9, the researcher found that classes are not left untaught and that the schools have policies on absenteeism. Parents are informed about absenteeism at school and staff meetings are not held during teaching hours. Most schools do not have a feeding scheme.

After the empirical investigation, the final chapter will focus on the recommendations, summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the chapters, the findings of the research and the recommendations that are made to establish the effects of absenteeism on education.

5.2 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the background and problem statement concerning absenteeism of educators was given. The aims and method of research in terms of both the literature study and empirical research were discussed. The investigative procedure to be followed, the instrument to be used, the population targeted and the way of drawing a sample was set out. The division of the chapters was also outlined.

In Chapter 2 a literature survey concerning absenteeism of educators was given, as well as the definition of concepts like absent, absenteeism, educator and learner. Different types of absenteeism were discussed. The reasons and the extent of absenteeism were outlined and the factors which influence absenteeism among educators were investigated.

In Chapter 3 the empirical research design was outlined, including the research instrument, procedures and administrative procedures, population and sampling procedures. The purpose of the empirical research was to gather information concerning the influence of educator absenteeism on effective education. In order to get this information, a questionnaire was constructed and distributed among principals, deputy principals, heads of departments and educators within the District of Northern Free State of the Free State Province.

In Chapter 4 data were analysed with the assistance of the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus).

This chapter also presents the interpretation of the results. The focus was on the significance of absenteeism and the responses of principals, deputy principals and educators thereof.

5.3 FINDINGS

5.3.1 Findings with regard to the first aim of research: To determine the nature of absenteeism of educators in education

- Absenteeism cost any country more money per year in reduced productivity (2.1).
- There are different categories of absenteeism, namely sickness absence, voluntary absenteeism/ authorised absence, involuntary/non-voluntary absenteeism, unexcused absence and unpaid vacation (2.3.1).
- Absenteeism is a complex phenomenon and there are numerous factors influencing absenteeism (2.3.2).
- Literature revealed that there are particular trends that appeared to have developed in absenteeism. There are clear links between gender and absenteeism, as well as age and absenteeism (2.3.3).
- It was found that the lack of proper records and collective measurement techniques on absenteeism lead to the real extent of absenteeism being hidden. However, it appears to be a growing trend (2.4).

5.3.2 Findings with regard to the second aim of research: To determine the extent to which absenteeism impact on education in South Africa

- Lack of proper records and measuring techniques makes a proper assessment of the situation very difficult (2.4).
- Principals often do not know of educators at school who are absent (4.4).
- Female educators appear to be absent more often than their male colleagues (4.4)

- The common reasons for absenteeism among educators are minor illness and serious illness e.g. cancer, AIDS and loss of family members (4.4).
- In most cases no substitute educators are appointed (4.4).
- Educator absenteeism was found to be putting a greater workload on other educators so that the educators cannot cope with this additional workload (4.5).
- The burden of the extra workload makes educators experience problems such as stress, frustration, low morale, depression and lack of motivation (4.5).
- Although this study provides no conclusive evidence to make a factual statement in this particular regard, it does appear as if the absenteeism of educators are having an influence on learners – in particular leading to higher rates of learner absenteeism and lack of discipline in class (4.6).
- In schools that are affected by absenteeism, the academic progress of learners is not satisfactory. One of the reasons is that combining the classes of absent educators with available educators results in classes that are too big for educators to attend to the individual learner (4.7).
- Educators who were present when completing the questionnaire, view themselves as effective, punctual and having good discipline (4.8).
- The majority of respondents indicated that classes are not left untaught and that the schools have policies on absenteeism (4.9)

5.3.3 Findings with regard to the third aim of research: To lay down guidelines for education role players regarding absenteeism of educators

Guidelines for this research aim are given below in the form of recommendations.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research was to determine the influence of educator absenteeism on effective education in South Africa, particularly in the Northern Free State district of the Free State Province. To realise this, a literature study was done which formed the base on which the empirical research followed.

The empirical research revealed that principals, deputy principals, heads of departments and educators have problems with educator absenteeism.

It is clear that educator absenteeism affects the school negatively.

In the light of the literature and empirical study the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1

It is important that an accessible psychological support system is put into place for educators.

Motivation

Educators are struggling with psychological issues brought about by work and learners who are affected by problems at home and school.

Recommendation 2

The District Office should take serious steps to reduce or act against absenteeism of educators.

Motivation

When an educator has been booked leave without pay the forms are sent to district office. The district office should delay to implement leave without pay because it will first follow its process of allowing the victim a chance to prove that he/she was really absent on the said date.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Education must also review salaries of educators which are not on par with those of the private sector.

Motivation

Educators' salaries are very low when compared with those of the private sector. This issue affects educators' morale and motivation and may contribute to educator absenteeism.

Recommendation 4

Different specialists must be used for development of staff on different topics.

Motivation

This will boost the morale of educators and bring efficiency in the educators' work.

Recommendation 5

Procedures must be put in place for accurate recording of educators' absenteeism.

Motivation

It is virtually impossible to address the issue without accurate records.

5.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended that further research is undertaken on the following topics:

- The effects of educator absenteeism on learners at South African schools. Issues such as the correlation between educator and learner absenteeism, educator absenteeism and learner progress and disciplinary problems need further investigation.
- The development of policies and procedures to curb this phenomenon.

- Support to overloaded educators dealing with the workload of absent colleagues.

5.6 CONCLUSION

From this study, it is clear that schools have problems with absenteeism. Principals, deputy principals, heads of departments and other educators have problems with educator absenteeism. School management teams must be effectively trained to deal with school laws and the implementation thereof with regard to educator absenteeism, and also be well-informed about the roles of unions at school.

As one reads the responses from the empirical research, it is clear that principals have serious problems about educator absenteeism which impact negatively on their work. And also affects other educators who are dedicated to their work. Since educator absenteeism also affects learners and to the extent the cream of the country, the District Office, community and the Department must help to reduce absenteeism. Educators must not forget that above everything the researcher said concerning absenteeism, one thing remains: You hold the future of these learners in your hands. Give the light, not darkness, and God will bless you.

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ADDENDUM A
Letter of permission to conduct research

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Sir/Madam

Re: "REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH"

I am an M.Ed student from the North-West University, and request permission to conduct a research at your school.

Permission has been granted by the Provincial Department pertaining to this research. I promise that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study, and no information will be available to an unauthorised person without permission of the schools in question and the Department of Education of D21(Northern Free State District).

I hope my request will be kindly considered.

Yours in education

E.P. KHEDAMA

Cell: 083-345-6106



ADDENDUM B

Letter of permission to conduct research

FREE STATE PROVINCE



Enquiries Mr W B van Rooyen
Reference no 16/4/1/10-2005

Tel: (011) 4 43 071
Fax: (011) 4 43 074

2005-03-18

Mr E. P. Khedama
17 Wedepohl Street
SASOLBURG
1947

Dear Mr E.P. Khedama

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project
2. Research topic: **-The effect of educator absenteeism on effective education**
3. Your research project has been registered with the Free State Education Department and you may conduct research in the Free State Department of Education under the following conditions:
 - 3.1 Educators and learners, participate voluntarily in the project
 - 3.2 The names of all schools, educators, and learners involved remain confidential
 - 3.3 The questionnaires are completed and the interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time.
 - 3.4 This letter is shown to all participating persons
 - 3.5 Suggested changes are considered.
4. You are requested to donate a report on this study to the Free State Department of Education. It will be placed in the Education Library, Bloemfontein. It will be appreciated if you would also bring a summary of the report on a computer disc, so that it may be placed on the website of the Department.
5. Once your project is complete, you may be invited to present your findings to the relevant persons in the FS Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing your findings wherever possible.
6. You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing to

**The Head: Education,
For attention: CES: IRRISS
Room 1204, Provincial Government Building
Private Bag X20565,
BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301**

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely



**WB van Rooyen
CES: IRRISS**

ADDENDUM C

Questionnaire

The effect of educator absenteeism on effective education

Please complete the attached questionnaire.

This research project aims to determine the influence of absenteeism on the teaching and learning situation in schools. The purpose of the research is to help schools to deal with the problem.

Instructions:

1. Your name must not appear in this questionnaire.
2. Kindly answer the questions by making a cross in the appropriate block.
3. Principals and HOD's must complete sections A, B, D, E, F and G.
4. Educators must complete sections A, C, D, E, F and G.

Section A: Biographic Information

1.	Your age	25–30 years	31-40years	41-50 years	51–60 years	>60 years
2.	The phase in which you are currently teaching:	Foundation	Intermediate	Senior	FET	
3.	The school in which you are currently teaching:	Public	Private	Ex Model C	Township	

Section B: The significance of absenteeism on principals and HOD's

1.	Are you currently aware of any educators at your school who are sick?	Yes	Not sure	Don't know	No
2.	How many educators at your school have been absent from school during the past 3 days?		Today	Yesterday	Day before
		Male			
		Female			
3.	How often are the following indicated sickness rate among educators at your school?				
	(a) Minor illness	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
	(b) Accident	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
	(c) Suicide	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
	(d) Violence / Homicide	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
	(e) Serious illness (e.g. cancer, HIV/AIDS)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never

4.	Indicate the average number of educators who are absent on a weekly basis by completing this table.	Male:	
		Female:	

5.	Indicate the average number of educators who are absent on for the past three months by completing this table.	Male:	
		Female:	

6.	Are substitute educators appointed at your school for days that permanent educators are absent?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
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7. Indicate the main reason for absenteeism of educators at your school by marking with an **X** in the appropriate block. (Indicate only one reason).

	Sickness	Funeral	Sickness or death of a relative	Work related	Other (specify)
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8. Are the following reactions noticeable among learners and educators in your school?

(a)	Lack of motivation?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(b)	Lack of social interaction?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(c)	Hyperactivity?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(d)	Passivity?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(e)	Nervousness?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(f)	Poor discipline?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always
(g)	Absenteeism?	No	Sometimes	Often	Always

Section C: The significance of absenteeism on educators

1.	Do you cope with more than one educator's workload?	Yes	No
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2. If yes, indicate the value of the following reason/s for your having to carry this workload.

(a)	Frequent staff members to attend to family responsibilities.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(b)	Shortage of staff members.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(c)	Staff members are not replaced.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(d)	Other (please specify):				

3. Indicate to what extend do you experience the following as feeling/attitudes for having to carry a heavy workload.

(a)	Frustrated	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(b)	Motivated	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(c)	Stressed	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(d)	Decreased interest in school and school activities	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(e)	Coping with the situation	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(f)	Not coping with the situation	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(g)	Comfortable	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always

(h) Low morale	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(i) Depressed	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(j) Feel like resigning	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	Always
(k) Other (Please specify)				

4.	Do you experience problems of having to take over the responsibilities of an absent educator?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
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Section D: The influence of absenteeism on learners

1.	Are you currently aware of any learners at your school who are sick?	Yes	Not sure	Don't know	No
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2.	If yes or not sure , please provide the number of learners who are affected by completing the table:	Male	
		Female	

3.	Based on your experience in the last 3 years, what percentage of learners repeated grades? Mark with an X .						
	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 70%

4.	What percentage of learners has been affected by educator absenteeism for the past 3 years?						
	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 70%

5.	Are you currently aware of lack of discipline in class?	Yes	Not sure	Don't know	No
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6.	Indicate the main reason for absenteeism of learners at your school by marking with an X in the appropriate block. (Indicate only one reason).				
	Sickness	Funeral	Sickness or death of a relative	Home responsibilities	Other (specify)

7.	How many learners are absent on average on a weekly basis at your school?	Male	
		Female	

8.	Estimate the % of learners exposed to the different types of home situations by completing the table below (mark with an X):							
(a)	Both parents alive	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(b)	Paternal orphan	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(c)	Maternal orphan	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(d)	Double orphan	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(e)	Seriously ill learner	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(f)	Seriously ill family member	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%
(g)	Parents/guardians died of Aids	0 – 10%	10 – 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50 – 60%	60 – 100%

Section E: The influence of absenteeism on teaching and learning

1.	Is your school affected by absenteeism?	Very much	Not very much	Not at all	
2.	Are you satisfied with the academic progress of the learners in your school?	Very much	Not very much	Not at all	
3.	If no , indicate the importance of the following reasons for your dissatisfaction.				
(a)	Classes are too big.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(b)	It is impossible to attend learners individually.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(c)	Educators' workload is too heavy.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(d)	Learners are not motivated.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(e)	Educators are frequently absent.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(f)	Learners are frequently absent.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(g)	Learners are ill-disciplined in class.	Definitely true	True	Sometimes true	Untrue
(h)	Other (please specify):				
4.	How frequent is absenteeism caused by each if the following reasons?				
(a)	Personal illness	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(b)	Illness of family member	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(c)	Loss of family member	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(d)	Too many responsibilities at home	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(e)	Rejection by peers	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(f)	School related problems	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Often
(h)	Other (please specify):				

Section F: Critical prerequisites for effective teaching and learning

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

1.	Educators are well prepared.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
2.	Educators present interesting learning activities.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
3.	Educators correct tests and assignments.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
4.	Educators provide assistance with educational problems.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
5.	Educators involve learners actively in learning.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
6.	Educators motivate learners.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
7.	Educators are dependable.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always

8.	Educators are punctual and regular in attendance.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
9.	Educators control disciplinary problems in class effectively.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
10.	Educators send learners to buy food during teaching hours.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
11.	Educators attend to their teaching periods.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
12.	Educators are sexually involved with learners.	Seldom	Sometimes	Mostly	Always

Section G: The influence of absenteeism on teaching and learning

1.	Are classes at your school left untaught?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
2.	Does the principal deal effectively with absenteeism of educators?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
3.	Does the school have a policy on absenteeism?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
4.	Are parents informed about absenteeism at school?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
5.	Are staff meetings held during teaching times?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
6.	Do educators report timeously to their respective classes?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
7.	Do educators control learner absenteeism in class effectively?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
8.	Do educators feel confident to teach HIV/AIDS topics?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
9.	Are there measures in place which deal with late coming?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
10.	Is there a feeding scheme at your school?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
11.	Is the governing body of the school aware of absenteeism at school?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
12.	Does the department implement leave without pay on educators who did not get permission from their principals?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never

Thank you for your time and co-operation!